

Rethinking Religious Ethnonationalism and Fundamentalism in Nigeria: Prospects for Cultivating New National Identity *Weltanschauung* and Values in a Global Age

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ABSTRACT: Cultural and religious identity crisis has become the bedrock of the Nigerian problem since her Independence in 1960. Over the years, religious clashes have occurred among Nigerians who began to see themselves as Muslims, Traditionalists, and Christians, and no longer in their ethnic or tribal identity. Today in Nigeria, there are abundant cases of religio-ethno clashes which have degenerated to eradication of national values and the Nigerian identity. Beyond eradication of national values and identity, there are socio-economic factors like bad leadership and poverty which has aggravated religious fundamentalism in Nigeria. The problem of this study therefore lies in a gradual erosion and death of core national values like patriotism, hard work, creativity and solidarity amongst Nigerians on account of escalated ethnic and religious clashes across the states of the federation. Insisting that value synthesis is an important aspect of the flexibility and dynamics of a renewed Nigerian identity, this paper highlights the concept of cultural synthesis in the discourses on Nigerian Identity and explores the various interpretations of religious fundamentalism in Nigeria. Consequently, it argues that religious fundamentalism now acts as a neo-colonial tool to suppress the authentic identities of Nigerians and impose new identities on them. The paper concludes that a revival of the questions of values and national identity amongst Nigerians will promote a shared psycho-social framework to boost communal worldview. It is this new worldview (*weltanschauung*) that will foster civic consciousness, sanctity of human lives, peaceful cohabitation and neutral platforms for value construction amongst the citizens.

Keywords: Values, Identity, Religion, Nationalism, Fundamentalism, Ethnicity, Revolution, Culture.

Date of Submission: 06 -07-2017

Date of acceptance: 15-07-2017

I. INTRODUCTION

The despotic state of affairs of the culturally and linguistically diverse, multi-ethnic nation, Nigeria, characterized by re-occurring cycles of religio-ethnic crisis implicit of religious ethno-nationalism and fundamentalism, puts the question of national identity and the legitimacy of the Nigerian nation state into spotlight. Such a situation negates the right to self-determination and preservation that is fundamental to any democratic dispensation. It also highlights the ethical problem of the attempts by elites to manipulate the differing regional identities and religio-ethnic orientation and affiliation of Nigerians. It instigates them to crisis and civil unrest; to the extent that a greater majority of Nigerians cannot boast of fully enjoying the extolled ideals of peaceful co-habitation and freedom of movement, worship and political participation enshrined in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal republic of Nigeria Amended.

Core to the national problem is the perceived alienation of the citizens from their rights to socio-political gains, which seems to be accessible only to some ruling elites. It was this same quest for identity, social emancipation, self determination and preservation that led to the emergence of African philosophy and earliest discourses on African identity. However, although these were originally situated in the colonial and post colonial contexts and arose in response to the anti-racism philosophy that flourished in that era; the theme of cultural synthesis is highly relevant to the present day Nigerians who now experience different forms of violence streaming from religious fundamentalism. This implicitly points to the pluralism of cultures, which in extension touches the philosophical questions of identity, rights and liberties, and fundamental human equality of human beings. It also shows how religion, contrary to Modernity's reductionism as a personal affair, has become one of the strong bases for Nigerians to elicit values that delineate their communal worldview and assert their identities. Consequently, this paper argues that religious fundamentalism now acts as a neo-colonial tool to suppress the authentic identities of Nigerians and impose new identities on them. The paper concludes that a revival of the questions of values and national identity amongst Nigerians will promote a shared psycho-social

framework to boost communal worldview. It is this new worldview (*weltanschauung*) that will foster civic consciousness, sanctity of human lives, peaceful cohabitation and neutral platforms for value construction amongst the citizens.

II. THE CENTRALITY OF CULTURAL AND VALUE SYNTHESIS IN THE DISCOURSES ON AFRICAN IDENTITY

A strong emphasis on the need for cultural synthesis on the part of Africans punctuates the works that emerged in the historical origins of African philosophy. These works, with their inherent concepts, aimed at establishing African socialism, liberating the Africans from the dual enterprise of colonialism and assimilation by Western powers, and emphasized on why Africans ought to purposefully blend their values and experiences in their respective liberated societies (nations), in order to ameliorate the problem of crisis of identity arising from their experience of colonialism and assimilation. There exists a contrast between the “traditional versus modern; oral versus written and printed; agrarian and customary communities versus urban and industrialized civilization; subsistence versus highly productive economies”; and a social disintegration of African societies amidst the growing urban proletariat due to “the destabilization of customary organizations by an incoherent system of new social arrangements and institutions” (Davidson, 1994). Similarly Mudimbe insisted that the colonial structure has led to the cultural and religious diffusion of new attitudes (1988, p. 4). However, what was the response of some African philosophers to this problem of identity crisis?

Césaire through his book *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* published in 1939, later translated into English as *The Return to my Native Land*, introduced two new concepts of *negritude* and *return* into the discourses on African identity and philosophy (Masolo, 1994, p. 1). Masolo further noted that Césaire used the words *negritude* and *return* to conceptualize the dignity, the personhood or humanity, the historicity of the black people; turning it into a consciousness, into a mental state that is subject to manipulations of both history and of power relations. Thus, the task of Africans in the face of cultural chaos they find themselves today according to him is to “set the demiurge free. He is the only one able to bring about a new synthesis from this chaos: a new synthesis, which deserves to be called culture. This synthesis-culture will reconcile and overcome the opposition between the old and the new” (Césaire, 1965, p. 205). Similarly, Nkrumah’s philosophical consciencism called for a purposeful attitude of the African’s experience of Westernism, Christianity, and Islam in order to “enable African society to digest the Western and the Islamic and the Euro-Christian elements in Africa, and develop them in such a way that they fit into the African personality” (Nkrumah, 1970, p. 79). In the same vein came Senghor’s concept of *Negritude* which he defined as “the whole complex of civilized values-characteristic of the black peoples, or more precisely, the Negro-African world” (Senghor, 1965, p. 43). Agreeing that synthesis of culture is the basis of African personality, Nyerere coined the term *ujamaa socialism* as “an attitude of mind needed to ensure that people care for each other” (Nyerere, 1968, p. 1); which aims at a rational synthesis of the social structure into which man fully realizes himself (Njoku, 2002, p. 272). His conviction being that such a synthesis is done based on African values, one of which is the extended family and the care experienced by its member. United together as a family, Nyerere held, Africans can form a united front to deal with the West in relation to issues affecting the African people. Nwoko’s coinage of the term “universal consanguinity” is based on his conviction that the values derived from extended family system; and the sense of religion or the spiritual are fundamental to African socialism; and that “all men share a common blood despite color, race, religion” (Nwoko, 1985, p. 34). Thus he insists that “it is only by assimilating positive values that [African Socialism] does not have, that it grows to a higher social system, [which] it does by ever continuous exposition, examination and re-acceptance of the genuine values of African society in constant dialogue with other civilizations” (Nwoko, 1985, p. 28). This theme of cultural synthesis is also implicit in Onyeocha’s definition of African identity. “Whatever the semantics behind the concept, term, African personality”, he writes, “is premised on the sum total of experience of the African people – the historical, cultural, religious, political and economic experiences that helped to share their attitudes”, thereby incorporating within its meaning “the sum total of African past experiences, present knowledge and future hopes and aspiration” (Onyeocha, 1997, pp. 113 - 114). Such an attempt to sum the African’s past, as Onyeocha called for, involves cultural synthesis; which is captured in his notion that African personality centers on community spirituality which manifests itself in the submission of the “I” to the “We” (Onyeocha, 1997, pp. 159-160). Lastly, Oyebola in his realistic pessimistic view suggested that Africans ought not to “live in a world of illusion” about their past; they ought to use whatever that is good about their past, present and future political, economical and cultural achievement “to reshape towards new goals and purposes” (Oyebola, 1982).

But of what rational imports are these aforementioned theories on African identity to the contemporary Africans, who are now citizens of their respective African countries. First, although socialism, communalism, and Marxism are to be appreciated as contributions to intellectual history; they have failed to serve as socio-political systems to ensure the development, integration and peaceful co-habitation of citizens in most African countries. As such, most African nations are still grappling with the search for principles to ensure and enforce

development and peaceful co-existence. More so, the revolutionary violence promoted by Marxism is no longer effective too, because it fuels ethnic and religious crises controlled by both outside and inside forces; as such an intellectual revolution would be a better lasting alternative. Also, the sensibilities and strong commitment of Nigerians to their culturally diverse ethno-religious backgrounds, which has survived the colonial and post-colonial attempts to be annihilated; and which serves as the rallying platform for them to voice out their opinion in cases of perceived alienation from the Federal government of Nigeria, and express their uniqueness in their respective heterogeneous communities, makes the search for a universal principle of integration in order to foster peaceful co-existence, protection of rights and interests, and dialogue among the different religio-ethnic groups a perennial quest, in order to avert possible manipulation of their identities or an imposition of new identities by some dubious elites, an urgent one. This was the rationale behind the historical origins of the earliest discourses on African identity and philosophy. Consequently, these discourses serve as contexts for Africans to grasp and persistently attempt historical re-evaluation and reconstruction of their past experiences in order to address and ameliorate issues emanating from the socio-political dispensation of their respective African countries. Furthermore, the need for cultural synthesis by Africans, called for by the aforementioned African scholars, is still relevant to Nigerians in particular and Africans in general. This is because Nigerians, just like every other socio-moral being, have to perennially attempt a metaphysical construction of moral schemes and values from diverse platforms- religious, secular, and socio-cultural etc., in order to embellish the dynamism in all aspects of their *Lebenswelt*. Although Nigeria is a democratic country, the theocratic nature of her civil society makes cultural synthesis a *conducio sine qua non* for peaceful co-habitation and cultural revival. Religion plays a vital role in the lives of Nigerians, but morality in the contemporary setting of most African countries ought not to be construed as solely derived from religion but on other factors such as “rationality, prudence, societal customs, habit and need for peaceful co-existence in the society” (Olatunji, 2007, p. 83). Their commitment to their respective faith communities and secular communities indicates a blend of values, and all attempts to make the condition of one of these communities become the condition for all others, as well as to secularize and militarize the domestic life, would and have always resulted in the upsurge in the violent cases of religious fundamentalism. As such there is need for an intellectual revolution to promote cultural synthesis, as against the violent approaches that have been used to suppress diversity and promote the national identity. Nigerians ought to delineate the meaning and purpose of their historical reconstruction – reflecting on and re-evaluating their historicity; and striving towards eliciting and curbing the elements that fostered alienation and exploitation in the past, but continues till the present. It is not surprising that most African countries have long gained their independences, but the vicissitudes of their lived experiences suggest the existence of neo-colonial mechanisms, one of which is religious ethno-nationalism and fundamentalism.

III. RELIGIOUS ETHNO-NATIONALISM AND FUNDAMENTALISM IN NIGERIA

Traces of ethnic diversity and rivalry, which raise the question of how best to accommodate ethnic and religious differences within the modern construct of nation, characterize the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial histories of most African countries. Prior to the advent of the colonial powers in Nigeria, tribes were at some point at war with each other over issues related to acquisition and usage of natural resources, one of which was mainly land. During that time as well, instances of internal *state* formation could be seen namely: Ife, Benin, Kanem-Bornu, Jukun, Sokoto, Nupe, Oyo, Ilorin, Egba, Ijebu, Ekiti, Abeokuta, and Cross Rivers etc. (Falola & Heaton, 2008, p. 16ff). Monarchy was then the main system of government; and the status and authority of traditional rulers were greatly observed by their loyal subjects within their respective localities or communities. These traditional rulers were the main custodians of the customs, traditions and religion of their respective communities, striving after uniformity in identity formation and value orientation to ensure peaceful co-existence among their subjects. They were the final arbiters in dispute settlements arising among their loyal subjects, and with their neighboring towns and communities. However, with the Islamic jihad of Usman Dan Fodio which attempted to get rid of the traditional practices in Islam, the advent of colonial powers alongside the Christian missionaries, and the institution of new system of government, the status of these rulers as well as the affinity to the customs, tradition and religion within these communities experienced subtle changes. For example, with the introduction of the indirect rule which incorporated these kings, the *Emirs* in the Northern part of Nigeria still had the status and structures of their authority intact, though politically modified. However, the ethnic sentiments of Nigerians remained strong in other regions, and some of the kings, such as Oba Ovaramwen, attempted to resist the introduction of foreign religion and system of government during the early years of the colonial era.

In the present day Nigerian context, such rivalry could be seen from some religio-ethnic groups demanding for their voice to be heard and represented at the national level, and for them to have access to their due dividends of the nation state and her natural resources. As Metumara (2010) rightly noted, “these rival ethnic groups pitched against each other in a contest for power and resources that have reflected in the political processes, sometimes threatening the corporate existence of the country”(p. 93). It was such rivalry that also

accompanied the rise of many nationalist movements initially known as 'tribal associations'. These 'tribal associations' also referred to as 'welfare leagues', 'tribal unions' or 'progressive unions', were initially tolerated by the colonial governments because they posed no political threats to them in the early years of their formation. But, they later on turned into 'political parties' in the move towards actualization of independent African 'nation-states' or the 'republics' (Davidson, 1994, pp. 72-78). However, with the gaining of her independence, Nigeria became faced with the prevalence of her citizens resorting to their religio-ethno nationalistic sentiments and tendencies threatening its survival as a geo-political entity. Factors such as the legacy of colonialism, the pluralistic nature and the heterogeneity of the polity, problem of a universally acceptable revenue allocation formula, lack of patriotism and loyalty of the people to their ethnic nationalities, the recent on-shore/off-shore dichotomy, party formation along ethnic lines, and monopoly of power by the major ethnic groups and the consequent marginalization of the minority groups, are responsible for the prevalence of ethno nationalism (Aluko & Ajani, 2009, p. 489). The phenomenon of religious ethnonationalism and fundamentalism in Nigeria would be subsequently explained.

IV. UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM

Fundamentalism is a broad cross-culturally applicable concept with a variety of aspects. It is "first and foremost characterized by a strong commitment to the basic truths of certain religion, belief, ideology or conviction" (Pavlovic, 2009, p. 55). This rhymes with the standpoint that fundamentalism is not only a phenomenon of religions, "but also of political and ideological worldview, which in all its forms is first and foremost depicted by separation, exclusion and extremism amidst a strong commitment to the basic truth of a certain religion, belief, ideology or conviction" (Stuckelberger & Hadsell, 2009, pp. 11-12). Similarly, Riesebrodt arguing from a sociological perspective identified fundamentalists to belong to a particular "sociomoral milieu" implying membership to a social movement wherein "members share attributes such as religion, regional tradition, economic position, and cultural orientation" (Riesebrodt, 1990, p. 29). Based on a similar stance, Hadsell and Stuckelberger defined fundamentalism as "a religious or political movement or attitude with a strict adherence to a set of basic principles, based on literal, not adapted interpretation, especially as a return to former principles" (Stuckelberger & Hadsell, 2009, p. 11). It is a "two-way exchange shaped by its interaction with modernity and its reaction against modernity" (Lawrence, 1995, p. xiv). It is "a meaning system that relies exclusively upon a sacred text", and wherein "the structure of the sacred text implicates the process of thought constituting the cognitive psychology of the fundamentalist believer" (Hood, Hill, & Williamson, 2005, p. 6). Religious fundamentalism is a reaction against modernity which cuts across themes namely: the quest for purity, the search for authenticity, totalism and activism, the necessity of certainty (scripturalism) and selective modernity, and the centering of the mythic past in the present (Antoun, 2009, p. 2). Similarly, hinting on this aspect of change and reaction to modernity Bruce Steve stated that fundamentalism is a rational response of traditionally religious people to social, political and economic changes that downgrade and constrain the role of religion in the public world (2000, p. 117). In line with the above, Lawrence listed five main traits of religious fundamentalism as follows: advocates of a pure minority viewpoint against a sullied majority or dominant group, oppositional, secondary-level male elites", end up generating "their own technical vocabulary which reflects "a polysemy of language by using special terms that bind insiders to one another while preempting interference from outsiders, and has historical antecedents but no ideological precursors" (Lawrence, 1995, pp. 100-101). Interestingly, all the above views shed light on religious fundamentalism in the Nigerian context, as would be subsequently articulated.

V. ISLAMISM IN NIGERIA

Fuller (1999) as cited by Mahmud noted that Islamism refers to "an effort to draw meaning out of Islam applicable to problems of contemporary governance, society, and politics". He also maintained that this definition "captures some aspects of other concepts related to Islam such as political Islam, fundamentalism, revivalism, and renewal" (Mahmud, 2004). It also highlights the relevance of Islam in Northern part of Nigeria despite the dynamism of the nature of Islamism in response to changes arising from socio-political and religious processes on the local and national levels respectively. Consequently, Islamism in Northern Nigeria, according to him, ought to be primarily understood as being determined by local conditions, namely: "the competition for spiritual and political influence in the region and the demands of Nigerian politics at the national level" (Mahmud, 2004). Prior to Usman Dan Fodio's religious jihad, attempts to blend some traditional rituals, values and practices into Islam could be seen in the Northern parts of Nigeria. Some of the then *emirs* and *sarkis* (rulers) even preferred indigenous traditional religion against Islam (Falola & Heaton, 2008, p. 62). But with the founding of the Sokoto caliphate in 1804, one of the initial efforts to propagate puritanist Islam and Islamic identity in Northern Nigeria was made by Dan Fodio. It provided the platform for Islam to "assume a public role in Northern Nigeria- serving as the source of identity and a medium of competition for resources and political powers" (Isizor, 2016). This *Fulbe* oriented religious *jihad* of Uthman Dan Fodio speeded up the establishment

of a Hausa-Fulani hegemony ruling class prefixed on the veneer of Islam in the Northern part of Nigeria, such that by the time of the independence, it has become a full blown political phenomenon to the point of casting political opposition in religious terms as departing from God (Tanko, 2008, pp. 112-113). In 1960, Late Sir Ahmadu Bello, who was then both the premier of the Northern region and the sultan of the Sokoto Caliphate, used his political position to foster Islamism in the Northern Nigeria. With the financial aids got from the Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, he built many Islamic schools, and set up the Jam'atu Nasril Islam (JNI) as an all purpose umbrella for the channeling of resources of finances for the propagation of Islam. However, Sir Bello's Islamist project was slowed down during the Nigerian Civil War, popularly known as the Biafra war, which lasted from 6th July, 1967 to 15th January, 1970. This was as a result of the Igbo ethnic group that wanted secession from the Nigerian government believed to be hugely controlled solely Northern-elites at the expense of their socio-political gains.

Another solidifying factor of this hegemony is the policy of indirect rule set up by the British right after the amalgamation of Southern and Northern protectorates, which bestowed self-government on the emirs and technically prevented Christian missionaries from carrying out their evangelical works in the Northern part of Nigeria. It further extolled Dan Fodio's legacy; the date for the celebration of the self-government coincided with the anniversary of Othman Dan Fodio's conquest of Sokoto caliphate; whereas the date mapped out for the formal declaration of the Northern People's Party (NPC) as the official political party for the Northerners coincided with the anniversary of national independence. Thus referring to Kukah's position, an impression was made on the Hausa-Fulani that Dan Fodio's legacy was to remain the reference point for Nigeria's policy; and his legatees forever the rulers of the Nigerian nation (Tanko, 2008, p. 112). Nowadays, the Hausa-Fulani hegemony still bears a strong hold among the Northern ruling elites of Nigeria and is the basis of political appointment in the Northern states.

Summarily put, certain factors brought about the Islamist project in Nigeria. The first was the desire to promote and establish a Muslim identity and state with the Sharia as the sole law binding on all citizens, a trend that began with Uthman Dan Fodio's puritanist Muslim jihad, and later promoted in the 1960s by the political jihad of Sir Ahmadu Bello aimed at establishing one united North. Whereas the former tried to get rid of pre-Islamic traditional religious practices in Islam, the latter used his political and religious position to promote the Islamization agenda in the North- emphasizing on Arabic education and Koranic school at the expense of its formal Western counterpart. There was also the religiousization of politics and vice versa in the Northern part of Nigeria by the ruling elites, who for fear of loss of power manipulated the religious sensibilities and identities of the locals to achieve their selfish interests. There were also instances where the execution of developmental projects in a state were accessed based on the religious or ethno-religious affiliation of both the political office holder who decides to execute the project and those of the locals (Yake, 2015).

Contrary to the popular notion that Islamism is characterized by extreme violence amidst a rejection of Western system of education and politics, Albert I.O. (2011) asserted that it arose out of the grassroots responses to bad governance in Nigeria, precisely from the abandoned Sharia projects initiated by the governors in some of the Northern states of Nigeria (p. 1). These Islamic fundamentalists, who initially promoted the adoption of Sharia in the northern states, were stripped of their religious and political significance, shortly after eleven states in the northern part of Nigeria enacted the Sharia- they were tagged enemies of these northern states for preaching against the corrupt practices of some governors in the Northern states of Nigeria. He further opined that the main enemy of Islamic sects; take for instance Boko Haram is not western education *per se*, but northern Nigerian leaders who have by their governance styles rendered western education not too useful to those outside the ruling elite (Oluwale, 2011, p. 3).

VI. CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALISM IN NIGERIA: AN INSIGHTFUL EXPOSE

In the Nigerian context, Christian fundamentalists either belonging to the conservative, evangelical, charismatic or Pentecostal groups, are characterized by their strong loyalties to biblical inerrancy, a charismatic leader, creationism and millennialist dispensationalism, as well as an avid emphasis on the divine compelling mandate to convert and win souls for Christ, as well as the practice of free and democratic availability of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Similarly, Gifford (1991) asserted that dispensationalism and Faith Gospel (prosperity gospel on health and wealth based on the dual notions of the world as evil and human dualism) stand out as the main characteristics of Christian fundamentalism in Nigeria, which flourished due to the preponderance of themes such as plagues, famines, and all kinds of disasters, drawn from the apocalyptic biblical books, and interpreted to designate all kinds of hardship and deprivation as revelations of the end-times predestined by God. Such a way of thinking engenders in the adherents "passivity and resignation in the face of poverty, sickness, deprivation", promotes "an interpretation of suffering to designate a sign of blessedness", and actively disempowers fundamentalist Nigerian Christians by luring them into downplaying the importance of development, or even in some cases dismissing it as irrelevant (Gifford, 1991). Towing the same line of reasoning, Christian fundamentalism in Nigeria has been defined as a pluralistic moral maxim and a reaction

against the ecclesiastical spiritual barrenness, unemployment, economic deprivation, tribalism, religious bigotry, the corruption of the secular government, social injustice, moral decadence, and the like, which is based on selected gospels and epistles centering on being “born again”, and the avoidance of illicit sexual relationship (Nmah & Amunnadi, 2011).

Accompanying this trend were obvious spiritual rejuvenation and revival programs in areas initially held to be exclusively Muslim enclaves. One of such places is *Sabon Gari*- outskirts in the Northern cities of Kano, Kaduna and Zaria, whose significance and impact initially did not bother the Northern elites. However, they later became “redeemed spaces” via the intensified evangelical activities of South-Easterners who expanded it into a socio-economic space, fully utilizing the commercial power and acquiring a distinctive Southern Christian identity. Many New Religious Movements (NRMs) sprang up and intensified their nationwide missionary strategies. There was the influx of protestant literature into the Nigerian tertiary institutions, the subsequent series of crusades and revivals by preachers from America and beyond, and the reactionary agenda to retain the Muslim identity and united North by the elites in the Northern region of Nigeria- who were eager to retain the political control of the region. In addition, some of these Pentecostals saw evangelization as an urgent task of Christians in order to prepare for Christ’s return (Gifford, 1991). Underlying such an ideology was a nationwide exclusivist theology of difference - some Christians in the bid to express their zealotry to evangelize, characterized both African Tradition Religion (A.T.R.) and Islam as evil. Shrines were burnt and the media evangelism was greatly utilized to spread their messages. Derogatory choices of words such as unbelievers were used during their evangelization outreach. The patience and tolerance of their host communities, the possibility of a gradual peaceful conversion and inter-religious dialogue were either neglected or not properly observed; which led to series of deadly and violent communal clashes between the majority of Muslim and Christians communities respectively.

The question of how best to achieve and control cultural revival in the modern era was another great factor that ushered in Christian fundamentalism in Nigeria. There was the desire to have African clergy in the hierarchy of the Nigerian Christendom and to implement the suppressed African expression in the doctrines, rites and rituals in these churches. The social phenomenon of Cultural Nationalism that eventually led to the founding of the United Native African Church in Lagos in August, 1981, emerged based on this mindset. This church accepted and judged polygamy and other traditional institutions to be compatible with the universal tenets of Christianity; held services in vernacular and wrote African hymns and songs (Okonkwo, 1998, p. 257). Some other aspects of fundamentalism in the Old and New Testament parts of the Holy Bible also informed the consciousness and the later galvanization of the growth of Christian fundamentalism in Nigeria. The Old Testament Biblical account of the revolt of Mattathias and his sons (1 Macc. 2: 15-25), and the New Testament Pauline fundamentalist credo of “salvation by grace through faith” both served as role models to some Christians in Nigeria, and led to the formation of the Methodist Evangelical Movement, Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion, Catholic Charismatic Renewal, Watchman Charismatic, Scripture Union Nigeria, Christian Association of Nigeria, Christian Council of Nigeria, Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria and so many similar groups operating in Nigeria (Nmah & Amunnadi, 2011, pp. 330-331).

VII. UNDERSTANDING RELIGIOUS ETHNONATIONALISM

Religious ethnonationalism according to Marty & Appleby occurs when the inherent elements of any religion that makes it both a consoler and a healer, are turned into weaponry of disruption and killing (1997, p. 3). In the Nigerian context, religions, amidst other factors such as tribe, language and cultural affinities, invariably constitute tools for social differentiation and succor to the citizens in their respective heterogeneous communities making up the thirty six states of the Federation. On the contrary, they have been interchangeably utilized to as weaponries to disrupt the political process and instigate extra-judicial killings and civil unrest on a large scale, and enact unending spirals of identity paradigm shift amongst Nigerians. Falola and Kukah in this regard noted that Nigerians in the 1970s began to see themselves as Muslims and Christians, and no longer in their ethnic or tribal identity (Kirk, 1998). Characteristic of the driving force behind such paradigm shifts are inter-ethnic mistrust, hate, segregation, prejudice, perceived domination, alienation and exploitation which began with the agitation of 1914 Lugard’s amalgamation and the later political restructuring of pre-independence Nigeria, but later got expanded in the 1966 coup d’état and counter coup d’état killings, and finally culminated in the Nigeria civil war. Erosion and disruption of the acculturating social processes that would have been put in place by the nascent democracy in Nigeria in order to cultivate the mindset that could have fostered dialogue of cultures, as well as the promotion of communal values and collective national identity among her citizens became the status quo. In the bid to ameliorate this situation, Yakubu Gowon established the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme in 1973, wherein university graduates were posted to serve in states outside their states of origin.

VIII. CHALLENGES AND IMPLICATIONS TO THE CULTIVATION OF AFRICAN IDENTITY, *WELTANSCHAUUNG* AND VALUES IN A GLOBAL AGE

The main ethical challenge of religious ethnonationalism and fundamentalism lies in its resort to violence and hindrance of the cultivation of values and communal *Weltanschauung* to enable Nigerians enjoy peaceful co-existence, promote and encounter intercultural exchange, socio-cultural change and development, amidst methodological reconstruction of their history without ignoring each other's rights, alterity and cultural traditions. From the discourse on African identity, we could infer that the term African identity involves a synthesis of elements such as culture, tradition, religion, ethnicity, and geographical location. Any attempt to bifurcate these elements is tantamount to stereotyping and denying their historical specificity. The same is applicable to the phenomenology of the Nigerian identity. Its religio-ethnic diversity remains a rallying point for Nigerians to refute attempts of being imposed a stereotyped identity. Although the nature of the state-religion relationship remains perplexed and religions plays a vital role in all aspects of their *Lebenswelt*, the tendency to designate Nigeria a non-secular state or divide her along religious lines implicit of Islamism, definitely obstructs a construction of values to ensure national unity, and worsens the already existing inter-ethnic mistrust and prejudice. The recent three months ultimatum issued by the Arewa Consultative Youth Forum (ACYF) for Igbos in the 19 northern states of Nigeria vividly captures this point (Ujah, 2017). Nigerian civil societies are pluralistic and heterogeneous. Her citizens within the constitutional provision have the right to reside and enjoy the protection by the government in any of the 36 states making up the Federation.

Relating the above to the question of national integration in the Nigerian context, it becomes obvious that the psycho-social and normative aspects of the religious and regional identities of a greater majority of her citizens shed light on why some citizens have resisted and continue to resist being manipulated and exploited by some dubious elites. Nigeria is neither an Islamic state nor a Christian state. It is secular by her constitution. Constantly faced with this reality and task of having to live together under one big umbrella Nigeria, either as residents, citizens or indigenes of the thirty six states of the federation, Nigerians necessarily and unceasingly do not fail to quest for autonomy, self-actualization, recognition and preservation, and strive to cultivate values and communal *Weltanschauung* to foster peaceful co-existence. This has been correctly termed the national question by thinkers like Ismagilova and Odion-Akhaine- who respectively upheld that it consists of unresolved contradictions namely ethnic oppression and ethnic inequality that persistently entrenches Nigeria in a vicious circle of crises (Akara, Udaw, & Omimawo, 2013, p. 53).

Brian Fay was right when noted that the interactional nature of human social identity formation are not mere private mental states existing in the mind of an individual but are constituted out of social practices- rules roles, institutions, laws, and conventions" (1996, p. 41). Relating this assertion to the issue of national question and national integration in the Nigerian context, the social (national) integration would definitely involve having a shared cognitive orientation or framework that would enable her citizens to define the parameter of their interactions by making acceptable norms and the sanctioning of deviant behavior meaningful; enabling them to anticipate the consequences of their actions (Akara, Udaw, & Omimawo, 2013, p. 51). In line with Akara et al (2013), I strongly agree that the experience of several attempts of ethnic oppression and ethnic inequality has made such a shared cognitive and normative framework to be subtle or entirely lacking in a greater majority of Nigerians. This poses far greater hindrances to the cultivation of communal *Weltanschauung* and values among Nigerians and to a reasonable extent question the legitimacy of the Nigerian nation state and the efficacy of the sovereignty of her citizens. That is why an intellectual revolution aimed at re-instating such a framework remains the most viable option to ensure and promote the greatly needed sense of national integration and identity.

IX. PLAUSIBILITY OF INTELLECTUAL REVOLUTION

Intellectual revolution backed up by dialogue remains a viable option for cultivation of communal values and *Weltanschauung* to sustain national unity, compared to social revolutions implicit of war and violence. The coup d'état and counter coup d'état killings, and the Nigerian civil war has bequeathed some Nigerians with inter-ethnic mistrust and prejudice, of which the Nigerian government has been attempting to ameliorate. The series of violence arising from the religious fundamentalism and inter-ethnic clashes now aggravates this problem, with poverty and illiteracy been the key factors influencing the former. In this regard, Ake (1996) as cited in (Metumara, 2010) was of the view that Nigeria's socio-economic history reveals that her citizens experience persistent impoverishment and socio-economic insecurity that alienates them from the state, and it is this condition that pushes people to seek solace in primary group identity. More so, the high illiteracy rate that definitely "encumbers the appearance of civil awareness that could have allowed the masses to be abreast of intricacies of modern government and the real issues therein" lures them into becoming "vulnerable recruiters by self-seeking elites that present ethnicity as panacea for their impoverishment" (Metumara, 2010). This is the case with the *almajiris* in the 12 northern states of Nigeria, who because of their poor status become lured into being recruited and paid as members of fundamentalist group. Consequently, the series of re-

occurring violent conflicts in Nigeria, some of which are related to religion, call for an intellectual revolution aimed at returning religions to their original sources- enabling adherents to know and live their religious history without infringing on the rights of others.

Such an intellectual revolution would aim for long-term solutions, as against the short-term solutions proffered by war and the militarization of domestic life. It would target the civil society and civil society organizations; include debates and creating awareness on the need to bridge the gap created between praxis and theory on religious and philosophical realms; provide a dynamic perspective on the *Lebenswelt* of Nigerians in order to avert the manipulation of the religious sensitivities and identities of some of her citizens to perpetuate and exacerbate conflicts often arising from the struggle over the right to natural resources and the country's dividends. This point is captured by Odudoye's assertion that the identity crisis in Africa, especially among the urbanized, the Western-educated, and the Christians, [Muslims], may be attributed to the loss of a dynamic perspective on life, which comes from knowing and living one's religious cultural history (Odudoye, 1986, p. 54). Within the framework of this dynamic perspective is an implicit philosophical stance and attitude which goes beyond the mere blaming of the colonial forces and the negative impacts of the ideologies and practices on Africans during the colonial and post-colonial era of the now African nation states (during which most African thinkers focused on asserting the authenticity of African identity, personality, experience and discourse), to foster the possibility of Nigerians to engage in a critical and hermeneutical interpretation of their historicity, heritage, religion and identity; while seeking for suitable solutions to issues emanating from their respective contexts, on subjective and inter-subjective realms, in the present day contemporary African nation states, one of which is the religious fundamentalism in Nigeria.

X. IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY: RETHINKING THE TWO CONCEPTS

Identity and community are two important inter-related concepts which point to the physical and psychological aspects of one's national identity. As long as the nation state, Nigeria continues to exist and has its sovereignty enshrined in her constitution, her citizens would perennially seek after the national question- the meaning of their lives and their place in their respective communities. Nigerians belonging to secular and non-secular groupings or communities ought to have frames of references that would enable them to synthesize communal values and *Weltanschauung* –forming the basis of their value orientation and strong social ties to them. Such that each social setting promotes its own kind of rationality, invests its own meaning into the idea of rational life strategy (Bauman, 2000, pp. 107-108). Nigeria, as a nation state, consists of multi-ethnic and culturally diverse citizens with different values and interests. The difference in the patterns of these communities and cultural differences among her citizens in terms of religion, language, beliefs, norms and *Weltanschauung* indicate their ability to self-actualize themselves while creating their own histories and civilizations. In connection with this Bauman noted that a wide and growing gap exists between the condition of individuals *de jure* and their chances to become individuals *de facto*- that is, to gain control over their fate and make the choices they truly desire. Insisting that it is from this abysmal gap that the most poisonous effluvia contaminating the lives of contemporary individuals emanate, he further held that such a gap however cannot be bridged by individual efforts alone: not by means and resources available within the self-managed life-politics (Bauman, 2000, p. 39). Sad but true, some politicians have intermittently utilized this loophole to stir up ethnic and religious conflicts in the 36 states of the federation and it also explains the accompanying rise of many religio-ethnic militia groups such as Boko Haram (BH), Oodua People's Congress (OPC), Mass Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), Independent People of Biafra (IPOB), to mention but a few. Since Nigeria, as enshrined in the 2000 Amended Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religions, is a secular state, but the enactment of Sharia in the 12 Northern states has created a wide and growing gap between the collective sense of national identity and the obtainable socio-political realities in the Sharia states in Nigeria. Also, such provisions enshrined in section 38 of the Federal Constitution of Nigeria extol the ideals of nationalism while protecting the rights of the individual. However, depending on the apparatus set up by these respective 36 states in order to delineate the communal *Weltanschauung* and the development of their citizens, tensions have always emerged from the perplexing nature of the state-religion relationship existing in Nigeria, and to the extent to which individuals can demand for their rights from their various states of origin and residence, cognizant of the fact that these 36 states can in turn exercise their powers on them.

XI. RECOMMENDATIONS

An intellectual revolution that is not backed with concrete action is futile. Towing Nkrumah's line of thought, Nigerians are encouraged to promote positive actions within their civil society which symbolizes the sum of those forces seeking social justice in terms of destroying all forms of exploitation of their religious sensibilities and identities, and all attempts to impose new identity on them. In this regard, the creation of better enhanced avenues political participation would be beneficial. Optimistic that there are indigenes of the 36 states

in Nigeria who in their aspiration for self-determination yearn for religious syncretism in order to enhance their shared psycho-social, normative and cognitive framework underlying their identity as Nigerians; implementing cultural adaptation and ecumenism amidst intra-religious and inter-religious dialogue amongst adherents of African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam making up the Nigerian civil society, would help avert possible imposition of one religious identity on others. The intra-religious dialogue would aim to engage the sects in a particular religious denomination in a dialogue to boost tolerance among each other, whereas the inter-religious dialogue would do same, but would provide platforms for Nigerians from different religious denominations to practice a dialogue of spirituality aimed at promoting mutual respect, tolerance and peaceful cohabitation among each other. It is here that more concerted effort is needed from the civil society organizations to curb the violent protests following the enactment of Sharia amidst the political agenda to maintain Hausa-Fulani hegemony of ruling elites venerated on Islam in the twelve northern states. The seemingly current romance over affiliation with the Fulani blood via miscegenation by the most Hausa elites is simply because of the *Sarauta* (traditional power benefits) underlying the Hausa-Fulani hegemony, which could be deconstructed, if such concept would be removed as a requirement for entering and ascending the ladder of the political hierarchy in the northern states (Tanko, 2008, p. 117). This would also ensure moderation in the application of Islam in solving the socio-political issues arising in the 12 states northern states, one of which is the clamoring for autonomy by the tribes and indigenes of the northern states that do not have the Hausa-Fulani lineage such as the Beroms, Tivs, Jukun and Kanuri; and who for histories of ethnic oppression and inequality, would not wish to be identified as Hausa-Fulani, but would rather insist that such puritanist Islamist agenda both alienates and suppresses the expression of their tribal identity in all its ramifications. The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) now serve as watchdog to monitor the forces behind JN1 and ensure that Nigeria still upholds a secular status.

In addition, Nigerian civil societies ought to create more awareness on civic responsibilities and rights; and serve as the voice to the downtrodden in their respective communities making up the 36 states of the federation. This would open up avenues for Nigerian citizens to enjoy their liberty of constructive political participation. The recent rejection of the three months ultimatum by Arewa Consultative Youth Forum (AYCF) demanding the Igbos in the 19 northern states to relocate from these states, and for all northerners living in the South-East zones to do same, by the Federal government, the Borno State Governor and Chairman of the Northern States Governors Forum, Kashim Shettima, the Kaduna State Governor, Nasir El-Rufai, the Middle Belt Consultative Youth Forum (MBCYF), Ohanaeze Ndigbo and others (Vanguard Reporters, 2017), is a laudable step to ensure the rights of citizens to reside in any part of the country without any form of hindrance enshrined in the Section 41, subsection 1 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution Amended is maintained in these regions.

Holding a Sovereign National Conference would serve a platform to dialogue and reconstruct Nigeria's historical past and proffer lasting solutions to the national question. It would discuss on the need Nigerian constitution to incorporate rotational presidency among the six geo-political zones. Being a Muslim, a Christian or an adherent of Traditional/Indigenous Religion, ought not to be considered as the main criteria to be either voted for or being elected for political positions. Engaging the Nigerian civil society in lively debates centering on the question of Nigerian citizenship and its meaning in the face of Islamism and Christian fundamentalism that challenges the notion of collective national identity, would be a good avenue to achieve to promote such. The Kaduna-based Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum had already begun to respond to this issue and creating more awareness (Mahmud, 2004). The BAOBAB for Woman's Human Right is another civil society organization that promotes the rights of woman via improving the customary law, knowledge, exercise and development of rights under religious law. They uphold an intellectual revolution principle evident in their call for a change of the some aspects of the Sharia implying prejudice and violation of women rights; for instance women need four witnesses against the two needed by men, in order to prove their innocence, even in cases of rape. The key word here is moderation. The move for the adoption of full Sharia in the 12 northern states of Nigeria should be discouraged on the grounds that it presents a kind of neo-colonialism and manipulation tool for the ruling elites to spread their strict forms of Saudi Salafism which is Wahhabism. It might play into the hands of politicians eager to make the conditions, values and norms of a particular faith community, Islam, the basis for them to suppress the cultural peculiarities and right of the minorities (Christians, non-Hausa-Fulani groups like Tiv and Beroms etc.) to the freedom of religion and worship, and control the propagation of the alienating puritanist Arab-Muslim identity in the predominantly Muslim dominated northern states of the Federation.

However, it is pertinent to note that not all the conflicts arising in Nigeria are ipso facto religious conflicts. Religion has only been utilized to exacerbate ethnic conflicts arising from the struggle for the rights to enjoy the democratic dividends of the country's natural resources- the crude oil and the revenue it generates. Such a troubled past and pivotal historical position at which Nigeria stands today calls for a critical examination of how and to what extent religious discourse and praxis can either serve to extend or abrogate the rights of

individuals in their communities. Hence, the onus lies on Nigerian religious leaders to expose the non-religious basis of ethno-political and economic conflicts, and to condemn them with all forcefulness and without equivocation (Ukwuegbu, 2008, p. 36). Pope John Paul II's declaration at the World Summit of Religion and Peace that religion must not be allowed to serve as a pretext for conflicts, especially where religious, ethnic and cultural identities intermingle and interface; and that no one who professes faith in the almighty and merciful God can in the name of the same God dare to kill his brother or inflict a physical injury (Ukwuegbu, 2008, p. 40). Nigerian Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) has carried out campaigns arguing on the sacredness of human life. In the light of the mayhem and rampant bloodshed accompanying the Boko Haram crisis in Northern Nigeria, NIREC released a newspaper advert captioned "Human Life is Sacred" which was co-signed by the Sultan of Sokoto, Muhammed Sa'ad Abubakar, Archbishop John Onayekan NIREC's co-chairperson, and Professor Is-hag Oloyode NIREC's Co-ordinator/Executive Secretary (Albert, 2011). NIREC also abhorred Yusuf's (Boko Haram Sectarian leader) misrepresentation of Islam, and the manner in which he was executed. Islam and Christianity are religions of peace; hence a rethink of the methods of evangelization utilized by Nigerian Christians and Muslims is of utmost importance. Both Christian and Islamic extremists have engaged in demonization projects, using derogatory languages such as *kafirai* (unbelievers). Since religion is one of the bases for instructions and sanctions, and a central factor in African culture, norms, value system, and traditions (Lenshie & Johnson, 2012, p. 47), excessive zeal which has also been witnessed in the name of evangelization and conversion within Christian and Islamic contexts resulting in violent protests ought not to be condoned by the leaders of various religious denominations in Nigeria. Rather, they ought to promote a religio-moral education for their followers to aid the clear examination of their consciences and to differentiate with all clarity between the various dimensions or elements of any concrete conflict- ethnic, political, or economic (Ukwuegbu, 2008, p. 40).

Resorting to violence as means of settling disputes, gaining converts and religio-political control of a region characteristic of religious fundamentalism in Nigeria would further worsen the already exploited religious and ethnic identities and sensibilities of her citizens. Great lessons abound from the Nigerian civil war wherein many lives were lost, and the chances of fully restoring mutual trust between the ethnic groups drastically reduced. As such, all the religious denominations in Nigeria urgently need to redefine the approach they take as they encounter each other. The exclusivist and inclusivist approaches are to a reasonable extent no longer effective in promoting the communal *Weltanschauung* of Nigerians. Instead, pluralism ought to be promoted within the religious and secular institutions of learning in the thirty six states making up the geo-political entity, Nigeria. Such a pluralistic attitude also ought to be reflected in the basic religious instruction in the curricula of schools in Nigeria- featuring the three religions of African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam. Conflict and Peace resolution studies in the higher institutions of learning in Nigeria would also foster this initiative. This could be fostered by deconstructing and contextualizing theological thoughts to incorporate the African communal *Weltanschauung* implied in the values of solidarity, tolerance, and pluralism. One of such concepts is the notion of community obtainable in the traditionalists, Christian and Muslim contexts in Nigeria. Furthermore, the Internet and social media platforms which are great tools of education and communication ought to be used in campaigning against the resort to violence in the name of promoting ones religion. The Federal Government of Nigeria urgently needs to sponsor and promote communal *Weltanschauung* among her citizens via ads or any artistic form featuring top religious leaders in the aforementioned religions standing against such demeaning attempts. If she could campaign for one Nigeria during the Nigerian civil war, she ought to do so now to avert chances of such killings escalating to another civil war. The recent influx of viral videos and posts on the Arewa groups call for Igbos to leave the 19 northern states of the Federation, and on the call for Biafra, would substantiate the need for these ads to be backed up by dialogue among these stakeholders would forestall the possible resort to violence and war.

XII. CONCLUSION

This paper has served to present theme of cultural synthesis in some of the earliest discourses on African identity. Articulating religious fundamentalism in Nigeria as a neo-colonial tool to exploit and manipulate the religious sensibilities and identities of Nigerians by elites, it links such attempts to the endless spirals of identity paradigm shifts experienced by a greater majority of Nigerians- implicit of the attempts to resist such manipulative and exploitative attempts characterized by huge undertones of ethnic inequality and oppression. It then concludes that it is only an intellectual revolution supported by dialogue would create the shared psycho-social and cognitive framework needed for Nigerians to promote a communal *Weltanschauung* and cultural synthesis in order to ensure national identity and integration, in a nation whose survival as a united geo-political entity is excessively threatened and feeble. We might be Christians, Muslims or adherents of Traditional/Indigenous Religion with different ethnicity, but we are most importantly humans, and ought to cherish the sanctity of human lives, and collaborate in creating avenues for enhanced political participation,

mutual and symbiotic co-existence in our heterogeneous but one nation, or else the labors of our past heroes, who upheld the unity of Nigeria, would be in vain.

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Jude Chukwuebuka Okafor. "Rethinking Religious Ethnonationalism and Fundamentalism in Nigeria: Prospects for Cultivating New National Identity Weltanschauung and Values in a Global Age." IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) 22.7 (2017): 52-63.