

INFLAMMANTORY LANGUAGE: A MASSIVE INDUCEMENT TO ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CONFLICT IN NIGERIA

GEORGE C. ASADU (Ph.D)
Humanities Unit, School of General Studies
University of Nigeria, Nsukka
+2348104732441
george.asadu@unn.edu.ng

Abstract

Religion is a functional, uniting factor in places where there is a state religion but it is dysfunctional in secular states where there are multiple religious sects. Therefore, in a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria with marked plurality of religious views among the citizens, there is the inevitability of clash. Of course, the country has been ravaged by ethno-religious conflicts. One major cause of ethno-religious violence whose effects have not been satisfactorily examined is inflammatory language. Unfortunately, the use of inflammatory language has become prevalent in Nigeria. The situation provokes concern and interest in public discourse and intellectual circle. This research is an attempt to examine critically the effect of inflammatory speech on ethno-religious violence in Nigeria. The methodology employed in this work is historical approach functioned by the use of secondary sources. The findings made clear the fact that the ethno-religious conflicts which divide Nigeria are mainly induced by unguided utterances. It is therefore, recommended that the use of such languages as derogatory, anger and hate speeches be avoided completely in order to curtail the incessant religious related conflicts in the country.

Keywords: Inflammatory language, Ethnicity, Religious Violence, Inducement, Nigeria.

Introduction

Right from the first time the two foreign religions (Christianity and Islam) encountered their host African Traditional Religion (ATR), the religious terrain has become enmeshed in a tangle of enmity and conflict. Hence, the function of religion which among other things is the overall development of man was caught by heavy galloping inflection, occasioned by the use of inflammatory languages otherwise known as hate speeches. In an apparent display of religious prejudice, the expatriate missionaries used words like heathenism, paganism and primitivism to describe African Traditional Religion, and their God they referred to as Idol. The Muslim Imams on the other hand used the words such as *Arna* and *Kafri* for the adherents of ATR. It was appalling the way these foreign religious propagandists treated the adherents of ATR. They “have casted aspersions and poured sarcasms on the nature of African Traditional Religion” (Ugwu and Ugwueye 2004: 12). The foreign religions had the same measure of desperation as the foreign invaders to occupy Nigerian space. Hence, they worked in collusion with imperial government to deal with the Traditional Religion (Asadu 2018:6). While Christian missionaries occupied the South, the Islamic Ulamas inhabited the North, from where they began to spread to other parts of the country. In the south where Christianity is the dominant religion there is relatively peace but in the north where Islam is the dominant religion there has been frequency of religious conflicts.

The use of inflammatory language is not limited to any one group rather it is used consciously or unconsciously by individuals or groups particularly when such persons or groups want to be distinguished. Thus, different ethnic groups in Nigeria also use inflammatory language against themselves. Explaining further on this, Ezeibe (2018) averred:

Observably, hate speech has eaten deep into the bone marrows of Nigerians and it has continued unabated. The hatred between the ethnic groups that make up Nigeria has intensified as the use of hate speech continues unregulated. This hatred manifests mostly

between the dominant ethnic groups-Hausas, Igbos and Yorubas. The Igbos and Yorubas see the Hausas as “abokis” which though means friend but derogatorily means a moron. Similarly, the Hausas and the Yorubas see the Igbos as lovers of money while the Hausas and Igbos see the Yorubas as cowards and saboteurs.

Interestingly, in every religion, inflammatory language is also used within the various denominations. For example, Muslim against Muslim brothers whom they call infidels; similar attitudes are shown by protestant churches against Roman Catholic Church and vice versa. For example the Roman Catholic Missionaries included in their catechism the following: “Will a member of the CMS Church enter the kingdom of God? No but even if he will, it will be like one passing through the furnace of fire”. In retaliation the CMS called them heathens, because according to them, the RCM are worshipping images (Onyeidu,1980:4). The two religious bodies became very abrupt with each other.

This paper specifically shows that inflammatory language is one of the major causes of the ethno-religious violence in Nigeria. Due to the competitive nature of these foreign religions, some of their teachings and preaching embodied hate speeches which inflamed passion further. This deepened the division already existing among the people.

In the next section, we shall clarify the key concepts used in the study in order to understand their meanings as applied in context.

Clarification of Key words

Inflammatory language

Inflammatory language in this context refers to angry words spoken orally or published to cause a person or persons become angry. Unguarded utterances, derogatory words, offensive languages, insulting speech and hate speech are all used interchangeably in this work. Mute (2014) took cognizance of the variety of usage of the word, when he averred that; “The concept of hate speech is understood and used variously by different people and in different contexts. Typically, inflammatory language is used to demean persons based on their identity such as race, religion, gender, sexuality, and predispose them to acts of violence. Essentially such languages are outrageous as it asperses others. However, “The irony is that people who usually complain of being insulted by other ethnic groups often use even more hateful words in describing the groups they feel have insulted them” (Adibe,2018). While it has been noted by Neisser (1994:337) that apart from causing danger of physical assault, hate speech risks violent reaction; Kayambazinthu & Moyo (2002) conceived hate speeches as wars waged on others by means of word. Inflammatory language was used by the early missionaries who came to propagate their religion in Nigeria.

The adherents of these religions being faithful soldiers and servants of their master have followed the way of their mentors, who believed that in a short while Nigeria will become their foot stool. To this end, various strategies are being employed including inflammatory speeches, which have become an easy tool for destabilisation of Nigeria. Consequently, ethno-religious violent has continued to occur without anyone being held accountable for it.

Background to Nigeria’s culture of intolerance

Prior to the amalgamation of Nigeria the various nations, kingdoms and empires that were merged to form a political unit now known as Nigeria formerly existed independently, each having different behavioural traits, different cultural values and different concept of government (Asadu, 2018:5). There are 374 ethnic groups in Nigeria of which only three-Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo are the majority and dominant. The remaining 371 are minorities and have been subordinated (Otite, 1990). Indeed, “Nigeria was extremely heterogeneous” (Uka, 2008:2) In addition to these challenges is the penetration of the two foreign religions into Nigeria, which hold widely divergent opinion about life (Asadu, 2018:5). Thus, political appointment, job opportunity in the public sector, admission in public institutions and even allocation of resources were influenced by ethnicity and religion. “As a result of this, the political power relies heavily on mobilizing primordial ethnic/religious sentiments to capture power at the centre” (Uka, 2008:3).

The foreign religions penetrated Nigeria through two points, Islam from sub-Sahara desert and Christianity from Atlantic Ocean; and had in the first half of the nineteenth century been firmly established in Nigeria. Being missionary religions they began to spread to different places through organised missionary campaign with western and Arabic educations as the most veritable instrument of evangelism. Mosques and churches became the nucleus of religious activities of these foreign religions, wherein converts were indoctrinated. Alas, the converts become more enthusiastic than their mentors and started slandering their kith and kin that are of other faith; this bred rancour between them. The competitive nature of these foreign religions has resulted in the plurality of opinion being witnessed among ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Although both Islam and Christianity originated from Middle East, there are many variations in the doctrine and tradition of both religions. Interestingly, both religions are believed to be dispensers of peace but have not lived in peace; always preaching love but have no love for one another. Each claims to be superior to the other. Thus, their theological standpoints which could have adopted traditional values to blend with the community have remained irreconcilable instead. “There are always the underlying fanatically ambitious aim and the determination to convert or wipe out infidels from Nigeria” (Odey, 2000:13).

Regional Hegemony

In the North a stringent measure was applied to annihilate traditional religion. The adherents of African Traditional Religion were stereotyped *Arna* meaning unbeliever or infidel and *Kafri* meaning worthless or foolishness. Thus, the Fulani Muslims propagandists presented a prejudiced view of the Hausa ethnic traditional worshipers and in the course of time their relationship were torn asunder. In 1804, the Fulani ethnic group using religion as basis for their actions, unleashed severe attack on the harmonious Hausa ethnic group and eventually subdued them. Commenting on the incident, Abiola (1974: 35) quipped, “Unfortunately, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, these fourteen (Hausa) states were forced to quit the political theatre of the West Africa...as a result of the jihad declared and fought by a tribe called the Fulani against the Hausas”

By that incident Fulani and Hausa fused together and became a large political group with Hausa and Islam as their official language and religion respectively. Hence, Buah (1977: 113) stated that “The effect of Jihad in the North West was the subjugation of Hausa tribal groups which transformed into Fulani Empire and a caliphate, with its headquarters at Sokoto”. With the emergence of Fulani and Hausa ethnic groups as one large organised nation in the North, things changed as they dominated the polity for over a century and have treated the minorities indifferently. Indeed, the Fulani-Hausa ethnic group have carved a niche for themselves as royal princes of the North. “Born to Rule” is their slogan.

From the time the jihadist declared holy war against the *infidel* there has been intermittent ethno-religious violence in the North between the Muslim and the other groups in the North. The only crime of these minorities that prompted attack on them was that, “their ways of life were not in line with the principles of the religion of Islam” (Usman Doan Fodio cited in Abiola 1974: 36).

The fact remains that it was through the influence of the Islamic religion, that the Fulani-Hausa ethnic group established regional hegemony in the North. According to Idowu (1973: 86), “One or two things have happened to man’s religion in any given situation: modification with adaptation or extinction”. This is very true of the influences of these imported religions on any culture it interacts with. The arrival of these religions had some disruptive connotations. Agreeing with the above statement, Eze (2012: 85) quipped:

Ethnocentric definition of religion has resulted in situations where it is made a handmaiden of political hegemony. To subject a people politically and or economically such a people are first of all intimidated culturally to hate or abandon their religion for that of the rival culture. Once an extraneous power can control another human group religiously they can control such a people in every other sphere of their life’.

Islam thrived during the colonial era because the introduction of indirect rule empowered the Emirs to rule the North on behalf of the colonial masters; an opportunity the Emirs maximized for the enlargement of

their empire that really gave them the advantage to acquire some degree of consent from the subordinate. Hence, “The introduction of indirect rule institutionalised the inferiority status for the non-Muslim peoples of the Middle Belt” (Turaki cited in Kuka, (1994: 3). *The International Crisis Group Report* (2012: 6) captures the event thus:

British rule empowered the Hausa/Fulani community to subjugate the indigenes, and, by so doing, established the hegemony of the north over the country – which jihad could not have achieved because Islamization of the Middle Belt had failed. Marginalization and oppression had driven those minorities to embrace Christianity as a tool for political emancipation. Middle Belt Muslims have also complained of treatment as second class citizens by Hausa-Fulani Muslims.

Thus, there have been cases of persecutions, marginalisation and frequent skirmishes between the Muslim Fulani-Hausa ethnic group and the Christian ethnic groups who the former has stereotyped as *Kabilu* (meaning minority groups or those who have no right). This fact was buttressed by the Vice President of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) Rev. Yusufu Turaki (1992) thus,

The Christian in the Northern State, whenever and wherever he is designated as a minority or “*Kabilu*” loses all constitutional rights, whether they are political, social, cultural or religious. The draconian Islamic laws, governmental practices and attitude are being systematically applied to Christians, hence, the loss of their human and religious right (Yusufu in *Today’s Challenge* 1992: 2).

The effort to abolish any form of colonialism and enthrone nationalism and the struggle to remain status quo is reason for the ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria. The Catholic Archbishop of Kaduna, Peter Jatau, identified the problem of the Middle Belt and by extension the North to include religion, politics and ethnicity. Inflammatory language is the catalyst. While responding to interview question with *Today’s Challenge* Magazine he said,

As far as I know the remote cause of the crisis is first of all political, secondly religious and thirdly ethnic, although there are attempts to overplay the ethnic factor. It is political because for a long time, the various tribes in Southern Kaduna have been demanding self-determination and chieftdoms. A few like Kagoro, Jaba, Maro have succeeded but a great majority are still subjugated to emirs and all attempts to secure their freedom have been resisted even with imprisonment. In Nigeria we condemn apartheid, colonialism and neo-colonialism but why should we practice similar things among ourselves? This is double standard and the attitude of the Emirs and Kaduna State Government is against the principle of justice and fairness. I don’t think the crisis will end as long as only cosmetic measures are applied (*Today’s Challenge* Magazine 1992: 3).

The Use of Inflammatory Speech in Missionary/Political Campaign

Both the missionaries and the politicians use inflammatory language in their campaign to win followers. Obviously, the missionaries’ messages typified hate speech. In the Southern Nigeria for instance, Asadu (2015: 130) captured one of such messages as was preached in Ibagwa-Aka, thus,

The Christian missionaries too taught the converts that the death of a Christian is a thing to be celebrated, because the Christian, having died in the faith, would rest in the bosom of the lord Jesus Christ in God’s heavenly kingdom forever. On the other hand, those who died in their unbelief (heathens or non-Christian) will go to hell with the devil and there, they will spend eternity in suffering and gnashing of teeth.

Such messages never pleased the adherents of African Traditional Religion, who were referred to as heathens that must go to hell. Inflammatory language was responsible for the converts’ utter disregard for the traditional religion. They were also incited by their leaders to destroy the properties of the ATR; such properties include the shrines, altars and other important artifacts. Any resistance from the traditional religion attracted the colonial administration, which also used force against it and destroyed some of its powerful deities. “This premised the first sectarian crisis between the adherents of the foreign religions and the natives” (Asadu, 2015:17).

The traditionalists, not willing to desert their gods have also continued to dare Christianity, which they refer to as stranger. They clashed intermittently with the Christians.

Their relations who embraced Christianity were seen as deviants to the traditional culture and norms and this created a scenario of tension and quarrels. Brothers were separated from brothers and friends severed relations with friends (Asadu, 2015:17). Achebe (1958: 24) captured the event thus, “The white man is very clever; he came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers and our clan can no longer act as one. He has put knife on the thing that held us together and we have fallen apart”. Certainly, things have fallen apart in Nigeria.

In the North, long before the arrival of Christianity there had been ethno-religious conflict as the jihadists were bent on forceful conversion of every resident. The spread of Christianity to the North increased the religious tension as the jihadists now have more than one religion to contend with. Besides, Christianity like Islam is missionary in nature and so it has a similar method of evangelism with Islam. Both religions use teaching and preaching to make converts. There is no gainsaying that some of their teachings and preaching embodied hate speech which inflamed passion further. This deepened the division already existing. Even in one state the distinction between a Muslim ethnic group and a Christian ethnic group is glaringly obvious, particularly as they live separately. For example after the Kaduna Sharia riot, the Chairman of Kachia local government council Mr. Joseph Kato in an interview with *The NewsMagazine* 2000:29) explained:

Religion is also responsible for the segregated living pattern between Christians and Muslims in Kaduna metropolis. While the Muslim zone is made up of Tudun Wada, Rigasa, Ungwan Mu’azu, Angwan Dasa and Ungwan Sanusi, the Christians dominate areas such as Television, Naranyi, Romi, Angwan Yelwa, Angwan Sunday and Sabon Tasha. And this fractionalisation seriously threatens the fragile peace process as there have been accusations of arms build-up by the various groups.

In his lamentation over the ethno-religious conflict that erupted in his state, the then Kaduna State Governor, Ahmed Makarfi said, “I have come to realise that politics is being mixed with religion, ethnicity with politics and religion, and this has got to stop, otherwise we will all be hijacked to a point that is not the point we had intended to go” (Makarfi in *The News Magazine* 2000: 29). Indeed, “Nigeria has been severally divided along ethnic and religious lines with each group in biased version for the others. The lack of acceptance of others makes the unity and strength motto of Nigeria nationality a mere hypocrisy” (Ezeanya, 2012: 103). And the North is worst hit of the crisis. Lamenting on the divisiveness of the North, Gen. Jerry Useni (2017) in the *Nation* Newspaper said:

In the past, Northerners were ahead of the South in terms of governance and administration, but today, the North has been relegated to the background, no one is talking about a unified North anymore, just a community divided along ethnic and religious loyalties. The Southerners also have differences of religion and ethnicity, but it is not a source of conflict there. How did the North get here? Even you journalists know the kind of cordial relationship that existed in the past. Truth is both sides are at fault. We Northerners have our own fault, and those opposing the North also have their own fault. Did the Southerners plunge us into the crisis we are witnessing today?” many innocent people have been killed today, to the extent that there was an attempt to kill the Emir of Kano, just due to lack of security. Not to talk of the Plateau. One cannot say these crises are as a result of religious differences because it appears to surpass that (28/9/2017).

Inflammatory Speeches: A Tool for Destabilization

Interestingly, the oneness which the North pretentiously boasted of is fast being eroded by ethno-religious conflicts. Discrepancies between the ethnic groups which are embedded in religious affiliation are now more pronounced than ever. The effort of the so called majority Muslim group to keep the North one and the struggle of the ethnic minorities to disentangle from the neo-colonization breed tensions and divisions in the North. Although the North adopted Hausa language and majority bore Islamic name as

their identity, which distinguished them from their southern counterparts, their discrepancies are so glaring.

Unfortunately in the North, the dichotomy that was originally between North and Southern was recently, surprisingly upturned following the sudden rise of deep suspicion in the North, among the so called 'majority Muslim groups' and the 'minority Christian groups'. Gen. Jerry Useni (2017) corroborated this fact when he said:

Everything now is based on religion and on ethnic affiliations. Why won't we continue to suffer? If we had not united ourselves as northerners in the past when some southerners killed our leaders, we wouldn't have overcome. But today, this one say I am a Muslim, the other one will say, I am a Christian. How can we make progress? We cannot progress by calling each other despicable names. Our leaders in the past did not do that".

The calling of despicable names as mentioned by Useni, refers to the use of inflammatory language on other groups. This was further elucidated by Turaki (1992: 6) thus,

The primary reason why there are frequent religious riots in these Northern States is that some State Governments have refused to implement and protect consistently and faithfully the constitutional rights of every Nigeria citizen under their domain. Rather, these Governments have sided with the strong and powerful sub-national and parochial interests that are increasingly becoming dogmatic and fanatical in denying both religious and cultural rights to those designated as minorities or "Kabilu" within their States.

"Kabilu" is a derogatory term for the Christian minority group in the North. The minority are not happy the way they are treated therefore, each ethnic group in the North is struggling to establish their independence firmly by claiming authority over their father land and by outright promotion of their unique cultural heritage as a mark of their autonomy from Fulani-Hausa dominance. Although, the Fulani political class opposed the establishment of Nigeria nation, they now perceive Nigeria as their political territory, which political leadership they must occupy and jealously guarded. For instance, in 1942, the northern Emirs while responding to UK base West African Student Union who solicited for their support against colonial rule in Nigeria said, "Holding this country together is not possible except by means of the religion of the Prophet. If they want political unity, let them follow our religion" (cited in Awolowo, 1947: 51).

The fact that since the amalgamation in 1914 till 1947 all Nigerians has not became Muslims made Tafawa Balewa to express his disbelieve in Nigerian unity thus, "Since the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern Provinces in 1914, Nigeria has existed as one country only on paper.... It is still far from being united; Nigeria's unity is only a British intention for the country" (Balewa 1947 cited in *The Guardian* 15 August 2017). When eventually self-rule was achieved the Sarduna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmed Bello delivered an inflammatory speech which was captured in the *Parrot* Newspaper of October 12, 1960 thus,

The new nation called Nigeria should be an estate of our great grandfather Uthman Dan Fodio. We must ruthlessly prevent a change of power. We use the minorities in the North as willing tools and the South as a conquered territory and never allow them to rule over us and never allow them to have control over their future'.

During Obasanjo administration, former Governor of Kaduna State, Balarabe Abdulkadir Musa, vented his anger on the people of South West thus, "So in the last one year this Yoruba arrogance has threatened civil rule. In fact it has threaten everyone in Nigeria...you have to remember this arrogance started with the establishment of the Action Group and came to reality with political decampment from the NCNC to AG..."(*TheNews* 12 June 2000: 39),while Dr. Datti Ahmed mocked the Igbo during the Kaduna Sharia riot, thus, "Let them go their way and we go our way...let's see who will cry first. The Igbo would be the first to cry because they have less everything than everybody else. They don't even have enough land to accommodate their own people" (*TheNews* 15 May 2000: 25).

Inflammatory Language in the Present Dispensation

In the current dispensation, media has been awash with public statements from ethnic champions and religious extremists attacking their opponents in the full glare of the nation. Some of the attacks were broadcast live on national television thereby expanding their reach. It has been difficult to curtail ethno-religious conflicts due to inflammatory languages being used by tribal champions. For example El Rufai who in his tweet of July 15, 2012, at 7:51PM said “We will write this for all to read. Anyone, soldier or not that kills a Fulani takes a loan repayable one day no matter how long it takes” (Ndukwe, 2017).

Furthermore, Muhammadu Buhari, another Fulani Muslim political leader made another inflammatory speech on May 14, 2012, during the visit of some members of the Niger State chapter of the defunct Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) to him in Kaduna. He said, “Dogs and baboons will be soaked in blood” (Luka Binniyat, 2012). After senseless killing of innocent children, aged and pregnant women and complete destroying sources of livelihood, in Plateau State, the country was sorrowful about the attack. Then came another inflamed speech by the Fulani Cattle rearers known as Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) that they were responsible for the attacks on Southern Kaduna and Agatu. The most annoying part of it was their claim that the massacre was a reappraisal attack. (Ndukwe, 2017).

The 2015 general election saw ethno-religious expression reaching unprecedented levels in the country’s recent past. According to Yakassai who was responding to interview on *Sunday Vanguard*:

Most of the Mosques in the North dedicated their sermons on the Friday before the election, to the way people should vote. They did not mention anybody’s name but they told the congregation to vote for people who would protect their religion and culture. When a Muslim and a Christian are contesting and in election, if the people in the mosque are told to vote for those who will protect their religion, will they vote for a Christian? (22/4/2018).

Similarly, Ima Sadiq enjoined “Muslims to vote for Buhari; it is a sin to support a non Muslim” (Twitter handle Saturday 27/12/2014). On the other hand Bishop Isa El bubal while delivering his sermon enjoined Christians to go and get their PVC to vote out Buhari from office. His reason is not farfetched from the fact that this present administration is killing Christians and the government is doing nothing about it. Indeed, inflammatory speech has assumed a greater proportion as each of the ethno-religious groups try to outwit the other. Just as Sadiq called on Muslims to vote for Muslim, Stephen a student of UBU who contested the student election admonished that “A vote for Stephen is a vote for Christ” (Cited in Uka, 2008).

Implications

The implication of inflammatory language is ethnic rancour that is being witnessed in Nigeria today. Islam and Christianity have intensified effort to occupy the Nigerian space, each struggling to outwit the other. None is ready to soft pedal. Hence, Ene (2014: 49) averred that “Both the Christian and Muslim jihads of the sword negated the biblical and Koranic injunction “Do not kill” and “love for all” (Sura 4. 30 & 4. 36). The Christian slogan of “love to all and malice to no one” echoed by Abraham Lincoln, fell on the deaf ears”. Since then it has been from one problem of ethno-religious conflict to the other. Speaking on this same issue, Abdullahi Adamu (2000) quipped,

The bloody clashes in Benue and Taraba states were inter-state and inter-ethnic; those in Plateau (Jos), Nasarawa (southern senatorial zone of the state) and Kaduna states were/are intra-state and inter-ethnic. The crisis in Bauchi was both inter-ethnic and inter-state. There is thus a common characteristic of inter-ethnicity in all these clashes. There is a religious coloration to the clashes in Kaduna and Jos. The religious coloration seeks to mask the underlying fundamental cause or causes of these crises.

While delivering his address at the maiden convocation ceremony of Taraba State University on Saturday 24th March 2018, the former Defence Minister, Gen. T.Y Danjuma, lamented the killings in Taraba and other States in Nigeria particularly in Middle Belt region. He urged indigenes of the affected areas to stop believing that the security forces will protect them but to defend themselves. Such public outcry of ethnic

cleansing by former Gen. Danjuma, suffices it that there is a crisis of confidence among Nigerians (2018). This suffices it to say that the struggle for the liberation of the Middle Belt from the Fulani-Hausa hegemony is one of the major reasons for the rancour in the North.

It is amazing how the two foreign religions are clashing with each other in this region and each of the ethnic group in the North also struggles to establish their independence firmly by claiming authority over their father land and by outright promotion of their unique cultural heritage as a mark of their autonomy from any foreign influence. It is no longer a fight against African Traditional Religion but between Christianity and Islam. The matter is exacerbated by the exit of the colonial master who was the final arbiter in the dispute over ethnic and religious divergences.

Another implication is that the menace of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria is fast eroding the core socio-cultural and religious value which forbids murder, covetousness, falsehood etc. It has hampered the economic growth of this country to such a great extent that poverty has engulfed the majority of the citizen. Worst still the mayhems have produced many disabled persons, orphans and widows, it has robbed many, of their comfortable homes, jobs and careers; it has left the citizens with enduring sorrow very hard to contend with (Asadu 2018).

Recommendations

In order to ensure that Nigerians avoid inflammatory languages, this paper recommends that:

Although every person has freedom of speech, each person should ensure that his freedom does not encroach on another's freedom.

False information against any group or any person violates the principle of freedom of speech and of the victim's dignity and integrity and therefore when it happens, should be properly redressed.

Both political and religious leaders should avoid the use of hate speeches in their respective political and missionary campaigns to win followers. They should equally educate their adherents on public speeches and sermon delivery. This will help reduce the ethno-religious violence in the nation.

To curtail the incessant ethnic and religious violence in the North and elsewhere, the various ethnic minorities who are agitating for self-determination should be allowed to have their freedoms and chiefdoms.

Government at all levels should honestly and diligently protect the lives and properties of every Nigerian citizen.

Compensations should be paid to the victims of ethno-religious violence while the perpetrators should further be punished according to the provisions of the law.

Conclusion

It is quite amazing to see the heightened tensions caused by the unguarded utterances which certainly inflame the anger of rival group beyond acceptable ethnic and religious contests. This anomaly finds its footing in ethnocentrism and religious bigotry which begets nepotism and internalizes discord. Obviously inflammatory languages which degrade intimidate or incite violence against someone or group based on political affiliation, religious inclination, race and ethnicity is not acceptable. The heated contestations are part of the body politic, and the level of damages that has resulted from such competitions is awful. There is no gainsaying the fact that hateful words can all too easily lead to physical attacks on citizens and set off a cycle of violence whose levels of damages are grossly unimaginable. Therefore, Nigerians should avoid completely all forms of hate speeches in order to live as one in unity and love and thus respect the human dignity and enhance sustainable national development.

References

- Abiola, E.O. (1974) *A Textbook of West African History* Ado-Ekiti, omolyo Standard Press & bookshop.
- Achebe, C. 1958. *Things Fall Apart*, London; Heinemann Educational Books
- Abdullahi Adamu, (2002). *Ethnic Conflicts in Nigeria*
Nigeria <http://www.abdullahiadamu.net/speeches/2ethnic.htm>
- Adibe, J. (2018). Ethnicity, Hate speech and Nation-building
<http://www.gamji.com/adibe/adibe19.htm> accessed on 25/8/2018
- Asadu, G. C. (2015) *Ibagwa-Aka Ozuzikoko in Church History: Origin, Growth and Impact 1914-2014* Nsukka; Great Ap Express.
- Asadu, G. C. (2017). Problems and Prospects of Missionary Diocese of the Anglican Communion in Igboland: A Ph.D Thesis submitted to the Department of Religion University of Nigeria.
- Asadu, (2018). Ethno-religious Conflict: The Bane of Nigerian Unity. A Conference Paper Presented at Unizik , Awka, on May 2018.
- Buah, F.K. (1977). *History Note West Africa Since A.D. 1000: Book two, the People and Outsiders.* London: Macmillan
- Eneh, J. O. (2001). *The Sharia and Islamic Philosophy: The Nigerian Experience* Enugu: SNAAP Press Ltd
- Eze, P-J (2012). Religion, Cultural Hegemony and Post-Colonial Social Oder in Africa in Ikwemesi, C. K. ed. *Astride Memory and Desire; People and culture Development in Nigeria.* Enugu ABIC Books
- Ezeanya, (2012). Christian Religion and the Challenge of Peaceful Co-existence in Nigeria in Ikwemesi, C. K. (ed) *Astride Memory and Desire; People and Culture Development in Nigeria.* Enugu. ABIC Books
- Ezeibe, C.C. (2018). Hate Speech and Electoral Violence in Nigeria. <http://www.inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Conference-Paper-by-Christian-Ezeibe.pdf>
- Idako, S. (2018). Religious Pluralism in Nigeria: Implication for National Integration: http://www.academicexcellencesociety.com/religious_pluralism_in_nigeria.pdf
- Idowu, E. (1973). *African Traditional – A Definition of Cultural Literacy*, London: CMS Press
- International Crisis Group** (2013). *Curbing Violence in Nigeria: The Jos Crisis*, Africa Report
- Kayambazinthu, E. & Moyo, F. (2002). Hate Speech in the new Malawi, in H. England (ed) *A democracy of chameleons: politics and culture in the new Malawi.* Stockholm: Elanders Gotab.
- Kuka, M. H. (1994). *Religion, power and politics in Northern Nigeria.* Ibadan: Spectrum Books.
- Luka Binniyat (2012). 2015 'Il be bloody <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2012/05/2015-Il-be-bloody-if-buhari/>
- Madiebo, A. A. (1980). *The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafra War.* Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers
- Mute, L. M. (2014). Rule of law: A Kenya Tale <https://www.pambazuka.org/governance/legislation-hate-speech-and-freedom-expression-kenya>
- Ndukwe, J. (2017) "Hate" speech: Between Apostle Suleiman and the Sultan of Sokoto Read more at: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/01/hate-speech-apostle-suleiman-sultan-sokoto/>
- Neisser, E. (1994) "Hate Speech in the New South Africa: Constitutional Consideration for a Land Recovering from Decades of Rational Repression and violence", *South African Journal of Human Rights* 10: 33-356.
- Odey J.O. (2000). *The Sharia and Rest of Us.* Enugu; Snaap Press.
- Onyeidu (1980). *Religious Phenomenology.* Enugu: Easy Quality Publishers.
- Oritsejiafor, A. (2004). *Nationalism and Politics of National Security: The Christian and the Boko Haram Challenge,* Enugu: Eminota.
- Otite, O. (1990) *Ethnic pluralism and ethnicity in Nigeria.* Ibadan: Shaneson C.I .
- Ozigbo, I.R.A. (1985). *Igbo Catholicism Onitsha Connections 1907- 1984.* Onitsha: Africa Fep Publishers.
- Parrot Newspaper* October 12, 1960.
- The Guardian* 15 August 2017.

Sunday Vanguard 22, April 2018.

Today's Challenge: Nigeria Popular Christian Magazine. Number 3, 1992.

Ugwu, C.O.T. and Ugwueye, L.E. 2004. *African Traditional Religion: A Prolegomenon*, Lagos:Merit International Publication.

Uka, E.M. (2008). Ethnic, Religion and Communal Conflict in Nigeria: Implication for Security in Ituma, E. A., Professor Bassey Andah Journal of Cultural Studies Volume 1, 2008

Useni, J. (2013). How the Northern Military Officers July 1966 Counter-Coup<http://thenationonline.net/how-northern-military-officers-stage-july-1966-counter-coup-general-useni/>

Yusufu Turaki (1992). *Today's Challenge*: Nigeria Popular Christian Magazine. Number 3, 1992