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Abstract

In this thesis I will be discussing in detail the conflict between the Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. I started my research originally in London conducting interviews and talking to many Nigerian Christians and Nigerian Muslims about the conflict between these two religious groups. While there I got a great perspective on how these Nigerians felt about the conflict first hand, but I was still left with many questions.

The majority of the Nigerians I interviewed were Christian, but I wanted to know which religious group was truly responsible for the violence? What were the underlying issues revolved around the conflict? What could be done to solve the conflict?

While reading and researching, I came across a series *Studies in Christian-Muslim Relations* by a Christian author Jan H. Boer. Boer had spent over thirty years studying in Nigeria about Christians and Muslims, and considered himself an expert on colonialism. In this nine volume series, Boer answered some of these same questions I had about which religious group was to blame and what the underlying issues around the violence in Nigeria were.

Boer’s goal was to end the violence in Nigeria by establishing parameters for each religious group to follow so there could be peaceful coexistence. He believed the only way for his goal to be achieved was for the Christians to become more wholistic, and the Muslims to have an open mind toward pluralism.

In my thesis, I will be doing an in depth analysis of Boer’s argument and his
Boer showcases many rhetorical structures of blame, but they are related to his belief that Muslims are the essential religious group to blame for the violence in Nigeria. Some of these rhetorical structures of blame Boer discusses include the Sharia Law, the Muslim dominant nature, and the teaching of justified Muslim violence.

In the end, Boer leaves some unanswered questions on the table, especially about the positive and negative intentions of secularism, but overall, these rhetorical structures of blame exist and have been focused around the Muslims. Boer's series goes from identifying who is responsible for the conflict, to what the issues are behind the violence, and finally what can be done to stop it and bring peace for the future. I also offer my own advice about what can be done for the Christians and Muslims to live together peacefully in Nigeria.

Introduction

I have been researching about the conflict between the Christians and the Muslims in Nigeria for quite some time. I even went to London and interviewed over forty Nigerian Christians and Nigerian Muslims on my own about the conflict between these two religious groups. The general consensus among the people that I
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interviewed (whom were mainly Christian) was that the Muslims seemed to play a dominant role in the conflict. One pattern I began to notice about the majority of the written sources I found was that they seemed to address how the conflict relates to religion, politics, and violence in some way, but none really gave me an idea of who was responsible for the conflict and violence.

The history of Nigeria shows that the Christians and the Muslims have been in conflict for centuries, especially after the Nigerian civil war and their independence from the British in 1960. My original question was to simply investigate which religion was to blame for the conflict when it begins to lead to violence, but I wanted to investigate more.

I found sources that placed blame on the government regarding the riots that occurred in Jos, Plateau State in 2001, which acts as a great example of the violence between the Christians and the Muslims in Nigeria, but I needed something additional. I finally came across an author by the name of Jan H. Boer, who seemed to be answering many questions revolved around the conflict between these two groups in Nigeria but focused on the rhetoric of blame. I took a particular interest in this source because it gives a Christian perspective on Muslim violence in Nigeria, and places blame of the conflict on the Muslims.

Upon this discovery, I decided to take a closer look at Boer's work in his volumes Studies in Christian-Muslim Relations. In this thesis, I will be taking a look at the written work of Jan H. Boer. His central argument is for Christians to become more wholistic and for Muslims to become more pluralistic in order for these two groups to live peacefully in coexistence with his goal. I will be analyzing and
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evaluating his writing. The author Jan H. Boer chooses to side with other Christians in the blame of Nigerian Muslims for the conflict based on some rhetorical structures of blame including the Muslim Sharia Law and the need for Muslim dominance.

Boer’s ideas got me thinking about a few important questions. Firstly, what is the rhetoric of blame according to Boer? How has religion been used to construct Muslims as the enemy? What is the relationship between secularism and Sharia? By using Boer as a primary source, I will be analyzing Boer’s argument based on these questions and using secondary sources to back up all claims. Boer’s central purpose is for there to be more positive relations between these two religious groups, but his arguments about the underlying issues of the conflict could use a broader perspective. I believe that in order for this conflict to be solved, in the end both religious groups need to take responsibility for themselves and stop pointing fingers at the other. Once this has been accomplished the violent riots between the Christians and the Muslims in Nigeria may be able to end.

My primary source for this thesis is a series, Studies in Christian-Muslim Relations by Jan H. Boer. Dr. Boer is a Christian born in the Netherlands who immigrated to British Columbia, Canada. He has a PhD from Amsterdam and has spent over thirty years studying in Nigeria developing a Christian-Muslim archive. He previously taught at the Theological College of Northern Nigeria, and is now retired. Nigeria’s Decades of Blood 1980 – 2002 Volume 1, goes into depth about specific riots that have occurred in Nigeria during those years, including the riots in Jos, Plateau State 2001. In Muslims: Why the Violence? Volume 2, and Christians: Why
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This Muslim Violence? Volume 3, Boer seeks to answer the questions about why Muslims choose to riot and kill, why Christians choose to follow behind them, who is responsible for the violent riots in Nigeria, and how do they relate to religion and politics.

Before I get into any analysis about Boer’s writing, or bring up anything about Muslim violence, I think we first need a better understanding of the relationship between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. According to the 2006 census records, Nigeria was a country that had 140 million people.¹ Nigeria is a country that is made up of many different ethnic and tribal groups. The Hausa dominate the North, the Yorubas are in the West, and the Ibos are in the East. Generally it is estimated that around half the Nigerian population are Muslim, while just under half are Christian.² The North is about 95 percent Muslim with the Hausa and Fulani ethnic groups, while there is a mix of all religions in the East and West, with a slightly larger Christian population.³

Nigeria was a country colonized by the British. The British occupied the North of Nigeria, and took over the judicial system with their colonial system.⁴ Sharia remained the recognized law until the end of the colonial period because many of the Muslim law regulations integrated into the colonial administration.

¹ Dr. Siraj B. Abdulkarim, Religion, Peace and National Development: A Look at Interreligious Conflicts in Nigeria, 1.
³ Political Shari’a?, 16.
⁴ Johannes Harnischfeger, Democratization and Islamic Sharia Law: The Sharia Conflict in Nigeria, 50.
Starting in the 1940’s, the colonial system was becoming untenable. Soon enough, Nigeria started to make their shift to their independence. Nigeria remained in the colonial system in control of the British until 1960 when it became a fully independent country. With no official law established for the country, Nigeria decided to become a democracy. It would seem that the Sharia law will play a crucial role in the development of Nigeria and exhibit a strong influence on the Muslim action that we will further discuss later on.

One important aspect that will assist the understanding of this conflict between these Nigerians is to see an example of a violent riot that resulted because of the conflict. Having a specific example to showcase the behavior and actions of both groups will be very beneficial to the argument because it will allow us to see the role religion plays in the conflict, and how religion has been used to justify violence.

**Jos, Plataeu State, September 2001**

It all started on September 7, 2001. A Christian woman was walking home and got into a fight with a Muslim security guard. It was a Friday, so hundreds of Muslims were lined on the roads outside of the mosque for prayer. It is not unusual for certain streets to be blocked off and for people to take alternative routes. When the woman decided to walk through this barricaded street is when the riot began. The word spread all over the city about the fight, and a Christian-Muslim street fight

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erupted in front of the mosque. The violence continued for six days, and resulted in a death total of over 1,000 people. The mosque was burned down, women and children were slaughtered and set on fire. It was pure chaos for days.

Although this specific incident is what initiated the violence in Jos, there were other reasons that caused conflict between the Christians and the Muslims that could have been used to justify this violence. Back in April 1994, Jos, Plateau State went through a similar act of violence over this same issue.

A peaceful demonstration of indigenous people, comprising mainly of Christians and traditionalist, was followed a few days later by a violent riot on the part of the so-called “Jasawa.” These were Hausa-Fulani Muslim settlers from Bauchi State, just to the north of Plateau State, who had moved to Jos earlier in the century. Because there were unresolved issues after the government reversed its appointment of a Hausa-Fulani as the caretaker committee chairmen of the Jos North local government, these violent riots began to become a regular reaction to political disagreement. In both cases, the appointment of these positions was socially unaccepted because they were both “settlers” in the country. Human Rights Watch covered this event with extensive interviews. Many people have hypothesized what the causes of this violence were.

Plateau State is located in the Middle-Belt of Nigeria where there is a large population of Christians and Muslims. The differences in religion, but more so ethnic groups in the area are presenting the most problems. According to Philip

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7 Abdullahi, *Nigeria: Jos – When Will The Crisis End?*
8 Abdullahi, *Nigeria: Jos – When Will The Crisis End?*
Ostien, author of *Jonah Jang and the Jasawa: Ethno-Religious Conflict in Jos, Nigeria*, in Plateau State, “religion enters into question as well, because the Hausa are mostly Muslims and the Plateau tribes are mostly Christians.” He suggests that the underlying problem between the rivaling Christians and Muslims are rights of the “indigenous,” those who are the earliest occupiers and the “non-indigenous,” those thought of as “strangers” or settlers” as Ostien puts it.

There are many reasons as to why Christians and Muslims in Nigeria remain in conflict today, whether it is due to political and governmental reasons, or ethnic and tribal. From what we have seen in the example of the riot is Jos is that Christian and Muslim relations are a key factor to violence in Nigeria. What seems to be happening is a back and forth retaliation between these two religions. Here Boer shares some e-mails he received from people directly involved in the conflict in September 2001.

The trouble started after the Muslim usual Friday prayers. They rose from their prayers and began attacking innocent unsuspecting people on the road. They are killing, looting an ongoing unending nation-wide revenge and counter revenge is imminent.⁹

If this situation does not sound bad enough, the Christians decided to retaliate and take revenge out on the Muslims for their violent actions. Another man stated that the Christians were:

Ransacking cars and killing anyone suspected to be Muslim. They said they were tired of being killed over and over by Muslims. They were determined to revenge the present and the past killings inflicted on them by Muslims. If you wore the traditional dress (usually Hausa’s), you’re toast. I saw between 15 and 20 men killed and burnt. About and a half dozen cars/trucks were

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⁹ Jan H. Boer, *Muslims: Why The Violence?*
also burnt. It is the most dangerous, life-threatening thing I ever experienced.\textsuperscript{10}

It is very clear, that many reasons for violence is based on retaliation of one event to another. Although many of the first instances of violence are a direct result of confrontation in political governance, these issues are still rooted in religion.

As we can see, this idea of the settlers vs. indigenous has come out very specifically in this riot, but has also contributed to the religious violence as well. As previously mentioned, if the settlers are dominated by the religion of Islam, and the indigenous by the Christians, there goes another reason as to why these two groups should be against each other. Not only because of religious differences but ethnic as well.

So far we have seen through the example of the Jos riot in September 2001, that violence can be a consequence of religious differences and ethnic differences. Although these are not the only reasons for conflict and violence they do give a starting place for understanding how and why conflict and violence erupt in the first place. Jan H. Boer has acknowledged a major problem between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria and would like to not only find out what it is that is causing this conflict, but what can be done to fix it?\textsuperscript{11}

**Who is Jan H. Boer?**

Now we have seen an example of what conflict between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria can look like when it leads to violence. The major question that comes up in this situation seems to be whose fault it is. Do we blame the Christians

\textsuperscript{10} Boer, *Muslims: Why the Violence?*,

\textsuperscript{11}
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or the Muslims? Jan Boer attempts to answer this question, but he is concerned about the issues that may be causing this violence in the first place. Perhaps there is another question to ask. What is the rhetoric of blame? How does Boer structure his argument and who does he blame? Let us first take a look at Boer more closely and get into discussing his primary argument.

We know that Boer is a Christian who has spent over thirty years in Nigeria studying. Boer considers himself an expert on colonialism. According to his website, he studied the worldview issues that showcase to the interplay between the Christians and Muslims. Boer discovered that the dualistic separation of religion and secularism that was imported by missionaries has “shortchanged Christians in their understanding of and approach to their Muslim neighbors who tend to hold a comprehensive and dynamic perspective on religion.”

It was this research that then inspired him to write this series on Studies in Christian-Muslim Relations in nine volumes so he can express to the world his level of expertise and what he brings to the overall topic of conflict and violence in Nigeria. In his first volume Nigeria’s Decades of Blood, Boer discusses specific riots of violence that have occurred in Nigeria over the past twenty or so years. He discusses answers to questions about who started what and what did the government do about it? In Boer’s second volume, Muslims: Why the Violence?, he begins to go into depth about why he feels Muslims have a need to riot and destroy, as well as some discussion about Muslims groups and some historical background.

In volume three, Christians: Why This Muslim Violence?, Boer gives the Christian

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perspective on the Muslim violence. This volume answers questions about these Nigerian Christians and Muslims that are rioting, what causes the violence between these two groups.

Volume four, *Muslims: Why We Reject Secularism*, is where Boer makes a shift and begins to get at the heart of the underlying issues to this conflict between these religious groups in Nigeria. It is here where he discusses why Muslims generally reject the ideals of secularism, and how this relates to studies on colonialism and Christianity. In volume five, *Christians: Secularism – Yes and No*, he explores Christian thought about the pros and cons of secularism, and goals toward a wholistic Christianity. Volume six, *Muslims: Why Muslim Sharia Law?*, is one of the volumes where Boer takes a look at the Muslim perspective and why Muslims want to revive the Muslim Sharia Law in Nigeria. This want of Sharia goes in line with their rejection of secularism and discusses the relationship between Sharia and secularism. Boer discusses the reasons why Christians do not agree with the Muslim Sharia law in volume seven, *Christians: Why We Reject Muslim Law*. He goes into details what it is about Sharia that the Christians reject and why they believe Sharia does not go along with the idea of secularism. In volume eight, *Christians and Muslims: Parameters for Living Together*, Boer finally begins to offer his advice for a solution to the Christian-Muslim problem in Nigeria. He discusses ways in which these two groups can live together in peace and coexistence.

Boer attacks the issues between these Christians and Muslims by breaking each problem down into separate steps and focusing on the Christians and the Muslim points separately. What he does in many of these volumes is quote people,
organizations, religious leaders, and scholars about the issues from both religious
groups to give a perspective of each side of the story so the reader will be able to
grasp a better understanding of what is going on.

So what is Boer’s purpose for writing this series? In the first volume, Boer
lays out that “the essence of his message to Christians is “wholism,” while for
Muslims it is “pluralism.” On his website, Boer has a section entitled “What This
Series Seeks to Accomplish.” Boer lists a number of things in this section, but I will
only focus on a select few of them. Although each volume discusses some different
themes, this entire series is centered on specific purposes and accomplishments.

At the top of the list Boer has “contribute to a solution to Nigeria’s religious
violence by establishing necessary parameters.” Boer refers to this a number of
times throughout his series because this is what he believes the solution is to the
problem between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. In order to do this, Boer
believes there are two things that need to take place for a solution to occur. First,
the Christians need to achieve a goal of wholism and second, the Muslims need to
reach pluralism, which would mean keeping up with contemporary developments.

Here is how he explains it:

I expect that Nigerians who read these monographs will feel deeply ashamed
of the violence they unleash on each other in the name of their respective
religions... These studies are not written only or even primarily to embarrass
Nigerians, though I hope that shame will play a constructive role here. The
main purpose is to arrive at some parameters within which they can develop

12Jan H. Boer, Social Theology: Islamica,
more positive relations with each other, relations of respect and tolerance that will allow both religions to flourish within the one nation.\textsuperscript{13} As a Christian who spent many years in Nigeria, Boer seems to have the people of Nigeria in his best interest by offering his area of expertise to assist them in reaching a solution. He is looking for ways to accomplish this goal and other goals in order to bring the country of Nigeria together.

One other important aspect Boer states as a goal for his series relates to the idea of secularism, which is a very important and critical component of his argument. This becomes especially evident when the rhetoric of blame comes into the picture. According to Boer, "secularism leads to anger and resentment among Muslims, and derails Christian thought." He is looking for a solution to Nigeria's problem, but secularism is not the answer.

It would be useful to understand what the relationship between secularism and violence is in Nigeria. How is secularism a key point in Boer's argument? Most of secularism's importance to Boer's argument is revolved around his want for Christians to be more wholistic. As a Christian himself, he is looking for something that will have a positive effect on the religion, but Boer believes secularism has a negative impact on Christians and how Muslims view them. Boer writes, "Christians...have inherited a dualistic secular approach from missionaries that is...despised and hated by the Muslims, but goes against the deeper intent of the Bible."\textsuperscript{14} So the issue with secularism is not only because it contributes to a hate of one religion towards another that may influence violence, but its ideals are not in

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
line with the Bible. Secularism is causing a problem and in order for it to be fixed, "Christians need to move away from it by developing a more comprehensive, biblical worldview."

Worldview seems to be playing an important role in the conflict between these two groups. As mentioned previously, his solution for the Muslims is to broaden their sense of pluralism, or "Muslims need to update their sense of pluralism," to use his exact words. This may be what Boer's goals and accomplishments are for writing this series, but I am more interested in how these goals relate to religion and the rhetorical structures of blame that he has created. Boer has placed blame on the Muslims, but we will get back to the specifics of this later on.

I would first like to explore the depths of Boer's argument thus far. There are a few issues that come up with his opinion about the solutions he has come up with for the Christians and Muslims. Boer has stated that secularism is the root of the problem for the Christians because its ideals are not congruent with the Christian Bible. We will be able to get into more depth later on, but did he not already state that the Muslims are the ones who reject secularism, and the Christians are the ones who reject the Muslim Sharia law? He has made it very clear that secularism is something that is negative for the Christians and Muslims in Nigeria, but it is unclear whether or not Christians should agree with secularism, and if so why? Is not the Christians' solution the Muslims' problem and vice versa? Muslims say no to
secularism and yes to Sharia, while Christians say yes to secularism and no to Sharia.\textsuperscript{15}

**Blame the Government!**

Thus far we have gotten a general consensus of what Jan Boer's argument is, and can see there is a lot of blame placed on the Muslims, but what responsibility do other organizations play in the conflict between the Christians and Muslims in Nigeria? We have already discussed in detail the conflict and the riots in Jos, Plateau State, so let us continue and see what role the government played during the riots and how it relates to the overall conflict in Nigeria. Human Rights Watch wrote a very detailed report about the riots that occurred in Jos, Plateau State 2001. There are numerous sections in the report including a summary, a detailed account by people who were witnesses to the violence, and suggestions for the Nigerian government to partake in to prevent anything from happening like this again in the future. Although this discusses specifically about the conflict between the Christians and the Muslims for this specific event, a lot of what they mention is very relevant to the overall violence between these two groups in Nigeria.

In this account of the events, there does not seem to be very specific blame on the either the Christians or the Muslims, but instead the Human Rights Watch seems to put blame on the Nigerian government for not stepping in.

...all those interviewed by Human Rights Watch agreed on one conclusion: that the violence could have been foreseen but the government authorities failed to take action to prevent it. The state government adopted a passive

\textsuperscript{15} Jan H. Boer, *Christians: Why We Reject Muslim Law*, 12.
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attitude and appeared not to take seriously the numerous, explicit threats issued by both “indigenous” and “non-indigenous” groups in Jos.\textsuperscript{16}

Clearly there must be a reason as to why those interviewed by Human Rights Watch said that they felt some of the violence could have been prevented, right? Warning signs are very important to pick up on as a government, especially in a country and area that has had issues with opposing groups of this nature in the past.

Too bad that was not the only reason why Human Rights Watch blames the government. Let us look at what they brought up next.

...the lack of police presence and intervention during the crisis and the failure to ensure protection and security for the population... only after many lives had been lost - it was the military, not the police who intervened to restore law and order (Human Rights Watch, 2).

In this case we see that even after the violence started there was still nothing done about the violence immediately. The police did not even step in to do anything for those injured or to find out what was going on.

Although blame cannot be solely placed on the Nigerian government, it is important to recognize that conflict leads to violence in many cases because government officials did not step in or take it as seriously as they should have. One of the women I interviewed name Yama is from Jos, in Nigeria, and her viewpoints are not far off from this point.

"The government is not doing enough. The past presidents are not doing enough to help solve the problem. We believe we are tolerant of each other, but for that to truly happen people have to care for one another. People are being killed; even children."

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Yama is now a Christian, who converted from Islam. She was born in the South where she lived with both her mother (Christian), and her father (Muslim) until her parents split up as a teenager. She then moved to the North with her mother where she began to practice Christianity.

The government should be doing more. What Yama is seeking from the Nigerians involved is tolerance. By achieving this, perhaps this could prevent these two religions from fighting. Prevention is something that is hard to prove, but there is also something that can be done, even if a conflict is already erupted to prevent it from becoming an issue of violence which takes it to a whole new level. What I do not understand is how even after the violence started, the police did not step in and try to calm it down or stop it. People were being killed and nothing was being done to stop it. The government and law enforcement officials should at least look at this as a problem to fix for circumstances like this in the future.

It's the Muslims Fault!

Although Boer's primary focus around blame has not been about the government, it is still useful to look how others play a role in the conflict. We do know that Boer's structure of blame have been revolved around the Muslims. What Boer does in his volume, Christians: Why This Muslim Violence?, is discuss what the common views are of the Nigerian Christians, which seems to blame the conflict and violence on the Nigerian Muslims. Boer quotes an Alex Fom that said:

It is true that religion continues to play a destabilising role in the socio-economic life of Nigeria. But the first question we should ask is, what religious sect constitutes the destabilising factor? At no time do the
Christians get up in arms to destabilise the politico-economy of the country. At no time do the Christians get up to riot. No. The Maitatsine groups for instance are Muslim groups. All this burning of churches, who did them? They are the Muslims.¹⁷ (Boer 27, Christians: Why This Muslim Violence?)

Boer uses this quote because it “expressed the dominant tone well.” He believes that remarks in this quote “is the driving sentiment in the Christian community.” He has a strong belief that the Muslims have influenced a lot of this violence. This is one example of his rhetorical structures of blame. Boer shows us here that the Christians are putting the blame on the Muslims.

Before we get into what he discusses about this Muslim blame later on, let us first look at the quote Boer is referring to so we are able to see what it is actually saying about the Christians and the Muslims in Nigeria.

Fom is firstly recognizing that religion plays a significant role in the society of Nigeria, which is something important to take note of. There are many conflicts going on between religious groups in Nigeria regardless of what the reasons are behind them. Second, Fom then proposes a question regarding which religious sect or “group” should be looked at in creating this destabilization. In other words, which religion is causing the conflict in the first place?

Fom answers this question by putting the blame on the Muslims since the Christians do not “get up to riot.” According Fom, Christians are not the ones causing the issues in the country of Nigeria, and the Muslims are the violent ones burning down churches. This has brought out a nice setup showing that one reason Christians feel they can place blame on the Nigerian Muslims is because they are the

¹⁷ Jan H. Boer, Christians: Why This Muslim Violence?, 27.
ones initiating the violence.

The only reason Boer is bringing any of this up is because he as a Christian agrees with the beliefs of the other Christians. Boer says that the views of Alex Fom are dominant among other Nigerian Christians. Boer believes that it is the fault of the Muslims for the cause of all this socio-economic destruction and conflict going on in Nigeria because those are the beliefs of others Christians? Although Fom and Boer both make great points, one can hardly place blame on one group just because the majority of the opposing groups believes it to be their fault. If that were always the case, no conflict would ever be resolved because someone would always be pointing the finger at someone else. The Muslims may be the ones starting some of the violent riots, but we cannot fully place blame on one group.

Let us continue with this blame and take a look at how Boer further discusses this. There is a very clear divide between the Christians and the Muslims, and the Christians have chosen to put the blame on the opposing religion, but for what reasons?

Boer discusses in a few sections throughout the rest of this book explaining why this is true, and what it is about the Muslims that forward their Christian views about the blame for the conflict and violence. This is where his rhetorical structures of blame come into play again. Here is an example of one of them. Boer's first point, which also seems to connect with the rest of his points, is this Muslim need for dominance. He states that, “Nigerian Christians are of the opinion that Muslims have a natural instinct for domination. They have a need to dominate.”18 Right

18 Boer, *Christians: Why This Muslim Violence?*, 30.
along with this “need to dominate” comes political power. In order for these Muslims to dominate, they will have to do so through the power of politics. Knowing that in many cases religion and political domination work together, especially with the Muslims in Nigeria, this is important to understand.

This need for Muslims to dominate is something that could be portrayed by the Muslim Sharia law. Sharia is a system of Islamic law based on four main sources: The Qur’an, which is God’s revelation to the Prophet Muhammad; the Sunna which are actions of the Prophet described in the Hadith; the Qiyas or process of analogical reasoning based on the understanding and principles of the Qur’an or the Hadith; and the Ijma, or consensus of opinion among Islamic scholars (Political Sharia). For many Muslims, Sharia is a philosophy and entire set of rules and guidelines, which extends well beyond the Western concept of law and governs day-to-day conduct in terms of social relations, private life, and ethical codes. The word Sharia literally means “the way” or “the path.” Although most Muslims agree with the principles of Sharia, there are differences in the interpretation. Considering that there are differences in the interpretation of the Qur’an and the Hadith, is why there are different understandings of the aspects of Sharia specifically among religious leaders and scholars.19

The introduction of the Sharia penal code as some may call it, was not introduced until 1999 in Northern Nigeria.20 One of the governors in the Northern states by the name of Ahmed Sani Yerima was the first to introduce it. Since then,

20 Abiodun Alao, Islamic Radicalisation and Violence in Nigeria, 7.
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the Sharia law has been used to enforce Islamic law in a predominantly Christian country. Slowly enforcing Muslim laws on a non-Muslim group could be used as a way to be in control.

Let us get back to Boer. He continues to make his point by quoting what others have to say that relate to this claim that “religion and government are one and the same.”

He begins by quoting Tanko Yusuf who argues that, “It is considered legitimate for Muslim political leaders to use state facilities, institutions, and power to promote Islam. It seemed natural, then, when Nigerian self-government began..., to Muslim leaders that they openly use government for both religious and political purposes.”

Although some of these secondary sources blames a different group of people for the violent conflict in Nigeria, they all are related because of the connection between religion, politics, government, and violence. Even in just the previous points that Boer discussed, we are beginning to follow this pattern. What are the Muslims doing that give him the strong claim that the Muslims are to blame? It is because of their want for dominance and political power. Boer’s previous claim alone links together religion and politics. It is political leaders promoting a specific religion.

Often times there are leaders of groups, either political or religious that advocate for views of the other. This means that many leaders in religion advocate for a certain type of politics and vice versa.

In December 2010, there were attacks carried out by Boko Haram, which is a

21 Boer, Christians: Why This Muslim Violence?, 30.
22 Boer, Christians: Why This Muslim Violence?, 31.
fundamentalist sect that has strong opposition to non-Islamic education.\(^\text{23}\) (Patrick Good Enough, Qualified for Liberation). In Nigeria the “Taliban” is a group that actively recruits young men and want a universal enforcement of the Sharia Law. In this example, the leader of the Taliban group, Mohammed Yusuf is using politics and government as a means to forward a cause. In this case, attacks against the Nigerian police have been used as a way to speak out about their opposition to non-Islamic education. Even though the leader of the Taliban has died, his political and religious teachings are still carried out by the group.

Another structure of blame that Boer begins to discuss about his issues with Muslim violence is how the Muslims have a plan to take over Nigeria. Boer brings up the statement that Muslims seem to refer to, which is that, “Islam is the most misunderstood religion in the world.”\(^\text{24}\) Boer mentions a quote that Christians use instead:

In Nigeria, Islam maintains the record of being the most bloody and controversial. This assertion may be regarded as a historical legacy rather than an aberration. Right from time immemorial, Islamic activities had been associated with violence.\(^\text{25}\)

The point of the first quote is for Muslims to get across that their violent behavior comes out of good intentions, and is not necessarily “wrong,” while the Christian quote looks at the consequences of the Muslim actions. Either way, the Muslims do tend to engage in violent activity whether it is justified violence or not.

\(^{23}\) Patrick Goodenough, Qualified For Liberation,  
\(^{24}\) Boer, Christians: Why This Muslim Violence?, 35.  
\(^{25}\) Boer, Christians: Why This Muslim Violence?, 35.
Since Boer seems to believe that Muslims have some sort of plan for the Nigerian country, let us take some time to see what this plan looks like. He goes back to quotes by Tanko Yusuf who explains, "... Muslims, or rather some of the militant ones, are certainly out for nothing less than the complete obliteration of Christianity in Nigeria. They want to make Nigeria an Islamic republic." Then Boer introduces C.O. Williams, who is a Christian leader and a retired federal civil servant. Williams shows us a list that was constructed by a Muslim governor as a plan for Nigeria:

1) Take-over of schools and hospitals; 2) Substitution of Christians names of Christian schools with Muslim names; 3) Replacement of Bibles in hotels with copies of the Qur'an; 4) Circulation of "false and vicious propaganda" about Christians; 5) Ridiculing Christians and making "provocative pronouncements" about the Christian faith; 6) Making "unprovoked attacks" on Christians, especially in the North.

Looking at this list, we can see that the main objective is to get rid of or obliterate anything that has to do with Christianity, and replace it with Islam. The list mentions things like switching out the Bible for the Qur'an. Let us take a closer look at the language that has been used here. By making themselves more visible than the Christians this may help the Muslims achieve the dominance they are after, but that is not the real reason behind this list. This plan was more of a tactic to create conversation between the Muslim and Christian leaders to arrive at some sort of form of peace. The plan above is more of a course of action that the Muslims would be forced to take place if other alternatives are not addressed.

26 Ibid., 36.
27 Ibid., 38.
Why Do We Blame Muslims?

So far we have seen blame put on the Muslims and the government, but what about the Christians? Boer is a Christian who attempts to showcase both viewpoints of the Christians and the Muslims, but the majority of the blame he is discussing is placed on the Muslims. It was easy to find any sources from a Muslims perspective that seemed to put blame on the Christians. There must be a reason as to why most of the sources I found relating to this Christian and Muslim conflict skips over the Christians and seem to put the blame of violence on the Muslims.

So why do Westerners, or even specifically Christians view these Nigerian Muslims as violent? We have seen Boer discuss the Sharia Law thus far, as well as the will for dominance. I believe there are two important things to look at in answering this question. The first is the history of Islamization in Nigeria, and the second is the understanding of Islamic radicalization in Nigeria. This understanding will contribute to Boer’s argument and showcase more evidence around the history of Islam in Nigeria.

When it comes to the history of radicalization in Nigeria, there are a few events that have a strong influence. The main one that came up numerous times were the riots that occurred in Kano due to the late Mohammad Marwa also known as “Maitatsine.” He was considered radical mainly because of what he said at the end of his preaching. Marwa would say, “Wanda bata yarda ba Allah tasine” which in English means “May God curse whoever does not agree with me.” Maitatsine was from Marwa in Cameroon. He claimed to be a prophet and began preaching
radically about Islam in Northern Nigeria.\textsuperscript{28} Marwa came back to Nigeria after 1972 when he started his own mosque that attacked the current Muslim order.\textsuperscript{29} On December 18, 1980, Maitatsine and his followers went to a field to preach when the police stormed the place because the group did not have a permit. The group fought back with bows and arrows, knifes, and guns. Eventually the 13 police vehicles were burnt down and four police officers were killed.\textsuperscript{30}

Although the riots began in Kano, they spread to other parts of Nigeria even after Nigerian forces had killed Maitatsine. The riots went on for 11 days and took the lives of over 4,179 people.\textsuperscript{31} This is just one incident that occurred in Nigeria, but it was the first time violence had been the result of religious conflict and only the beginning of Islamic radicalization.

Another major event that is relevant in the history of Islamization in Nigeria occurred during the 19\textsuperscript{th} century through the jihad of Usman Dan Fodio.\textsuperscript{32} Back in 1804, the Islamic prophet led a jihad that within 50 years established a Fulani hegemony by getting Hausa rulers off their thrones. Islam soon became dominant through social contacts, trade, and war. It even began to spread to other areas of Nigeria including the south-west.\textsuperscript{33} Under the colonial rule, many of the administrative structures that were created after the jihad were recognized the colonial government.

\textsuperscript{29} Alao, \textit{Islamic Radicalisation}, 16.
\textsuperscript{31} Danjibo, \textit{Islamic Fundamentalism}, 9.
\textsuperscript{32} Alao, \textit{Islamic Radicalisation}, 7.
\textsuperscript{33} Alao, \textit{Islamic Radicalisation}, 7.
Abiodun Alao defines radicalization as, "the process of strict adherence to a belief-system that involves the use of non-conventional means to aspire and effect change along the lines of what is considered an ideal past or envisioned future in society." Although this is not the case for all instances of Islamic radicalization, violence can be used as these "non-conventional means" as stated in the definition. The ideas of dominance and radicalization work together.

Looking at the Islamic history in Nigeria, it may not be far off for Boer to make his claims about the blame on the Muslims, but it is important to take a closer look at the way history has structured this belief. A history of radical leaders and islamization is very capable of shaping a negative view for opposing groups to believe about Nigerian Muslims and their violent nature, but what do Christians from Nigeria say about the Nigerian Muslims and their violent and dominant nature? Is this negative portrayal something that Christians are brought up thinking about Muslims?

Another Christian I interviewed during my time in London named Bissi seemed to have a lot to say about this. "In the letters, Islam is about peace, but if you really look, Islam is revolved around crisis," Bissi said. Bissi was born in London, UK but left for Nigeria in 1978 when he was only 5 years old. He has a younger brother who was born in Nigeria. Although his entire family practiced Christianity, he and his brother attended Islamic school for their first years of education. Bissi explained to me that in Lagos, the only way he and his brother could get an education at all would be by going to an Islamic school.

34 Ibid., 13.
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Bissi stayed in Nigeria for 31 years until he came to London last February to give himself more freedom. Having been in Nigeria for so long, especially raised as a Christian, Bissi adopted many Nigerian Christian beliefs and habits. He has very strong beliefs as a Christian about Muslims and their negative intentions in Nigeria. Bissi believes that, “Muslims are being used as weapons to cause conflict.” This was a belief that he had growing up about Muslims based on his surroundings and teachings as a Christian. Although not all Nigerian Christians may think the same way, what Bissi seems to think is similar to Boer and other Nigerian Christians. There is a reason as to why Christians in Nigeria view the Nigerian Muslims in this way.

One other thing that Bissi mentions goes right along with the beliefs of Boer. Bissi said, “Muslims are taught to cause trouble. They want to be the dominant religion and do not want to be taken over by a westernized society.” Perhaps the majority of Christians do believe that Nigerian Muslims have this will to be dominant as Boer suggests. Muslims do want the superiority of being the top and dominant religion.

Going back to what Bissi said, dominance and causing trouble seem to be things that are taught. Earlier we got a detailed view of the Islamic history in Nigeria and how violence and radicalization has been incorporated in Islamic teaching. There is evidence of this teaching, but what does this say about Muslim intentions? If it is the violence that has been taught by their religion that is wrong, then can we truly place blame on the Muslims for being taught that it was right? No, because we have learned that placing blame on a single aspect is not useful.
Stop Pointing Fingers!

The conflict between the Christians and the Muslims in Nigeria has been an ongoing conflict for very many years. We have seen so far that the majority of Christians have blamed Muslims when the conflict results in violence. The Christians in Nigeria are simply not taking responsibility for their own actions and critiquing themselves. Jan H. Boer has a section Volume 3 Christians: Why This Muslim Violence?, where Christians are actually looking at themselves. Let us take a look and see what he has to offer.

Right away he begins quoting general secretary of the CAN (Christian Association of Nigeria), Engineer Salifu:

I put the blame of the ills of the country squarely on Christians! Because we have not been the light and salt if the world as we ought. The challenges before us Christians is just one – to live righteously. Do what is right wherever you are. By the time you find even half the Christians in state or establishment doing what is right, they will change that place. Unfortunately most Christians prefer to follow the stream. Personally I don’t blame the Muslims or those who do not believe. I blame Christians who are not ready to stick to what is right...35

This quote is jam packed with points and says a lot about what the Christians are not doing, and what they should be doing. One very important thing to point out here is the emphasis on religion. We have previously discussed how the Muslim religion has a history of violence and radicalization, but nothing about Christianity. It seems that Salifu puts an emphasis on religion because its existence should have a positive influence on what the Christians do or not do. The problem is, as Salifu

35 Boer, Christians: Why This Muslim Violence?, 21.
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suggests, is that they are ignoring their Christian values so to speak and allowing the influence of the Muslims’ violent actions get the better of them.

Following this statement, another writer asks the question, “Where have the Christians been all this time?” and this was their response:

They have been involved but have hidden their lights under the bushel. The average Muslim, when he gets to a high position becomes more religious-for the Christian the reverse is the case. He becomes less godly. He sees his brothers and sisters as fanatics! He becomes too busy to go to church...once or twice a year is enough for him. He is ashamed to be seen in his office with a Bible.36

I find it interesting that again, the focus is on religion. Does being religiously faithful translate to nonviolence? Does power somehow diminish religious qualities? By focusing on the fact that Christians are not looking at themselves religiously in these violent situations says a lot about the Christian religion. Whether or not these correlations to violent retaliation and blame for the conflict are true or not, it shows how close Christianity is to nonviolence. Boer seems to be saying that religion should be the center and focus of everything, and by allowing violent retaliation, and political power to take that away presents a problem.

Although religion is the primary focus here, politics plays a definite small role, especially when it comes to understanding why Christians may or may not choose to participate in politics in Nigeria. The writer above hints at it, but another member of the CAN goes into greater depth.

Politics may be a dirty game-but who will make it clean? If Christians distance themselves from politics that lead to leadership, then demons will have a field day as has been the case with Nigeria up till today. If demons govern and rule us and burn our churches and marginalise us and treat us

36 Boer, Christians why This Muslim Violence?, 22.
like second class citizens in our country of posting, then why should the Christian community complain? The price honest people pay for keeping silent and not getting involved is to be ruled by dishonest men.37

It could be that Christians are afraid of these political positions because they know what the outcomes will be. Religion and politics are very related, but perhaps this is not something the Christians are ready to face and realize.

I want to look at something Bissi said regarding this topic that flows well with this idea. Bissi said, “As a politician to get votes, where do you go? The church. So there is this idea to use the church leader to convince their congregations to vote for who they wanted.” It is not uncommon for religion to influence political decisions, especially when it comes to voting. Let us say for example, that there was a Christian man whose pastor encouraged him to vote for a specific person in an election. He would most likely vote for them because he looks up to his pastor as a person that they admire and respect. Why not go along with a decision with someone that you admire and respect?

Yama mentioned something that brings another perspective on this situation.

“I think there is a conflict of interest between the people in power and their religion. Everyone is worried about their political aspirations. Some get friendly during elections to get votes from the other religion then after that it goes back to normal.”

This is what seems to be holding some of these Christians back from getting as involved in political positions as they may actually want to. The Muslims may already have their violent aspirations in combination with their political ones, but the Christians may be a different story. It seems to me that the Christians are

37 Ibid., 22.
worried that their religious responsibilities will clash with any political aspirations they may be after and simply allow Muslims to control the politics.

**Secularism vs. Sharia**

Throughout this thesis we have discussed a number of rhetorical structures of blame based on Boer's discussion of blame on the Muslims in Nigeria. Earlier we discussed briefly what Boer's argument was and how he plans to resolve the conflict between these two religious groups in Nigeria, but before we get into what courses of action are necessary, I want to talk in greater detail about the relationship between secularism and the Sharia Law.

As we mentioned earlier, Boer's goal is to arrive at a reasonable solution to Nigeria's violence by outlining parameters for both groups to follow. His main argument is that secularism is negative to Nigeria because it leads to anger and resentment for the Muslims and derails Christian thought. Whether this is true or not, Boer makes a bold claim that relates the idea of secularism to Sharia. Boer believes that Muslim Sharia Law is the result of their rejection to secularism. He has a strong belief that secularism is the cause of the disintegration of the Western culture, suggesting a fear of it. 38

Boer stated that is essential message was to make Christians more wholistic and Muslims more pluralistic. Although secularism can be thought of as negative in many ways, there are just as many ways where secularism has been used as a positive that he has not considered. Let us first take look at the definition of secularism he is referencing to analyze further.

Boer looks to many definitions and interpretations of secularism. One definition by K.A. Balogun states, “non-adoption of a state religion.” He describes it as "a more positive platform whereby the government recognizes the existence of religion and the spirituality of the people without necessarily taking an official position either in its favor or against it.”39 Another definition Boer refers to is one by Ado-Kurawa that says, “secularism is the separation of the worldly from the spiritual.”40 Something these definitions all have in common is the focus of the existence of religion, but its separation from government or other aspects of culture. If Boer is using this definition of secularism, then it is important to note that he is talking about a secularism that keeps religion separate from politics and government.

As I mentioned, secularism does not always result in negative consequences. Peter Berger, who is well known for his theory of secularization defines it as, “a process by which sectors of society and culture are slowly removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols.”41 Berger claims that society will slowly become more secular due to the decline of religious influence. It seems the reason Boer has such an issue with secularism, especially when it comes to the Muslims is that it calls for the exact opposite of the Sharia Law. Boer states:

It will become abundantly clear that these two closely related issues, secularism and Sharia, form the main battle front between these two

39 Jan H. Boer, Muslims: Why We Reject Secularism, 32.
40 Boer, Muslims: Why We Reject Secularism, 32.
41 Peter Berger, The Sacred Canopy.
religions in Nigeria... It is at these fronts that the problem and solution cross over, with the Muslim solution being the Christian problem and vice versa.\textsuperscript{42} If the Muslims want Sharia Law, which calls for religion and government wrapped up into one, they most certainly do not want anything to do with secularism. While it is still unclear why Boer feels secularism is so detrimental to both Muslims and Christians if they are after opposite solutions, however because secularism revolves around the separation of religion and everyday life, I do understand his argument that secularism is not in line with the Bible. Secularism, especially in the case of Christians can have some negative affects on their biblical beliefs.

Conclusion

Throughout this thesis we discussed the conflict between the Christians and the Muslims in Nigeria, the arguments and goals of Jan H. Boer and many rhetorical structures of blame for the Muslims.

Boer’s goal for the conflict was to arrive at a solution where the violence in Nigeria would be able to come to an end. His best suggestion was for both religious groups to setup parameters where they could coexist in one society peacefully.

What were the underlying issues?

Boer makes two important claims. One is that, this peaceful coexistence between the Christians and Muslims in Nigeria cannot exist until the Christians become more wholistic, while the Muslims become more pluralistic. His second and larger claim discusses secularism and the Sharia Law. Boer believes that secularism is the major cause of conflict and violence in Nigeria. Secularism derails Christian

\textsuperscript{42} Boer, \textit{Muslims: Why We Reject Secularism}, 12.
thought because it is not in line with the bible, and it is also the antithesis of Sharia Law because it calls for separation between religion and government authority.

Is it secularism that is causing the underlying issues around the conflict? Although secularism seems to be a negative influence for both Christians and Muslims, I am wondering how it relates to Boer’s rhetorical structures of blame. One of the main rhetorical structures of blame Boer discusses is the Sharia Law, which we know has an opposite relationship to secularism. Whether or not secularism contributes to Boer’s thoughts around blame placed on the Muslims is unsure, but the blame is there.

One thing Boer still leaves unclear is how, if this is possible at all, can secularism be used to arrive at the goal of coexistence? According Boer’s argument secularism can only result in bad, but I would argue that secularism can be used for a positive outcome. Boer is looking for a solution to the violence in Nigeria, and by keeping religion separated from certain things like government, and avoiding the extreme force of some ideologies, including the Sharia Law, there may be a chance for peace and coexistence for the Christians and Muslims in Nigeria.

Blame is something that is not easy to track down. People will always blame others for many different things for many different reasons, but perhaps what we have seen from these rhetorical structures of blame for the Christian-Muslim conflict in Nigeria is that blame is something that can be preconceived in our minds. Christians may always, blame Muslims, just as Muslims may always place blame on the Christians for the simple fact that they have opposite beliefs, but we do know that blame can never be placed solely on just one person or one group. Perhaps
Christians are taught to believe Muslims are violent, and Muslims are taught to be violent. The bottom line is that the only way peace and coexistence can exist is through understanding.

Appendix

We know Boer believes that the solution to the violence in Nigeria is by establishing parameters that both the Christians and the Muslims can follow so they can live together peacefully. Boer uses volume eight to bring up proposals about coexistence. The general consensus is for each group to strongly listen to one another, understand and feel each other’s pain, then to give each group a chance to prove themselves. We know that in any conflict, it is never solely the fault of one side or another. Each group involved has done something wrong at some point during the conflict. In the case of many violent riots and conflicts between the Christians and the Muslims in Nigeria, I still believe it was the Muslims who initially started to react violently and then caused the Christians to retaliate with violence as well.

With this said, it does not matter who started the violence or who did not start the violence, but what matters is what can be done to solve this problem so it does not continue to occur. This conflict has been going on for centuries. Too many lives have been lost to this conflict already and something needs to be done to stop it. Below I am going to lay out a plan with suggested steps I believe each group needs to do in order to move forward from this violence and transform it to peace and understanding.

The first step that I believe needs to be recognized by both the Christians and
the Muslims is the relationship between religion and politics. This is something that should not only be recognized in Nigeria, but in other places as well. Too often, especially in Nigeria’s case, issues are being attacked by looking at religion and politics separately, when in fact the two are in a relationship with one another and have a strong influence on the other one.

By simply looking at the results of political elections, we can see an example of this relationship and influence. In Nigeria, it is very common for political and governmental officials to be elected into office based on their religious identification. “Muslims vote for Muslims, and Christians vote for Christians,” as Bissi said.

The recognition of this relationship becomes very important in Nigeria when it begins to lead to violence. We have seen from the example of the Jos riots in 2001 that an underlying reason behind the violence was the appointment of a Hausa man by the name of Mukhtar Muhammad. As a Muslim settler the majority of the Nigerian community felt outraged by his appointment.

Unfortunately, upsetting groups over political appointment has been a continuous cycle throughout history in Nigeria and has been causing violence in the country over and over again for different reasons. Once the Christians and the Muslims identify this problem and recognize that religion and politics together is a “lethal weapon” and have been the underlying problem for such a long time, perhaps they will be able to move forward to actually solving the issues.

A Christian author by the name of Danoye Oguntola-Languda goes into great detail about the relationship between religion and politics in Nigeria in his essay.
Danoye Oguntola-Languda argues the existence of a relationship between religion and politics in the pluralistic society of Nigeria. Oguntola-Languda uses Emile Durkheim’s definition when he refers to what religion is. According to Durkheim, “religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices which unite into one moral community called a church all those who adhere to them.” Oguntola-Languda uses this definition because he believes it “gives a sociological interpretation to religion and its practice.” Oguntola-Languda then discusses the meaning of politics using Nkem Onyekpe’s definition. Onyekpe says, “Politics is the struggle for power which itself is the authority to determine or formulate and execute decisions and policies, power of governance, especially executive authority.” Oguntola-Languda supplements this definition by pointing out “the struggle of power depends on political development in the country,” and “political power leave no room for the input of the people.” With both of these issues in mind, in regards to both religion and politics, Oguntola-Languda believes there can be a relationship between the two concepts of religion and politics in Nigeria, a pluralistic society. Oguntola-Languda writes:


On the whole, we make bold, to say that religion and politics need to interact in Nigeria to promote good governance, the effort of this will be political stability, steady economic development, a corruption free society and increase in moral values... a good understanding of religion and its purpose for man, and here and in the hereafter, will be better appreciated if it is allowed to interact with politics.\textsuperscript{45}

I appreciate what Oguntola-Languda adds to the discussion about the relationship between religion and politics. Although I believe this relationship has been what is the major cause to conflict in Nigeria, but the relationship between these two concepts do eventually need to work in order for Nigeria to reach a better state of development. It is all about the recognition and understanding of this relationship in order for the country of Nigeria to move forward.

The next suggestion on my list to resolving the conflict is for both the Christians and the Muslims to take responsibility for their own actions. As I have mentioned earlier, in the end it really does not matter who started the violence, or whose fault it is. Every group involved in a conflict, regardless of how small the involvement was has some level of responsibility for the violent consequences. The major problem in my mind seems to be that the Christians and the Muslims are not realizing how a riot that happened in Jos, Plateau State will also affect other parts of Nigeria like Lagos, or Kano. Continuous fighting for years and years over the same issues will get the country nowhere. In fact, all of this violence in Nigeria is doing nothing but slowing down the development of the country as a whole.

My observations thus far from both the Christians and the Muslims have been blaming of the other group and pointing fingers. A major reason why this country has been stuck in the same state for so long if because of the lack of self

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 30.
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responsibility and blaming everyone else other than themselves. Christians, so what if the Muslims feel the need to dominate and take control? There is no reason you should be responding the same way with violence. You are all “Nigerians.” Some of you may be Muslims, and some of you may be Christian, but in the end all you are doing as a country is killing your own people.

The President of Nigeria at the time of the riots in 2001 makes some great points that express my beliefs perfectly about violence and what Nigeria should do. President Olusegun Obasanjo says,

“We are not only citizens of one nation but also children of one God. Though tribe and tongue may differ, though religions may differ, in brotherhood we stand... Christians are indispensable to Muslims as Muslims are to Christians. There shall never be a time when our society shall be totally free from differences. We must therefore resolve our differences without resort to violence. Violence has never solved political, economic, social, or religious differences. Violence can only lead to more violence.”

Both religions in Nigeria have a role in the conflict and violence that is occurring in Nigeria, but each of them are very different. They each require separate ways to handle and address their situations. This is what I see. The Muslims are a very violent group and have taken the dominant role of initiating violence in many of the riots and conflict in Nigeria throughout history, but this seems to be what they are taught to do. Just like we saw in the example of Maitatsine and his followers initiating violence so many years ago, this has continued to occur. I am not saying that this violence is right or justified, but Muslims throughout history have been taught to think like this. There is an innate will or want for Muslims to feel “powerful” and they believe that the violence they
commit is justified. They have not been doing anything wrong, which is why this violence still continues today.

Here is what I advise the Muslims to do. First, they need to recognize their violent history. I am not saying that this history is right or wrong, or to place blame on the teachings of their religion because it is wrong by any means. Just recognize that violence is something that has been taught and take it for what it is. Next I believe the Muslims need to find an alternate way to achieve their motives. If Muslims are after dominance, which is not necessarily a bad thing, they should look for another way to get there that does not involve negative violence. The main thing I would stress to these Muslims is to have understanding. If these Muslims can understand that their violent history has been hindering their own development in Nigeria, perhaps they will want to find another way to go after what it is they want. If they can begin to understand why their religion has taught them to think this way about themselves and others, then they can begin to understand what has and has not worked throughout their history and try something different. You cannot continue to do the same experiment over and over again expecting different results when everything you are doing is exactly the same as you were doing before.

The Christians have another problem of their own. Especially after speaking with so many Nigerian Christians during my time in London, I noticed this pattern of "blaming." Whether it was blaming the Muslims, or blaming the government, there seems to be not enough self-responsibility among the Christians. As I have mentioned a few times, I do not fully disagree with many Christians who "blame" the Muslims. I do think that the Muslim need for dominance has been what has
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escalated this conflict into violence, but the Christians can most certainly not blame the Muslims for this entire conflict. The group who starts the violence is just as responsible as the group who finished and retaliated to the violence.

Here is what I suggest the Christians do in this situation. Each of them should focus on responsibility and self-critique. If the Christians are able to let go of any stipulations they may have over the Muslims in Nigeria, and realize that both groups were wrong in this case, then there may be some sort of chance for them to move forward to resolving this ongoing problem. Boer attempts to discuss a Christian self-critique which I believe is valid, but his beliefs are still centered around the views of many other Christians, which choose to put the blame on the Muslims.

If the Muslims can understand their violent background, and start leading toward a new way of achieving their goals, and if the Christians can take some self-responsibility I believe there is hope for resolving this conflict. To further support these claims, I believe it would be a good idea to show an example of what these changes could look like for each group.

Let us start with the Muslims. I believe it is easy for Muslims to see how violence has been incorporated into their teachings by looking at the Qur'an and paying very close attention to the words that have been used. Here are a few examples of verses in the Quran that are believed to be justifying violence.

Fighting is prescribed for you, and ye dislike it. But it is possible that ye dislike a thing which is good for you, and that ye love a thing which is bad for you. But Allah knoweth, and ye know not (2:216).
This example plays on the fact that Allah is a higher being and therefore more knowledgable than the believers themselves. If Allah tells you to fight, than that is what you are supposed to do.

Let those fight in the way of Allah who sell the life of this world for the other. Whoso fighteth in the way of Allah, be he slain or be he victorious, on him We shall bestow a vast reward (4:74).

In this verse, the incentive of a reward is being used to influence the believer to fight for Allah.

Not equal are those believers who sit (at home) and receive no hurt, and those who strive and fight in the cause of Allah with their goods and their persons. Allah hath granted a grade higher to those who strive and fight with their goods and persons than to those who sit (at home). Unto all (in Faith) Hath Allah promised good: But those who strive and fight Hath He distinguished above those who sit (at home) by a special reward (4:95).

The words in this verse focuses on superiority, and who is a better believer. The believer that fights and follows through will somehow be ranked higher.

Once Muslims can see what it is they have been taught about violence and dominance, they can find an alternative for achieving dominance without the use of violence. What they can try doing is implementing changes without using violence. I mentioned earlier that putting religion together with politics is a major reason why this violence has occurred in the first place. If the Muslims can pick out either religion or politics to concentrate on for dominance, there will be less of a chance for them to feel the need to use violence to forward their agenda. In these circumstances, the Christians will be more likely to not retaliate violently so this would be a positive adjustments for both groups. It is either religious dominance (which I believe is what they are after based on all of their talk about the
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"unbelievers" in the Qu’ran), or political dominance. I think the Christians would be more likely to understand the Muslims wanting to have Nigeria as a Muslim dominant country considering they are the minority to Christians rather than political or government dominance for the sake of peace.

Now as for the Christians, they need to be able to look at themselves and see when they are the ones who are to blame. We can look at the example of Jos in 2001. In this situation there was a Christian woman who insisted upon passing through this street where Muslims were praying. Even though the street was blocked off the woman still walked through. Although very small, the lack of respect that this woman had for the Muslims religion at that point and time had an effect on the riots even if the Muslims may have been the ones who physically started it.

During the Christian self-critique section of Boer's *Christians: Why This Muslim Violence?* Many of the Christian writers he quoted focused very closely on religion. As Christians, they are more peaceful than the Muslims, and should not allow others to take them outside of themselves.

There is obviously more than one way to actually play out what I have suggested for these two groups. These suggestions and examples are a means for helping resolve this ongoing conflict between the Christians and the Muslims in Nigeria.