

Ethno-Religious Conflict and Security Implication in Nigeria: The Myths and Realities

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria is made up of over 250 ethnic groups of which three are majority groups (Ibo, Hausa, and Yoruba). These groups because of their privilege position have consistently dominated the political and economic scene before and after independence in 1960. This is a clear case of marginalization of minorities by the majority ethnic groups and this serves as fertile grounds for conflicts involving individual or groups to achieve their goals. The political class in collaboration with their religious counterparts has explored and exploit religion as a mobilizing instrument for sharing national resources. Most conflicts in Nigeria had assumed ethnic and religious character and this has caused destruction of citizen lives and property worth millions of naira. All these ethno religious conflicts appear to have serious implications to national security in Nigeria. Almost all the ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria witness since independence owe their origin to the expression of socio-economic and political deprivation of the affected ethnic and religious groups. This undermined peaceful co-existence among Nigerians, thus scuttling the integration efforts of the country. In view of this, the paper examines the causes of ethno-religious conflicts and implications to national security in Nigeria. It is both interrogative and analytical; it is interrogative because the incessant pace of ethno religious conflicts has done more harm than good in Nigeria, and it is analytical because it explains the frog's eye the variables responsible for these conflicts. The failure of political elites to establish good governance, forge national unity and promote socio-economic development engineered ethno-religious conflicts. Nigeria will continue to suffer disintegration if this trend persist especially the recent insurgency and perennial settler-indigene conflicts in all sections of the country. The only option is to face this challenge collectively with sense of patriotism. It recommends commonalities amidst our differences and recognizes the truth in our diversity in unity, while exhorting unity in diversity.

Keywords: Ethnicity, Religion, Politics, Conflict, Integration, Good Governance.

INTRODUCTION

The idea of living in harmony as one sovereign state is a forgone issue; instead perpetual conflict, bitterness, rancour and gross animosity anchored on religious divide become the order of the day (Ojo, 2005, Salawu, 2010). All these led to some form of contextual discrimination among members of one ethnic group against the other on the basis of differentiated systems of socio-cultural religion. Since the end of military rule in 1999 and the return to democracy, Nigeria has witnessed recurrent outbreaks of violence. For decades now, Nigeria has been trying to resolve its national question in an attempt to bring together its extremely complex web of ethnic, linguistic and religious identities. The Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo account for almost half of the country's population and many smaller groups tend to cluster around this triplet creating a tripolar ethnic structure around

which competition strategies intensify (CRISE, 2007). A religious divide separates mainly Muslim north and more powerful Christian south. A history of predominantly military rule has left the country with little political dialogue between state, civil society and endemic corruption (Idemudia and Ite, 2006). Almost a decade after the return to democracy, transparent management behaviour and equitable resource distribution are still rare and the legitimacy of the state is still questioned (HRW, 2007). The turning point in Nigeria's fall into internal conflict is identified by some analyst as the 1987 Kafanchan-Kaduna riots, from which old tensions between Muslim Hausa-Fulani and non-Muslim communities gradually spread throughout the north and Middle Belt of the country (CRISE, 2005). In recent years the introduction of Islamic Sharia law in 12 out of 36 states has caused additional

tensions, but clashes between Muslim and Christian groups have usually been caused by other factors, such as pressure on land or unequal access to social services. The first leg of ethnic and religious conflicts in Nigeria in recent time was on July 1999, when some Oro conflict in Sagamu, Ogun state accused Hausa woman of coming out when the cultist were outside with their Gnome. This led to some altercations which eventually led to full blown crisis, where majority of Hausa and Yoruba tribe lost their lives. The infamy was temporarily put to check only when dusk to dawn curfew was imposed on the sleepy town of Sagamu. When the city was settling down for peace, Lagos erupted with another orgy of violence as mark of vengeance for Kano mass killing of Yorubas. The most recurring ethno-religious conflict in Jos, Plateau State was regarded as the physical graveyard for hundreds of people including children cut down midstream in the bloodletting environment. Since Jos has lost its acclaim as the centre for peace and tourism, it is now a city of pieces and terrorism. The crisis evolved after a state wide local council election in the state erupted between indigene and non-indigene in Jos north Local council. Also, on Sunday 17th January 2010 was yet another ethno-religious crisis in Bukuru Jos and this engulfed in orgy of killings, mayhem and destruction of properties, business premises and many houses were completely brought down to their foundations. The tensions spread to Bauchi, Kano, Kaduna, Nassarawa and Gombe States respectively. In Kaduna State, the Nigeria Police force report that 1,435 private houses, 987 shops, 157 Churches, 46 Mosques, 45 police properties, 16 government properties, 437 vehicles, and 219 motorcycles were destroyed (Ogbaudu 2011). Many who lost their houses, shops and other properties are not members of rival political parties, but individuals who are adherents of rival religions. A striking aspect of the 2011 post-election violence was the use of bombs and explosive devices in the destruction of houses and properties, especially in Kaduna and Borno States (Idris 2011, Muhammad 2011). The panels of inquiry set up to investigate this conflict by government to buy time and a psychological trick in order to allow people to pour out their anger. Such inquiries have cathartic effects without true commitment to implement recommendations that arise there from. Most panels end up as talk jamborees and some have raised controversies and complicates issues (Olojo, 2014, Danjibo, 2012). It is on this

backdrop that the paper looks on some ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria and its implications for national security.

CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

Ethnic

Ethnic is derived from the Greek word *ethnos* meaning a group of people who share a common and peculiar culture. Ethnicity is the feeling of belonging to a peculiar cultural and linguistic groups or expression of ethnic awareness in relation to other groups (Imobighe, 2003). In the words of Suberu (1996), ethnic is a group whose members share objective characteristics like language, culture, ancestral myths, religion, territory or political organization, they share subjective perception of common identity developed in contexts of relationship involving two or more ethnic groups.

Nnoli (1977) refers to ethnicity as a social phenomenon associated with interactions among members of different ethnic groups. He explain that ethnicity exist only within a political society consisting of diverse ethnic groups. Cohen (1969), view ethnic group as an informal interest coalition of people whose members are different members of other groups within the same society even though they share common institution like kinship, religion, economic system and have the capacity to communicate among them. An ethnic group is the existence of a distinct awareness of similarity that is normally predicated on some language, common religion and culture. Foster et al. cited in Odeh, (2010) define ethnic group as a group of people who hold in common a set of traditions that differentiate them from others with whom they are in contact. This tradition includes a common ancestry, place of origin, religious beliefs and language. Therefore, ethnicity is the nature, content and focus of inter-ethnic relationship existing between different ethnic groups in a multi-ethnic society. Otite, (1990) defines ethnicity as the contexture discrimination by members of one group against others on the basis of differentiated system of socio-cultural symbols. This definition portrayed ethnicity as tool used to serve a particular interest and undermine national security, integration and development in a society (Imobighe, 2003). Ethnicity can be a building block and equally a potential stumbling block on the process of nation building.

Religion

Oxford Advance learning Dictionary (1997), defines religion as the belief in the existence of a God or gods, and the activities that are connected with the worship of them, it is undisputable that human existence is premised on religion. In the same vein, religion is the consciousness of one's dependence on transcendent being and the tendency to worship him, it is a belief in an unseen power called supernatural (Alananmu, 2005, Ololobou, 1999). In another sense, religion is the conciliation of powers superior to man, which are belief to control cause of nature and human life. Marx viewed religion as the opium of the masses (Alao, 2015, Abdusalam, 2002). Religion is man's interaction which he regards as holy regardless of whether the holy being is supernatural or even personal to the individual. It has been a known fact that religion controls man, his value and environment, some individual will die for it (Odeh, 2010). Nigerians are generally regarded as committed religious people even if the practice has not translated to peaceful co-existence, harmony and progressive socio-economic development (Alao, 2015). In Nigeria the most popular religious are Islam and Christianity and religion that promoted peace and salvation has been used to mar rather than make our nation Nigeria. Religion is a veritable tool of political mobilization, fulfilment of parochial and selfish interest and ethno-sectional aspiration (Odeh, 2010). From the foregoing therefore religious values are now manipulated by political anarchists to perpetuate violence and terror by making it an avenue for expressing socio-economic and political grievances. The quest for personal gain, political, selfish ends, egocentrism, drunk for power to dominate made the agitators to use religion as a cove (Dopamu, 2002).

ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS

Conflict has been defined by scholars in different forms, but its origin comes from the Latin word "Configere" which means to strike together. It is defined as opposition among social entities directed against one another (Wright, 1990 cited in Albert 2001). This means that either people in the society are in co-operation or in opposition, anywhere human beings exist, conflict becomes inevitable. Conflict is a disagreement, disputes held by two or more individuals or group, it is the manifestation of dissatisfaction among individuals or groups (Aboki, 2004, Oyeshola, 2005).

Conflict is incompatibility among values, where the achievement of one value can be realize only at the expense of some other values. Conflict is serious competition between two or more groups, each of which aim to gain advantage of power, resource interests, values, need over the others (Schmid 2000). There is a general argument among scholars that conflict is a normal character in the interaction between human beings, whether in their individual capacities or in groups. The aim of the group is mainly to neutralize, injure or eliminate the rivals (Mobighe, 2003, Bercoritch and Zartman, 2009). From the foregoing ethno-religious conflict can be described as those ethnic conflicts that assume religious conflicts. This transformation of ethnic conflicts to religious is a result of ethnic groups' identity with a particular religion. Nigerians are in privilege positions to perpetuate themselves in those positions they used ethnic and religious as cover. Obasanjo (2000) remarked that the elite in the country are most times the brain behind ethno-religious conflicts.

Causes of Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria

Nigeria's current ethno-religious conflicts have been shaped by the developments in the country's recent and distant past. In Nigeria, violent conflicts have become part of the landscape since independence in 1960. Despite the civil war experience, the state of conflicts have not changed for good, instead it posts a greater threat to national security and development in Nigeria (Sanda, 2003). The frequency occurrence of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria over the years was as result of the return of democratic rule as Nigerians exercised their freedom of expression, association. In the last few years, Nigeria witnessed series of conflicts among them are: Zangon Kataf in Kaduna state, Tiv-Jukun in Wukari, Taraba State, Ogoni-Adoni in Rivers state, Itsekiri-Ijaw-Urhobo in Delta State, Ife-Modakeke in Osun state Aguleri-umuleri in Anambara state, Yoruba-Hausa community in Shagamu, Ogun State, Ijaw-Ileja conflict in Ondo state, the intermittent clashes in Kano State Hausa-Fulani, Sawanya in Bauchi State, Hausa-Fulani in Jos and Fulani-Irigwe and Yelwa Shedam both in plateau state and Hausa-Yoruba clashes in Idi-Araba Lagos State (Imobighe, 2003). Ethno religious and inter communal conflicts is very common that there is hardly any part of the country that has not been affected.

No trust among various ethnic groups and this has resulted to deep misconception, religious intolerance, poverty of economic and political domination, media reports and government inability to take action in previous happening caused ethno-religious conflicts (Fwa, 2003).

Religious intolerance failed to accommodate the opinions of others, Nigeria religious adherents especially Muslims and Christians have demonstrated intolerance attitudes which have resulted to violence outburst that spill over the political and economic lives of the citizens (Alanamu, 2005). The introduction of Sharia (Islamic law) in Zamfara State on 27th October, 1999, following the Zamfara example many states like Kano, Kebbi, Sokoto, Niger, Yobe and Borno made their intentions to adopt similar measures. The move by Kaduna state house of Assembly to pass sharia bill led to a series of anti-Sharia demonstration by Christians on 21st February, 2000 (Fwa, 2003).

Another catalyst for ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria is political deprivation, the neglect of democratic principle of equal participation in public affairs management in the country led to the frequent cry of marginalization by various ethnic group and bitter rivalry by each groups to control power (Imobighe, 2003). Most of the ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria are political struggle for the control of state power and resources. Such struggle normally result to accusation and counter accusation for effective participation in political and economic deprivation in affairs of the country. The conflicts are used to attain concrete political economic and other goals. The Zango -Kataf riot of February, 1992 was the relocation of market as the Kataf resentment of Hausa-Fulani domination of cultural, political and economic life in Zango - Kataf (Usman 2003, Suberu, 1996). Fwa (2003) pointed out that Hausa-Fulani community who are settlers controlled the market and the Kataf community who see themselves as real indigenes, were becoming increasingly angry about this and the control of the territorial administration by the Zaria emirate. Also, the Jos Crisis of September 2001 and November, 2008 are result of struggle between indigenes and settlers to have access in decision making, political representation and economic control led to the crisis. The absence of a democratic practice in Nigeria encouraged people to compete among themselves for access to the state and influence in politics. In the course of this, ethnicity and religion is a vital

tool used in achieving these objectives (Fwa, 2003).

Poverty account for ethno-religious conflicts such as unemployment, inadequate housing, physical and social infrastructures, the present unequal distribution of scarce resources in Nigeria societies has created the problem of poverty which is partly responsible for the creation of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria (Obateru, 1994).

It is interesting to note that ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria are the manifestation of conflicts rooted in the crisis of identity (Alanamu, 2005). It has been pointed out that the issue of indigenous and settlers peoples is at the heart of ethno religious conflicts be experienced in the country. According to Sanda (2003) settlers versus indigenous is the dichotomy and pathological mistrust between those who claims they are indigenes on one hand, and settlers or non-natives, on the other. This explains that in Nigeria certain ethnic nationalities have come to be identified with definite territorial locations. Citizenship in Nigerian constitution is defined biologically not socially. That is why, the problem of indigenes has become dominant in controlling group relations in defining identity and acquiring greater shares of public resources and status, the ethno-religious conflicts experienced in Plateau State from 2001 to date was as a result of these claims and counter claims over land ownership and access to political office between indigenes and the settlers.

An attitude of the press in reporting conflicts is another source of ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria. Experience has shown that the mass media reports, news analysis and features are capable of positive or negative role in the interaction between ethnic and religious depending on the journalist concerned. The actions or reactions of Muslims to Christians are determined by the mass media reports (Alanamu, 2005). In many occasions the embers of ethnic and religious conflicts are fanned by such negative and sectional press report and news analysis for example the April 1991 religious riot of Katsina was caused by an article titled would you marry a known prostitute turned born again Funtimes (Giwa, 1991). The role played by mass media in reporting the 1987 Kafachan riot was negative; members of the society were grossly misinformed by the press with bias reports, which created another crisis between Muslim

and Christians (Bidmos, 1993). The unbridled actions of Nigeria press towards ethno-religious conflicts are capable of causing violence. There is no conflict in this country that was not investigated by an administrative or judicial panel, either by state or federal government to find out the remote and immediate causes of such crisis. It is unfortunate that most of these reports were never made public, talk less of implementation. The political will to implement such recommendations was not there, the effects compound the ethno-religious crisis by some groups or individuals who feel that they are above the law (Fwa, 2003).

Catalogues of Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria

There has been a phenomenal increase in ethno-religious conflicts since May 29, 1999. The most destructive and violent of these conflicts occurred in cities of Lagos, Kaduna, Kano, Ibadan and Jos, as well as other places like Shagamu, parts of Benue, Nassarawa, Taraba, Bayelsa and Delta states. The loss of lives has been estimated in billions of naira. The totality of the material and non-material costs are profound, and they impose a heavy burden on a country as resilient and resourceful as Nigeria. Apart from loss of lives, property and emotional trauma that accompany these, the persistence of ethno-religious conflicts has resulted in declining national cohesion and identity, undermine legitimacy of the state and considerable loss of confidence on the machinery of government. Some issues of citizenship contradict with notions of indigene ship based on ethnic and communal identities. The debate on the national question has remained as relevant as ever in the history of Nigeria with dire results (Jega, 2002). On 9th November 1999, Oro cult members attacked Hausa-Fulani Muslims in Shagamu (Ogun State) over the former's traditional rites, on December 2008; another conflict broke in Taraba state between Jukuns and Chambas. One features of ethno-religious clashes in Nigeria emanate from institution of higher learning led by students or elite class that attained a higher education in the society. The Sharia issues in Zamfara, Niger, Kano, Sokoto, Yobe and Borno States in 2000 are cases in point (Mohammed, 2005).

According to Mohammed, (2005), the perceived marginalization of northern political class by Obasanjo administration was accentuated by the government inability to protect lives of northerners living in the southern parts of the

country. The killings in Shagamu, Lagos and Aba since 1999 and government's ambivalent response shook their confidence in government and Nigerian state. The swift military response of the same government to similar developments in Odi and Zaki-Biam, was an evidence of government's selective justice. The Islamic preachers consistently cited these instances to whip up sentiments and fan the members of ethnic and religious hate. These factors revive Sharia and its transformation as a vehicle for regional and Pan-Muslim identity. Mohamed (2005) adds that the two main groups with interlocking relationships in the Sharia project are political class who engaged in campaign of manipulation and obfuscation and their intellectual avant-garde, the Izala preachers. The latter, unlike the traditional Ulama, encourages its members to engage in partisan politics with a view to influence public policy. It is their activism and the inability of the people to counter their activities that is responsible for the apparent success of the Sharia project. Once the Zamfara Sharia project was achieved, all governors in the North were under pressure to embrace Sharia as non-compliance is tantamount to unbelief. The Islamic preachers now appropriated the right to define Islam. Sectarian Carnage broke out in the political capital of Northern Nigeria, Kaduna on Tuesday, November 26th, 2002. The cause of the orgy was a sectarian protest against the botched miss world contest published by this day, considered blasphemous of the Prophet Mohammed. The three-day riots claimed over 200 lives in Kaduna metropolis and consumed countless property, including many places. Cars and other valuables became cuboids of coal in the conflagration that is gradually becoming the trademark of Kaduna, this shockingly crept to Abuja and exposed its vulnerability to the ghost of primordial hostilities which Nigerians have been trying for the past years to exercise (Oshunkeye and Mumuni, 2002).

Ethno-religious crisis has become a burning issue in Plateau State since 2001, hardly a year passes without mind blowing cruelty by perpetrators. But for months now, Jos North has remained the centre of this gruesome act; the two feuding groups, Hausa-Fulani settlers and their host, indigenous Berom group. Indeed, behind the façade of electoral dispute between supporters of People's Democratic Party (PDP) and All Nigerians People's Party (ANPP) in which Jos mayhem was originally anchored, analysts and worrying gladiators agree that the

issue of land and the right to possess it as a religious-political bargaining chip is the base of the problem. The Beroms and other non-Hausa-Fulanis in Jos not only as settlers but usurpers on the other hand see themselves as bona-fide indigenes and indeed owners of Jos North; having lived there for centuries and in the spirit of ethnic and religious affinity, other Hausa-Fulanis in the North have spoken in tandem with their kith and kin in Jos in Plateau State. For example, Umaru Dikko, in his interviews on *Daily Sun* of Monday, May 31, 2004 and Bala in their recent writings “Jos shares the thesis that Plateau State belongs to the Hausas. There are some misguided people in Plateau who think they are aborigines. Some of them come from Kobbì, they don’t even know their history. Then his verdict:

“The Hausa/Fulani were in Plateau before many other tribes arrived. So, if it is in the spirit of first come, first serve, the Fulani should have a first place before most of the tribes there (Onyemaizu, 2008).

Plateau indigenes are not treating their opponents’ claims of ownership of Jos with kid gloves. In a series of newspaper advertorials, they have sought to perforate the Hausa-Fulani claims about Jos. For example in its reaction to the November 2008, Jos crisis, a group that calls itself, “The Plateau indigenous development associations network (PIDAN), last two weeks published an advertorials in a newspaper where it dwarfed the Hausa-Fulani thesis on Jos question as regards ownership of the city. In January 9, 2009 advertorial in *Daily Independent* Newspaper, PIDAN shot down the Hausa-Fulani claims thus:

“If those would be taken into consideration, it goes without saying that the Hausa came to Jos as recent as in the 1900s, that is less than one hundred Years ago” (*Daily Independent*, 2009:A5).

On 30th September 2005, all hell let loose, following the publication of some cartoons of Prophet Mohammed by *Jyllands-Posten*, a Danish newspaper. Since then, the world has not known peace, as violent protests continue to rock Muslim world and beyond. In Maiduguri, Potiskum and Katsina States, Christians were killed while their Churches and properties were razed. More trouble started shortly after Moslem Ulama, under the umbrella of Borno Moslem Forum, addressed a public rally on the

personality of Prophet Mohammed at the Ramat Square Maiduguri, into a large pool of blood. The arsonists chanted war songs from the venue of the rally and took to the street any Christian they saw, burnt over 40 churches and destroyed properties belonging to Christians in Maiduguri metropolis. The Ibos carried out reprisal attacks to Northerners in Onitsha, Awka, Enugu and Aba. It was not surprising that economic activities were grounded in Maiduguri and surrounded cities and states. Many shops that survived the rage of the riots were shut with many traders from the South east fleeing to their states of origin for fear of being killed. Mukwuzi and Agbo (2006:25) add:

Moslem fanatics in neighbouring states of Yobe, Bauchi and Gombe states attacked the traders in transit. the traders were ordered out of a bus owned by Young Shall Grow Motors in Potiskum and beaten before being allowed to continue their journey. But the overall outcome was grislier, as over 50 Christians were reportedly killed in Bauchi, Potiskum and Gombe states.

In a state wide broadcast, Governor Ali Modu Sheriff of Borno State asserts that the North was fuelled by lawless people to satisfy their political ambitions. While sympathizing with those who lost their loved ones and property, the governor promised that his government would deal decisively with culprits. Normalcy has returned to Takum local government area of Taraba State, where Jukun and Ketub ethnic groups clashed two days after Christmas. Both groups clashed over Adere, the Jukun traditional regalia. A Ketub allegedly removed Adere from a Jukun woman dressed for a wedding, the Jukun retaliated. There was blood bath, property worth millions of naira was destroyed and many were displaced. The Jukun-Kuteb crisis has a long historical foundation that if both tribes refuse sheathing their swords, there would be no peace and development in Takum. The most unfortunate results of these crises brings to the fore-front religion and ethnicity as de-facto of where one may live. The question of who is an indigene or settler is an incorrect way of dealing with identity or understanding heterogeneity. It is ironic that self-determination and the liberation of Hausa-Fulani or any other minority groups from their emirate oppressors in terms of the creation of new chiefdom or state for them.

The Implications of Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria

USAID (2001) posited that Nigeria appears to be a nation in chaos, a nation at the brink from the religious conflicts in the North and Middle belt to ethnic violence in the South West and to the low-level guerrilla warfare in Niger Delta, the defining characteristics of Nigeria over the last decades has been conflict. Nigeria is a country that often seems on the verge of collapse and places like Lagos appear to be little more than managed anarchy, but somehow, the country stays together and keeps going ahead. As one perceptive journalist puts it:

Nigerians from all walks of life are openly questioning whether their country should remain as one entity or discard the colonial borders and break apart into several separate states. Ethnic and religious prejudices have found fertile ground in Nigeria, where there is neither a national consensus nor a binding ideology. Indeed, the spread of virulent strains of Chauvinism in Nigeria is part of a worldwide phenomenon playing out in Indonesia, the Balkan, the former Soviet Union, and a host of other African nations (Maier, 2000:XX).

Horowitz (1985) and Ross (1993) classified the nature of disputes in federal societies in those arising from its constitutional provisions, societal configuration and contending goals of dominant social forces. As Crommelin (2001) observed that the distribution of power provides a variety of disputes, between government and between governments at the same level, people and government. All disputes involve issues of constitutionalism: definition and enforcement of limits upon government authority. The latter arises from the configuration of federal society and sharing of positions among ethnic groups in the society. Some assume that once the constitution clearly and proactively defines citizenship, the problem of these flashpoints would be solved or ameliorated. These issues go beyond constitutional issues no matter how brilliantly one tries to obliterate the dichotomy between settlers and indigenes.

Since the Nigerian leaders failed to weld a nation out of the many nations in Nigeria, those nationalities were bound to reinforce their sacred attachment to ethnic boundaries. Those boundaries have today ossified. According to Onyemaizu (2009), Hausa-Fulani are not only unwilling to integrate into societies outside their

local environment where they live, but often exhibit territorial and expansionist tendencies. It is a habit peculiar to the Hausa-Fulani to rename wherever they congregate, outside their own locality for a transaction in cattle and other livestock, "Garki" has site in places like Enugu, Abuja, Okigwe among others as Hausa -Fulani have such enclaves outside their own environment. The steps taken by federal government to bring the crises under control have worsened the suspicion some minority groups entertained against the majority group. Akintola (2009) observed that analysts who seemed to have queued behind settlers in the Jos crisis have ignored the salient fact that it was precisely the Hausa-Fulani of the North who at first kicked against oneness. Umaru Dikko was not pretentious about Hausa-Fulani stock's desire to conquer Nigeria if the need arise. In 2004 *Daily Sun* interview, he bared his mind thus:

Let everybody know that if any tribe in Nigeria, and any tribe in Nigeria, thinks it can fight the Hausa/Fulani is wasting its time. Because our tribe is not only in Nigeria, we extend in Sudan, Cameroun and Gambia. If we blow our horns and call on our tribesmen, they will descend on Nigerian and takeover. We call on our tribesmen across the world, they will descend on Nigeria and we should take over the whole country (Onyemizu, 2009:25).

Analyst sees the correlation between the importation of gladiators from Niger and Chad Republic during the Jos Crisis against the backdrop of Dikko threat. The ethno-religious crisis in Nigeria illustrated vividly the inexistence of crisis management team in Aso Rock. For example, the recent Jos Crisis shows how deeply the state is polarized, even the panels to investigate the crisis has elicited deep distrust to the point that federal government and state constituted different panels. Indigenes and settlers have vowed to ignore both federal and state panel respectively. It is not certain whether legal battles relating to the powers of settling up panel of inquiry are resolved both camps to the crisis would respect the law.

The manifestation of such conflicts has been the source of deadly conflicts between different religious groups and communities at its peak in 2012 and 2013 when Islamist group stormed a gathering of Igbo Christians who were shot killing over dozen of innocent citizens and

injure others in the ultimatum given by Boko Haram Islamist sect to Southern Christians living in the North to leave (Onuoha, 2010). Such conflicts manifested after general elections, after the killing of Christians in the north with attendant reprisal attacks in some south-east states just like the incidents between 1999 and 2002 in Anambra and Abia States.

The Boko Haram Islamic religious groups caused a lot of havoc in Nigeria in 2014 by bombing public and private buildings including car parks (Chothia, 2014; Olojo, 2014). Currently, the group tends to focus on young school girls, as demonstrated by the abduction of Chibok school girls numbering about 200. Another incident is when they ambushed a bus and killed students who were going for Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) examination. Both incidences took place in Borno State. Some argue that ethnic conflicts in Nigeria portray a nation enmeshed in primordial loyalties which contributed to the senseless killing of people after the 2011 presidential election (Udeke, Okolie-Osemene, 2013).

It has been noted that religious induced violence has a relationship with faith and conviction where people of a particular faith build walls around their faith to the exclusion of others (Nigeria Watch, 2011; Udeke, et al, 2013; Olojo, 2014). Most multi-religious nations have experienced different conflicts in Plateau State; some local groups reported that over 53,787 lives were lost in religious conflicts that were generated by ethnic tensions in Middle Belt (Nigeria Watch, 2011). Since 1960, ethno-religious conflicts have littered Nigeria's landscape. It is a situation where the relationship between the members of a particular ethnic group and other ethnic group in a multi-ethnic society is characterised by fear and suspicion leading to violence (Salawu, 2010). The feeling of insecurity has given birth to the formation of ethnic militias such as the Oodua People Congress (OPC), the Bakassi Boys, the Egbesu Boys of Africa, and the Niger-Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF). Others are Igbo People's Congress (IPC), Arewa People's Congress (APC), MASSOB is struggling to re-establish the state of Biafra, and Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People and the Boko Haram group that forbid Western education (Time, May 19, 2014, Dike, 2006) The emergence of ethno-religious groups heightened ethnic division in Nigeria with each group suspecting the other. This affected politics,

policy, development and relationships in Nigeria.

Similarly, ethno-religious conflicts affected Southern Kaduna especially the Kasuwan Magani insurgencies between 1980-1981, Gure-Kahagu 1984 crisis, Lere 1986 riots, Kafanchan 1987 riots, and Zango-kataf disturbances of February and May 1992 among others (Mustapha, 2003; Kazah-Toure, 2003). The introduction of section 38 (1) and 10 of the 1999 constitution, which grants freedom of religion, but prohibits a state religion, has given rise to a number of ethno-religious conflicts. The Enugu and Kaduna riots provide remarkable examples of such conflicts, which are deeply rooted in the inclusion of Sharia Islamic Legal Code into the document in Nigeria.

The Implications of Ethno-Religious Conflict and Security in Nigeria

The concept of security is all about feeling safe from harm or danger; it is more concern about survival and the condition of human existence. National security means capabilities or struggle to overcome internal and external aggression, others consider a nation as secure once it is free from military threat or political Coercion (Francis, 2006, Aliyu, 2012). A nation is secured if it is not in a position to lose its core values of life, property and liberty, if it wishes to deter aggression or win war when it is unavoidable (Aja, 1999). It has been noted that when ethno-religious conflicts is not well managed it will threaten the peaceful co-existence of the nation state. Integration is the high degree of comprehensiveness (Ojo, 2002). The objective of government to provide security and accessible justice through these strategies:

- For safety of people from conflict in their communities, homes, work and schools.
- To secure property from theft and damage
- To ensure that everybody has access to system which dispense justice fair, speedy without discrimination (DFID, 2000).

The persistence of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria has resultant effect within the nation such as disagreement, disunity and distrust, collapse of economies, political system, threat to health conditions, displacement of people, environment degradation, destruction of agricultural produce and other natural resources (Adesanya, 2005). The effects of ethno-religious conflicts has great impediment to achieve national security, integration and development

in Nigeria. The attainment of integration and development are only possible in a peaceful society.

Over the years, the Nigerian government has adopted some rhetorical measures to manage ethno-religious conflicts littering the country's political landscape. Some scholars argued that the measures are not effective given the continued escalation of such conflicts in society (Dike, 2006). The 2002, 2004, and 2008 Jos upheaval and the most recent and dreadful Boko Haram attacks noted above are good examples, the two measures adopted by government of Nigeria are the coercive and the judicial methods (Adeola, 2010, Omorogbe and Omohan, 2005). The coercive method involves the deployment of troops, which in reality has only served to worsen the situation. This method has failed apparently because it involves a lot of shootings and more often than not innocent citizens are the victims. This type of conflict management strategy does not include extensive mediation; the military officers do not seem to possess the expertise required to quell conflicts. The restriction of religious teaching for fear of militant Islamism will lead the Moslem communities to fear that their culture will be banned or eliminated. Another measure adopted by the government was the use of the judicial system, which has failed because it has brought the victims more sorrow than expected relief. This method is affected by poor logistics; therefore, it takes time and often does not receive the required cooperation by the parties involved in the conflict (Omorogbe and Omohan, 2005). The apparent failures of the adopted strategies the offers operational ways of managing the Nigerian experience of ethno-religious conflicts.

Ethno religious conflicts in Nigeria have presented many challenges that border on security and the corporate existence of the country which is the fundamental reason for the adoption of a federal system. The 'ethno religious' crisis in Jos have served as a tenuous hook to national unity and integration for instance, in the Jos crisis, the Hausa-Fulani have been pitched against Christians instead of confronting Plateau State government in order to resolve their areas of disagreements. The crisis has weakened patriotism, commitment to national deals and true nationhood, giving rise to parochialism, ethnicity and other cleavages which 'ethno-religious' Jingoists exploit for their interest and advantage. More so, the

Plateau crisis has had enormous negative consequences on the economy. For instance, President Obasanjo declare state of emergency in plateau State, the violence has reached unprecedented levels and hundreds have been killed with much more wounded or displaced from their homes on account of their ethnic or religious identification. Schooling for children has been disrupted and interrupted; business lost billions of naira and property worth much more destroyed (Obasanjo, 2004). President Obasanjo observes that visitors and inventors are fleeing Plateau State and the neighbouring states had their economies and social life disrupted and dislocated by the influx of internally displaced persons. The federal government and the neighbouring states to Plateau State are incurring huge expenses in managing the socio-political and economic consequences of the near collapse state authority and the breakdown of law and order in some parts of Plateau State and elsewhere. In a report presented by participations of the senior executive course No. 26 of the NIPSS, the economic consequences of ethno-religious conflict were noted as follows: In addition to the irreplaceable loss of lives in terms of property (goods, houses, business premises) have not yet been fully ascertained. Some survivors have permanently lost all they laboured for in their lives. One can argue that the aggregate of such instances impact negatively on the economy of these communities and the rest of the country; new armies of the unemployed, the destitute and highly aggrieved are added in the streets with its attendant consequences. Victims are made and belonging to the economically active segments of the society (NIPSS, 2004).

The various ethno-religious disturbances were a critical and potent force for socio-political instability, they portrayed the gross inadequacy and ineffectiveness of the state security, security of lives and property could not be guaranteed. The climate of insecurity usually created by violent conflict deters investments. And where the polity is scaring away foreign investment, the economy becomes stagnant and democracy dividends equally become a mirage. The growing incidence of ethno-religious crisis in Nigeria is sufficiently worrisome and if ethno-religious conflicts are not stemmed now and completely, the operation vengeance slogan which became a catchword before the 2010 Jos crisis indicates that memories from such conflict could create future conflicts.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The spate of ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria since independence has been estimated loss of over three million lives and unquantifiable damages. In spite of the ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria and their long history, the present and past government have failed to tackle this problem through articulate policy actions. The conflict management has been poor as government continues to rely on coercive method and always resorts to the use of white-paper emanating from them which are not implemented. Nigeria emerge as a free and democratic society; a society where the worth and dignity of the individual is accorded to all irrespective of religious and ethnic inclination. All hands must be on deck to root out the menace of ethno-religious bigotry from the social system.

The resurgence of ethnic conflicts gave birth to ethnic militias in Nigeria with different security implications considering the military attributes of the groups and individuals involved. Other causes of conflicts include corruption, domination, and marginalization, the breakdown of traditional institutions, victimization and use of military troops by Nigerian government in managing conflict. This is a failure on the part of Nigerian government but the eradication of the ugly trend is an impossible task. Unfortunately, over 50 percent of Nigerian youths particularly in the Northern part of the country are unemployed and are easily attracted to the extremist groups such as Boko Haram. Otherwise, managing the Nigerian experience of ethno-religious crisis will remain a daunting task.

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