

Ethno-Religious Crises and the Challenges of Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Numerous development plans aimed at achieving the nation's objectives have been put in place by the government right from the nation's independence for the purpose of improving the socio-political and economic development of the country. The natural and mineral resources, with which the country is endowed, all competed favorably with one another in securing a big chunk of foreign exchange earnings for Nigeria in the early 60s. The discovery of oil, and the unprecedented wealth accrued from it in the 70s, soon emerged as Nigeria's major foreign exchange earner, all which is omens of sustainable development. The dichotomy between growth and development is, however, manifested in the country, in view of what operates there. In spite of the natural and mineral resources with which the country is endowed, coupled with numerous governmental policies and programs to foster peaceful co-existence among the multi ethno-religious entities which make up Nigeria, the country has virtually become a battle field where incessant ethno-religious crises are staged. The crises do not spare any part of the country as ethno-religious crises have become the order of the day in the northern part of the country, while cases of kidnapping and vandalization are the norms in its eastern part. Thus the instrument, which is supposed to be used for sustainable development, is conversely being used for destruction and vandalization purposes.

The big questions are: can any development be attained in an atmosphere of crises? What are the causes and effects of ethno-religious crises on sustainable development in Nigeria? What other steps is the government taking to address the issue of ethno-religious crises? How can religion assist in checking the menace of crises in the country? These, and some other questions, shall be answered in the course of this paper.

Keywords: Ethno-religious, crises, sustainable, development, challenges.

INTRODUCTION

When the age-long Trans-Atlantic slave trade was abolished, there came a sign of relief for the Africans and an opportunity for them to live in peace for them to embark on developmental projects to move their continent forward. At the inception of colonialism, they were not unified, and so, for administrative convenience, they were fused and merged together by the colonialists. Just like the Noah's ark, which contained all species of animals; the cockroach was living peacefully with the hen, the rat was moving about without any molestation from the cat, and the dog was accommodated by the lion, different ethnic groups in Nigeria were living peacefully, not minding their differences under the hegemonial suzerainty of colonial masters. No sooner that they alighted from the ark than they faced one another with serious enmity, hatred, and they did not want to see one another again, as if they were not the one who once lived peacefully under one roof. In the same vein, by the time the colonial masters were ruling the nation, the marriage of inconvenience

of the diverse ethnic groups were maintained and the diversity were united without any problem. With the exit of the colonialists, things started falling apart and the center could no longer hold. Regretting the action taken by the British to merge diverse ethnic groups into one in Nigeria, the former Secretary of State at the British Colonial Office (1952-1959), Sir Peter Smitters, was reported to have lamented that it was extremely dangerous to force diverse radical and social entities into single rigid political structure (Ali, 2004).

Though, many shortcomings were observed in the amalgamation of the numerous ethnic groups in Nigeria, one doubts the alternative options that could have been adopted by the colonialists in administering a diverse group of people with diverse cultural and ethnic identity. Sincerely speaking, the large size of the country and the pluralism of the ethnic groups of the socio-geographical area, called Nigeria, have called for a number of steps to ensure its unity. A conglomerate of almost four hundred ethnic groups, each having its distinct history, language, culture and political systems before the colonial rule, all preserved in mitigated forms with the British system of governance super-imposed and named Nigeria. Paradoxically, the colonial administration, for administrative convenience, compressed and merged the various minority groups with the major groups in their respective regions, making Hausa/Fulani, Igbo, and Yoruba the major ethnic groups and reinforced the three political/administrative divisions – the north, the east, and the west, under appropriate constitutional arrangement. At independence and post-independence era, the status-quo of the colonial era was retained, as every group retained its traditions, language, and culture while sharing the common central institutions in a federal arrangement.

As if what constitutes the federalism is not satisfied, there have been agitations for reversing back to the old regional autonomy of the different groups for the purpose of determining the pace of their development and control of their respective resources. The Odua People's Congress (OPC) was put in place by the Yoruba in the south-western part of the country to fight for the protection and defence of Yoruba in Nigeria. In the eastern part was the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), fighting for cessation of the Igbo ethnic tribe from the Nigeria. This might probably be the feeling of Elaigwu (2005) when he writes:

...the violent protests in the Niger-Delta over perceived injustice in resource distribution; the Itsekiri-Ijaw violence in the Delta; the resumption of the Ife-Modakeke communal violence; the menace of Odu'a Peoples' Congress (OPC) and the accompanying violence in Lagos and Shagamu areas; the formation of the Arewa Peoples' Congress (APC) and the Igbo Peoples' Congress (IPC); the MASSOB feeble attempt to resuscitate Biafra; the Sharia crisis and the demands for a confederation; the South-South demand for the control of its resources; and all the recent inter-ethnic/religious conflicts in various states across the country are all part of the bubbles of the Nigerian federation. They are based on the historical structures of mutual fears and suspicions among Nigerian groups in a competitive process. They reflect dissatisfaction of Nigerian groups with the state of the federation (P. 12)

Federalism, as an approach to national unity, has resulted to anarchy in the country. Lamenting on this, a former military Head of State and later a civilian President of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, was said to have highlighted some of the shortcomings of this type of approach when he says:

Fear, suspicion, intolerance, and greed have been constant in every crisis and confrontation in Nigeria... It is the psychological fear of discrimination and domination. It is fear of deprivation or not getting one's fair share... It is variously described, at the political level as constitutional imbalance; at economic level as uneven distribution of national cake; and at the educational development level as inequality of opportunity (Daily Times, 1984).

Attempts to check the shortcomings in the system of Federalism culminated in the birth of many principles, like the 'quota system' or rather 'proportional representation' and finally the Federal Character principle in 1979. A number of steps have also been taken to promote unity among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria. Such include establishment of federal institutions in some states of the federation, promotion of national sporting activities, and, more importantly, the National Youth Service Corps (N.Y.S.C) program, to mention a few. Although these steps have yielded some fruitful results in achieving national unity, the marriage of inconvenience of the ethnic groups is still begging for irrevocable divorce.

Apart from the ethnic rivalry threatening the sustainable development of Nigeria, another serious problem facing the country is religious pluralism, which has culminated in many crises and has shaken the country to its root. Religion is so sensitive to Nigerians that many are not only ready to defend it at all costs, but are ready to die for it. It is on this note that we shall consider the issues of ethno-religious crises in Nigeria as they affect sustainable development of the country.

A GLIMPSE OF ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CRISES IN NIGERIA BETWEEN 1980 AND 2010

It would seem an exaggeration to say that the country has become a battle field where ethnic and religious riots are constantly staged; but a cursory look at instances of ethno-religious crises would prove this fact. Our earlier studies have recorded some of these crises up to 2005. This work contains a summary of some of them and others which occurred thereafter. What is essential to note is that most of the ethno-religious crises paved way for merciless killings of human beings, just like the *jahiliyyah* period. A good case of ethnic crises similar to what obtained in the pre-Islamic Arabian land was cited by Albert (2005), where a scuffle between an Igbo trader, Mr Arthur Nwakwo, and a Fulani security guard, Mallam Abubakar Abdu, both operating at the Sabongari Kano market, led to community fracas as both were supported by their kinsmen, and more than thirty people were killed as a result of the incident. The Maitatsine riot in Kano metropolis in 1980 was like a burning fire during harmattan in the northern part of the country. The intra-religious riot was said to have claimed 4,177 lives. As if that was not enough, subsequent Maitatsine riots in Bullum-Kutu in Borno State of 26th - 29th October 1982 were pathetic. Imam (2004) recorded the enormous casualty of the Maitatsine uprising of Bullum-Kuttu that it claimed more than four hundred lives and properties worth over 3 million naira were destroyed or looted. According to him, the Jimeta Maitatsine crisis of 26th February -5th March 1984 claimed one thousand and four lives, while five thousand, nine hundred, and thirteen families were displaced; and the Gombe Maitatsine disturbance of 26th - 28th April 1985 claimed over one hundred lives. The Kafanchan riot of March 1987, in addition to some mosques and churches that were burnt, left about twenty-five people killed and several others hospitalised (Lateju & Adebayo, 2006).

In 1990, the invitation of Reinhard Bonnke, a German Christian preacher to Kano, was met with bitter opposition by the Muslims, who felt cheated for previously denying Ahmed Deedat, a Muslim preacher from South Africa, to come to the country for the same purpose. The crises took place between 11 and 14, October 1990 and left behind a casualty of over 500 lives and million-worth property. Many lives were equally lost in the 1991 Muslim-Christian religious crisis of Tafawa Balewa in Bauchi State. The cause of the crisis could not be precisely given. While some believed that it erupted following an attempt of a Christian to slaughter pigs in the Muslim section of the town's only abattoir, some said it was ignited consequent upon roasted meat (suya) made of pork and sold to a Muslim. However, Imam (2004) traced the incessant crises between the inhabitants to ethnicity between the Seyawas and the Fulani. He writes:

As late as the colonial days such crises had been reported. It is claimed that the bone of contention for the perennial crises in the area has been over the leadership of Lere District, an area, the Seyawas would want to be governed by the native people and not the Fulani. In pursuant of this demand, the people had clashed with the District Head of Lere who is always an appointee of the Emir of Bauchi. Because of lack of positive response of their demand the people of the area had vowed to operate on the opposing camp to the Bauchi authority (p. 27).

The October 1991 Tiv-Jukun ethnic crisis is another conflict over land ownership and political domination. The crisis was said to have claimed not less than 5,000 lives with dozens of villages burnt, while up to 150,000 residents fled the war zone in the exodus that followed (Newswatch, 1991).

On September 10, 2001, another serious religious crisis enveloped the entire city of Jos consequent upon the reaction of a woman who drove through a street barricaded by a group of Muslim worshippers during a Friday service. The woman bent on having her way because she felt the people had no right to block a public road. The consequence of the crisis was succinctly described by Lateju and Adebayo (2006) in the following words:

Jos which was hitherto a serene town had become a mass grave of decaying corpses nose-wrenching odours and paratrooping vultures as arrows, machetes, swords and guns of varying sophistication were employed (freely used) indiscriminately. Human bodies were strewn on virtually every street in Jos. People who were not blown up by bullets were simply hacked down and their throats slit in the manner of slaughtering of an animal. Many others were sprayed with petrol and set ablaze. The stench of burnt bodies was suffocating. Buildings and vehicles were not spared. A particular car dealer in Jos metropolis lost all the vehicles on display in his fleet to the mayhem (p. 9).

The 1992 Taraba State religious crisis was ignited by a misunderstanding between Muslim and Christian female students of the Government Science Secondary School, Jalingo. It consequently spread to other parts of the northern states and went away claiming lives and properties. Two lives were also said to have lost in the Potiskum disturbance on December 4, 1994 consequent upon the conversion of one Catherine Abban, known as Fatima Abban to Islam. There was also a

demonstration of the *al-majirai* in Maiduguri, Dikwa, Biu, Ngala, and Monguno on 4th April 1996, which led to destruction of churches, hotels, and properties worth over two million naira (Imam, 2004).

The serious casualty recorded in the Kaduna State's reaction to adoption of Shari'ah would forever remain in the memory of Nigerians. This crisis, which happened in 2000 consequent upon the attempted introduction of Shari'ah in the State, was met with bitter opposition by those who were not favorably disposed to it. In the process, the mayhem became an ethnic crisis as many Igbo people were killed. A rejoinder to this was the killing of many northern Muslims residing in Igbo towns as retaliation. In May 1992, there was another communal feud between the Katafs and the Hausas in Kaduna State. This metamorphosed to inter-religious crisis between Muslims and Christians in major cities of Kaduna State, leaving many casualties at the end.

It is disheartening to observe that over 700 lives were lost in a religious crisis which erupted consequent upon certain cartoons against Prophet Muhammad published in Denmark. As if taking a pestle to pick teeth, the 'loyalists' of the Prophet took to the street destroying properties worth billions of naira and burning places of worship. This February 18, 2006 mayhem in Maiduguri later turned to an ethnic crisis where several Igbo were killed. A revengeful attack on the Hausa communities in Enugu, Abia, Anambra, and Delta states therefore took place. The Hausa had their own share of the Igbo aggression where many Hausa Muslims were killed and mosques destroyed and burnt.

Between 2008 and 2010, some major ethno-religious crises were witnessed in Nigeria with serious casualties. The Jos crisis of 2008 was fatal as it recorded more than 700 casualties. The cause of the fracas is given by Umejesi (2010) when he writes:

The Jos religious crisis of 2008 was both ethnically and politically motivated, as it was as a result of Local Government elections in Jos North, which Hausa/Fulani Muslim settlers claim to be their own as against the claim of ownership by indigenous people of the area who are mostly Christians. The Head Quarters of Jos North was, shortly, before the election of November 27, 2008 relocated from its location of C Division of the Nigeria Police to the premises of the Jos Metropolitan Development Board (JMDB). The relocation did not go down well with the Jasawa (Hausa/Fulani in Jos) who saw the relocation as an attempt to short change them politically and they were prepared not to allow that (p. 236).

The crisis, given serious attention by the Federal Government, has become a recurring decimal, and, up till now, it could not be said that it has been totally suppressed. Of recent, Bauchi State witnessed major religious crises, which led to loss of lives and properties. The February 2009 religious crisis, which took place there, recorded some casualties. The July 26, 2009 Boko Haram crisis also emanated from Dutsen Tenshin in Bauchi State before it later spread to Kano, Yobe, and Borno States. Close to eight hundred lives were lost in the crisis.

It needs to be mentioned that the ethno-religious crises are not restricted to the northern part of the country alone, rather, other parts of the country also recorded cases of the problem. In the south-western part of the country was the Ife-

Modakeke riot, which claimed many lives and properties. Also the activities of the Odua People's Congress (OPC) nearly threw the country into total anarchy. The clash between the OPC and the Hausa settlers in Shagamu on July 2, 1999 led to wanton destruction of lives and property. The retaliatory wave of this was noted in Kano, where many Yoruba residing in the city were seriously dealt with. Elaigwu (2005) has a long list of 140 ethno-religious crises that took place in Nigeria between May 1999 and June 2005. Ever since then, a score of them have also occurred. All these crises have led to destruction and looting of properties worth millions of naira. The big questions then are: how can remarkable development take place in atmosphere of crises, chaos and disturbances? Can foreign investors decide to come to a country where ethno-religious crises have become the order of the day? Are those killed in the crises not relevant in the scheme of development of the nation, more-so that virile men and women are mostly the victims of the crises?

Causes Of Ethno-Religious Crises

As indicated earlier on, every geo-political zone of the country has tasted the bitter pill of ethno-religious violence. While both ethnic and religious crises have nearly torn the northern part of the country into pieces, the south-western part faces ethnic problem championed by the Odua People's Congress (OPC) against the Ijaws, Hausa, or Igbo traders in Lagos and other places. In the Niger-Delta zone, the militant youths had made the place hot for expatriates working in oil industries making the area virtually ungovernable for the government. The Bakassi Boys and MASSOB took over the southeast with the aim of 'liberating' their zone from Nigeria and stay alone to control the natural resource on their land. From this, one observes that different factors are responsible for ethno-religious crises in Nigeria.

Poverty has been considered one of the major causes of ethno-religious crises in Nigeria. It cannot be doubted that Nigeria is naturally endowed with mineral resources and naturally blessed with fertile land that is good for both cash and food crops and it has high potentials for industrial and economic development. The discovery of crude oil is an additional advantage to the country and this serves as her major foreign exchange income. In spite of all these divine blessings, it is sad to note that the country is scored low in terms of human development. The 1998 Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) states that in Nigeria, life expectancy is 52 years compared to 75 years in developed countries, while one-third of the people live not up to 40 years. Infant mortality is 79 out of 1000 births, compared to ten in developed countries, mortality rate of children under five years are stunted due to malnutrition; only 44 percent of adult population are literate; 49 and 70 percent, respectively, have no access to safe portable water in the urban and rural areas; 49 percent have no access to basic health facilities; and 48.5 percent live in poverty compared to 43 percent in 1985. In his statistical analysis, Ogbulafor (2000) claimed that in 1996, the number of people bitten by excessive poverty in Nigeria was 39.2 million representing 65.6 percent of the population, as against 17.7 million representing 28.1 percent of the Nigerian population in 1980. The frequent occurrence of ethno-religious crises in Nigeria has, therefore, been attributed to the level of poverty in the country (Omogbe & Omohan, 2005). Ibrahim (2008) also carried out a research on causes of ethno-religious crises in Kano State and she discovered that poor economic base of the populace carried the highest percentage of 34.9%, while religious fundamentalism followed with 31.8%.

Albert (2005) considers the international dimensions of social conflicts in Nigeria since the 1980s. In his work, he observed that some external forces used the loose security measure of the country to foment violence. He found out that Marwa, the brain behind the 1980 Maitatsine riot, was from Marwa village in Cameroun. He was said to have been

deported to Cameroun in 1962 before sneaking back into the country in 1966. To substantiate this, Albert found out that about 185 of the followers of Marwa who were arrested and detained at Kano Central Prison and the Goron Dutse Prison in 1980 were non-Nigerians – 162 of them from Niger Republic, 16 from Chad Republic, 4 from Cameroun Republic, 2 from Mali Republic, and 1 from Burkina Faso.

Another reason responsible for ethno-religious crises in Nigeria is the wrong interpretation of the scripture by those who claim authority to the interpretation of the holy books. If not so, one wonders why people act contrary to the teaching of the scriptures in matters pertaining to peaceful co-existence, unity and sanctity of life, and property. As it is a serious disease for an ignorance to claim authority to knowledge, many of the so called 'religious leaders' use their shallow knowledge to interpret the scripture to suit their selfish end banking on the ignorance of their followers. Lamenting on the wide gap between the teaching and practice of religion among its adherents, Adebayo (2003) identified some factors responsible for using religion as instrument of polarization, among which is leadership tussle, which also culminated in the proliferation of many denominations in the country. Also, sectarian jingoism, as well as excessive patriotism to one's religious sect, which consequently transformed to fanaticism, is another major factor contributing to this social menace.

One can not rule out the assumed economic marginalization of some ethnic groups as a cause of ethno-religious conflicts. This is true of the reactions of the Ijaws and the Ogonis in the Niger-Delta to the economic exploitation of the foreign multi-national oil companies in the area with little or no compensation to the environmental degradation of the area. In spite of the hanging of the leader of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), Ken-Saro Wiwa in 1995, the Ogoni people continued with their request through violence means by kidnapping of many expatriates of the Shell Company. For economic reasons, the Ijaws, Itsekiris, and Urhobos have always confronted one another violently. The abundance of crude oil deposits in Warri Township had made them to fight and claim ownership and political dominance of the area. The May 1997 crisis, which erupted from the zone, was highly pathetic and devastating.

In conclusion, many other factors have been identified as the causes of violence in Nigeria. These include selfishness, greed, injustice, poverty, do-or-die politics, love of money, accumulation of wealth, revolt, repression, immorality, and ignorance (Ideyi, 2008).

THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The concept of sustainable development is the efforts at improving the socio-economic and ecological status and at exploiting and processing the environment or natural resources for the purpose of improving the quality of human life in such a way that the needs of the future generations are not jeopardized. The 'World Conservation Strategy', published by the World Conservation Union, publicized the concept of sustainable development in the 20th century. The term became more pronounced and received greater attention in the report of the Bruntland Commission, which the United Nations General Assembly assigned to propose long-term environmental strategies for achieving sustainable development by the year 2000 and beyond (Sulaiman, 2002). The report spells out the definition of the term, sustainable development, its nature, scope, objectives, and approaches, among others. Most of the definitions given to the concept 'development' see it as a process of change in the social structure, attitude, institution, and general acceleration of economic growth through reduction of inequality and poverty. Going through the multifarious definitions of the concept, Mohammed (2002) identifies three important facts on it, namely:

- i. increasing the availability and widening the distribution of basic life sustenance, such as food, shelter, and protection;
- ii. raising the level of living in addition to higher income, provision of jobs, better education, and greater attention to cultural and humanitarian values, all of which serve to enhance material well-being, but also to generate greater individual and national self esteem, and;
- iii. expanding the range of economic and social choice to individuals and nations by freeing them from servitude and dependence.

From the above, some indices of development, which are no doubt prerequisites to sustainable development, are identified. According to Adedeji (1997), the level of human development could be measured by the Human Development Index (HDI), whose components are health, education, and income. To Aliyu (1999), the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which is the total output of the economy, is a major determinant of development. Other indices of development, identified by Mohammed (2002) include: improved standard of living in terms of availability of decent accommodation, improved nutritional standards, qualitative health care and education services to the majority; life expectancy which is mainly influenced by the standard of living, availability of health services, literacy level, and income of the people. From this, it could be observed that all the identified indices of development could hardly be attained in an atmosphere of crises. The health, education, and income of Nigerians are jeopardized and adversely affected during any of the ethno-religious crises.

Dogarawa (2002) has broadly classified resources into four categories namely: common, definite, acquirable, and possessive resources. To him, common resources are resources that are common to all nations, people, and tribes which no one prevents anybody from being used. Such resources are air, sunlight, moonlight, rain, weather, wild animals, forest, and time, among others. Definite resources, as the name implies, have terminal features, hence the need for speedy, effective, and efficient utilization. Examples of these are lifespan, target, completion, and strategy. Acquirable resources are acquired to change from one status to the other. Examples are skills, experiences, and orientation. Possessive resources are obtained through exchange by customary rights and other legal forms of ownership, which can be used, neglected, sold, or transferred by way of gift or control. Money, assets, technology, territory, and independence are examples of possessive resources. These resources put together are ingredients of development, which sustainability depends mostly on their effective utilization and which under-utilization and misuse could be a great loss and catastrophic. The point is that none of these resources could be managed or even harnessed in atmosphere of crisis and chaos.

The summary of this is that a pseudo development could only be attained in an atmosphere where religion is used as an instrument of vendetta. In another dimension, one can attribute the discovery of crude oil in Nigeria as well as the refinery companies there as an element of development. However, this blessing has been threatened by various agitations, protests and demonstration by the oil producing communities who considered themselves cheated in the sharing formula of the proceeds from the resources.

IMPLICATIONS OF ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CRISES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

It is an undeniable fact that a nation that witnesses ethno-religious crises almost on an annual basis could not be said to be stable politically. The problem of ethnicity, which dichotomized the country's armed forces, was said to have been

responsible for the outbreak of the 1967 civil war, which lasted for thirty months leaving thousands of lives dead including “soldiers and civilians that would have done the country proud” (Ajimotokin, 2003). It is also observed by Adebayo, (2003) that religion has no place where ethnicity is dominating. He attributed the annulment of the June 12, 1993 election, which was believed to have been the most peaceful, free, and fair election in the political history of the country, to ethnicity where both the acclaimed winner of the election and the then military President that annulled the election were Muslims but from different ethnic background. In essence, ethno-religious crises breed unstable governments, which is very crucial to sustainable development.

Education is very vital in any sustainable developmental program. The nation is striving to put in place amenities for the purpose of elevating the education standard of the country. This is, however, hampered by incessant closure of schools and institutions in places where ethno-religious crises are holding. Apart from this, schools are not spared in the destructive tendencies of those participating in crises of any nature. Many schools had been burnt down while many were forced to close down for months. The education of innocent youths was equally disrupted under tumultuous situations created by ethno-religious crises, as many were forced to emigrate from the crisis area. Imam (2004) identified two patterns of emigration in such a situation, namely temporary and permanent emigration. He observed:

Those who emigrated on temporary basis came back after several weeks or months in exile to come back and contend with relics of their abandoned residences and properties. However, those who opted for permanent emigration were mostly non-indigenes who suffered losses and felt their continued stay in the crises areas is like casting one’s life into perdition (p. 38).

Whichever the case was, the crises destabilized everything, including the education of students whose parents were forced to relocate consequent of the crises. Such people became refugees elsewhere and would take time for them to settle down in their new settlements to practice their profession and for children to adjust to their new environment.

Cases of ethno-religious crises have serious implication for stability of education programme in the tertiary institutions where they are launched. Ethnic crisis, which took place at Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Zaria, no doubt, led to brain drain. The Hausa community in the institution, motivated by spirit of ethnicity, complained about inequality of posts of responsibilities among the staff of the University. The staff, mostly Hausa-Fulani, constituted themselves into an organization called Northern Elements Coalition (NECO), accused the Yoruba and Tiv staff of marginalizing them. Losing sight of the fact that positions in tertiary institutions are filled on merit and qualifications and not on the basis of ethnicity, they accused the then Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Daniel Saror (a Tiv man) of collaborating with the University Senate and Council, which were composed essentially of professors of Yoruba extraction to ‘destroy’ the University. The rancour consequently led to the brutal murder of Prof. Bamidele Bandipo, who hailed from Offa, a Yoruba town in Kwara State (Adeyemi, 2005). This state of insecurity made many lecturers of the institution, especially the Yoruba and Tiv, to look outside the institution for other universities where their lives and properties would be protected.

It needs to be mentioned, as well, that no remarkable development could be recorded in an atmosphere of BDR (build, destroy, and rebuild) as it amounts to cycling within the circle. In essence, it gulped the government millions of naira or dollars to put in place numerous amenities which were destroyed during crises. Resources, which could have been used

to improve these amenities and embark on other developmental projects, would have to be used on restructuring and replacing what had been damaged during the crises. In most cases, government compensated victims of these crises and this gulped millions of naira, which could have been used for other developmental projects.

Incessant crises are also inimical to sustainable economic development of the nation. This is because, apart from the fact that many virile men of the nation are seriously affected in the crises which consequently led to their death, the country's source of revenue is equally affected. Crises in the Niger Delta, for example, had shaken the country to her root, as the source of the 'goose' of the country was greatly affected. Virtually all steps taken to check crises are not economic-friendly. For instance, imposition of curfew brings every economic activity to a halt as it becomes difficult to move freely from place to place. The whole area of crisis, therefore, becomes desolated and remains a ghost city until normalcy is reinstated. Since no economic development could take place in an atmosphere of fear, anarchy, and insecurity, it, therefore, implies that ethno-religious crises are bane to economic sustainability. Looking at it internationally, incessant ethno-religious violence has added to the fear foreign investors are having of Nigeria. Cases of kidnapping of expatriates in Nigeria are no more news. One wonders how foreign investors could decide to establish in the 'war zone.' Apart from the fact that the image of Nigeria has been dented globally as a country which breeds social miscreant and criminals, Nigerians have also become the first suspects in any scene of crime. They are also exposed to thorough screening before they are allowed to enter other countries.

CURBING ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CRISES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Advocating for religious tolerance and the call to forget the differences of the ethnic diversity and religious affiliation of Nigerians seems to be not working for the unity of country. We, however, opt for better understanding of the differences for the purpose of building a unified nation. Through proper education and knowledge of the plight of each ethno-religious groups, amicable settlement of the differences could be facilitated. It is a pity to say that an average Igbo man knows nothing about the culture of other tribes in the same country, while Christians look at Muslims with contempt and suspicion and vice-versa. A fact that cannot be denied is that no tribe can operate in isolation, nor can it be all self-sufficient. Nigeria is a nation blessed with land and mineral resources with high potentiality of industrial and economic development. Being an agrarian society, palm products, cocoa, coffee, timber, groundnuts, rubber, and other cash crops are expected to be produced in abundance. In addition to the discovery of crude oil, such other mineral resources, like limestone, tin, gold, silver, iron ore, coals, lead-zinc, gravels, bauxite, sand marble, graphite, stone- zircon, feldspar, and kaolin, to mention a few, are means through which the country could explore her revenue for sustainable economic development. Exclusive dependence of oil, as the only source of income for the nation, is a sign of ungratefulness to God, who endowed them with these resources. It also gives the oil area the opportunity to feel too big as if others are not also blessed with any resources. It will be wise for the government to explore other resources with which the nation is endowed, and this will help in keeping idle hands busy and as well create job opportunities for thousands of Nigerians. This, in turn, will reduce poverty, which is one of the key factors for ethno-religious crises.

The gradual withdrawal of God from the scheme of Nigerian affairs and the wrong assumption that Nigeria is a secular nation makes her to downplay morality. The nation seems to have bid farewell to love, justice, trust, patience, honesty, integrity, fairness, accountability and selfless service, and other virtues, and it welcomes corruption, injustice, violence, killing, maiming, and other socio-economic and economic vices. This makes individuals to look for means of satisfying

themselves, not minding stepping on people's toe or even cutting their throat. On this note, we strongly feel that the Federal Government needs to enforce moral codes on the citizens of the nation by bringing to book moral violators and those who foment trouble or crisis in any society. The establishment of the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) by the federal government, for the purpose of stamping out bribery and corruption in the country, is a right step in the right direction as it helps in breaking the monopoly of power in the hands of public officials and the more discretion they are given in the decision making process with little or no accountability. Similar commission needs to be established to deal decisively with those who ignite, or fuel, crises in the community.

There is also the need to revamp the educational policy of the country in such a way that the traditional *Al-Manjiri* education (migrant seekers of knowledge) will be integrated into the mainstream of education. Experience has shown that the products of the schools have largely been involved in many of the ethno-religious crises in the northern part of the country. This system of education was well flourished in the pre-colonial period of northern Nigeria and had produced great scholars. The colonialists met this on ground and allowed it to operate freely. In the post colonial era, however, this system of education has been grossly neglected and its products are not given any recognition. Those who pursue the program take to begging, roaming aimlessly the streets, and indulging in petty crimes and other deviant behaviors. To find a permanent solution to the social scourge of the Al-Manjiri, it is pertinent that the federal government takes a step at giving due attention to this age-long system of education just as it does to the western system of education.

One fact still remains that no religion teaches violence and shedding of blood. Rather, every religion teaches endurance, peaceful co-existence, neighborliness, sanctity of life, and protection of property. If this is the case, it means that all religions have their common meeting place, especially when it comes to virtues. What, therefore, remains is that the government should create an enabling environment for the leadership of these religions to meet and come up with recommendations and suggestions for adequate penalty for culprits who decide to disrupt the peaceful co-existence of the country.

CONCLUSION

So far, attempts have been made to discuss the magnitude of ethno-religious crises in Nigeria and the factors responsible for these crises. There is no doubt that a nation who focuses on developmental projects without addressing the issue of security is only planting corn on the rock, as no serious development can take place in an atmosphere of crisis. On this note, we suggest the diversification of Nigeria economy to address the problems of poverty and unemployment, which are strong backbones for ethno-religious crises. We equally found out that ethno-religious crises could be checked should their perpetrators are adequately brought to book and made to face the wrath of the law. Sustainable development could also take place where justice and other moral virtues are allowed to reign. The al-Manjiri factor in ethno-religious ethnic crises could also be averted if the products of the system are entrenched in the mainstream of the nation's employment scheme. If not, the case will be worse than that of a father who decided to train some of his children and left the rest untrained. Those who were not trained would, however, not allow the trained ones to enjoy the fruit of their training. In such a case, no development could be sustained.

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