The Challenge of Religious Violence in Nigeria: Implications for International Peace And Security

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Abstract

In Nigeria, religion [Islam] seem to have become a practical pretext for savage intolerance, incomprehensible arson, torture and mass murder, targeting mainly Christians and their properties in several cities of northern and most recently central Nigeria. An emblematic historical example is the inferences from 1987, when a major religious violence erupted in the northern city of Kaduna between Moslems and Christians, popularly known as the *Maitasine Riots*. In view of the above analogy, this paper employed the interdisciplinary theories that best explain multi-layered and cross-sectional problems such as religious violence in Nigeria, and with its attendant ethno-religious, economic, social-cultural and political undertones; and attempts to provide a historical examination of the nature and chronology of religious violence in Nigeria, and a narrative insight into the question: why has religious violence persisted in Nigeria? And, what are the implications of religious violence on international peace and security? It adopted a survey method based on the perception of citizens and Government officials regarding religious violence. In all, 150 questionnaires were distributed randomly to respondents. A total of 100 questionnaires were retrieved from the survey and used as the total sample size. The study used both Pie-Charts and Chi-square goodness of fit-test to analyze the data. The study has revealed that religious violence in Nigeria serve as a double-edge sword that has either facilitated violent or peaceful activism for change not only at the national and regional level but also at the international level. The study concludes that religious leaders and government officials in Nigeria should have good opportunity to choose from supporting violent or peaceful activism with its attendant implications.

Keywords: *Religious Violence, International Peace and Security.*

Introduction

Geographically, Nigeria is bisected into predominately Christian South and Muslim North, and the adherents of these two religions had lived together peacefully throughout the colonial era and decades after independence. Religious violence in Nigeria is ascribed to situation where individual or collective violence orchestrated by mainly Muslim fundamentalist groups, in other words other individuals and groups particularly in northern Nigeria, and seems to be basically motivated by religion, politics, and poverty (Genevalunch.com, 2009). According to the ICG Middle East Report (2004), violence comes with a lot of severe sadistic acts such as torture, assassinations, mass murder, ruthless arson and destruction of properties belonging to people of other ethnic groups and faiths, mainly Christians and particularly Ibos.

An emblematic historical example is the inferences from 1987, when a major religious violence erupted in the northern city of Kaduna between Moslems and Christians, popularly known as the *Maitasine Riot*. The Maitasine Riot in 1987 quickly spread like wild fire to adjoining villages and towns. In fact, religious violence has not only persisted but significantly increased in magnitude and character (Genevalunch.com, 2009). This newly assumed character and magnitude of religious violence in Nigeria has begun to threaten seriously not only the very existence of Nigeria as a nation but indeed international peace and security, due to the alleged involvement of foreign Muslim mercenaries particularly from Niger (Genevalunch.com, 2009).

 In addition, the alleged violence seems to be in a political spectrum in Nigeria, rather than religious mode. Perceptibly, this underscores the notion that "Islamic movements are those with Islamic ideological references pursuing primarily political objectives" (ICG Middle East Report, 2004). In Nigeria, religion [Islam] seem to have become a practical pretext for savage intolerance, incomprehensible arson, torture and mass murder, targeting mainly Christians and their properties in several cities of northern and most recently central Nigeria.

Oftentimes, the widespread carnage brought by religious violence has elicited repeated calls from a cross section of the Nigerian public demanding the severance of Nigeria into several independence states, as a way of averting the inevitable bloodshed that is sure to arise from these deadly disturbances. According to the Genevalunch.com (2009), the causes of this massive violence in the name of "God" are as varied as the violence itself, ranging from pure religious militancy often orchestrated by itinerant Muslim preachers and sects, to ethnic cleansing and frustrations, and deprivations arising from chronic poverty to suspected complicities of the northern political elite (Kano State Government, 2006).

Religious violence involves all phenomena where religion is either the subject or object of individual or group violent behavior. It is basically rooted in an aberrant interpretation of the principles of the particular religion involved in violence, and often underscores the symbolism of the act. This paper employs the interdisciplinary theories that best explain multi-layered and cross-sectional problems such as religious violence in Nigeria, with

its attendant ethno-religious, economic, social-cultural and political undertones; and attempts to provide a historical examination of the chronology of religious violence in Nigeria, and a narrative insight into the question: why has religious violence persisted in Nigeria? And, what are the implications of religious violence on international peace and security?

Review

Location: Center and Outlets of Religious Violence in Nigeria

Nigeria is located in the westernmost part of Africa bordering the gulf of Guinea between the Republics Benin and Cameroon on the West and South, and Niger on the North. It lies between the equator and the tropics of Cancer, and experiences essentially tropical climate all-year roundand covers well over Nine hundred and twenty-three thousand, seven hundred and seventy square kilometers in total land area.

Figure 1: Center and Outlets of Religious Violence in Nigeria
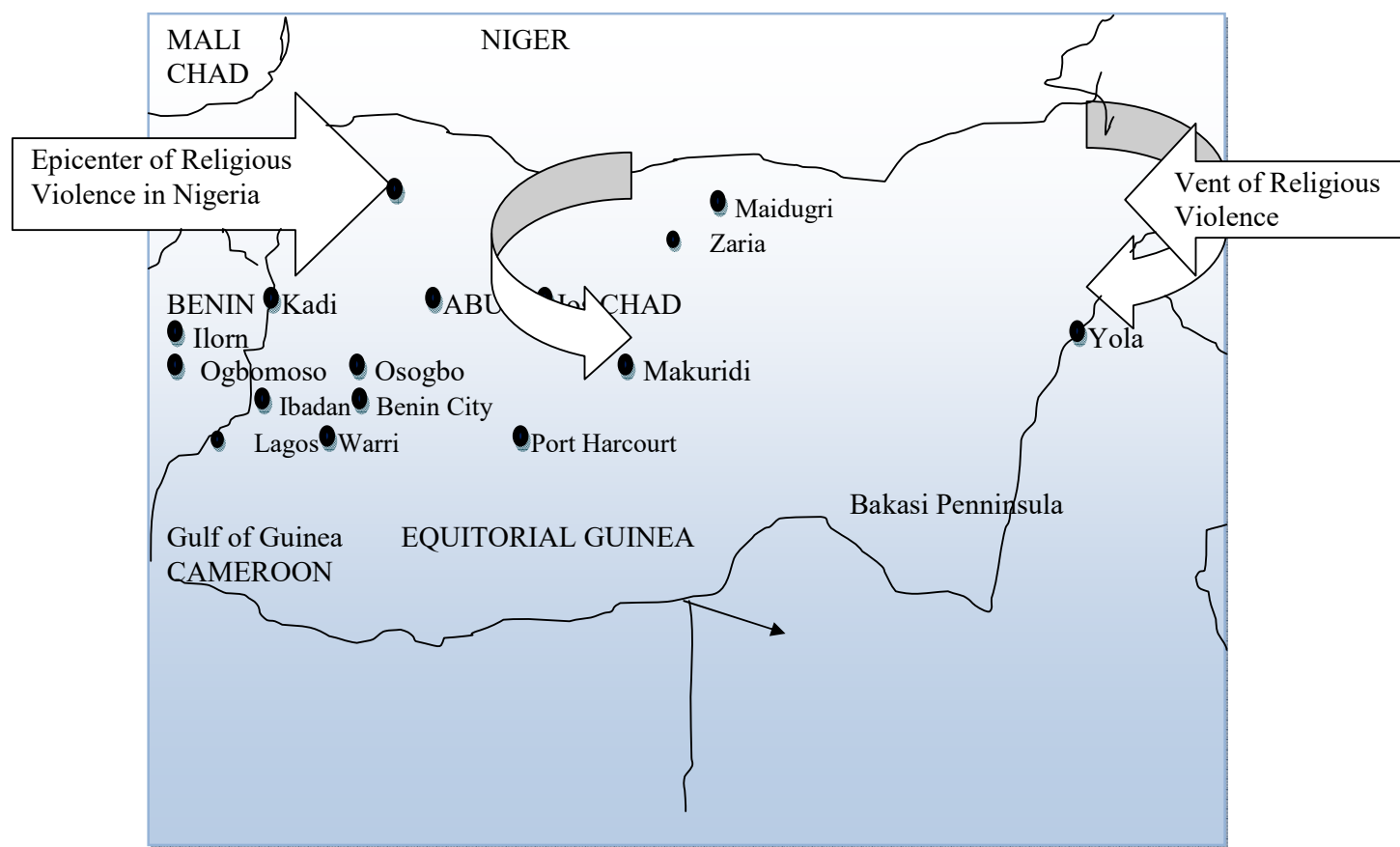
Source: *Author's own representation of the "hot spots" of religious violence in Nigeria*

According to UN Population Commission estimate, Nigeria's population is approximately one hundred and twenty million with over two hundred and forty ethnic groups.

Genesis of Religious Violence in Nigeria

Nigeria was colonized by Britain until 1960 when it gained its political independence. For several decades, the Northern and Southern regions of Nigeria were administered as separate colonial regions or entities until 1914, when both regions were merged to form what is today Nigeria. With the advent of colonialism and its western education and Christianity, the rudiments of modern social and economic system were established and later amplified by the discovery of oil. After the oil discovery, the economy artificially expanded and produced new forms of wealth, increased consumption and improved material well-being of a few section of the population especially in the South where western education was totally embraced. Nonetheless, the North where Islam had firmly established itself as the dominant religious and political force long before colonial rule, avoided early contacts with western education[*recently renewed*] for fear of being converted to Christianity.

The policy of non-engagement with western education by the north, soon inadvertently created a long lasting gap in education and socio-economic development between the two regions to date. Meanwhile, the Southern region has gained tremendously from the benefits of western education and economically viable with the discovery of oil (*by Nigeria standard*), the north is one-half arid though fertile [can feed the whole of West Africa if present irrigation systems are expanded and properly managed], but bedeviled with poor management of irrigation systems and still largely remains excruciatingly poor thus, exacerbating personal and community frustrations, anger, hatred, and youth unemployment in the region. This appears to be more frustrating to the youths of the north in view of the fact that the northern political elite had controlled political power in the country for over three out of the four decades of independence. Consequently, the prevailing excruciating poverty, frustrations, and danger in the region soon found practical expression in the form of aggressive ethno-religious violence that has consumed thousands of lives and $billions of properties in Nigeria.

Colonial Policy Initiatives on Religious Violence in Nigeria (Emergence of Minor-Hegemony)

Long before colonialism, the north had through Usman Dan Fodio's jihad or religious war successfully established an Islamic theocratic empire-the Sokoto sultanate and fervently sought its expansion to the length and breadth of what is today Nigeria. However, the expansionist ambition was effectively halted and subdued by the British colonial fire power around the middle belt. The subsequent colonial and presently (concocted) "national" constitutions established a secular form of government with guarantees of freedom of religion and vested in states the concurrent power to established their own court systems as opposed to the Islamic theocratic agenda thus, effectively laying the foundation for future politico-religious conflicts. At both constitutional and practical levels, these guarantees are strictly incompatible with Islamic ideology that rejects separation of political from religious authority detached from a unified theocratic system of governance. This informed the rush to the policy of "northernization "[accumulation of all political and economic power] pursued by northern political elites soon after independence and to the present, as a practical step in redressing this constitutional incompatibility and reasserting Islamic expansionist ambition.

Implications of Nigeria's Religious violence on International Peace and Security

The international system based on market economics substantially needs a large degree of stability in order to function effectively particularly in this age of globalization. Generally, if the stability is lacking in any part of the system, many more societies or nations may be forced into conflict and anarchy, thus gravely disrupting the system. Africa is indeed an important provider of raw materials and other resources for the international market economic system, and a major chaos in one of its most populous nation and its inevitable spill-over effect will significantly disrupt the market, create major human dislocations and ultimately dislodge the peace and security of the region. At present, religion has gradually but steadily become, the major driving force behind modern political violence (particularly in the post cold war era), religious beliefs (fundamentalism) are indeed a potent force threatening the safety and security of the predominant secular state-system within the international system (Larsson, 2004). Thus, the global security environment has witnessed a number of significant religious driven bloody conflicts and terrorism in modern times, including the conflicts in India, Pakistan and Afghanistan in South-East Asia, Northern Ireland and the former Yugoslavia in Europe, Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen in the middle East. In the Africa hemisphere, are the massacres in Somalia, Sudan, and Nigeria (Larsson, 2004).

Nigeria's case is important to the stability of the international system because of its large populations, natural resource base and seeming stabilizing role not only in West Africa, but also Africa as a whole. An eventual explosion of violence and chaos and disintegration of Nigeria occasioned by religious fundamentalism as well as political instability would inevitably usher in regional chaos and large scale human dislocation arising from its spill-over to neighboring countries.

Possible implications of expanding Religious Violence in Nigeria for International Peaceand Security

**Implications of Current Religious Violence
for International Peace & Security**

**Growth & Sophistication of Nigeria Local Islamic
Fundamentalist Sects-**
- Tactics, attacks
- Greater expertise in orchestrating violence
- Expansion of mobilization skills
- Illegal arms running
- Expansion of targets

Possible Development of Local Al-Qaeda Cells
- Increase International funding
- Transfer of terrorist expertise such as bombs, biochemical agents
- Deadly attacks on local, western & non-Muslim targets in Nigeria and around neighboring countries
- High risk of spill-over effect to neighboring countries with large Muslim populations
- Increased suicide bombings, killings & maiming, chaos in & around neighboring countries
- Risk of international humanitarian crisis in Nigeria & around the Sub-region from widespread chaos & total breakdown of law and order in Nigeria

Source:*Author's Own Representation of possible implications of expanding Religious Violence in Nigeria for International Peace and Security*

Methods and Materials

       The study was exploratory in nature. It adopted a survey method based on the perception of citizens and Government officials regarding religious violence. In all, 150 questions were distributed randomly to respondents (Government Officials) in the Nigeria. A Face-to-face survey technique was used to increase respondents towards the analysis of this critical need topic to the state. A stratified random sampling technique was adopted for the entire survey. A total of 100 questions were retrieved from the survey and used as the total sample size. The piloted survey instrument was on the perception of citizens, Government Officials and Religious Leaders on the implication of religious violence on international peace and security. The data collected

was qualitative in nature. The data was coded and analyzed with the help of Excel and STATA 11.0. Both Pie-Charts and Chi-square goodness of fit-test were used for the data presentation and discussion.

Conceptual Model of Chi-Square Goodness of Fit-Test

The Chi-Square Goodness of Fit-Test model is used to test for a single variance. In addition, the chi-square statistics is used to see whether a frequency distribution fits into a specific pattern. For example, to know the implication of religious violence on international peace and security, the study wishes to see whether the religious violence cause a specific implication on international security and peace, that is, from the perspective of Growth and Sophistication of Nigeria Local Islamic Fundamentalist Sects; and Possible Development of Local Al-Qaeda Cells, so that adequate driven policy can be enacted to curb the problem. Perhaps, since the study explore to test to see whether a frequency distribution fits a specific pattern, therefore, the chi-square goodness-of-fit test is used. Before computing the test value for Chi-square goodness of fit test, there is the need to state the hypothesis.

H_0: Religious violence cause no a specific implication on international security and peace

H_1: Religious violence cause a specific implication on international security and peace

Formula for the Chi-Square Goodness-of-Fit Test

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$$

With degrees of freedom equal to the number of categories minus 1, and where

O = observed frequency

E = expected frequency

Note: Two assumptions are needed for the goodness-of-fit test. These assumptions are given as: (1) The data are obtained from a random sample, and (2) The expected frequency for each category must be 5 or more.
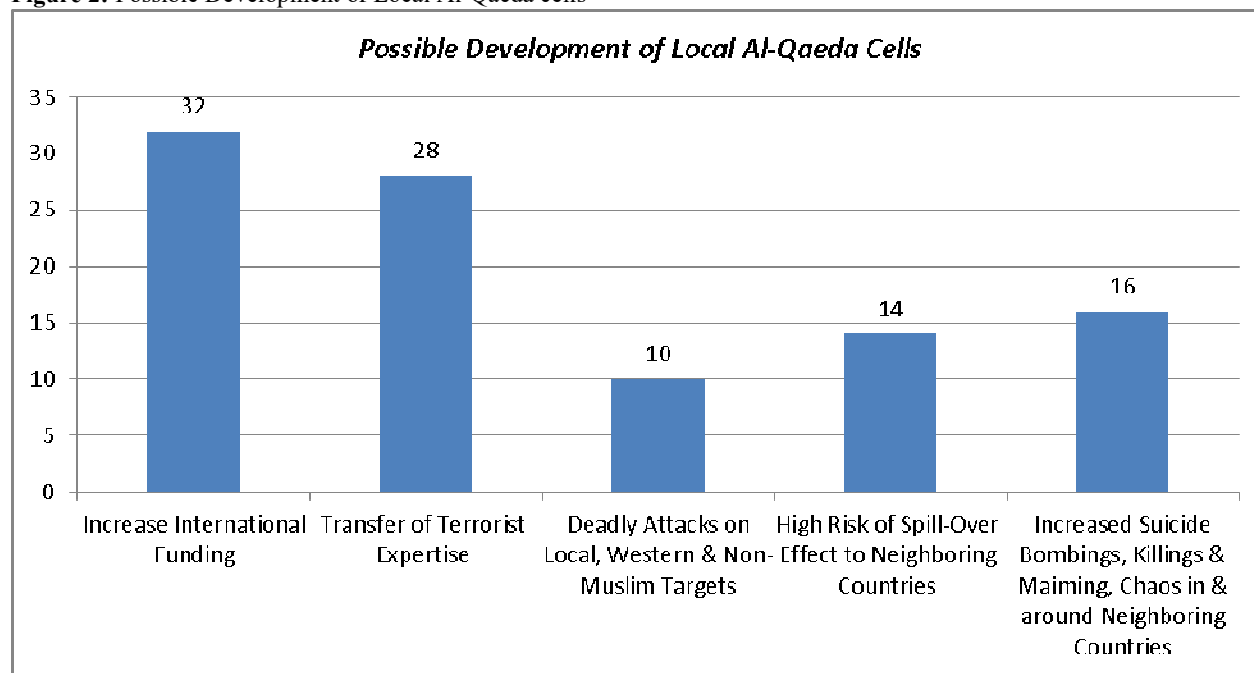
Data Presentation and Discussion

Figure 1: Growth and Sophistication of Nigeria Local Islamic Fundamentalist Sects

Growth & Sophistication of Nigeria Local Islamic Fundamentalist Sects
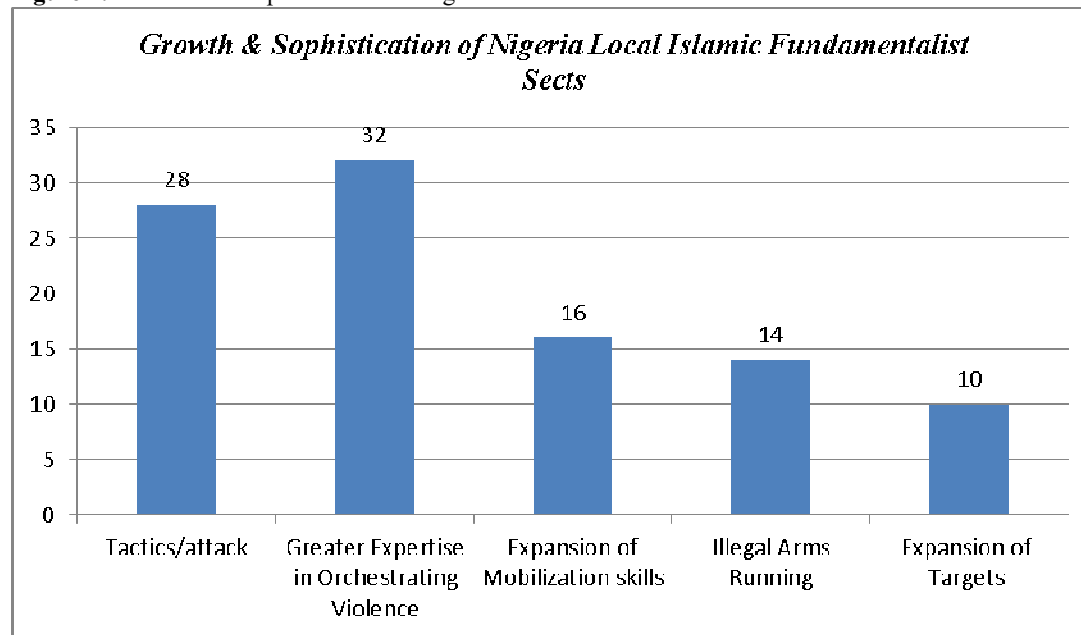
Source of Data: Field Data August, 2017

Figure 2: Possible Development of Local Al-Qaeda cells

Source of Data: Field Data August, 2017
Chi-Square Goodness of Fit-Test Estimation for Religious Violence Implications on Growth & Sophistication of Nigeria Local Islamic Fundamentalist Sects –Given the Chi-Square Critical Value of 9.488 at 4 degrees of freedom (5 – 1 = 4) and α = 0.05.

H_0: Religious violence cause no a specific implication on Growth & Sophistication of Nigeria Local Islamic Fundamentalist Sects

   H_1: Religious violence cause a specific implication on Growth & Sophistication of Nigeria Local Islamic Fundamentalist Sects

Frequency	Tactics/Attacks	Greater Expertise in Orchestrating Violence	Expansion of Mobilization of Skills	Illegal Arms Running	Expansion Targets
Observed	28	32	16	14	10
Expected	20	20	20	20	20
Chi-Square Estimation	$X^2 = \sum \frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$ $= \frac{(28-20)^2}{20} + \frac{(32-20)^2}{20} + \frac{(16-20)^2}{20} + \frac{(14-20)^2}{20} + \frac{(10-20)^2}{20}$ $= 18.0$				

Source of Data: Field Data August, 2017
Chi-Square Goodness of Fit-Test Estimation for Religious Violence Implications on Possible Development of Local Al-Qaeda Cells- Given the Chi-Square Critical Value of 9.488 at 4 degrees of freedom (5 – 1 = 4) and α = 0.05.

H_0: Religious violence cause no a specific implication on possible development of Local Al-Qaeda cells
H_1: Religious violence cause a specific implication on possible development of Local Al-Qaeda cells

Frequency	Increase International Funding	Transfer of Terrorist Expertise	Deadly Attacks on Local/Non-Muslim Targets	High Risk of Spill-Over Effect to Neighboring Countries	Increase Suicide Bombings, Killing & Maiming
Observed	32	28	10	14	16
Expected	20	20	20	20	20
Chi-Square Estimation	$X^2 = \sum \frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$ $= \frac{(32-20)^2}{20} + \frac{(28-20)^2}{20} + \frac{(10-20)^2}{20} + \frac{(14-20)^2}{20} + \frac{(16-20)^2}{20}$ $= 18.0$				

Source of Data: Field Data August, 2017

Discussions

The Figure 1 discussed the implication of religious violence on international peace and security from the perspective of Growth and Sophistication of Nigeria Local Islamic Fundamentalist Sects using a sample size of 100 Government Officials and Religious Leaders. About 60% of the respondents (Religious Leaders and Government Officials) were of the notion that the implications of religious violence on international Growth and Sophistication of Nigeria Local Islamic Fundamentalist Sects, are dominated by the implications of attacks/tactics, and greater expertise in orchestrating violence. However, about 40% of the respondents argued that expansion of mobilization of skills, illegal arms running and expansion of targets are other possible implications of religious violence on international peace and security (i.e. Growth and Sophistication of Nigeria Local Islamic Fundamentalist Sects).

The Figure 2 discussed the implication of religious violence on international peace and security from the perspective of possible development of Local Al-Qaeda cells using a sample size of 100 Government Officials and Religious Leaders. About 60% of the respondents (Religious Leaders and Government Officials) were of the notion that the implications of religious violence on possible development of Local Al-Qaeda cells are dominated by the implications of increment in international funding, and Transfer of Terrorist Expertise. However, about 40% of the respondents argued that expansion of deadly attacks on local/non-Muslim targets, high risk of spill-over effect to neighbouring countries, and increase suicide bombings, killings/maiming are other possible implications of religious violence on international peace and security (i.e. possible development of Local Al-Qaeda cells).

In relation to the Chi-square Goodness of Fit-Test estimation for Religious Violence implications on Growth and Sophistication of Nigeria Local Islamic Fundamentalist Sects, there is enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis which claims that religious violence cause no a specific implication on Growth & Sophistication of Nigeria Local Islamic Fundamentalist Sects since the Chi-square estimated value of 18.0 is greater than the Chi-square critical value of 9.488 at 5% significance level. This implies that the implications of religious violence on international security(i.e. implication on Growth & Sophistication of Nigeria Local Islamic Fundamentalist Sects)fit into the implications pattern of attacks/tactics, and greater expertise in orchestrating violence with a total percentage of 60% of the total respondents.

Regarding the Chi-square Goodness of Fit-Test estimation for Religious Violence implications on possible development of Local Al-Qaeda Cells, there is enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis which claims that Religious violence cause no a specific implication on possible development of Local Al-Qaeda cells since the Chi-square estimated value of 18.0 is greater than the Chi-square critical value of 9.488 at 5% significance level. This implies thatthe implications of religious violence on possible development of Local Al-Qaeda cellsfit into the implications pattern of increment in international funding, and Transfer of Terrorist Expertise with a total percentage of 60% of the total respondents.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The study has revealed that religious violence in Nigeria serve as a double-edge sword that has either facilitated violent or peaceful activism for change not only at the national and regional level but also at the international level. The study concludes that religious leaders and government officials in Nigeria should have good opportunity to choose from supporting violent or peaceful activism with its attendant implications. Also, the

tendency of the religious systems to resist change, intensive national and international efforts are required to motivate religious leaders and communities in Nigeria to redirect their religious goals and efforts by choosing more peaceful goals and means within their religious groups.

Policy Recommendation

Based on the findings the study therefore recommends the following Policies:

- A more inclusive approach in stemming religious violence in Nigeria would offer national, regional and international policy makers an informed awareness of the magnitude and danger of expanding religious violence in Nigeria, and the potential distribution of its burden.
- Regional and international effort must dwell on encouraging Nigeria to institute a genuine national dialogue that will practically reorganize the structure and institutions of the nation itself in such a way as to achieve fairness and accommodate all aggrieved sections of the nation.
- The United Nations as well as the International community which may have variety of overt and covert measures, should tie foreign aid to major crisis to major restructuring, arms embargo, travel bans on Nigeria Government officials and their families, support the strong civil society organizations, and trade embargo on violence states.
- Finally, civil society must step up organized and peaceful agitations for fundamental changes in the structure and character of the Nigeria state through a sovereign National conference or credible constitution review effort.

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