RELIGIOUS MILITANCY IN WEST AFRICA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF GHANA AND NIGERIA

BY
CHARLES ENCHILL
(10014429)

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LEGON
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DECLARATION

With the exception of the quoted references and acknowledged sources, I hereby declare that this dissertation is a result of an original research conducted by me under the supervision of Dr. Ken Ahorsu and that no part has been submitted anywhere else for any purpose.

................................................. .................................................
CHARLES ENCHILL        DR. KEN AHORSU
(STUDENT)                                                                              (SUPERVISOR)

DATE: ..................................... DATE: .....................................

University of Ghana                              http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh
DEDICATION

To God Almighty for the grace and strength. I say glory to You Lord.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere thanks to my project supervisor, Dr. Ken Ahorsu for his guidance throughout this work. I say I am most grateful.

I also express appreciation to all teaching and non-teaching staff of LECIAD.

I finally would like to say thank you to the LECIAD batch of 2013/2014.

May God richly bless you all.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIDS</td>
<td>Acquired Immuno Defficiency Syndrome</td>
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<tr>
<td>AQIM</td>
<td>Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb</td>
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<td>ATR</td>
<td>African Traditional Religion</td>
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<td>AU</td>
<td>African Union</td>
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<td>CAC</td>
<td>Christ Apostolic Church</td>
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<tr>
<td>DVD</td>
<td>Digital Versatile Disc</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECOWAS</td>
<td>Economic Community of West African States</td>
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<tr>
<td>FBO</td>
<td>Faith Based Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>FIS</td>
<td>Islamic Salvation Front</td>
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<tr>
<td>FTO</td>
<td>Foreign Terrorist Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>IED</td>
<td>Improvised Explosive Device</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>JTF</td>
<td>Special Joint Task Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>LECIAD</td>
<td>Legon Centre For International Affairs and Diplomacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>MUJAO</td>
<td>Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Structural Adjustment Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>USA</td>
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ABSTRACT

Religious militancy has been one of major challenges of the West African state since the end of the Cold War. The surge of globalisation and state weakness in West Africa all contributed to a rise of religiously motivated groups of all degrees in the sub-region. The work seeks to assess religious militancy in West Africa. Comparing Nigeria with Ghana, the study seeks to investigate the factors that have motivated the strong emergence of religious militancy in Nigeria as against Ghana and whether or not the two countries share similarities which could precipitate the rise of the phenomenon in Ghana as is happening in Nigeria. Hinged on the thesis of pluralism and with the employment of both primary and secondary sources of data, the study makes an attempt to know what the similarities and differences between these two countries and further situates it in the context of West Africa. The study argues that though religion may be an important aspect of the grievances of the religious militants, the political, economic and social frustrations characterizing the northern zones of both countries are the most important remote motivating factors. In the immediate, however, political and economic elites have exploited religious intolerance and extremism for their parochial interests. That the challenges Nigeria is facing are not faced in Ghana because Ghanaian religious groups have learnt to tolerate one another with minimal political influence on religion as in Nigeria. To successfully tackle the challenge, the study recommends that West African states and for that matter Ghana and Nigeria must commit much efforts and resources into improving political and socio-economic conditions of the people. State and religious leaders also have important role to play by way of education, intensification of intelligence gathering as well as ensuring equity and justice in society.
CHAPTER ONE

RESEARCH DESIGN

1.1 Background to the Problem Statement

War and peace have been dominant feature in the history of the world. To a large extent, the world as it is today has been shaped by wars, most of which were religious in nature. According to Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, almost all the early religious-ethical civilizations, the challenge of war was seen not only as one of political and military strategy but also as one of spiritual and moral importance.¹ Religion plays a double-edged role in conflict and peace; it is a conflict resolution tool while at the same time serving as a source of conflict in itself. All the major world religions including Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and African Traditional Religion, have resorted to the use of force and violence at some stages in history.

Religious conflicts by their nature are basically often unscientific, mystic and irrational. This characteristic of religious conflicts makes religious warfare unconventional. The problems associated with religious doctrine, identity, interpretation and proselytisation have generally been cited as the major causes of religious violence. For instance, the interpretation of the Islamic Jihad, Fatwa, and the Haram, has continued to be a major source of violence either within Islam or between Islam and other religious institutions. In the early history of Christianity, the religious largely abstained from any form of use of force or conflict. Christians were taught to seek heavenly treasure since the world and all it contained were only temporal

¹
However, later when church and state authority began to merge with the church taking over the administration of the state, the responsibility to protect the social order dawned on the church. The use of force by the church, therefore, became inevitable. This use of force by the church was largely interpreted as instrument of justice to safeguard the common good. This idea led to the proposition and development of the just war theory which was championed by scholars such as Saints Ambrose, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. The just war theory was propounded to justify the use of force by the Church which served as the foundation for the Christian Crusades that were carried out in the Middle Ages.²

During the Cold War era, characterised by ideological warfare, the international system and its wars were interpreted not through the lens of religion but ideology. Explanation of warfare during the inter-war period through the cold war era were focused on ideology, with very less emphasis on religion. However, at the end of the Cold War, some commentators such as Samuel Huntington and Judith Miller conceptualized religious conflicts as one of the most prominent features to characterise the post cold war international system.

Samuel Huntington describes these fault lines as the ‘clash of civilizations.’ He argues that there would be conflict between Christian and Islamic civilizations. Since then there have been a strong emergence of pro-religious groups in the global political landscape. Examples are the Islamic revolution in Iran led by the Ayatollah Khomeini that overthrew the Shah government in 1979, the reemergence of pro-Islamic group, the Brotherhood in Egypt, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in Algeria and the Mujahedeen of Afghanistan. The most important to emerge over the period, however, was Bin Laden’s Al Qaeda movement. The attack of this militant group in the United
States on September 11 2001 served as a turning point in the history of the clash between Islamic Civilization against Western Civilization. Today, the radical and caliphate ambitious Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL), which has evolved largely as a result of the inter-regnum created by the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and the evolution of the Arab Spring and its consequences in Syria, threatens to re-write human rights and normative progress the world has made through its radical interpretation of the Quran. It threatens the whole world with the world groping without clues how best to contain and eliminate its ramifications. Isolated radical Islamic groups in the Sinai, Maghreb, Sahel and Nigeria have expressed their support for ISIL and its ideologies and some of these groups apart from carrying out similar dastardly acts against hostages have equally declared Islamic States in the territories under their control.

West Africa has a long history of religious militancy or alleged jihads. In contemporary times, many violent conflicts are influenced by religious radicalism or militancy. Since independence, Nigeria has suffered recurrent Muslim-Christian violence in the major cities of Kaduna, Jos, Kano, and Maiduguri. In Ghana, there has been intermittent violence between the al-Sunnah and Tijanniyya/Quaddiriyya sects over whether the orthodox al-Sannah or syncretic Tijanniyya/Quaddiriyya forms of Muslim worship is right and acceptable. While not the same, it mirrors the religious differences between the Sunnis and the Shiites in the Middle East. In 2012, Ghana also witnessed a violent clash between the Hohoe indegenes and the settler Muslim community that had religious undertones. In both Nigeria and Ghana, there have equally been intra-christian conflicts. In Ghana, there have been perennial tensions and clashes between charismatic Christians and authorities of the Ga Traditional Council which is the custodian of the traditional religions in Accra.
However, the emergence of Boko Haram in 2009 has been the most dramatic and virulent in the history of both Nigeria and West Africa. The rise and occupation of northern Mali by the Ansar Dine militant group in 2012 and the violent turn taken by Nigeria’s Boko Haram since 2009 have been the crux of religious violence in the sub-region. Boko Haram’s radicalism and violence, is unprecedented in modern West Africa and has caused thousands of deaths and colossal destruction of property as well as sowing fear and uncertainty both in governments and the people. The rise and occupation of northern Mali by the Ansar Dine militant group in 2012 and the new threat of radical Islam being posed by the activities of ISIL pose serious questions for West Africa. The sub-region’s vulnerability religious threat is particularly compelling given the structural and economic weaknesses of the states in the sub-region. This study throws a searchlight on religious militancy in West Africa with Ghana and Nigeria as case studies.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

As stated earlier, West Africa has experienced many forms of religious militancy in the past that aggravated the problems and challenges of the weak states. New forms of religious militancy and violence have evolved with the emergence of Boko Haram. These include suicide bombing and lethal indiscriminate attacks on multiple targets. In the advent of the Libyan crisis, the sub-region is awash with small arms and light weapons and with the threat of further spread of religious militancy across the Sahel region, religious militancy poses a serious threat to the sub-region. In search for answers of how best to contain and manage the merging threats of religious militancy, the study undertakes a comparative study of the phenomenon of religious militancy in Nigeria and Ghana to uncover the causes, forms and dynamics, as well as the management of religious
militancy. It seeks to find out why religious militancy appears to pose greater threat to Nigeria than Ghana although Nigeria is more endowed with resources than Ghana.

1.3 Research Questions

What are the causes and motivations for religious militancy?

What philosophies inform religious radicalism?

How do governments react to the menace?

What are the challenges both the militants and governments face in addressing radicalism?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the research is to have an overview of religious militancy in West Africa with special reference to Ghana and Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to achieve the following: to,

- overview religious militancy in West Africa;
- overview the causes, evolution and dynamics of religious militancy in Ghana and Nigeria;
- Examine the responses by the governments of both countries and the measures put in place to confront the phenomenon;
- Make recommendations based on the findings.

1.5 Hypothesis

Nigeria is likely to be more vulnerable to the surge in religious militancy than Ghana due to differences in their social, structural and institutional dynamics.
1.6 Rationale of the Study

Violence of whatever kind creates fear, anxiety and instability. This leads to the breakdown of law and order with curtailed civil liberty. National and international security is compromised. Violence also retards development as both human resource and property is destroyed while socio-economic activities are brought to a standstill. Finally, West Africa’s already weak state stands to see its image drained.

These are enough justifications for the research to be conducted. Besides, the research results will be of immense benefit to the government and policy makers as well as future researchers in this area.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

The research is based on the framework of pluralism. Pluralism argues that there are multiplicity of actors in the international system that influence world politics. In other words, as much as there are many actors so are many issues, interests, and concerns of these multiple actors that determine exigencies and relaity of work politics. Such an improtant actor, is religion, which is also considered as an immutable dynamic in world politics. Britannica Concise Encyclopedia defines pluralism as the independence enjoyed by incongruent groups within a society or the doctrine that the exercise of such groups is valuable to the growth of society. The theoretical framework of pluralism also denotes that in pluralistic society, no single interest group or class dominate absolutely. Pluralism assumes that international relations thrive on four key principles which are as follows: Non-State actors are important to international relations, the state is not a unitary actor in international relations, the state is not a rational actor, and the agenda of world politics is
extensive. The main proponents of pluralism include Robert H. Dahl, Seymour Martin, and William E. Canolly.

Opponents of pluralism contend that there is no such thing as the common good because there are so many conflicting interests in society. What is good for one person is often bad for others. The argument is that interest groups interfere with democracy because they seek benefits for a minority of people rather than the greater good of the majority. The National Rifle Association in the United States, for example, has repeatedly blocked new gun control legislation despite the fact that a majority of Americans actually want stricter gun laws. Other critics argue that the interest group system is really effective only to economic interest groups, which have greater financial resources at their disposal. Nearly two-thirds of lobbyists in Washington represent economic groups. Critics also argue that interest groups tend to ignore the interests of the poor in favor of middle- and upper-class Americans, who have more time and money to contribute.4

The relevance of this framework to the study emanate from the following principles. First pluralism recognizes the importance of non-state actors including religion because it may have local, regional and transnational character. Secondly, pluralism acknowledges the fact that the state never acts unitarily in matters of world politics. According to Vautti and Kaupi “decision making whether domestic or foreign, is composed of competing individuals, interest groups, e.t.c.Pluralism argues that national, regional and international policy decisions are made by a combination of actors which includes religious actors.5
According to Holsti, interest groups act as international pressure groups publicizing problems and proposing solutions to them. From this perspective, world politics emerges from a lengthy process of interaction and consultation between private transnational groups, politicians, bureaucrats and many others. The presence of a greater diversity of sub-national actors, including religious groups in democracies, has an impact on world politics.⁶

Thirdly, pluralism posits that in decision-making the state is not a rational actor as realists claim. The presence of bargaining and the need for compromise as interests groups clash, does not allow for a rational decision making process. This is because before they come to the negotiating table, various interests groups, including theocratic states and religious organizations, may have different perspectives on a particular local, regional or international policy issue.⁷ They compete, lobby, build coalition and eventually compromise on issues. The resulting decision armed at is often put in the name of the state is actually a product of a joint effort and struggle of a multiplicity of actors.

According to Robert Dahl, in political science, pluralism stresses the role played in international relations by associations, organizations and groups that are relatively independent of the state and one another.⁸ At the heart of pluralism is interest group liberalism, which stresses the active role of interests groups in domestic policy formulations and international relations.

Harold Lasswell and Robert Dahl, contend that pluralism can best be described as a system in which all the active and legitimate groups in the population can make themselves heard at some crucial stage in the process of decision making. In such a context, decisions are made by endless bargaining. Pluralists believe that groups are central to the decision making process and that international relations is a fragmented political system in which multiple actors compete.⁹
In his discussion of `Social Pluralism`, Samuel P. Huntington sees `Social Pluralism` as one of the distinguishing characteristics of Western Civilization. Social Pluralism` is not necessarily a characteristic of modernization, but marked by the rise and persistence of diverse autonomous groups not based on blood relations or marital unions but on common identities such as religion and interests. From this perspective, this social pluralism affects the authority of the Nation State, which is the major actor in international relations, by seeking to inform the decision making process as far as their host countries’ international relations are concerned.10

The model for decision making whether national, regional or international, in the context of interest group liberalism and pluralism, is the societal model. By this model, policy makers are obliged to consciously consult all identifiable interests groups, which may be affected by the decision to supply inputs to inform the decision. This calls for a long period of series of consultations, negotiations and arbitrations to achieve headway. The societal model has thus been criticized for not being useful and being ineffective in times of crisis. An example is the continuing chaos in Egypt in the aftermath of the July 3, 2013 Military coup. The chaos has been compounded after the choice of liberal politician Mohammad El-Baradei as interim prime minister was rejected by the conservative groups of al- Nour Party and the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) of the Muslim Brotherhood.11

Transnationalism is another key sub-concept in pluralism. In this concept, the assertiveness and the activities of organizations that are international or belong to transnational groups or organizations are incorporated into decision –making processes. The growth of transnational
movements and organizations that are concerned with global issues has become an important modern trend in world politics. These include religious denominations and organizations that spread across the world such as the Shia Sect, the Ahl-al Sunnah, Ahmadiyyah, the Presbyterian Church; The Methodist Church e.t.c. Transnationalism includes a range of identities, activities norms, values and issues that connect humans across nations and national boundaries. Some strands of transnational thought are referred to as globalization or cosmopolitanism.\textsuperscript{12}

Most religions have a strong transnational element. Some religions assert universalistic claims; and other religions create an urge to unite all the members of that religion across countries. For example, is the Baptismal Formula in Christianity which states \textit{“Go therefore and make disciples of all Nations, Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”}.\textsuperscript{13} The Qur’an also calls for the universal acceptance of Islam \textit{“…enter into the fold of Islam universally”}.\textsuperscript{14}

The inroads that religion has made and continues to make in influencing world politics derive its strength from its transnational nature. Thus transnationalism as a sub-concept in pluralism is relevant to this study. It helps to carve out the overlapping effects and transnational consequences of religious activities in individual countries. This explains the clash of civilisations and the kind of conflicts religion, in general, and radicalism generates, in particular.

\textbf{1.7 Scope of the Research}

The study is limited to religious militancy in West Africa with specific reference to Nigeria and Ghana. The evolution and development of militant groups in these two countries and how they
compare and contrast each other. The research also assesses the attempts made by the governments to contain these militant groups. The study is also limited to the period since the end of the Cold War in the ‘90s to October 2014.

1.8 Literature Review

Religion as a source of conflict

According to Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, religious conflict is a constant element in global affairs and, therefore, cannot be erased totally from the system. They see war and conflict as recurring phenomena. They, however, warn that the causes of religious conflict and war cannot be constricted into a single cause.¹⁵

They assess the three monotheistic religions and how each of them sometimes becomes a source of conflict. They see war in Islam to be embedded in the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed as he preached the *Jihad*; that the world is divided into the *Dar al-Islam* and *Dar al-harb* and these two are seen to be in perpetual war with each other:

> In as much as Islam was a universalist system of belief, the two territories were always theoretically at war with each other because war was the ultimate device of incorporating recalcitrant peoples into the peaceful territory of Islam.¹⁶

Jihad is, therefore, portrayed as a crusade rather than a just war.

In Judaism, conflict and war are seen, according to Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, as a necessity because the chosen people of Israel found themselves living in a hostile world where they had to rely on both religious prophecy and divine directions to survive.¹⁷ In Christianity, however, there was initially a strong tendency towards pacifism. But later, the Catholic Church accepted war as a “sad necessity in the eyes of men of principle.”¹⁸ This was after the church had assumed the responsibility of ensuring social order or government. Since then scholars such as Saints Ambrose, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas propounded the *Just War theory* which justified the use of force
by the church to ensure law and order. War, therefore, became a morally legal instrument for which the Church could use to ensure obedience.\textsuperscript{19}

From the analysis of Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, it could be said that all these three major religions accept the use of force as a last resort to ensure compliance. Significantly, this aspect of the literature establishes the basis for the acceptance of war as a necessity by these religions. Religious militant groups in West Africa, therefore, see the legitimacy of their militant activities embedded in scripture. \textit{Boko Haram}, as a Jihadist movement, for instance does justify its militant activities with the \textit{Jihad} doctrine and sees it as their duty to carry it out in that manner.

Ayatollah Mortezi Motahari, in \textit{Jihad: The Holy War and its Legitimacy in the Qu’ran}\textsuperscript{20} posits that all verses on the \textit{Jihad} are interpreted conditionally. For him:

\begin{quote}
\textit{The Jihad cannot be fought unless the other side intends to attack us; or that it creates a barrier against the call of Islam, meaning that it negates the freedom of that call and becomes an obstacle to its diffusion, while Islam says that those barriers are to be removed.}\textsuperscript{21}
\end{quote}

This means it is only in context of this, as well as to liberate people from oppression that \textit{Jihad} can be legitimate. This conditional interpretation of the jihad directly contradicts the interpretation given by most militant groups. By this, Motahari rejects the view of those who believe that \textit{Jihad} must be fought unconditionally; thus so far as one remains non-Muslim the person must be fought. He argues further that \textit{Jihad} is not intended for all non-Muslims. According to him the Qu’ran does not ask Muslims to fight all the “People of the Book” (Christians and Jews) but only those who do not practice true religion.\textsuperscript{22}
This interpretation given by Ayatollah Mortahazi sheds light on the difference between mainstream Muslims and militant Islamists. The interpretation of scripture thus serves as major source of violence by militant groups, such as *Boko Haram*, in the name of religion.

Dilip Hiro writes on the foundation of militancy in Islam. In *War Without End*, Hiro traces militancy in Islam to its very early years, after the death of its founder, the Prophet Mohammed. Following the death of Mohammed, succession to the leadership resulted in series of assassinations due to the problem of who was the legitimate successor to the Prophet. This, according to Hiro, is one of the origins of militancy in Islam.

He further opines that the problem with interpretation, in terms of the *Jihad* (the holy war), the *fatwa* (religious proclamation) and the *haram* (the forbidden in the society), has to do with Islam’s lack of a central authority. While some Muslims interpret the *Jihad* in a pacifist way others interpret it belligerently, leading to the creation of sects, fundamentalist and militant groups.

He posits the proposition that Islamic fundamentalism and militancy:

"Derives from the conflict that exists between the egalitarian message of the *Qu’ran* and the exploitation and iniquity of the real world, between the demands of virtuous existence made on the believer by the *Sharia* and the actuality of life surrounded by temptation and vice. Radicals present it as a religion of justice and equity and measure the current system strictly in terms of these ideals."

The inability of ideals to match the reality gives radicals the cause to gather the alienated and underprivileged against the system in strict quest for justice, mostly by demand for a new system based on strict religious principle which, unlike the existing system, is just and incorruptible.

According to him the tactics used to achieve this objective may vary from:

setting up secret cells to addressing a large congregation inside a mosque or outside; from bloody confrontation with the security forces to peaceful participation in elections; from
carrying out terrorist actions to holding non-violent demonstrations; from subverting official institutions through infiltration to total withdrawal from society; from waging open warfare against an infidel state to conducting intelligent debate with secular adversaries.\textsuperscript{26}

Hiro, however, does not mention Sub-Sahara Africa in his work, not to even talk of West Africa despite the strong emergence of religious militancy in the region in the post-Cold War era. This notwithstanding, all the major religious militant groups and their mode of operation fit into his description of organization.

In describing the object of fight of religious militants, Benjamin Barber uses the term “\textit{McWorld}” to refer to all forms and aspects of modernization—advancement in science and technology, increased globalization, the increasing redundancy of state borders due to global trade and investment; and most especially the continuing spread of Western civilization. In \textit{Jihad vs. McWorld}, Barber uses Jihad as a generic term to refer to all forms of fundamentalist opposition to modernity that can be found in most world religions.\textsuperscript{27} Barber describes all inhospitable tendencies to democracy and modernism – “conditions favourable to parochialism, anti-modernism, exclusiveness and hostility to the ‘other,’”—as \textit{Jihad}. While acknowledging that the home of birth of \textit{Jihad} is Islam, he uses the term \textit{Jihad} to refer to all forms of violence and militancy against modernism. By this, Barber makes clear the fact that religious militancy is not exclusive to a particular religion, but rather common to all forms of religions, though may vary in degree.\textsuperscript{28} He argues that \textit{Jihad} will constantly fight \textit{McWorld} for its religious conceptions of the world against secularism and relativism:

\begin{quote}
They fight with weapons of every kind, carefully chosen to secure their identity; they fight against others who are agents of corruption; and they fight under God for a cause that, because it is holy, cannot be lost even when it is not yet won.”\textsuperscript{29}
\end{quote}
This, according to him has been a major challenge to democracy and modernization, especially in the Islamic religion; because Islam demands a world in which the Muslim religion and the Islamic state are co-created, inseparable and with no room for secularism.\textsuperscript{30}

Barber’s proposition on religious militancy against modernization and democracy reemphasizes why it is so difficult for religious militants to respond to the call for peaceful negotiations. They believe mostly that they are fighting God’s cause and must win by all means. Resort to negotiations would therefore mean compromising with secularism.\textsuperscript{31}

\textit{Post Cold War Religious conflicts}

On the strong emergence of religious violence in the post-Cold War era, Samuel Huntington, in \textit{The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order},\textsuperscript{32} argues that the post-Cold War international system will be characterized by conflicts between various world civilizations. The most notable among them will be the clash between Islamic civilization and Western or Christian civilization. Huntington does not believe that Islamic fundamentalism is the major threat to Western civilization. He contends that:

\begin{quote}
The underlining problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism; it is Islam, different civilizations whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power.\textsuperscript{33}
\end{quote}

He argues based on his assertion that “Islam’s borders are bloody, and so are its innards.”\textsuperscript{34} He posits that Muslims make up one-fifth of the world’s population but by 1990 they had been far more involved in intergroup violence than the people of any other civilization.\textsuperscript{35}

Writing on the role of the West in post Cold War faultline conflicts, Huntington argues that:

\begin{quote}
The West’s – particularly America’s – efforts to promote a universal Western culture – the belief that the non-Western people should commit themselves to the Western values of democracy, free markets, limited government, human rights, individualism, the rule of law and should embody these values in their institutions – and its declining ability to do so.\textsuperscript{36}
\end{quote}
For him, this kind of “Western arrogance and Islamic intolerance” is the crux of the sources of conflict between the two civilizations. Huntington generalizing that mainstream Islam is the source of Islamic militancy in the post-Cold War era may be a bit problematic as enough evidence exist to show that there are many Muslim countries and societies living peacefully among themselves and with their non-Muslim neighbours. Therefore, Islamic faith is not a necessary and sufficient cause of violence against non-Muslims. This notwithstanding, the strong emergence of religiously motivated violence after the Cold War, especially in the case of West Africa is significant.

Judith Miller also discusses the emergence of religious conflicts in “The Challenge of Radical Islam.” She maintains, like Huntington, that Islamic militancy is a real threat to Western Civilization. For her, religiously motivated conflicts have emerged strongly after the Cold War and the most significant among them is the threat of radical Islam, and, therefore, calls for pragmatic measures by the West to counter this malice. Miller, unlike Huntington, however, distinguishes between mainstream moderate Islam and radical Islamic militant groups.

Leon Hadar totally disagrees with both Huntington and Miller in “What Green Peril.” He argues that Islam is not as united as it is said to be and that is not necessarily a threat to Western civilization. For him Islamic fundamentalism is a Western propagandist term that could be compared with the ideological propaganda used during the Cold War. The real challenge to the West is rather motivated by economic and political strategic reasons. The protracted Middle Eastern crisis and the continuing tension between the West and the Islamic world is a direct result
of the failure of Western civilization. For him, these developments do not reflect a war between Western and Islamic cultures.\textsuperscript{40}

Hadar rather sees the challenge facing the world as embedded in Western hypocrisy. He explains that the West in their claim to propagate democratic values at the same time fought a war and committed their military and diplomatic power to secure the survival of the most fundamentalist state of all—Saudi Arabia – which is more rigid in applying Islamic law and more repressive than any other Islamic state.\textsuperscript{41}

\textit{Religious conflicts in West Africa}

In “Reflections on West Africa’s Security in the Context of the Global War on Terror,”\textsuperscript{42} Obi Cyril argues that the greatest trans-national security threat to West Africa is terrorism. He contends that the emergence of post Cold War globalization and its challenge to the fledgling West African state make the state very attractive to global terrorist groups. He defines transnational terrorism as:

A global network using conventional and unconventional weapons of destruction to strike at targets representing the dominant system, actors or symbols of Western political, philosophical and economic power and hegemony. More often than not, the victims of such attacks are civilians that are not involved in the conflict, through which the terrorists seek to inflict pain and fear on the real primary target: the State or a Western Power.\textsuperscript{43}

He argues that West Africa is highly vulnerable to being used as safe haven for terrorists, considering the structural and economic weaknesses of the states. The violent conflicts that West Africa has suffered since the end of the Cold War, especially the Manor River region civil wars make the sub-region particularly vulnerable. He mentions the Liberian, Sierra-Leonean, the Guinea-Bissau and the Cote d’Ivoire civil wars and the weak nature of those states even after the wars as an indication that West Africa is not immune to terrorist engagements. In Nigeria, in
particular, he cites the protracted Niger Delta civil strife, the continuous tensions in Kanu, Kaduna and Jos, as potential motivating factors for terror in the sub region.\textsuperscript{44}

On the challenge of religious militancy as a potential terrorist threat, Obi attributes the problem to the continuous politicization of religion in the sub-region. He contends that political elites have often exploited religious differences between mainly Muslim north and Christian south in many countries as tools of political expediency.\textsuperscript{45}

Obi argues that the incorporation of West Africa into the West’s global counter-terrorism programme, though to some extent has helped to strengthen the security apparatus of some West African states, may not stand to serve the interest of West African states. He identifies the \textit{Pan Sahel Initiative} (PSI) adopted in 2002 and the \textit{Trans-Saharan Counter Terrorism Initiative} (TSCTI) also in 2005, as the notable United States counter-terrorism plans in West Africa.\textsuperscript{46}

He, however, explains that the United States and the West’s interest in fighting terror in West Africa are not necessarily in the interest of the West African states. He identifies three main motivations. The first is the fear of terrorist attack on Western nationals and property abroad and the need to protect these interests even as they do so at home. The second is security of oil supply from West Africa to the Western countries especially from Nigeria, and finally, as a means of providing security for Western investors in West Africa. He asserts that:

\begin{quote}
what is most significant about regional approaches to West Africa’s security in the context of the global war on terror is that hegemonic externally-driven zero-sum militarist top-down solutions that do not address the historical, political and social-economic roots of violent conflict and crisis in the region, cannot be sustainable, and will eventually fail.\textsuperscript{47}
\end{quote}
Writing at a period prior to the strong emergence of the militant groups like *Boko Haram, Ansar Dine* and the *AQIM*, Obi could not foresee the radical emergence of these groups. This made him assert that some of the claims about the existence of terrorist threats are overstated.\(^{48}\)

Michael Tanchum writes on a possible network of militant Islamist groups in West Africa which is a threat to the West African sub region. According to him, there is a network already existing among the North Africa’s *Al-Qaida of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)*, the *Ansar Dine* terrorist group in Mali and the *Boko Haram* in Nigeria which makes it possible for the more sophisticated *AQIM* to train militants for *Boko Haram* and *Ansar Dine* as well as share resources.\(^{49}\)

He warns of a possible danger for West Africa if this network matures and continues to operate in the sub region. He argues that with this network an enforcement action against one of the groups may attract the support of others especially with the emergence of Mali’s *Ansar Dine* serving as a link between Northern Nigeria and the Sahel region where *AQIM* operates. He, however, does not make a comparative study between the countries involved and why these groups have defied all resolution measures which this research seeks to find. However, his work on the networks among them and subsequent warning of a possible danger for West Africa makes critical the need for concerted efforts by West African governments to draw regional plans to counter militant terror.

However, these writers did not look at West Africa and they threat poses to the region. Considering the porous nature of the West African borders, as well as the inter-ethnic and inter religious similarities they share, it becomes easy for militants in one country to cross border to another. The economic and structural weaknesses of the West African state further make this work instructive.
This study therefore assesses religious militancy as a threat to West Africa by comparing the situation in Nigeria with that of Ghana, two of the sub-region’s biggest economies.

1.9 Sources of Data

The research makes use of both secondary and primary data. The secondary data was collected from the Balm Library and the LECIAD Library. The primary data was also collected by interviewing experts relevant to the study such as Emmanuel Bombande of the West African Network for Peace Building (WANEP). The study will also make use of qualitative data analysis method.

1.10 Organization of Chapters

The work is organized into four chapters. Chapter One is the Research Design.

Chapter Two presents an overview of religious militancy in West Africa.

Chapter Three is a comparison between Ghana and Nigeria and the implications for both countries;

Chapter Four comprises summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations.

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CHAPTER TWO

RELIGIOUS MILITANCY IN WEST AFRICA

2.0  Introduction

This chapter makes an assessment of the role of religion in world politics and how religion has been a motivation of violence in West Africa. The chapter argues that religion as a source of conflict is a major phenomenon in global affairs and not unique to West Africa.

2.1  Role of religion in evolution of world politics

Religion has been a major contributor to the development of world politics. Timothy Shah explains that religion has contributed to the maintenance of normative values in the international system. This set of norms shapes international relations by influencing the framework of the international system and the actual conduct of states.¹

According to Timothy Shah, the modern day state is a religious creation. The Protestant reformation that resulted in the signing of the treaty of Westphalia actually resulted in the creation of the modern state. He argues that the result of the Protestant Reformation was to “establish the state as the normatively central actor on the European stage.”²

Another significant contribution of religion to development of world politics is the shaping of the norms governing the international law of war. This norm is based on the assumption that military action by one state against another is unjustified except in cases of reasonable self-defence, as
embodied in the Just War Tradition. This tradition was developed by thinkers such as Saint Ambrose of Milan, Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas.³

Another significant role is what Scot Appleby calls the peace-building role of religious institutions. Religious leaders and faith-based organizations, sometime in collaboration with governmental and policy making agencies, initiate efforts to build the constructive roles that religious actors are capable of playing in peace-building and the longer-term rebuilding of civil society and democratic institutions; as well as “second order” reforms such as building of human rights regimes and the promulgation of religious and secular laws and ethical traditions conducive to peaceful relations. ⁴

2.2 Religions in conflicts

Jonathan Fox and Shmuel Sandler conceptualise the role of religion in world conflicts. According to them, religion is a source of conflict because of its unique features. They identify several forms and manifestations of religion that make it sometimes violent.⁵

Firstly, according to Fox and Sandler, the identity aspect of religion is the most important source of conflict. Identity can either be individual or group. Group identity can be defined as people who share a similar collective identity and who think of themselves as having a common interest and a common fate.⁶

Religion as a basis for group identity, therefore, has the capacity, through its norms, values, rules and processes, to induce solidarity among members that differentiate them from others.
Sosis and Candace confirm this assertion by their proposition that:

Religion’s most significant role in militancy may be its incorporation of emotionally evocative and highly memorable symbols, myths, and rituals that serve to individually motivate and collectively unify diverse individuals under a common banner.\(^7\)

This is in agreement with Samuel Huntington arguments that that the post-Cold War fault line wars are almost always defined by identity.\(^8\)

Secondly, Fox and Sandler argue that religious doctrine and belief systems have the potential to generate religious conflict. This belief system is usually embodied in religious doctrines. In this instance the main rational for the action may be a crime, such as murder or suicide, but those who commit them can invoke a doctrine or belief to justify their actions.

The interpretation of these beliefs and doctrines is also a major source of religious conflicts. Some religious doctrines are vague and liable to different and opposing interpretations. This to a large extent leads to the creation of sects and extremist within a particular religious tradition.

Thirdly, the use of religion as a source of legitimacy can lead to religious conflict. Religion can be used to justify any policy or action even those that otherwise may seem unjustifiable. It is used by leaders to justify their continuous stay in power as well as to justify those who overthrow them.

The main reason for employment of such tactics is to motivate group members to sacrifice themselves for the cause. This transformation from political to religious struggle encourages actors to perceive that they are participating in something of divine significance that transcends individual self-interest.\(^9\)
Religions have their own institutions which wield authority and command loyalty of their adherents. These institutions, according to Fox and Sandler, are capable of creating conflict. The institutions provide the logistical basis for mass mobilization like any other established institutions. Sometimes the state acts as a religious institution. In Iran and Saudi Arabia for instance the proclamations of the religious must be obeyed.

This broad framework drawn by Fox and Sandler provides the premise for an appreciation of religious conflicts in West Africa.

2.3 Religion in West Africa

The two major religions in West Africa, Islam and Christianity, came into the sub-region in different periods and different methods. This part of the chapter examines the advent and development of these two religions in West Africa.

2.3.1 Islamic in West Africa

Islam is one of the two biggest religions in West Africa. According to Margari Hill, the spread of the religion in West Africa was in three stages. The first is what he describes as containment. This stage is characterized by the period when North African Muslims and Arabs began crossing the Sahara to trade in West Africa. The Trans-Saharan trade enhanced the encounter between Muslims as they crossed the Sahara into West Africa for trade. This encounter eventually enhanced the conversion of some of the rulers of the major West African empires of the time.
The second stage was the mixing stage. At this stage, rulers formally became Muslims as the region expanded steadily over the centuries. These rulers largely combined Islam with traditional practices as they ruled over a population that was not islamised. Over time, the population began to adopt Islam. This is the period of the triumph of the ancient Mali and Songhai Empires.

The third stage was the reform stage characterized the 18th and 19th century’s jihads. Islamic leaders and scholars at this level demanded for a pure practice of Islam devoid of all forms of paganism which had characterized Muslim worship since its coming into West Africa. Islam practices such as ancestor veneration, polygamy, circumcision, magic, and beliefs in spirits to a large extent helped the rapid adoption of the religion by the Africans. These practices were assimilation of some traditional African practices.

2.3.2 Christianity in West Africa

Christianity was introduced in West Africa by Portuguese missionaries. The first Christian group to be introduced was Catholicism in the 15th century. The Portuguese, who were later joined by French and British missionaries, began to establish footholds along the coast of West Africa in the 16th century. By the start of the 19th century, both Protestant and Catholic missionaries had began an intensive effort to convert the people of West Africa to Christianity. This effort was essentially precipitated by the end of slave trade.

A wave of Protestant missionaries who sought to explore Africa followed the collapse of the slave trade. They largely succeeded in converting the coastal countries and their people to Christianity.
Both Protestant and Catholic missions quickly established themselves in Christian communities and within a few decades Christianity had flourished across the forest zone of West Africa.  

On the other hand, colonial administration in the West African sub-region to a very large extent helped in the propagation of the religion. Christianity grew very rapidly under Colonial rule. For instance, by 1950, there were at least twenty-three million Christians in Sub-Saharan Africa. Roughly eleven million were Roman Catholics, ten million Protestants, and two millions members of independent churches.

2.3.3 Influence of Religion in West Africa

The fact that all the states in West Africa are colonial creation with their structural, institutional and economic weaknesses made West African states naturally weak states. West Africa is the sub-region with the highest number of the world’s poorest states. The post-Cold War era surge in globalization significantly contributed to the deepening of the woes of the states in the sub-region. Introduction of structural adjustment with its severe austerity measures further resulted in a situation where the state was viewed as insensitive to the plights of its citizens.

People resorted to non-state actors to seek refuge; some of which happened to be religious organizations and others violent ones. In the face of the weakness of the state and the inefficiency of its institutions to provide the human good to its citizens, the Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) supplemented and complemented government’s efforts towards improving the lives of the people, not only believers. This was, however, not limited to Christianity. Islam, through the trans-Saharan trade promoted trade and education in West Africa.
This key role played by these faith based organizations resulted in the states inability to control their influence. In Nigeria, for instance, Islam became so powerful that by the year 2000 twelve states had adopted Sharia legal system implementation of which resulted in crisis in the country’s major cities. Key among them were Kanu, Jos and Kaduna when Christians resisted the imposition of a new and foreign legal system on them. Also, in countries dominated by Christianity the church occasionally challenged the authority of the state indirectly. This challenged, coupled with the inherent structural and economic weakness of the West African states led to virtual non-responsiveness of the state to the demands of the populace.

The inability of the states to provide the needs of its citizens due to poverty, the new problems presented by the Structural Adjustment Programme and the multiple effects of globalization resulted in civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, Cote d’Ivoire experienced political crisis while Nigeria has been a theatre of religious violence. 22

2.4 Religious Conflicts in West Africa

As discussed earlier, the enormous role played by religion in the development of the West African state had so many implications for the survival of the states. One core aspect of this is the role played by religion in precipitating violence in the sub region.

2.4.1 Islamic Conflicts in West Africa

Islamic influenced conflicts in West Africa could be categorized into two major phases. The ancient jihadist militancy and the post-Cold War militancy. These two phases had so much in common, appropriating the aspect of Islam that could be exploited in conflicts.
The first phase of Islamic militancy was witnessed in the 18th and 19th centuries. The militancy at this period was basically in response to perceived disregard for Islamic standards and rules. Those who waged these wars accused the system of combining Islam and paganism which is contrary to pure Islamic beliefs. They therefore, embarked on reforms to sanctify the religion and bring it back to its purest state.\(^{23}\)

The biggest of these movements arose in the Hausa states of modern northern Nigeria leading to the creation of the Sokoto caliphate which has existed till date. Uthman Dan Fodio (1754-1817), a member of a Fulani clan with a tradition of Islamic scholarship and teaching and a member of the Qadiriyya, a Sufi brotherhood was the leader of this reformist group. He began by various travels to preach his ideas in the 1770s. He denounced corrupt practices in the courts and in the society and eventually earned the favour of those oppressed by the system.\(^{24}\) Gathering followers enough, Dan Fodio embarked on a major jihad in 1802. After a successful jihad leading to capturing of political, religious and economic power from the aristocrats, Dan Fodio and his followers established a centralized political system with both legal and educational reforms\(^{25}\)

Just like the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate by Dan Fodio, Muslims in other parts of the sub-region established two other important Islamic communities through jihads. These were the Macina Islamic state and the Tokolor Empire. The Macina Islamic state was established by the leadership of Hamad Bari in the 19th century which eventually collapsed in 1862. The Tokolor Empire was the second largest in West Africa in the nineteenth century, after the Sokoto Caliphate. The revolution was led by Al Hajj Umar.\(^{26}\)
According to Webster and Booahen, however, these early jihadist movements were not actually true jihadist in the real sense of the term. For them the employment of religion was just to legitimize their actions and mobilize support for their actions. Their argument is based on the fact that the reforms promised during those revolutions were never carried out. The social vices the reformers protested were rather deepened by these same people who protested them.

Post-Cold War religious militancy in West Africa associated with Islam far outweighs those associated with any other religion. Contemporary West Africa has seen a series of attacks against the state by Jihadist militants seeking to establish Islamic states in those countries. Key among these organizations has been Boko Haram in Nigeria, Ansar Dine in Mali, and the Al-Qaeda of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), operating in the Sahel region of West Africa and the Muslim/Christian conflicts in Nigeria, specifically, Kanu, Jos and Kaduna.

The Al Qaeda of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), initially the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), affiliated itself with Osama bin Laden in 2007 for greater financial support and name recognition. The Mali based Islamist Ançar Dine (Defenders of the Religion) formed by Iyad ag Ghaly, a prominent leader from the Touareg rebellion of 1990-1995, was created in late 2011. Ançar Dine is linked to AQIM with the goal of fighting for the establishment of an Islamic state in Mali. On March 21, 2012, Ançar Dine began to administer a sharī‘ah-run regime in the northern cities of Mali, promising to fight against those advocating the creation of a Democratic Republic of Azawad. As sign of the implementation of a Salafi Islamist regime, Ançar Dine militants destroyed the shrine of Sidi Mahmoud Ben Amar, one of Timbuktu’s venerated medieval saints, claiming that the traditional Muslim piety of the area was not authentically Islamic.
In 2012, AQIM took advantage of political chaos in northern Mali to consolidate its control there and worked with the secular Azawad National Liberation Movement (MNLA) to secure independence in Kidal, Gao, and Timbuktu for ethnic Tuaregs. 

In 2012 a dissident group of AQIM members broke off to form Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) to support Ansar al-Dine. As of early summer 2012, MUJAO was holding two Spanish and an Italian hostage. Separately, AQIM has provided funding and training to members of the Nigerian terrorist group Boko Haram. In January 2013, France intervened in Mali and restored the northern Malian cities which were captured by the Islamist militants. Ansar Dine and its allies however pose a threat to Mali as they have resorted to suicide attacks against the government and its agents.

The United States Department of States has designated Ansar al-Dine, AQIM and MUJAO as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs). In June 2013, the Department of States offered $23 million as a reward for information that would lead to the capture of kingpins of the four main Jihadist militant groups operating in West Africa (Boko Haram in Nigeria, Al-Qaeda of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in the Sahel region, Ansar Dine in Mali and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO))

The early Islamic revolutions led by Dan Fodio and his colleagues are similar to the post cold war ones in some respects. The most important among them is the varied interests at stake for which reasons the wars were waged. Both phases aroused religious passions and emotions in mobilizing support. The end result however, showed something different. The question of political and
economic motives cannot be washed away completely. The religious motivation is closely linked with a complex mix of political and economic interests which become very difficult to separate.

2.4.2 Christian Militancy in West Africa

The only known form of early Christian militancy in West Africa is the one related to colonial rule. Knowing that the Christian religion and colonial rule moved in tandem and largely supported each other, some early Christian converts embarked on overzealous attempts to violate traditional African way of life. This became a dominant feature of Christianity in its early days in the West African sub-region.

Generally, the Christians and their new converts were overzealous to put into practice the “Good News” they have heard. Their overzealousness made them want to abolish all what they described as “pagan” practices. Most of the evangelists had an inherent distrust for political authorities and they expected that all these evils would necessarily be swept away with the adoption of Christian ethics.

The iconoclastic and radical ones might race into the chambers of religio-political institutions, such as Ekpe Societies of the Calabar, violating all traditions and smashing sacred symbols like the drum. When the provoked authorities sought redress, and demanded apology, the missionaries turned round to the Government to protect them and avenge the “insult to white integrity.”

In the post-Cold War era, Christianity has been involved in violent conflict both within and with other religions. In Ghana, many Christian conflicts have been with the traditional religion and authorities. For instance Ga traditionalists and some Christians denominations in Accra have had tussles regarding various religious ceremonies. These clashes were based on the annual ban on noise making in Accra prior to celebration of the main traditional festival, Homowo.
The refusal of some Christians to obey the order on noise making resulted in clashed during the celebration of the festival.  

The churches claimed their right to freedom of worship and the right of Christians not to be involved in ‘animistic’ rituals. Traditionalist groups in turn required respect for the ‘local cultural heritage’.

Intra-Christian violence has also been commonly observed. Basically the conflict stems from interpretation of scripture. Though usually does not generate into violent conflicts, these conflicts over interpretation is usually between orthodox Christians and Pentecostal/Charismatic churches. Some of these conflicts are over whether Saturday or Sunday is the right day of worship, whether or not Christians can employ statues and images in their worship, whether or not it is right to venerate Mary and saints, whether it is good or not to openly perform miracle, etc.

2.5 West Africa’s Vulnerability to Religious Militancy

According to Kehinde, Bolaji, the West African region is the most advanced in designing and nurturing structures and institutions to fight insecurity in Africa but it is at the same time the most vulnerable to terrorist attacks.

This is because of the availability of small arms and light weapons, bad governance, management problem in the extractive industries, trans-border criminal networks capitalising on free movement of people in the region and activities of external interests, among other factors.

Prior to 2001, there were no designated “foreign terrorist organizations” in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, by 2013, there were more foreign terrorist groups in West Africa than any other sub-
region in the continent. Key among this list is Boko Haram, operating mainly in Nigeria and other parts of the sub-region such as Niger. The others are the Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) operating in northern Mali and Mauritania and finally the Ansar Dine in Mali. West Africa’s geographic and economic characteristics since the fall of the Berlin Wall to a large extent have been used to explain this emerging pattern.

Some scholars have argued in the first place that the current surge in globalization coupled with the sub-region’s porous borders is a major factor which has facilitated the work of militant and terrorist organizations in recent times. Growing inter-relatedness and liberalization of movement and economic affairs have increased the risk of attack and made easier planning and execution of violence, criminality and terrorism. The increasing ‘privatization’ of terrorism, perpetrated with a high level of sophistication and precision, is one of the manifestations and side effects of globalization.35

Jessica Pombo argues that West Africa’s unique state of infrastructural development, thus a sub-region with both developed cities and very underdeveloped communities at the same time, makes it more vulnerable to all forms of terrorist attacks. The argument is that terrorist and militant groups are more prolific in states that have more advanced infrastructures and major cities such as Nigeria. Without a reliable and secure commercial infrastructure, it becomes difficult to move commodities and illicit goods to fund terrorist activities.36

On the other hand, terrorist groups tend to use weak states with poor infrastructure as staging grounds and transit points, rather than places where the groups build long-term organizational and financial networks. For instance while Hezbollah obtains diamonds from conflict zones and
stateless areas in West Africa, these terrorists find it necessary to transport them through the Lebanese diaspora community that lives in the more politically stable countries.37

Radical groups have also been able to capitalize on local struggles for power and influence, as with the recruitment of militants from the Tuareg group in Mauritania and Mali. This was so evident in the recent Mali crisis involving the declaration of the independence of the state of Azawad in the north of the country. The struggles that followed between the militant Islamist group Ansar Dine seeking to establish an Islamic state and the secularist Azawad state leaders depicted a true struggle for power and influence. This has been commonly connected to the struggle for resource control and socio economic development in the region.38

Furthermore, Kehinde Bolaji attributes West Africa’s vulnerability to religious militancy partly to the states’ inability to put in place legislations to combat terrorism. The non-existence of a properly-functioning collective structure to fight terrorism in the sub-region is a source of concern especially given the unwillingness of some member-states to conform to the Conventions and also the non-implementation of the relevant protocols.39

For Bolaji, the continued proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the sub-region is a clear manifestation of the states unwillingness to fight the menace in totality. This is important because criminal networks have turned the region into major transit point for these arms and they have been used to undermine the security of the people.40
Another challenge the West African sub-region is facing regarding the fight of religious militancy has been the proliferation of regional groupings with overlapping memberships and/or mandates, which has resulted in duplication of effort, waste of resources and conflicting spheres of jurisdiction. Moreover, in several instances it has led to highly problematic institutional confusion, much of which has arisen from the pursuit of contradictory policies that have been instituted by countries belonging to more than one organization. ECOWAS, the main sub-regional body has been rivalled by UEMOA and the Mano River Union. This has often resulted in explicit power play mostly inhibiting the ability of states to effectively draw efforts together to face militancy.\(^{41}\)

Also related to the issue above is the inherent tension between state sovereignty and the common will upon which regional cooperation is founded – namely that effective collaborative action necessarily requires individual member countries to cede some of their national independence to the wider group. The highly personalized nature of governance and politics in Africa has not only hindered the development of institutionalized forms of cooperation but also made these efforts contingent on the nature of the individual relationships that exist between what are often overly powerful presidents.\(^{42}\)

Corruption, according to Modibo Goita, is also a significant problem that inhibits governments performance across the Sahel, including counterterrorism efforts and by that increasing the sub-regions vulnerability to militant attacks. For example, Mali’s recent and publicly available government audit revealed that a record $224 million of government funds for rural development, water and food security, transfers to sub-national authorities, and other public expenditures were mismanaged or misappropriated in 2009.\(^{43}\)
The sub-region’s role in global drug trade has also been a major contributory factor to the risks of terror in West Africa. These terrorist and militant groups often engage in illicit trading activities such as drugs in order to fund their activities. For instance, Moroccan authorities recently arrested a network of thirty-four (34) individuals attempting to smuggle 600 kilograms of cocaine destined for Europe from Algeria and Mauritania. Among those arrested were members of AQIM, including individuals based in northern Mali.

Northern Mali has also become a storage point for much of the cocaine that transits the region. Narcotics traffic is likely to yield much higher revenues for the militants in the sub-region more than any other activities, such as kidnapping. For instance, “while AQIM is thought to have received a total of $70 million in kidnapping ransoms since 2006, the 600-kilogram cocaine shipment would have sold for some $60 million at wholesale prices in Europe.

Most importantly, West Africa’s war history is very significant in assessing the vulnerability of the sub-region to militant attacks. Interrelated wars have occurred in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, and Guinea. Nine African countries were drawn into the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, during the late 1990s. This highly unstable situation has given rise to a dangerous chaos in which criminal syndicates partner with rogue leaders like what Charles Charles Taylor did in Liberia during the country’s civil in the ‘90s. Religiously motivated militant groups can always take advantage of any situation of political instability to foment terror.

2.6 Conclusion
Religion as the “opiate of the masses” has several qualities that make it possible to be utilized for violent activities. Its doctrine, belief systems, interpretation of scripture and proselytisation are all features that can be invoked to achieve any purpose including ill-conceived purposes. To this end, religion has been exploited throughout history to satisfy parochial interests with the guise of safeguarding the sanctity of the religious institution.

Although almost all religions have been subjected to this utility role, Islam has been the most affected. This is basically due to the doctrine of jihad which has been subjected to various forms of interpretation, both in pacifist way and belligerently. All the major jihads fought in the 18th century and those militant activities that have been carried out in the post-Cold War era in West Africa have all been based on the doctrine of jihad. This notwithstanding, careful study reveals the political and economic aspects of the revolutions.

Finally, West Africa’s special situation in the global community makes the sub-region particularly vulnerable to religiously motivated violence. The infrastructural weaknesses of the states, disparity in distribution of wealth as well as other factors make mobilization for militant activities easy and rewarding.
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CHAPTER THREE

RELIGIOUS MILITANCY IN NIGERIA AND IN GHANA: A COMPARISON

3.0 Introduction

As seen in the previous chapter, religious conflicts in West Africa in the post-Cold War period is not an aberration but rather a continuation of what existed before the advent of colonialism. This chapter attempts an assessment of the kinds of religious conflicts prevalent in two of West Africa’s major economies. It makes a comparative analysis and the implications thereof for the entire sub-region.

3.1 Socio-economic and political dynamics of Nigeria and Ghana

Religion to a large extent is prescriptive on all aspects of life and usually religious conflicts encompass other aspects of society. To better appreciate the dynamics of religious conflicts in Nigeria and Ghana, an evaluation of the socio-economic and political patterns of these countries becomes instructive.

**Nigeria:** The Federal Republic of Nigeria covers an area of 923,768 sq. km. on the shores of the Gulf of Guinea. It has Benin on its Western side, Niger on the North, Chad to the north-east and Cameroon to the east and south-east.¹ West Africa’s largest country was created by amalgamating the Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914 and remained under British colonial rule from then until it gained independence in 1960.² Since independence, Nigeria has experienced a mix of both political instability and religiously motivated violence.
The political history of Nigeria is spotted with series of social conflicts. From ethnic, sub-ethnic, religious to political conflicts, every geopolitical zone of the country has one or more troubled spots. These conflicts are as a result of many fundamental issues. Specifically, the interplay of economic imbalance, political injustices, ethnic prejudice, religious intolerance, and the nature of the global economy may be considered as being responsible for these conflicts.\(^3\) The north of Nigeria is undoubtedly poorer than the south in almost every imaginable measure. Joined with limited resources and deteriorating environmental factors, poor government leadership and corruption have contributed to the socio-economic situation, and generate an environment lacking practical job prospects for large numbers of youth.\(^4\)

Gourley identifies three primary triggers of socio-economic related conflicts in Nigeria: economic/demographic growth disequilibrium, increasing wealth disparities, and an increase in rent-seeking behaviors. The failure to diversify away from the petroleum sector has contributed to this economic crisis, where there is general scramble for the “petroleum dollars.” Petroleum has succeeded in growing the economy but at the same time made more and more people poorer. Economic problems, coupled with native/alien conflicts especially in the north, present an enabling environment for radicalism.\(^5\)

Furthermore, Nigeria’s political system has not been stable since independence. It has been stained with series of coups and counter coups. The political system generally succeeded in implanting in the society various concerns which Forest describes as follows:

Rampant corruption among a political and wealthy elite that is heavily invested in the status quo; a huge gap between aspirations of Nigeria’s youth and the opportunities provided by the system for achieving a better life; a lack of critical infrastructure and basic support services; a history with long periods of military dictatorship and political oppression; a swelling population amid economic despair; and a system in which entrenched ethnic
identities are politicized and constrain opportunities for meritocratic advancement or for being able to worship one’s faith in accordance with a strict interpretation of the Koran.\textsuperscript{6}

These problems are compounded at the national level as political power has long been held by leaders from the north until 1999 when democratic rule shifted power to the Yoruba as General Olusegun Obasanjo became President. Ali Mazrui, Albert Schweitzer, et al argue that the introduction of the sharia legal system in 1999/2000 was a response to the political decline of the northern elite after the election of General Olusegun Obasanjo. It became clear, however, that Northerners had voted against their own political pre-eminence in Nigeria. The \textit{Sharia}, therefore, became a cultural assertion by Northern elites at the state level to recompense for their political decline at the federal level.\textsuperscript{7}

The north/south conflict over the presidency became even more complicated with the informal power-sharing agreements known as “Zoning” between the North and South. Assuming that nothing goes wrong, the agreement seemed to promise political stability. The death of President Yar’Adua resulting in the transfer of power to Vice President Goodluck Jonathan and his subsequent election in 2011, however, resulted in increasing tensions and threat to the survival of the arrangement and the political order.\textsuperscript{8}

The Nigerian political society is to a greater extent an antithesis of a nation-state. The three main regions that make up the country are different in many respects with different cultures, aspirations and educational systems. Since colonial era northerners have generally had that holier-than-thou attitude. Activities such as sale of alcohol were frowned upon but they were the very resources for the development of the country. They dominated the ruling class because they were dominant in the military which has been a source for political leadership courtesy coup d’états. Yorubas have
been the intellectual base of the country whiles the Ibos have been the economic hub. Again, while the north has advantage of population, it hosts the country’s poorest people and at the same time the richest. The result is that there is a few rich political elitist class with a large poor majority under them. Patronage becomes very easy under such circumstances as rich politicians can easily mobilize poor youth to “do dirty politics” sometimes for them.

Arms are left in the hands of these poor, unemployed and desperate youth who must also survive, which sometimes may mean going to war. Eventually, the society ends up revolving round politics, economics and religion. Unfortunately, in Africa, the hopes of most politicians are power and wealth—but never about the welfare of the society. The invocation of religious doctrine and believes mostly appear to be mere ploy to service the parochial ambitions of corrupt politicians and other influential members of the society.

Ghana, on the other hand lie on the Gulf of Guinea and bounded by Ivory Coast to the west, Togo to the east and Burkina Faso to the north with the Gulf of Guinea at the south. Gaining independence in 1957 and later republican status in 1960 the country was led by its first charismatic president Dr. Kwame Nkrumah until February 1966 when he was overthrown in coup. The country was marred by coups and counter coups spotted by very short civilian rules from 1966 to 1992. Under another charismatic military leader, Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings, the country transited to a democratic rule and has since then been seen as one of Africa’s most promising democracies.

Socio-economically, Ghana is not too different from Nigeria. Unlike Nigeria’s oil-driven economy, Ghana’s economy since independence has been driven by services, industry and
agriculture. The country is currently the second leading producer of cocoa and very vibrant in gold and diamond mining. The country discovered oil in large quantities in 2007 and started producing oil in commercial quantities in 2010. Oil has since 2011 been a major component of the country’s economy.

Just like Nigeria, wealth is unequally distributed in Ghana. The main dry and less resourced north is evidently poorer than the well resourced south. This is same with education, as the country has a concentration of its educated elites in the south as against the north. Religiously, Ghana, like Nigeria has a predominant Muslim north and a Christian dominated south. In effect, therefore, Nigeria and Ghana have a lot in common concerning demographic characteristics of their citizenry. For far long, scholars have attributed violence in Nigeria to the socio-economic and political dynamics of the country. If this is so why is there then more open violence in northern Nigeria more than northern Ghana? Most likely these factors are more of remote causes than immediate. They lay the foundation for militancy but will take other factors to trigger the violence.

3.2 Trajectory of Religious Conflicts in Nigeria and Ghana

Nigeria: Religious militancy in Nigeria dates to the early 19th Century. The Jihad led by Uthman Dan Fodio was the largest of the Muslim reform movements occurred in the Hausa city-states of modern northern Nigeria and led to the creation of the Sokoto caliphate. By the late eighteenth century, many Muslim scholars and teachers had become disenchanted with the insecurity that characterized the Hausa states. Some clerics continued to reside at the courts of the states, but others, who joined the Qadiriyyah brotherhood, began to think about a revolution that would overthrow existing authorities. The grievances of the Muslim community, both Fulani and Hausa,
against the aristocracy were religious, political and economic. Muslims objected to conscription into Pagan armies to fight Brother Muslims; they hated the practice of selling Muslims into slavery; they despised the Sultans for their sacrifice and belief in spirits, for the luxury and sinfulness of court life as well as for the servility demanded from commoners. They therefore, demanded complete acceptance of the spiritual and moral values of Islam, and condemned corrupt and unjust government which, against the teachings of the Qu’an, oppressed the poor and the weak.

Uthman Dan Fodio (1754-1817), a member of a Fulani clan with a tradition of Islamic scholarship and teaching, was also a member of the Qadiriyya, a Sufi brotherhood that dates back to the twelfth century. Beginning in the 1770s, he began to travel and preach throughout rural Hausaland, denouncing corrupt Islamic practices and the tyrannical and venal rulers who tolerated them. His calls for religious and political renewal gained him many followers among the Fulani, who considered themselves oppressed by their rulers, and some Hausa farmers with various social grievances. In 1802, Dan Fodio led a major Jihad and with the help of a large Fulani cavalry and Hausa peasants, he overthrew the region’s Hausa rulers and replaced them with Fulani Emirs. The movement led to centralization of power in the Muslim community, education reforms, and transformations of law. He also sparked a literary revival with a production of religious work that included Arabic texts and vernacular written in Arabic script.

Colonial rule put religious militancy in Nigeria unpopular. Even if there were they were silenced by the heavy hands of colonial administration. Although the Biafra Civil War fought in the 1960/70s had religious tinges, it was seen largely as political war. In the early 1980s, however, Mohammed Marwa, a preacher originally from Cameroon, instigated the Maitatsine riots that
killed thousands in northern Nigeria. Modern religious militancy in Nigeria is traced to the Maitatsine uprising in the 1980s.

Terwase argues that the 1980 Maitatsine disturbances and the current Boko Haram sectarian violence are both products of rigid observance to sharia jurisprudence, which inspires Islamic Jihad and the destruction of Western civilization. Misinterpretation of the concept of Jihad has been the main cause of conflict in Nigeria. Both Charles Kabir and Armiyaw Shaibu stress that the first and most important requirement of the Jihad is the struggle to overcome personal sin. The rejection of this interpretation by militants and quest to fight non-Muslims to the teeth has been seen as misinterpretation of the concept of Jihad.

Again, the quest to maintain religious purity in a multi-cultural and multi-religious environment led to the religious crisis which engulfed Tafawa Balewa in Bauchi state in 1991. Muslims summarily attacked Christian pork-vendors at the only public abattoir in the Tafawa Balewa market citing that pork meat being (prohibited) under Islamic sharia. The 2002 Miss World riot in Kaduna was also sparked by Muslim opposition, contending that the “spectacle of girls parading themselves in seminude attires and prancing to an ogling audience violated the tenets of Islam.”

This followed announcement by the Secretary-General of the Nigerian Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs (SCIA), Alhaji Lateef Adegbite, that holding the event in the month of Ramadan was an insult to Nigerian Muslims.

Aside these intermittently religious violence there are traditional religiously groups that perpetuate violence in Nigeria. Some of them include the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), Izala, and
Kala Kato. *Boko Haram*, therefore, certainly the most violent, can be seen as one in the midst of a number of similar entities, both contemporary and historical.\(^{20}\)

The emergence and evolution of Boko Haram, however, served as a turning point in the history of Nigeria. The sect has been the most violent religious group and has claimed thousands of lives since the beginning of its violent attacks. *Boko Haram*’s violent path began with riots and clashes with the police in 2004 and again in 2009 with an attack on a Bauchi State police station in which over 700 people died. This period of violence was triggered by a raid in Dutsen, Tenshin and Bauchi by a joint security team. It was shortly after this engagement that Mohammed Yusuf died. Since the death of Yusuf, *Boko Haram* has undergone many changes under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau, a former deputy to Yusuf. The deadly turn that the movement took since then has been described as a revenge for the death of Yusuf.\(^{21}\)

The name *Boko Haram* is derived from the combination of the Hausa word for *book* (as in “book learning”), *boko*, and the Arabic term *haram*, which designates those things which are ungodly or sinful. Thus “*Boko Haram*” is not only the group’s common name but also its slogan to the effect that “Western education (and such product that arises from it) is sacrilege.”\(^{22}\) The official name of the group with which it prefers to be called is “*Jama’atul Alhul Sunnah Lidda’wati wal Jihad*,” which means “people committed to the propagation of the Prophet’s teachings and jihad.”\(^{23}\) The members of the group, also called *Yusuffiya*, consist largely of hundreds of impoverished northern Islamic students and clerics as well as university students and professionals.\(^{24}\) Recruitment for members is based on indoctrination and is estimated to have more than 280,000 members across the 19 states of northern Nigeria, Niger and Chad.\(^{25}\)
Since its active reemergence in 2009, 

*Boko Haram* has been in alliances with several Jihadist movements outside Nigeria. *AQIM* has been a long standing ally of *Boko Haram*. *AQIM* itself has had a discrete number of Nigerian recruits since the Algerian “*Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat*” (GSPC) or the *Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat* was rebranded as al Qaeda’s franchise in the region. This group has never hidden its desire to exploit tensions between Nigerian Muslims and Christians; by this it has offered an extensive training to *Boko Haram* members and supplied them with weapons such as improvised explosive devices (IEDs).26 This linkage between *Boko Haram*, *AQIM* as well as Somali *Al Qaeda* affiliate *al Shabaab* was actually suspected shortly after the 26 Aug 2011 attack on the UN headquarters in Abuja. These concerns are buttressed by documentation that verbal communications have been made between *AQIM* and *Boko Haram*, as well as sightings of a Nigerian leading an *al Shabaab* cadre. It is also alleged that Mamman Nur, the *Boko Haram* member responsible for the United Nations bombing executed the attack after arriving home from Somalia.27

**Ghana:** Unlike Nigeria, Ghana’s pre-colonial history was rather characterized by ethnic and tribal conflicts instead of religious militancy. Most of the wars recorded at the pre-colonial days in the then Gold Coast were mainly wars of expansion and conquest. The 1901 Yaa Asantewaa War between the Ashantis and the British leading to the official annexation of Ashanti by the British colonial empire was political war to a very large extent. Similar wars fought at the time took the same format. Religious aspects of the wars were not pronounced. However, there were intermittent intra-religious conflicts though were seen as aberrant.
The above notwithstanding, Ghana has seen a number of intermittent violent religious clashes especially in the Ashanti and Northern regions of the country in the post independence period. While most of the time it had often been a case of intra-Islam violence. There are other cases of Christian versus Islam, Christian versus traditional religion or Islam versus traditional religion.

Islam, for instance as practiced in Tamale, the hub of Islam in Ghana, is subtly fragmented into various groups of similar traditions. These petty divisions are responsible for various conflicts and clashed within Islam in the Metropolis. For example, in Tamale currently, Tijaniyyah cannot be said to be one Islamic sect; there are the Maikano and Ceissey factions of the same Tijaniyyah. Same can be said of the Ahlus-Sunnah sect, with the Baasha and the Ambariyyah factions both struggling for recognition and prominence. These groups bear the same sectorial name but differ in some of their practices and orientation. The leadership struggles and the struggle for prominence often result in clashes.28

According to Alhassan Muhammad and Hussein Ja’afar, several intermittent verbal disputes transpired among Muslim scholars in Tamale between 1952 and 1965 when Afa Ajura broke away. Yussif Nabahani, a Tijaniyyah scholar added that heated verbal confrontations transpired between Afa Ajura and his group on one side and Sheikh Hassan Nasirul-deen who was the leader of Tijaniyyah based in Kumasi and his students on the other side. Yussif Nabahani mentioned among others Alhaji Muntaka Zakaria, Sheikh Tahir Issah, Sheikh Ibrahim Gushegu, Sheikh Yakubu Issahaq and Sheikh Muhammad Panpanku as those who confronted Afa Ajura in the early days of his mission before the emergence of Sheikh Abdullai Maikano. The situation after 1965 as a result of the schism and the radical nature of both Afa Ajura and Abdullai Maikano became more volatile with Muslims arguing and fighting to the extent of killing one another over doctrinal differences.29

Similarly in 1977, an angry Ahlus-Sunnah youth group armed with weapons attacked a Tijaniyyah cleric who had organized a marriage ceremony in Tamale on the main Tamale Airport road. “Regional Minister ordered an investigation into the lawlessness by the Munchiri and when a
search was conducted, many arms and ammunitions were found hidden in the ceiling of Afa Ajura’s Mosque at Sakasaka possibly preparing for another attack.\textsuperscript{30}

Furthermore, on Friday the 5th of December 1997, the Tijaniyyah Muslim group was attacked by the Ahlus-Sunnah sect members while celebrating \textit{maulid-nabi}h (birthday of the Prophet) at Gumani, a suburb of Tamale. This incident reportedly took place when people had gathered and were waiting for the invited guests to arrive for the commencement of the programme when the some Ahlus-Sunnah members pounced on them with all forms of weapons. This resulted in injuries of various degrees of several other people from both sides. In addition, a number of motorbikes belonging to the Tijaniyyah group who attended the occasion were burnt to ashes.\textsuperscript{31}

Again, intra Muslim clashes have also been witnessed in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. For instance, in April 2007, “members of the \textit{Wahhabi}-oriented Ahl al-Sunnah and members of the Tijaniyyah Sufi order clashed at Ejura, in the Ashanti region of Ghana, over doctrinal differences. The \textit{Tijaniyyah} accused \textit{Ahl al- Sunna} of preaching against them. They afterwards attacked the \textit{Ahl al- Sunnah} members and inflicted various degrees of injuries on ten of them.”\textsuperscript{32}

One remarkable difference between Islamic militancy in Nigeria on one hand and in Ghana on the other hand today is the relationship with the state. Islamic militants in Nigeria led by Boko Haram target their attacks largely on the state and its agents. The relationship between the state and Islamic militants is very poor. In Ghana, however, there has not been any incident of Islamic militancy
against the state or its agents. Islamic conflicts have largely been intra-Islam or with other religious groups.

Another remarkable difference between the two countries is the intensity of the violence. Generally religious groups in Ghana live at peace and violence only occurs as aberration. The case in Nigeria, especially the north is totally different. Since the emergence of Boko Haram in 2009, religious militancy has been very rampant. The violence rate is very high as well as intensive as compared to the Ghanaian situation. To a very large extent, the historical and societal dynamics of both countries have contributed to this situation. Socially, Nigeria has had very bitter rival groups in the image of the northern Muslim Hausa and the south eastern Christian Igbo. Historically, the jihad of Othman Dan Fodio establishing the Sokoto Caliphate in the 19th century has been a motivating factor to recent religious militancy in Nigeria. The historic tribal rift between the Hausa and the Igbo’s too has to a no mean way fuelled Islamic militancy in the country. Even the 1967 Biafra war between these two groups took religious dimensions in the course of the war.

Ghana, however, has had a serene religious atmosphere since independence. Apart from political instability characterized by military takeovers, the country has never experienced any civil war. The political and social arrangements of the country have largely facilitated unity among the three main religious groups in the country. Charle Bruno Kabir sees this as the religious groups’ ability to combine reasoning with faith. According to him, to avoid religious militancy, there must be a balance between reasoning and faith. “Faith and reason can only be identified but not separated because between them exists only an inadequate difference” Failure of this results in fundamentalism and extremism.
Christians in Ghana have also been involved in violent conflict in recent years. It has had confrontations within, as well as with both Muslims and Traditionalists. Many Christian conflicts have been with the traditional religion and authorities. For instance Ga traditionalists and born-again Christians in Accra clashed perennially in May over the traditional ‘ban on drumming and noisemaking.’ During this thirty-day period of observing silence preceding the Ga *Homowo* Festival, the traditional authorities in Accra do not allow drumming, handclapping and other forms of ‘noisemaking.’ The silence is meant to give the local deities the peace to look after the growth of the ritually sown corn before it is harvested and prepared into a ceremonial dish (*kpokpoi*) to ‘hoot at hunger’ (as *homowo* translates) during the harvest festival.\(^{34}\)

Charismatic-Pentecostal churches’ refusal to respect the ban led to violent clashes. The churches claimed their right to freedom of worship and the right of Christians not to be involved in ‘animistic’ rituals. Traditionalist groups, such as the *Afrikania Mission*, the Ga Traditional Council, and Ga high priests (*wulomei*), in turn opposed the ‘noisemaking’ that accompanied Charismatic worship and required respect for the ‘local cultural heritage’. Churches were raided, worshippers wounded, and instruments seized. In 1999, for instance, traditionalists tried to stop members of the Lighthouse Chapel International at Korle Gonno from drumming during the ban leading to a clash between the two sides in which both parties sustained injuries. Until 2002 a Task Force on Nuisance Control was installed to resolve the matter.\(^{35}\)

Intra-Christian violence has also been subtly observed. Basically the conflict stems from interpretation of scripture. Though usually do not generate into violence, these conflicts over
interpretation are usually between orthodox Christians and Pentecostal/Charismatic Christians. Some of these conflicts are over whether Saturday or Sunday is the right day of worship, whether or not Christians can employ statues and images in their worship, whether or not it is right to venerate Mary and saints, whether it is good or not to openly perform miracle, etc.

Sometimes, however, Christian based conflicts are not always religious. They rather range from political/leadership to economic factors. The debate over the performance of miracles for instance is basically motivated by economic factors; as it economically pays for a modern day Christian pastor to be miracle worker. Leadership problems have also led to revolts, separations and establishment of new churches. For instance the establishment of the Christian Praise International Center (CPIC), in Ghana, out of the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) by Bishop Annor Yeboah was due to conflict over the Chairmanship position of the CAC. Similar factors led to the separation between the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EP Church) and the Global Evangelical Church also in Ghana. In addition to this has been the split between the Winners Chapel International and the Winners Chapel Ghana also in Ghana and Nigeria.

Perhaps, one key difference between Islamic militancy and Christian militancy both in Ghana and in Nigeria is the relationship with the secular state. While intrinsically radical Islam does not separate religion from state and does not recognize secular states, Christianity acknowledges separation between state and religion. This aspect of Christianity possibly emanating from Jesus’ teaching that “give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s,” naturally reduces tension between the state and religion. The problem with Christianity is its tendency to assert itself as the superior and best religion. This has fundamentally characterized its conflicts with other religions.
and the state. Islam’s reluctance to accept secular state due to the concepts of *dar al-Islam* (Islamic state) and *Umma* (Islamic Community), partly explains why generally tensions between Islamic movements and the West African states are higher than that of Christianity’s.

The African Traditional Religion, being the only indigenous religion in Ghana has also been involved in a number of clashes with both Christians and Muslims. The religious leaders, considered to be the custodians of the land, often seek respect, obedience and regard from the Muslims and Christians. The refusal to do so often results in religious clashes which often manifest in various forms such as political, ethnic and economic, mostly due to unwillingness to compromise. The conflict between Christians and the Ga Traditional Council in Accra described above is an example of conflicts involving the tradition and other religions.

In June 2012, other violent clashes between traditional authorities in Hohoe, Ghana, and Muslims resulted in two deaths and displacement of over 6,000 people. The conflict erupted after the body of an Imam, Alhaji Alhassan, was exhumed on the alleged orders of Togbe Gabusu, the paramount chief of the Gbi Traditional Area. The chief's car was set ablaze and his palace vandalized in the process.36

The African Traditional Religion has also been in subtle conflict with the Ghanaian state. Traditionalists, considering themselves as the custodians of the land, sometimes want to assert their influence on the state. This sometimes manifests in their demands; for instance their frequent request to be allowed to pour libation during state gathering so far as those gatherings fall within their territory. The refusal of the state to grant this request leads to conflict with the state. The
Ghanaian central government has had conflict with the authorities of the Ga Traditional Council over the pouring of libation during state functions. Their argument is that, so far as Christians and Muslims are allowed to pray, they also must be given the right to offer traditional prayers.

The problem, however, is that the traditional religion has been tagged as backward, uncivilized, and pagan. This presupposes that they do not worship God. Though custodians of the land, the ATR usually suffers discrimination from the leaders of West African states who are mostly Christians and Muslims. Apart from the disregard by the state, the taboos and customs of ATR are subjected to violations by followers of other religions.

### 3.3 Causes of Religious Conflicts

Aside the socio-economic and political causes described above, Isaac Terwase Sampson identifies other salient causes of religious tensions and violence in Nigeria. He sees the socio-economic and political issues to be remote causes of religious conflicts in Nigeria and for that matter identifies the immediate causes.

The first is religious fundamentalism or extremism. He examines this on the basis of the extent to which Christianity or Islam compromises or gives up some religious or doctrinal rights for the sake of societal change. For Christianity, the basis of respect for political authority is Jesus’ directive to his followers to give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s. For him this teaching is the crust of Christian recognition of temporal authority and the need for state and church to cooperate to ensure social orderliness.

The basis for executive authority is laid in Romans 13:1 and 2, where Paul said: ‘Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained by God. Whosoever therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance
of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation’. Similarly, in 1 Peter 2:13–14, Peter directed Christians to ‘Be subject to every kind of human order, whether it be to the king as the foremost, or governors as sent by him, as a vengeance on the wicked and a reward to the just’. Liberal leaning towards authority in the Christendom will therefore cause a Christian to gain respect for the privacy of others, realising that certain aspects of other people's lives do not fall under his jurisdiction. Hence he would not attempt to take over the power of the state to sanction deviant behaviour, nor would he try to abate certain conduct, which though it offends Christian doctrine, is absolutely within the regulatory purview of temporal authority. By virtue of this doctrine of compliance to temporal authority, Christianity endorses compliance with the economic, political and social order sanctioned by temporal authority, provided that does not interfere with its worship.38

Islam, on the other hand, is not just a religion, but a way of life that encompasses the entire scope of the economic, judicial, political and cultural lives of its Umma (faithful); hence its definition as ‘total submission to the will of Allah (God) as revealed by the prophetic message of Muhammad. By this he concludes that “the 1980 Maitatsine disturbances and the current Boko Haram sectarian violence are both products of rigid observance of sharia jurisprudence, which inspires Islamic Jihad and the destruction of Western civilization.”39 Thus religious extremism and fundamentalism is the first immediate cause of religious conflicts in Nigeria.

Secondly, the mode of worship of both Muslims and Christians does trigger conflict in Nigeria. Religious worship can be obstructive, disruptive and annoying. For instance, the Christian tradition of organising mass crusades and revivals on public highways or properties adjoining the highways constantly causes confusion with other non-Christians. Most of these crusades and revivals have the disregard of obstructing vehicular and human movement for long periods of time. This in many instances is a source of conflict. This tradition has triggered religious disturbances, particularly in places with evenly distributed numbers of Christians and Muslims. For instance, “the 2001 Jos religious violence was caused by a mêlée that erupted after a Christian woman insisted on having
her right of way through a public highway which was barricaded by Muslim worshippers on a Friday.  

Furthermore, reproachful or critical preaching has been observed to be one of the most common causes of religious violence in Nigeria. In this case both Christians and Muslim claim monopoly of religious truths and total right to eternity in heaven. This, Terwase argues, manifests in public preaching of both religious groups:

Religious sermons are often laden with messages signifying the monopoly of salvation and truth. In extreme cases, the messages transcend the traditional monopolisation of essence, thereby delving into the arena of judgemental and scornful delegitimisation of opposing religions and their prophetic symbols.

The March 1987 religious violence in Kafanchan, Kaduna state, was for instance, allegedly caused by a Christian preacher who allegedly used verses from the Quran to attack Islam, while justifying the exclusive existence of salvation within the realms of Christianity. In addition, Muslims in Kaduna also alleged that one Reverend Minister Abubakar Bako publicly sought to interpret the Quran in a manner that discredited Islam, in addition to making some derogatory comments about Prophet Mohammad. The end result of all this is conflict and tensions between the two religious groups.

This challenge has largely been precipitated by the increase in number of Churches and Mosques in the country and the persistent electronic media coverage of religious preaching. All this has helped in reinforcing the reproachful sermons. Some religious fundamentalists have taken advantage of these media opportunities to cause serious religious dissonance and subsequent violence. The use of audio and video preaching in public places is not less offensive. The two religious groups often use audio-taped preaching even in conflict-prone areas like Jos city, in
defiance of the standing security embargo placed on them. This challenge is also associated with mockery in some instances.

The mockery of opposing faiths is also compounded by the pervasive stereotyping of religious adherents. For instance, Muslims, especially those from the northern part of Nigeria, are in the habit of referring to all non-Muslims as *Arna* or *Kafir*; Arabic words for ‘heathen’ or unbelievers; while it is fashionable for Christians to refer to all Muslims as terrorists and violence-mongers. This attitude of religious stigmatisation has generated religious violence in the past and has the potential to do more.

Another significant point noted by Terwase as an immediate source of conflict is what he terms as religious patronage. This has been deep-rooted in the Nigerian society and takes shape depending on the preponderance of which religious adherents are in positions of authority. In many states of northern Nigeria, public funds are used in the purchase and distribution of food items and other valuables for Muslim faithful during the Ramadan fast. This however, does not extend to Christians during Christmas or traditional religious worshippers during their traditional ceremonies. This approach is reversed in states where Christianity is dominant religion. It could be said in this instance that religion here is being manipulated and patronized for political gains.

This attitude is furthermore extended to the clergy. Here too based on the dominance of the religion in a particular state authorities give the clergy undue attention and support as against the religion in minority. The action largely translates into political and economic favour towards the favoured religious group(s), while marginalising the others:

> Christians have been denied access to electronic media in 16 Northern states, while Islam monopolizes 24 hours for its broadcast in the same area. … Every hour the Muslims broadcast provocative statements about Christianity. It means nothing, they proclaim, that people attend church on Sunday only to dance and to listen to songs.

In addition, exaggeration of reportage on conflicts by the media has been identified as a major source of conflict in Nigeria. This action by the mass media eventually ends up fuelling the
intensity of these reported conflicts. This media character led to the 1987 Kafanchan religious disturbances:

News reports monitored on Radio Kaduna, immediately after the commencement of the violence, alleged that Christians were killing Muslims indiscriminately, burning their Mosques and copies of the Holy Qur’an, and banishing them from the town. The broadcast further alleged that an itinerant preacher had misquoted the Qur’an and blasphemed the name of Prophet Mohammed, urging Christians to kill Muslims and burn their Mosques. These reports ignited reprisal attacks by Muslims all over Kaduna state, causing an invaluable loss of lives and property.\(^{47}\)

Most religious leaders in the country have, therefore, accused the media of fanning the flames of religious violence by their provoking and sensitive reports. News headlines such as ‘Islamic Assailants Kill Hundreds of Christians near Jos’, ‘Muslims slaughter Christians in central Nigeria’, ‘Muslims slaughter 400–500 Christians in latest Jos crisis’ are very common during religious disturbances. These startling headlines, coupled with gory images of victims often trigger reprisal attacks.\(^{48}\)

The use of religious symbols and apparel is another significant immediate source of religious violence in Nigeria. Most Muslim women, for instance, insist on the use of the Hijab, and in extreme cases, Niqab and Burka (which cover the entire body including head and face) even when state laws prohibit their use. For example in 2005, following the prohibition of the use of head scarves by female law students in the faculty of law of the Ahmadu Bello University of Zaria state. A Christian lecturer, Dr Andrew Akume, turned back a female student who wore the Hijab from attending his lecture. This action drew the anger of the Muslim Students Society (MSS), who quickly organized and issued fatwa (Islamic death sentence) on the lecturer, forcing him into hiding.\(^{49}\) In addition to causing fear and panic on campus, the act by the students caused conflict
between the governments of Kaduna and Benue states (the state in which the university is located and the lecturer’s home state, respectively) over the safety of the lecturer.\textsuperscript{50}

The above facts notwithstanding, Armiyaw Shaiba argues that these acts of religious violence are an aberration in Islam. He describes them as deviations in the religion and while acknowledges that these acts are rampant in Islam, he observes that they are also common in other religions. He largely agrees with Charles Kabir that faith must be accompanied with reasoning but emphasizes the deviance aspect of religion. While Charles Kabir sees the problem basically with inability to combine faith and reasoning, Armiyaw, stresses on the fact that those militants are only religious deviants.\textsuperscript{51}

Furthermore, the immediate causes of conflict mentioned above represent the main departure between Ghana and Nigeria in terms of religious violence. Ghana and Nigeria both share similar socio-economic and political history. Both countries have experienced political instability and then a move to democracy. They both have relatively developed south with generally underdeveloped north. Again, both Ghana and Nigeria have a large number of unemployed youth resulting in high poverty rate. These have often been cited as the remote causes of conflicts especially religious violence in West Africa.

What make the difference between both countries, however, are the immediate causes enumerated above. While these features are rampant in Nigeria, especially the north and middle belt, they are virtually non-existent in Ghana. While the factors mentioned above are rampant in Nigeria, they their occurrence in Ghana is rather an aberration.
3.4 Role of the state

The West African state undoubtedly plays a role in the escalation of religious conflicts into violence. In Nigeria, for instance, the government adopted the “carrot” and “stick” approach in its response to the religious insurgency, particularly Boko Haram. The “carrot” involved granting amnesty to sect members who would relinquish their radical and militant activities as well as pragmatic measures to address problems such as poverty, unemployment, social injustice and public corruption in violence prone states. The philosophy behind is to legitimize the government and calm the anger of the vulnerable youth population, especially in northern part of the country.\(^{52}\)

The “stick” on the other hand has involved the use of state security forces to counter insurgency. Since the emergence of Boko Haram in particular, the government constituted a special taskforce known as “Operation Restore Order” (JTORO). The JTF has achieved successes in some area including the arrest of a top Boko Haram commander, Ali Saleh, and five accomplices in Maiduguri. It won praises for the effective use of military checkpoints and temporary bans of motorbikes which were used by extremists in drive-by attacks.

Other security measures adopted by the government to check the activities of the sect included the closure of Nigeria’s borders with Cameroon and Niger. It also deported illegal immigrants mostly Nigeriens and Chadians, as part of its quest to check the influence of foreigners. Also, in addition to declaration of state of emergency in some parts of States attacked by the sect, the JTF recent established new defence intelligence missions in neighbouring Niger Republic and the Republic of Mali.\(^{53}\) The state security agencies have also made arrest of high profiled militants, including
the arrest of a spokesman for the sect, Abu Qada, and the alleged architect of the Christmas Day bombing at Madalla, Kabiru Abubakar Dikko, alias Kabiru Sokoto.

The government of Nigeria has, however, been criticised severely for its heavy handedness on militants. In its quest to restore order, the state has injured civilians and damaged property in the process. Onuoha agrees with Armiyaw that the strong emergence of religious militancy was the result of the terrible extrajudicial murder of sect members and leaders, especially Boko Haram’s Mohammed Yusuf, during the July 2009 revolt. The argument in effect is that, indirectly the Nigerian state has contributed to escalation of religious conflicts in the country.

Another major weakness of the state is effective intelligence gathering on sects and their operations. The difficulty lies in the fact that the members, goals, and objectives of these religious sects are not properly and accurately ascertained. For instance the Nigerian government has kept on giving conflicting accounts about basic facts concerning Bako Haram. Inability to gather intelligence has largely been a major problem for almost all West african states in their efforts to combat terrorism and militancy. This weakness to a large extent provides strength and encouragement to militants.

Aside governmental institution’s inability to effectively tackle militancy state agents and individuals have also complicated issues. There have been for instance actual instances of complicity of government officials with the militants. For example in Nigeria, among those who have been arrested and charged with assisting Boko Haram was a sitting federal senator from the ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP), Mohammed Ali Ndume of Borno State. President Goodluck Jonathan acknowledged that the militants have sympathizers or enablers throughout the
government: “some of them are in the executive arm of government; some of them are in the legislative arm of government, while some of them are even in the judiciary.”

This is actual confirmation that the state and its agents have hand in escalation of religious violence in both Ghana and Nigeria. This situation also points to the multi-causal nature of conflicts. These acts by state agents and officials are most likely motivated by political and economic factor rather than purely religious motives.

3.5 Conclusions

The chapter has assessed religious militancy in both Nigeria and Ghana. Religiously motivated violence continues to be a major challenge in West Africa. To a large extent, the countries’ historical and ethnic dynamics have bearing on the intensity of the kind of religious conflict to be experienced. In Nigeria for instance, militants such as Boko Haram have drawn inspiration from the earlier 19th century Jihad led by Uthman Dan Fodio. Again, the traditional northern Islamic and southern Christian divide of the country has largely precipitated the likelihood of religious violence in the country.

Though Nigeria and Ghana share similar socio-economic and political features that have been described by many scholars as the main causes of conflicts and wars, the two countries have different dynamics that could serve as immediate causes of conflict. Comparatively Ghana’s religious community has been more accommodating to one another. Again, the few religious conflicts have largely been either inter-religious or intra-religious and with very few targeted
against the state. This trend is contrary to the case in Nigeria where aggression is mostly targeted to the state and its agents.
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14 Terwase, Sampson Isaac, “Religious Violence in Nigeria: Causal Diagnoses and Strategic Recommendations to the State and Religious Communities” Available at (p 16)
15 Personal interview with Rev. Fr. Dr. Charles Bruno Kabir, Dean of the Faculty of Religious Studies, Catholic University College of Ghana, Fiapre, Sunyani; in Accra, December 20, 2014.
16 Personal interview with Sheikh Armiyaw Shaibu, Greater Accra Regional Director of Islamic Education Unit and Assistant Spokesperson of the National Chief Imam, Accra, December 21, 2014.
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CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Summary of Findings

Religious militancy in West Africa is not a new phenomenon. It was prevalent even before the advent of colonial rule in the sub-region. The creation of the Sokoto Caliphate in modern northern Nigeria, the Macina Islamic State in current Mali and the Torkolor Islamic state in modern Senegal and Guinea have had great influence on contemporary religious militancy in the sub-region. Through its ambivalence, religion by its nature is subject to manipulation to satisfy political, economic and social needs outside its own realm. Religious militant groups who have become part of the post-cold war pluralist global society often capitalize on the differences in interpretation of religious doctrine, scripture, belief systems and proselytisation to perpetuate violence.

State inability to exert enough control over its citizens coupled with globalization and its influence, largely precipitated the activities of these non-state actors in the sub-region. A crucial part of these non-state actors that emerged were religious militants challenging both state and non-state institutions. Some of those religious militant groups in West Africa have been Boko Haram in Nigeria as well as Ansar Dine and AQIM in Mali and Mauritania. These actors have challenged the authority of their state promising to establish better societies with the implementation of Islamic states ruled by Sharia law.

Besides these main religious militant groups, were other incidents of religious clashes and violence which have been experienced by both Ghana and Nigeria. These have largely been clashes over religious beliefs and practices. In Nigeria, cities such as Kano, Jos and Kaduna have been notable
hotspots of religious violence mostly between Muslims and Christians. There have also been similar occurrences in Ghanaian cities such as Tamale, Accra and Hohoe. The difference between these two countries, however, has been the level or intensity of the violence and the role played by the state.

4.2 Conclusions

To a very large extent, both Nigeria and Ghana possess similar trends of socio-economic and demographic dynamics which have often been cited as the source of most conflicts in West Africa. Both countries have generally underdeveloped north inhabited predominantly by Muslims and a relatively developed south dominated by Christians. In both countries, poverty and illiteracy abound, especially in the north as against the south. Additionally, both countries have diverse religious groups with different sects within. Politically, both Nigeria and Ghana have seen intermittent military coups and returns to civilian rules. In effect both Ghana and Nigeria have societies that are fertile grounds for militancy of all kinds.

This study, however, argues that the difference between these two countries is the level of prevalence of factors that would trigger the violence. These factors seen as the immediate causes of religious militancy are far more prevalent in Nigeria than in Ghana. While religious extremism and fundamentalism as well as intolerance are prevalent in Nigeria, Ghanaian religious groups have largely learnt to co-exist peacefully. Again, the few religious conflicts have largely been either inter-religious or intra-religious and with very few targeted against the state. This trend is contrary to the case in Nigeria where aggression is mostly targeted at the state and its agents.
Again, to a large extent, the countries’ historical and ethnic dynamics have bearing on the intensity of the kind of religious conflict to be experienced. In Nigeria for instance, militants such as Boko Haram have drawn inspiration from the earlier 19th century Jihad led by Uthman Dan Fodio. Again, the traditional northern Islamic and southern Christian divide of the country as well as the historic enmity between the predominantly Muslim Hausa north and the predominantly Christian Igbo in the south east have largely increased the likelihood of religious violence in the country.

The implication is that Ghana is equally vulnerable to the kind of religious violence Nigeria is facing currently. The kind of pluralist society West Africa is taking suggests that these non-state elements have come to stay. It is therefore, incumbent on both state and religious leaders to ensure that the immediate factors that would trigger violence are brought to the minimum.

4.3 Recommendations

- Good governance and development is the most effective panacea to religious militancy in West Africa. The governments of Ghana and Nigeria must endeavour to promote good governance, protection of fundamental human rights, freedom of religion as well as ensuring development and job creation. These are essential in order to eliminate as much as possible the remote causes of religious militancy.

- Intelligence gathering is very crucial in order to successfully combat religious militancy without unnecessary abuse of human rights. The typical anonymous nature of most of these groups and their members require intensive investment in intelligence. Seeking assistance from more developed foreign intelligence agencies will also be of immense help as this will go a long way to help track down these militants.
• The challenge posed by Boko Haram shows the need for an all inclusive and comprehensive West African programme to combat religious militancy. The ECOWAS protocols on terrorism seem inadequate to effectively tackle the menace. If not handled cautiously, religion and already existing conflicts could be exploited for parochial interests, resulting in religiously militancy. The global community, especially the United States, in its global war on terror, must ensure that the unique cases and challenges of West African states are addressed. West African states must as well cooperate with the international community in this regard.

• Education is a key instrument for change. Religious leaders have the responsibility to teach their congregation about true religion. It is the only way to avoid extremism and fundamentalism. Islamic and Christian leaders must as much as possible draw close to their members and know what they are learning and teaching. Places of worship could be the best place to start the search for militants. The extremist interpretation of scripture must not be tolerated as it has the capacity to degenerate into militancy.

• Finally, public education is very crucial to tackling religious militancy in West Africa. There must be effective conscientisation of the public on how to spot and report any change of behaviour toward militancy. In this regard the ordinary citizens who live with and know the militants can help monitor and report all such persons to the appropriate authority. This is especially essential as many militant groups have assumed anonymous nature.
Informants must as well be guaranteed of secrecy and protection as motivation factors to allow for more people opening up.
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