

Nigerian Economy in The Throes of Politics and Religion

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Abstract. Nigeria's population in 2025 is estimated to be approximately 237.5 million, according to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA, 2025), making her the most populous country in Africa. The country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is projected at \$2.573 trillion, maintaining its position as the continent's largest economy. When the country gained independence in 1960, it has a sharing hope of achieving a qualitative economy development and even structural transformation. Sooner than later, it started experiencing period of boom and bust. Unfortunately, the economy was later brought down to her knees, struggling from all ends to come up again. The challenges that affected Nigeria economy are not far-fetched, they stem from religio-political conflicts which were manifested through the Boko-Haram and ISWAP insurgency in the north-east, banditry and kidnappings in the north-west and the farmer-header clashes in the middle belt of Nigeria. The Nigeria economy is intricately linked with the country's politics and religion which have significantly influenced its development trajectory. The Country has a north/south dichotomy and the religion rivalry between the two dominant religions, thereby resulting into shaping the political dynamics of the country negatively at the expense of economic productivity and citizen welfare. This paper explores the complex dynamics between politics, religion and the economy in Nigeria, how these factors intersect to shape the country's growth and development. This work aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between religion and politics viz-a-viz the socio-economic growth of the country.

Keywords: Religion, Politics, Islam

1. Introduction

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation and one of its largest economies, continues to grapple with a paradox of wealth and instability. Despite vast natural resources and a vibrant labour force, the country's economic growth has been consistently undermined by the entanglement of politics, religion, and insecurity. Since the return to democratic rule in 1999, governance has been marred by ethno-religious patronage, corruption, and weak institutional frameworks that erode public trust and economic confidence (Adebajo, 2019). The rise of violent non-state actors, particularly Boko Haram and various terrorist factions, has further destabilized regional economies,

displaced millions, and impeded agricultural and industrial productivity (Agbibo, 2022). In addition, the escalation of kidnapping for ransom and recurrent farmer-herder conflicts have imposed economic costs through loss of labour, food insecurity, and disrupted rural livelihoods (Okoli & Lenshie, 2021). Consequently, the Nigerian economy remains in a state of chronic vulnerability, caught in the throes of political contestation and religious tension.

Existing scholarship offers important insights into the political and religious dimensions of Nigeria's economic challenges. Studies by Adebajo (2019) and Suberu (2020) demonstrate that political patronage and sectarian allegiances shape fiscal allocations and policy outcomes, leading to regional inequalities. Olofin and Obadan (2021) emphasize that economic reforms often fail due to elite capture and weak institutional enforcement, exacerbated by ethno-religious divisions. Meanwhile, Agbibo (2022) interprets Boko Haram's insurgency not only as a religious rebellion but also as a response to socio-economic exclusion and state neglect. Similarly, Okoli and Lenshie (2021) argue that the farmer-herder crisis reflects deeper economic pressures aggravated by governance failure and climate-induced resource competition. While these studies are valuable, few integrate these interlocking variables into a holistic framework that captures the simultaneous influence of politics, religion, and insecurity on economic performance.

The rationale for this study lies in addressing this fragmentation in existing literature. Despite multiple policy interventions, ranging from security reforms to agricultural subsidies, the Nigerian economy continues to underperform, suggesting that conventional approaches overlook the interconnected nature of political and religious factors driving economic instability. This paper therefore seeks to examine how political and religious dynamics interact to shape Nigeria's economic outcomes, focusing specifically on the manifestations of Boko Haram insurgency, terrorism, kidnapping, and farmer-herder conflicts. Such an approach is crucial for developing multidimensional strategies that can tackle the systemic roots of economic decline rather than its symptoms.

This study is guided by the following research questions: 1) How do political and religious structures influence Nigeria's economic policy and performance? 2) In what ways have Boko Haram, terrorism, kidnapping, and farmer-herder conflicts disrupted economic stability and productivity?

Accordingly, the objectives are to: 1) Analyze the interplay between political and religious forces in shaping Nigeria's economic environment, 2) Evaluate the economic impacts of terrorism, kidnapping, and communal conflicts on key sectors such as agriculture and trade, and 3) Propose an integrated analytical framework for understanding and mitigating the political-religious roots of economic insecurity in Nigeria.

This study therefore addresses a critical gap in the literature by offering an integrative perspective that links political and religious determinants with economic performance in Nigeria. Unlike prior research that treats insecurity and governance as

separate phenomena, this paper conceptualizes them as mutually reinforcing forces that sustain economic fragility. Its novelty lies in constructing a hybrid analytical framework that synthesizes political economy, religious ideology, and conflict economics to explain how political manipulation of religious sentiment perpetuates insecurity and, consequently, economic stagnation. By situating Nigeria's economic trajectory within the interplay of politics and religion, this study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the systemic factors inhibiting sustainable development.

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative research approach using a descriptive-analytical method to examine the complex relationship between politics, religion, and economic development in Nigeria. The qualitative approach is considered appropriate because the study focuses on understanding socio-political and religious dynamics that influence economic conditions rather than measuring variables quantitatively. The research primarily relies on secondary data obtained from academic literature, policy reports, journal articles, books, and credible institutional publications related to Nigeria's political economy, religious dynamics, and security challenges.

Data collection was conducted through an extensive literature review. Relevant sources include scholarly works on political economy, religion and conflict studies, and security studies, as well as reports from international organizations, government agencies, and research institutions. Particular attention was given to literature discussing Boko Haram insurgency, farmer-herder conflicts, kidnapping, and the broader role of religion and politics in shaping Nigeria's development trajectory. These sources were systematically reviewed to identify recurring themes, conceptual arguments, and empirical findings relevant to the study.

The analytical process followed a thematic analysis framework. First, the collected literature was categorized into key themes, including political governance and economic policy, religious influence on social structures, and the impact of insecurity on economic productivity. Second, the study examined how these themes intersect and reinforce one another in the Nigerian context. Through this approach, the research identifies patterns that demonstrate how political competition, religious mobilization, and socio-economic grievances contribute to persistent economic instability.

To strengthen the analytical framework, the study adopts an interdisciplinary perspective by integrating insights from political economy, religious studies, and conflict analysis. This integrative approach enables the research to move beyond isolated explanations and instead present a holistic interpretation of how political and religious dynamics collectively shape economic outcomes in Nigeria.

Overall, this methodological approach allows the study to develop a comprehensive understanding of the interconnected factors influencing Nigeria's economic challenges and to propose a more integrated analytical framework for interpreting the relationship between politics, religion, and economic development.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Religion: A Tool for National Development - Malaysia and UAE Experiences

Religion, particularly Islam, has played a critical role in shaping the socio-economic and educational development of both Malaysia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). As Islamic nations, both countries integrate religious principles into governance, finance, and education. Religion remains a significant force in national development, influencing values, governance, and policies. In Malaysia and the UAE, Islam is the state religion, forming the moral and legal foundation for public life (Al-Azmeh, 2020). Both countries exemplify how Islamic values such as justice (adl), charity (zakat), and public welfare (maslahah) guide nation-building efforts.

Islamic principles play a major role in shaping the economic landscape of Malaysia and the UAE. In Malaysia, Islamic finance is a pillar of the national economy. Institutions such as Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad and Tabung Haji (the Pilgrims Fund Board) promote ethical savings and investment practices aligned with Shariah principles (Hassan & Lewis, 2022). Malaysia's leadership in the global sukuk market and Islamic banking reflects its success in integrating religious ethics with economic growth (Bank Negara Malaysia, 2023).

Similarly, the UAE has positioned itself as a global hub for Islamic finance and the halal economy. The government's Dubai Islamic Economy Strategy emphasizes Shariah-compliant industries including Islamic banking, halal food, and tourism (Al Qasimi, 2021). Through institutions like the Dubai Islamic Bank, the UAE promotes financial inclusion, ethical investment, and sustainable development (World Bank, 2023).

In the area of Social Development, Religion has also been instrumental in promoting social justice and welfare in both nations. In Malaysia, for instance, the administration of zakat and waqf funds ensures redistribution of wealth and support for the underprivileged (Mohamed & Rahman, 2020). Programs under Malaysia Madani stress compassion, accountability, and justice as Islamic social values promoting unity and inclusiveness.

In the UAE, the Zakat Fund and Awqaf Authority implement Islamic welfare mechanisms to assist low-income families, fund healthcare, and provide scholarships (Khan, 2021). These initiatives demonstrate how Islamic teachings on compassion (rahmah) and charity foster social cohesion and moral governance.

3.2 Claims and Counterclaims against Muslims' Involvement in Terrorism in Nigeria

Bill Maher, an American comedian and television host, recently stirred controversy by asserting that Nigeria is experiencing a "Christian genocide" perpetrated by Islamist groups such as Boko Haram. Maher claimed that over 100,000 Christians have been killed since 2009 and that approximately 18,000 churches have been destroyed. However, critics argue that these claims are sensationalized and oversimplify Nigeria's deeply rooted and multifaceted conflicts, which are influenced by ethnic, economic, political, and resource-based factors in addition to religion (BBC News, 2023; International Crisis Group, 2024).

Scholars and conflict analysts contend that violence in Nigeria cannot be attributed solely to religious persecution. Instead, it results from the intersection of

terrorism, organized crime, farmer–herder clashes, and political instability (Campbell, 2020; Nwankpa, 2021). Nigeria’s conflict dynamics are complex, and they often blur religious lines—both Christians and Muslims have been victims of attacks and displacement (Amnesty International, 2024).

Furthermore, Nigeria’s security architecture reflects both religious and regional diversity, as key leadership positions are held by individuals from both Christian and Muslim backgrounds. This diversity challenges the perception of state-sponsored religious bias (Premium Times, 2024). Critics have also emphasized that exaggerated statistics and unverified reports from foreign commentators, risk fueling sectarian narratives and deepening mistrust among communities (Human Rights Watch, 2024).

3.3 The Multifaceted Challenges Facing Nigeria

The challenges facing Nigeria as a nation are multifaceted and deeply entrenched. Across the country, countless children go to bed hungry, youths are disillusioned, and women suffer in silence. Addressing these issues is not only germane but also an urgent national priority (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2024).

Nigeria today grapples with internal aggression, which is deeply woven into the fabric of society. This aggression does not always erupt in headlines, yet it manifests in the hollow eyes of unemployed graduates, the muted pain of battered women, and the quiet despair of communities neglected by development (Omoju et al., 2023).

One visible expression of this internal aggression is the farmer–herder conflict, which continues to destroy livelihoods and deepen ethnic fault lines. These clashes are not merely about land; they are about identity, survival, and the absence of effective conflict-resolution mechanisms. They reflect a state that has failed to mediate competing interests and foster peaceful coexistence (Dabo et al., 2022).

The same aggression is evident in youth restiveness, driven by chronic unemployment, underemployment, and exclusion from decision-making processes. When a significant proportion of young people cannot find meaningful work, frustration becomes combustible. The streets become classrooms for disillusionment, and radical ideologies find fertile ground (NBS, 2023; Vanguard News, 2023).

Religious intolerance and ethnic polarization further fracture Nigeria’s national unity, turning diversity into division. Places of worship have, in some cases, become battlegrounds, while political rhetoric increasingly weaponizes identity. The failure to build inclusive narratives and ensure equitable representation has fueled suspicion, resentment, and alienation among various groups (Oriola & Ajayi, 2023).

In the modern era, this aggression also manifests in digital spaces through hate speech, misinformation, cyberbullying, and online radicalization. What were once heralded as tools of empowerment, the internet and social media, have become arenas of hostility, undermining social cohesion and spreading divisive ideologies at alarming speed (Adebiyi et al., 2025; Akinsanya, 2024; Jimada, 2023; Nwadike, 2023)..

3.4 Boko Haram and the Havoc It Has Caused in Nigeria

Boko Haram is an Islamist extremist group that originated in northeastern Nigeria in the early 2000s. Its name translates loosely from Hausa and Arabic as “Western education is forbidden.” The group was founded by Mohammed Yusuf in

Maiduguri, Borno State, and initially began as a religious movement opposing Western influence and corruption in Nigerian society. However, after Yusuf's death in police custody in 2009, Boko Haram evolved into a violent insurgent organization under Abubakar Shekau and later splinter factions (Onuoha & Oyewole, 2018; Britannica, n.d.).

Boko Haram's main objective is to establish an Islamic state governed by Sharia law in Nigeria, rejecting Western education, democracy, and secular governance. Its campaigns of violence have targeted government institutions, schools, churches, mosques, and civilians (Human Rights Watch, 2012).

Since 2009, Boko Haram has been responsible for numerous atrocities, including bombings, suicide attacks, mass kidnappings, and village massacres. The 2014 Chibok schoolgirls abduction, where over 270 girls were kidnapped, remains one of the group's most infamous acts (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.). Schools have been burned, students abducted, and communities devastated. Over 35,000 people have been killed since 2009, and more than 2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) have fled their homes, with thousands seeking refuge in Niger, Chad, and Cameroon (Yayla & Yahaya, 2023).

Boko Haram's activities have destroyed agriculture, trade, and infrastructure in the northeast, leading to billions in economic losses and discouraging investment (Onuoha & Oyewole, 2018). Hundreds of schools have been destroyed, thousands of children deprived of education, and fear of schooling has spread throughout the northeast (Human Rights Watch, 2012).

The Nigerian government launched several military operations, including Operation Lafiya Dole, while the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), comprising Nigeria, Chad, Niger, and Cameroon, coordinated regional counterinsurgency efforts (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.). Although Boko Haram has lost significant territory, factions like ISWAP remain active.

Communities affected by Boko Haram suffer from widespread trauma, displacement, poverty, and social breakdown. Survivors experience long-term psychological harm and loss of livelihoods (Yayla & Yahaya, 2023).

3.5 The Herder-Farmer Clashes in Nigeria

The herder-farmer conflict in Nigeria has escalated into a major source of communal violence and insecurity in recent decades. Historically rooted in pastoralist-farmer relations, the clashes now cause "significant loss of life, displacement, and destruction of property

Nomadic Fulani herders and sedentary farming communities have coexisted in Nigeria for centuries. Migrant pastoralists first entered northern Nigeria as early as the 15th-16th centuries, and by the 19th century Fulani jihads further extended their reach into the Middle Belt. Over time the Fulani became the dominant pastoral group (constituting over 90% of Nigerian herders) and often integrated with local farmers, especially the Hausa and other ethnic communities. Abbass (2012) notes that farmer-pastoralist disputes have existed since the beginnings of agriculture, with their intensity rising or falling in response to economic and environmental pressures

In colonial and early-postcolonial Nigeria, land and grazing were largely managed by customary systems. However, as Nigeria's population grew and

agricultural development expanded, traditional grazing routes became encroached. By the late 20th century, especially after democratic governance resumed in 1999, herder-farmer clashes became markedly more frequent and deadly. For example, studies report that in recent years thousands of fatalities and the broad extent of human displacement have been recorded in these conflicts. In southern Kaduna State alone, the conflict has repeatedly flared despite security interventions, indicating a deep-rooted historical trajectory. In summary, whereas farmers and herders once managed shared resources through long-standing arrangements, historical changes in land use, administration, and population have transformed that relationship into one characterized by violent competition.

3.6 The herder-farmer crisis in Nigeria is driven by multiple interrelated factors:

The most fundamental cause is competition over scarce resources. Nigeria's growing population and agricultural expansion have placed intense pressure on land and water. Fulani herders rely on grazing land and water for their cattle, while farmers need arable plots and irrigation. Climate variability (drought in the Sahel, desertification) has pushed herders further south in search of pasture, leading to overlap with farming areas. As Abbass (2012) reports, "increases in herd sizes" and climate change have "put great pressures on the land" and provoked conflict as both groups vie for fertile "fadama" (riverine) lands.

Linked to resource competition is the expansion of farming into traditional grazing corridors. Governmental and private development of farmland, irrigation projects, and sedentarization policies have reduced nomadic grazing reserves. Farmers increasingly convert marginal and wetland areas (once used seasonally by herders) into permanent crops. When herds enter cultivated fields to graze or drink, crops are often destroyed, igniting tit-for-tat attacks. Dan-Azumi (2025) highlights that the "expansion of cultivated lands" and "encroachment of grazing fields" by farmers has effectively left herders "with no alternative to neither retreat nor surrender," making violent conflict "inevitable" when grazing space is removed.

The conflict also bears strong ethno-religious and social dimensions. Most Fulani herders are Muslim, while many of the Middle Belt farmers are Christian or from different ethnic groups, and episodes of violence are often framed as ethnic or religious aggression. In some areas, indigenous farmers view Fulani migrants as "outsiders" encroaching on ancestral lands. Historical grievances and narratives of marginalization fuel mutual mistrust. Social issues such as cattle rustling (theft of livestock) and sometimes abuses (e.g. harassment) by itinerant herders against farming communities have added to tensions. These social grievances interact with material scarcity to create complex conflict dynamics.

Several analyses point to poor governance and policy gaps as key causes. There has been no coherent national grazing policy to balance pastoralism and farming. As Dan-Azumi (2025) finds, there is a "lack of feasible and realistic grazing policies and a lack of strong political will to address the conflict". Some states have passed anti-grazing laws or imposed cattle "colony" schemes without adequate consultation, which both sides see as punitive or illegitimate. The vacuum has often been filled by vigilante groups

and local defense militias, provoking cycles of retaliation. rather than alleviated herder-farmer tensions.

Violence has claimed a heavy toll in lives and livelihoods. The conflict zones have seen mass fatalities and large-scale displacement. Babatunde and Ibnouf (2024) report that in Nigeria “thousands of fatalities and [the] broad extent of human displacement” have resulted from farmer–herder clashes. In one recent period, Nigerian government figures cited hundreds of deaths in a single state; elsewhere, humanitarian reports count tens of thousands of internally displaced persons fleeing attacks. The trauma of ambushes and massacres has left entire communities on edge and undermined social cohesion.

Economically, the violence disrupts farming and herding, leading to food shortages and higher prices. Farmers whose fields are burnt or grazed upon often cannot harvest crops, reducing local food supply. Cattle owners lose livestock to raids or refuge, undermining pastoral livelihoods. Agricultural investment suffers when households fear theft or attack: one study found that higher conflict risk leads farming families to cut back on fertilizer and labour, thereby lowering crop output. Over time, this erosion of farm productivity contributes to wider food insecurity in the region.

Beyond food, the conflict damages rural economies. Attacks destroy infrastructure such as storage granaries, markets, and even schools and health clinics. Property losses (homes, vehicles, farm equipment) run into millions of naira each year. Insurance premiums rise and investment slows in volatile areas. In addition, pastoral economies suffer when herders avoid contested grazing lands; the resulting decline in cattle production can reduce meat supply and pastoral household income. Local governments and businesses alike report that insecurity hampers development projects and erodes investor confidence in the Middle Belt.

The crisis also deepens security and governance challenges. Governments have deployed the military and police to intervene, but without resolving underlying tensions. Security forces sometimes clash with herders or inadvertently side with one community, fueling mistrust. The emergence of vigilante self-help groups adds another layer of violence and undermines the rule of law. In many affected states, regular curfews and checkpoints have become the norm. Moreover, some analysts caution that the violence has spillover effects: it can aid recruitment by extremist groups in neglected rural areas and complicate other security threats. Thus, the herder–farmer conflict has become not only a local humanitarian crisis but a national security concern.

3.7 Kidnapping in Nigeria

Kidnapping in Nigeria is largely driven by socio-economic factors and has grown sharply in recent years. Studies identify abject poverty, corruption, joblessness, and a “quick-money” mentality as major causes. In other words, youth unemployment and economic desperation have motivated many to turn to kidnappings. This is borne out by national data: analysts report that kidnappings have more than doubled in a year, from about three thousand, six hundred and twenty (3,620) people abducted, five hundred and eighty two (582) incidents in 2022–2023 to seven thousand, five hundred and sixty eight (7,568) people, one thousand, one hundred and thirty (1,130) incidents in 2023–2024. Observers attribute this surge to Nigeria’s struggling economy – rising inflation

and unemployment make ransom-seeking more attractive – so that even typically “safe” demographics (students, professionals, children) are now targeted.

The human and economic costs of widespread kidnapping are severe. Victims and families suffer trauma, injury, or even death (hundreds of abductees were killed in recent years. Large ransom demands (about ₦11 billion in 2023–24) have strained private fortunes and public budgets. According to Ngwama (2014), recurrent kidnappings have “heightened the fear of foreigners, especially international investors,” and threatened economic development. For example, analysts note that tourism and business investments have fallen due to insecurity. The net effect is a climate of fear – communities adopt curfews and avoid travel – and a drag on growth. kidnappings can destabilize labour markets and unemployment. Ngwama (2014)

The Nigerian government has responded with new security initiatives and policies. In 2024 it created a Multi- agency Anti-kidnap Fusion Cell (MAAKFC) under the Office of the National Security Adviser, pooling military, police and intelligence resources. Official reports cite an ~80% success rate in rescue operations by this unit. Security forces have rescued thousands of hostages, for instance, a 2024 raid freed 128 kidnapping victims in Zamfara State and arrested or neutralized many suspects. Senior officials have also publicly discouraged ransom payments and vowed to overhaul security agencies. Nevertheless, experts note that persistent corruption, limited coordination among agencies, and porous borders mean the government must sustain these efforts to reverse the kidnapping epidemic. (Iroegbu, 2025).

While kidnapping now spans Nigeria, its prevalence varies by region. The North-Western states are the current epicenter: Zamfara, Kaduna, and Katsina report the highest numbers of incidents. For example, SB Morgen Intel data show Zamfara accounted for 132 abduction cases in one year, more than any other state The Federal Capital Territory (Abuja), Lagos and Kaduna see the largest ransom demands. In contrast, the South-East (e.g. Anambra, Rivers) and South-South (Niger Delta) have long contended with cult-related and militant kidnappings, but their incident counts are lower; however, the rates of ransom payment can be high in these areas. Overall, the North-West (bandit country) and North-East (insurgent zones) remain hotspots, but urban centers and even the South are increasingly affected.

Kidnapping became widespread in Nigeria only in the past two decades. In the early 2000s, it was mostly confined to the oil-rich Niger Delta, where militant groups began abducting oil workers for leverage. By the 2010s, Islamist insurgents (notably Boko Haram) introduced mass abductions in the North-East, the 2014 Chibok schoolgirl kidnapping drew global attention, and criminal networks proliferated nationwide. Today Nigeria’s kidnapping crises blend political insurgencies, banditry, and organized crime. Its rapid rise has made kidnapping “Nigeria’s fastest-growing industry,” prompting it to be ranked among the country’s gravest security challenges. The current wave thus reflects both this historical evolution and acute present-day pressures, underscoring a complex national security emergency.

3.8 Islam and Insecurity in Nigeria

In recent years, Islam has often been misrepresented due to the violent activities of extremist groups such as Boko Haram and the increasing cases of kidnapping and

farmer-herder clashes in Nigeria. However, it is important to note that these acts of violence do not reflect the true teachings of Islam. Islam is a religion founded on peace (Salam), justice, and compassion. The negative portrayal of Islam in relation to these crimes has led to misconceptions and social tension, especially in multi-religious societies (Adebayo, 2021). This would be better explained in the subsequent paragraphs

As noted earlier, Islam is derived from the Arabic word Salam, meaning peace and submission to the will of Allah. The Qur'an explicitly emphasizes peace, tolerance, and respect for life. For example, in Qur'an 5:32, it is stated that killing one innocent person is as if one has killed all of humanity. This central principle underscores the sanctity of life in Islam. According to Abubakar (2020), Islamic teachings promote peaceful coexistence and justice as essential components of human society. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also instructed Muslims to avoid oppression and to treat others with kindness, regardless of religion or ethnicity.

Groups such as Boko Haram have distorted the message of Islam to justify their political and ideological goals. Boko Haram, whose name means "Western education is forbidden," misinterprets Islamic concepts to oppose modern education and governance systems. Scholars have shown that their actions contradict Islamic teachings on knowledge and education (Adesoji, 2019). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) encouraged the pursuit of knowledge as a duty for every Muslim, male and female alike (Nasir, 2022). Therefore, the violent ideology of Boko Haram represents political extremism, not religious devotion.

Kidnapping and farmer-herder clashes are largely socio-economic problems rather than religious ones. These conflicts are driven by poverty, unemployment, population growth, and competition over land resources (Ibrahim & Ahmad, 2021). Linking these acts to Islam is misleading because the religion prohibits injustice, theft, and violence. Islam places a strong emphasis on property rights and peaceful conflict resolution (Ali, 2020). Therefore, the perpetrators of these acts act out of greed and desperation, not out of Islamic conviction.

Islam encourages mutual respect, dialogue, and justice as means of achieving lasting peace. The Qur'an (49:13) teaches that diversity among humans is a divine will, intended to promote understanding and cooperation. Muslim scholars and organizations in Nigeria and across the world have consistently denounced terrorism and kidnapping, reaffirming Islam's commitment to peace and development (Usman, 2023). Through education, interfaith dialogue, and justice, Islam can continue to serve as a force for unity and national stability

4. Conclusion

Both Malaysia and the UAE illustrate that religion can serve as a constructive force for national development. By embedding Islamic values into governance, economics, and education, both nations demonstrate how religion fosters ethical leadership, economic inclusivity, and social harmony. Their experiences highlight that when properly applied, religion can be a transformative tool for sustainable national progress.

It is apt to say that insecurity is not only about guns and bombs, it is about hunger, hopelessness, and humiliation. To build a peaceful and prosperous Nigeria, we must confront this aggression in all its forms. We must treat it not as a security nounally, but as a development emergency, no nation can thrive when its people are at war with their own reality.

Boko Haram has caused profound human, economic, and social devastation in Nigeria. While military operations have weakened the group, addressing the underlying causes such as poverty, illiteracy, and inequality is essential for sustainable peace and stability.

The herder-farmer crisis in Nigeria is a complex, multifaceted conflict fueled by resource scarcity, environmental change, social tensions, and governance failures. Historical patterns of coexistence have given way to violence, especially as climate pressures and land competition intensified in recent decades. Addressing this crisis will require integrated solutions: credible grazing and land-use policies, community dialogue, climate adaptation measures, and improved local governance. The socioeconomic and security costs ranging from thousands of deaths and displaced people to disrupted agriculture and strained state capacity, underscore the urgency of such action.

In all, Islam should not be equated with terrorism, kidnapping, or ethnic conflicts. The teachings of the Qur'an and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) promote peace, justice, and respect for human life. Extremist groups and criminal actors misuse religion for their selfish agendas, creating negative perceptions that must be corrected through education and interreligious dialogue. Understanding Islam's true principles is essential to fostering peaceful coexistence and national development.

Ultimately, while there is no doubt that Christian communities have suffered targeted violence, branding the situation as a "Christian genocide" oversimplifies Nigeria's complex socio-political and security realities. A more nuanced understanding, recognizing the shared suffering of both Christians and Muslims, is essential for effective peacebuilding and humanitarian response.

Religious institutions must rise to their moral calling. Their influence reaches deep into communities and hearts, making them critical agents of social transformation. Through sermons, teachings, and outreach, they must promote tolerance, equity and compassion-faith based financial instrument such as zakat and waqf should be institutionalized to support education, healthcare, and microfinance initiatives. Mosques, churches, and temples must become centers of empowerment and not merely sanctuaries of worship. Religion leaders can mobilize their congregations for development, partner with civil society to deliver services, and mentor youth away from radicalization and toward civic engagement.

Above all, government should strengthen governance, address corruption, improve education and employment, and promote community reconciliation as long-term solutions to end the cycle of violence in Nigeria.

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