CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS TO ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA: CASE STUDY OF THE JOS CRISES

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ABSTRACT

Since the emergence of the nascent democracy in 1999, Plateau State, North Central Nigeria has become a permanent flashpoint of violent clashes. The State which had hitherto been one of the most relatively peaceful in Nigeria has been deeply enmeshed and suffused in political and ethno-religious conflicts characterized by genocidal attacks, bombing, maiming and killings of several persons, loss of business investments, and properties worth several billions of Naira. Within the space of eleven years, several violent political ethno-religious conflicts have been reported in Plateau State and all effort to restore peace have not achieved the desired end. It would seem that democracy has increased the culture of impunity in some people while political differences are believed to have fueled some of the violence that have erupted. It was crisis that made Plateau State go down with the unenviable record as the first state in the Fourth Republic where a state of emergency was declared. Democratic governance with the underlying emphasis on the activation of the citizenry to realize the 'common good' has not taken root in the popular consciousness of Nigerians. Everyone appears to be for himself. The thrust of this paper therefore, is to investigate the recurring decimal of flawed political and ethno-religious conflicts with a view to pinpointing its nature, form, causes and proffering solutions for Nigeria's democracy to thrive.

Key-Words: Crises, Conflict, Alternative Dispute Resolution, Good Governance

INTRODUCTION

More than anything else, the greatest obstacle to the nascent democracy is the pervasive insecurity of lives and property, as evidenced by the spate of armed robbery attacks, assassinations, ethnic and religious conflicts, coupled with the seeming helplessness of security agencies to handle criminal acts (Ojo, 2010). The situation is worsened by the increasing number of unemployed Nigerians some of whom are ready recruits for criminal activities (*Nigerian Tribune*, 2002). The above statement from an editorial comment by a national daily in Nigeria indeed, epitomizes the central focus of this paper, the aim of which is to analyze the nexus between democratic nurturing, sustenance

and eventually consolidation via-a-vis ethno-religious violence, conflict and crises in Jos. The paper argues that with the upsurge of violence, seeing it as the most significant factor impeding constitutional democracy (Joseph, 1998) not only in Nigeria but in Africa generally is a source of serious concern. Social disintegration could well be the most acute danger facing democracies, undermining the human rights and civil liberties on which democracy stands (Przeworski, 1995).

Arguably once Nigeria's most serene city, Jos is now synonymous with senseless violence, largely occasioned by misgivings and primordial sentiments and prejudices among inhabitants. The directive given to the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), Kuru, Jos sometimes ago to carry out a comprehensive research into the crisis and similar cases across the country can only have the desired results if the government musters enough political will to tackle the issues leading to and fuelling the situations. When it began, it was a time the entire country was trying to come to terms with the prospects of democracy early into the Fourth Republic. A monster called indigene/settler syndrome tore the Jos people apart. The Birom and Hausa were engaged in a supremacy feud over Jos North Local Government. Simultaneously, religion became an issue. When it did, the scope of the problem was amplified as dwellers from other parts of the country were compelled to line up behind the two original parties to the conflict (Gomos, 2011).

Predictably, the mixtures of ethnicity and faith have taken the strife to unimaginable, deadly heights. Whole villages have been levelled. Neighbours who had lived in harmony for decades have turned on one another with murderous fervour. That has led to the loss of thousands of lives. Numerous buildings and other valuables have been razed. Social and economic life is at its lowest. The city and indeed state that used to hold a lot of attraction for tourists now find it hard to sustain even the love of the indigenes. Fear has become a common denominator. Only few weeks ago, two suspected bombers who were on a morbid mission to one of the churches in the city were allegedly blown up by their own device before they could reach their destination. As the report was being disseminated, church services were promptly terminated and worshippers dispersed. Law enforcement agents now comb worship centres in Jos on Fridays and Sundays to safeguard them. For a nation whose citizens boast of belonging to either Christianity or Islam, two of the world's greatest faiths, that indeed is a sad commentary (Egwu, 2011).

On the surface, the order given to NIPSS by the federal government should bring hope to Nigerians and even the international community many of whom are apprehensive about the fate of the city. To begin with, the Institute is located within the troubled area, so it should hopefully possess first-hand information about the subject. This is the thrust of this paper, so as to sustain the current debate on sustainable development and security which are topical issues in Africa. The profile of the team - several competent scholars, practitioners and researchers in peace and conflict, sociology were deployed in order to attain sustainable development in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general which were   from diverse ethnic, religious, geographical and political backgrounds - is an added boost. Equally noteworthy is the government brief, which includes devising workable peace, enhancing strategies, building a stakeholder model by applying strategies for sustainable development, participatory crisis analysis and strengthening community-based groups towards achieving societal harmony (Obateru, 2010).

Nigeria is a key player in African Affairs and an important participant in global matters. The country, which is fondly called "the giant of Africa", is the most populous and potentially one of the well-endowed nations. Based on the 2006 Population and Housing Census report, its population is put at over 144 million (NPC, 2006). It is one of the world's most ethnically diverse nations. It comprises multi-ethnic nationalities put between 250 and 450 (Idahosa 1997; Aghemelo and Osumah 2009). Some of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria are larger than many independent states in Africa. At the early 1960s, of the estimated 3,000 ethnic groups in the world about 1000 were represented in Africa and about 445 in Nigeria (Akali 1997). Of the numerous ethnic groups, there are three dominant ones: these are the Hausa in the Northern region, the Igbo in the Eastern region and the Yoruba in the Western region. Other minority ethnic groups include Kanuri, Tiv, Bini, Isoko, Nupe, Ibibio, Jukun, Gwari and Igbira (Wikipedia, 2011). The three dominant ethnic groups have been net beneficiaries of the political power at the national level (Imobighe 2003). The overwhelming majority of the Northern population is Muslim, which is estimated to be over 50 per cent of the total population. Christianity is strong in the Southern region, accounting for perhaps 35 per cent of the total population of the country, while the balance of the population remains animists (Dibie, 2000).

The challenge of managing Nigeria's political and ethnic plurality has not been an easy task. The ethnic problem has posed a number of threats to the legitimacy of the national government and its ability to offer leadership appropriate to the demand of nation-building. The mobilization of ethnic sentiments and solidarity seeking to gain or retain relevance has fueled anxiety, suspicion, fear of domination and outright conflicts (Osumah and Okor 2009). Granted that conflict is an inevitable phenomenon in social and political settings and thus, not peculiar to any part of the world, its nature, dimension, consequences and management vary from one country to another. Nigeria is one of the nations in the world whose political landscape has been inundated, suffused with and deeply enmeshed in spectrum of recurring complex conflicts ranging from resource, communal, to political and ethno-religious conflicts (Jega 2002: 35-8).

Political and ethno-religious conflagrations have severally drawn the country to the precipice of disaster. It has engendered huge human carnage, internal displacements and refugee crisis, loss of investments, strained inter-communal or inter-ethnic relations, threatened internal security and public order. There is the high level of inter-ethnic and inter-religious vendetta in the country, to the point that it seems that Nigeria is now exhibiting the symptom of a collapsing state, whose members are perpetually at war with one another (Imobighe 2003a:1-12). Thus, the recurring political and ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria have become matter of great concern to the international community. On account of the nature of the conflicts among other security threats in the country, United States National Council Intelligence Report on May 28, 2005 predicted that the nation may explode (disintegrate) within 15 years (Agbaje 2005). Indeed, the nation has undergone series of profound civil disturbances and recurrently seeking ways to manage her persistent and complex problems and ethno-religious conflict. Several efforts such as deployment of huge security operatives, peaceful dialogue amongst religious groups and setting up of probe panels have been made to manage the perennial conflict but with little or no positive transformation.

However, this paper with particular reference to political and ethno-religious crisis in Jos, Plateau State, seeks to investigate the challenges and proffer solutions to the political upheaval in Nigeria.

PROBLEMS

For most Nigerians however, the pressing problems of everyday survival remain the highest immediate priority. Since the oil boom of the 1970s, Nigeria's economy has been in crisis despite continued expansion in oil production. Without the establishment of an accountable government, the chances of addressing pressing problems like the deterioration of living conditions and the collapse of once treasured town of Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria, looks slim.

Since the emergence of the nascent democracy in 1999, Plateau State has become a permanent flashpoint of crisis. The State which had hitherto been one of the most relatively peaceful in Nigeria has been deeply enmeshed and suffused in political and ethno-religious conflicts characterized by genocidal attacks, bombing, maiming and killings of several persons, loss of business investments, and properties worth several millions of Naira. Within the space of eleven years, several violent political, ethno-religious conflicts have been reported in Plateau State. Furthermore, these violent conflicts have compelled several Nigerians to attempt a redefinition of their identity as fallouts of emotive feeling and perceptions. The politico-violent conflict which has remained a recurring decimal has severally threatened the nascent democracy, national unity, and our collective security as a nation-state.

Thus, the challenges of managing the political and ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria with particular focus on Plateau State have little been explored by earlier researchers. Thi yawning gap in terms of level of analysis is what this paper intends to fill; and in order to effectively do this, it has set for itself the following questions:

(a)   Does competitive partisan politics pose any challenge to the management of the recurring   political   and ethno-religious conflicts in Plateau State?

    (b)   Does the presence of a huge pool of angry brigade of unemployed youths pose   any challenge to the management of the recurring political and ethno-religious conflicts in Plateau State?

    (c)   Does the significant gap in the capacity of the security agencies make   violence perpetrators face the wrath of the law pose any serious challenge to the   management of the recurring political and ethno-religious conflicts in Plateau State?

(d)   Does the mobilization of ethno-religious sentiments to pitch one group against   another   engender   any challenge in the management of the orgy of violent   political and ethno-religious conflicts in Plateau State?

OBJECTIVES

The general objective of this paper is to investigate the challenges of managing political and ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria with special focus on Plateau State. Specifically, the paper intends to:

1.   find out whether competitive partisan politics pose any challenge to the management of the recurrent ethno-religious conflicts in Plateau State.

2.   ascertain if the presence of a huge pool of angry brigade of youths pose any challenge to the management of the recurring ethno-religious conflicts in Plateau State.

3.   determine whether the significant gap in the capacity of the security agencies to bring perpetrators of violence to face the wrath of the law pose any serious challenge to the management of the recurrent ethno-religious conflicts in Plateau State.

4.   examine if the inputs of stakeholders to peace building process on one group against another ignite the management of violent ethno-religious conflicts in Plateau State.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

State:

State is characterized by political apparatuses, distinct from both ruler and ruled, with supreme jurisdiction over a demarcated territorial arena, backed by a claim to monopoly of coercive power, and enjoying a minimum level of support or loyalty from their citizens (Epelle 2010:7)

Ethnicity:

Ethnicity according to Nnoli (1978:5) refers to as a social phenomenon associated with interactions among members of different ethnic groups. He further held that ethnic groups are social formations distinguished by communal character (i.e. language and culture) of their boundaries. Also, Otite (1990) defined ethnicity as categories of people characterized by cultural criteria of symbols including language, value systems and normative behavior, and whose members are anchored in a particular part of the new state territory. These definitions are adopted for the purpose of this study.

Crisis: Crisis is a state of tension, fear and insecurity within a state, group or organization.

Conflict: Conflict denotes clash, contention, confrontation, battle, struggle, controversy or quarrel. Conflict may either be violent or non-violent. Conflict often manifests in violent form. Violence denotes employment of illegal methods of physical coercion for personal or group ends.

Ethno-Religious conflict is the clash, contention, confrontation, battle, rivalry, controversy or quarrel among ethno-religious groups. Ethno-religious conflict stem from an irreconcilable posture with regards to symbolic values to the groups concerned. These symbolic values, which cannot be compromised, are religion and language.

Conflict Management is concerned with the processes for controlling and regulating a conflict to ensure that it does not escalate. It is also concerned with techniques involved in the avoidance, prevention, containment and

satisfactory resolution of the catalytic factors in a conflict. In the context of this study, it involves the actions or inactions of government and civil society organizations to avoid, prevent, and tackle ethno-religious conflagration.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ethnicity

Nnoli (1978:5) defines ethnic groups as 'social formations distinguished by the communal character of their boundaries'. To him, the crucial communal factors may be language, culture or both. Similarly, Suberu (1996:4) conceptualizes an ethnic group as a "social collectivity whose members not only share such objectives characteristics as language, core-territory, ancestral myth, culture, religion, and/or political organization, but also have some subjective consciousness or perception of common descent or identity". This ethnic identity results from contact with other groups. But he argues that ethnic pluralism is necessary but an insufficient condition for ethnicity.

Ethnicity therefore is a 'social phenomenon associated with interactions among members of different ethnic groups' (Nnoli, 1978:5). It emerges when the members of an ethnic group become characterized by a common consciousness of their identity in relations to other groups with in-group and out-group differences becoming marked with time. Such exclusivist, identity-based discrimination undoubtedly results in conflicts over scarce economic resources and socio-political goods.

However, ethnicity hardly exists in pure forms. It is a consequence of ethnic group identity mobilization and politicization especially in a competitive ethnically plural environment or context (Suberu 1996; Nnoli 1978). Also, Wolff (2006) observes that ethnicity on its own does not cause conflict as several factors are always at play in each conflict situation, arguing that identity is a fact of human existence, and that it is what people make of it or to what use they deploy it that makes the difference between ethnic cohesion, harmony or conflict.

The manner in which activists define the in-group and out-group relationship (the 'us' versus 'them' sentiment) is crucial in conflict dynamics: "The more confrontational the definitions – that is, the more 'our' poor situation is a result of 'their' oppression, or the more superior 'we' are compared with 'them' – the more likely are inter-group relations to take a turn for the worse" (Wolff 2006:35).

Religion:

Religion is an elusive and imprecise concept. It is difficult to define with precision and objectivity because it is emotion laden (Egwu 2011, Agarwal et.al 1994);Religion has been variously defined as a body of truths, laws and rites by which a man is subordinated to transcendent being (Adeniyi 1993). To Bellah (1970) religion denotes a set of symbolic forms and actions that relate man to the ultimate conditions of his existence. Drawing similar concern, Peter (1988) conceptualized religion as system of symbols which act to establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting mood and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.

Ogburn (cited in Agarwal et.al 1994:236) defined religion as attitude towards superhuman powers. In the same vein, Maclever (1946) opined that religion is a relationship not merely between man and man but also between man and some higher power. According to Christopher Dawson (cited in Agarwal et.al 1994:236) "wherever and whenever man has a sense of dependence on external powers which is conceived as mysterious and higher than man's own, there is religion, and the feeling of awe and self-abasement with which man is filled in the presence of such powers is essentially a religious emotion, the root of worship and prayer". Yinger J. Milton (cited in Agarwal et.al 1994:237) conceived religion as "the attempt to bring the relative, the temporary, the painful things in life into relations with what is conceived to be permanent, absolute and cosmically optimistic". To Sapir (cited in Agarwal et.al 1994:237) religion is a man's never ceasing attempt to discover a road to spiritual serenity across the perplexities and dangers of daily life. Lowie (cited in Agarwal et.al 1994:237) conceptualized religion as a "spontaneous response to the awe-inspiring extra-ordinary manifestation of reality".

In a broader perspective, religion can be understood in two related, yet distinct ways, material and spiritual. In the material perspective, it is conceived as religious establishments (i.e. institutions and officials) as well as social groups and religious concerns. On the other hand, in the spiritual perspective, religion is concerned with models of social and individual behavior that help believers to organize their everyday lives. It is in this way that religion is characterized as transcendence, supernatural realities and sacred (Alanamu 2004).

Conflict:

As noted by Wolff (2006:2), the term 'conflict' is used to describe "a situation in which two or more actors pursue incompatible, yet from their individual perspectives entirely just, goals". He further argues that sometimes, conflict is as a result of the struggle for power and material gain by leaders and followers alike. Because of such vested interests, the conflict entrepreneurs prefer conflict to cooperation and privilege violence over negotiations. To have a thorough grasp of conflict, therefore, one must cautiously examine the various actors and factors and their interrelationship in each conflict situation (Wolff 2006:3). The material value or economic viability of the territory is also vital in conflict dynamics. For example, if the territory is rich in natural resources such as oil, gold, diamond, timber or if there are cultural attachments to the territory, there would be more stakes in it.

Similarly, Otite (1999:20-22) argues that most conflicts in Nigeria are premised on land space and resource competition; disputed jurisdiction of traditional rulers; creation and location of local government council headquarters; scarce political and economic resources; micro and macro social structures of Nigeria; population growth; and disregard for cultural symbols. Conflict may either be non- violent or violent. Notably, what constitutes violence and non-violence varies depending on the context or perception of the legitimate use of force or challenge of authority. Max Weber in conceptualizing the state contended that violence is legitimate in the rule over men (Wolff 2006). To Wolff (2006) violence is the illegitimate or unauthorized use of force to effect decisions against the will or desire of others. The criminal model of violence differentiated between legitimate and illegitimate violence. It places emphasis on the identification of criminal in the target domain. In this perspective, the problem of

violence is ascribed to outlaws and thugs who unleash terror on the law-abiding citizens and cause social and political instability in the society. This model tends to ignore the socio-cultural factors that breed violence (Turpin and Kurtz 1999).

In an attempt to provide an analytical framework for a deep appreciation of the causes of violence and conflicts, it is pertinent to analyze the various forms in which violence manifests. Violence can be categorized as either small and large-scale depending on the intensity. Large scale violence is difficult to control and its consequences are hard to predict (Coady, 1999). Violence has also been categorized as physical and psychological. Psychological violence is an act of violence in the absence of a violent act. The destructive effects are gradual and cumulative. It involves brainwashing, indoctrination and threats. On the other hand, physical violence is an act that palpably involves physical means such as bombardment, whipping, stabbing to death, overpowering, poisoning, forceful intrusion, malevolent intrusion among others. Its destructive effects are swift and direct (Turpin and Kurtz 1999). It is instructive to note here that the distinction between the two is for the purpose of analytical clarity, as the borderline between both is little and sometimes difficult to draw.

Beyond the conceptual and categorical perspectives, violence has been part of human history. In this perspective, the social contract theorists held that man prior to the emergence of the contemporary state lived in a state of nature. According to Thomas Hobbes, in the state of nature "life is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short" Several other theories and models have been developed to explain violence. The micro and macro approach to violence is one of the several approaches. This approach draws a web of casual links between the personal biological impulse and psychological disposition on the one hand, and global structures, processes, and behaviour on the other. At the micro level the propellant of violence is identified as individual psychological factors and biological impulse, while at the macro perspective socio-cultural factors are adduced for violence (Turpin and Kurtz 1999).

Studies have also shown that violence has been perceived as an instrument of survival under difficult circumstance. In this perspective, the frustration-aggression theory is the most explored. The exponents of the theory identified major conditions in which the individual or group deploy violence. To them, the obstruction or blockade of efforts by the individual intended to achieve desired ends such as power, wealth, social status, security, equality and freedom leads to frustration that breeds violence. Also, a causal link has been drawn between unfulfilled rising expectation and violence. In this perspective, it is contended that tension or violence arises from unfulfilled expectation to people who had experienced hardship or enslavement but suddenly promised improved material condition or freedom. Furthermore, a relationship has been drawn between relative deprivation and violence. In this sense, the objective material condition is believed not to nurture violence but rather the sense of deprivation in relation to others around them, or their own past condition is believed to be responsible for violence with the intent to redress the situation (Dowse and Hughes, 1982).

The greed and grievance analytical framework ascribes violent conflicts to grievances arising from limited economic opportunities, poverty and inequalities. There are two strands of contentions in this analytical framework. The first perceive violent conflicts as under-girded by irrationality originating essentially from hatred. In the second perspective, violent conflict is hinged on a number of grievances such as systematic discrimination and gross human rights violation, inequality in economic and political power, or dearth of resources especially in multiethnic state. In this regard, violence is perceived as instrumental like any means for seeking redress. Violent conflict has also been explained from the industry perspective. It is believed that the dominant propellant of violence is economic benefits and commercial interest rather than grievance. This presupposes that the preoccupation of the belligerents and insurgents is the economic spoils and booty that they appropriate from the protracted violence.

Another theoretical explanation for the etiology of violent conflicts is systemic pathologies arising from the dialectical changes in the structures and processes of society. According to Potholm (1979:149 cited in Deeka 2003) when a system does not deliver what its leaders had promised and the political elites continue to ask the masses to make sacrifices that the elites themselves are unwilling to make much of the aura of legitimacy gained during the decolonization period will be dissipated.

In another theoretical prism, eruption of violent conflicts is linked with group pluralism and interactions to achieve their diverse objectives (Deeka 2002). In seeking relevance or retention of political power, the elites manipulate and massage religious and ethnic sentiments. Many of the ethnic clashes and sectarian conflagrations are rooted in the context of the group conflict theoretical assumption (Jega 2002). Violence has also been perceived as structural and institutional (Coady 1999). Structural violence is the form of violence rationalized on the basis of a great range of social injustice and inequalities prevailing in a state. In this perspective, reformers, leftists and even terrorists rationalize their violence and opposition against the state on the basis of seeking to correct the prevailing social injustice and inequalities in the state. The form of violence in this context often involves a direct physical attack in response to and defence against acts perceived as unjust and inequitable in the society. On the other hand, institutional violence is a quiet violence that arises due to systematic deprivation in the way of transactions within a state (Abah, 2009). Several other factors such as over population, impotence, loss of power, displacement, the quest for social values, as well as natural phenomena such as natural disasters, earthquake, environmental scarcities, disease outbreak, drought, and famine can be identified as contributory to violence.

THEORETICAL EXPOSITION

In this paper, conflict trap theory shall be adopted as the framework of analysis. The exponents of this theory are Paul Collier, V.L. Elliott, Havard Hegre, Ankle Hoeffler, Marta Reynal-Querol and Nicholas Sambanis. To them, conflict trap denotes that once a conflict has erupted, it tends to develop a momentum of its own. Peace seemingly becomes elusive and hard to restore. Even when peace is restored it often does not endure (Collier et. al 2003).

The exponents of conflict trap ascribed the lengthy pattern of a typical conflict to a number of interlocking factors. Conflicts in multiethnic societies are enduring possibly on account of their ready vulnerability to the rallying, massaging and mobilization of ethnic sentiments for both the warring groups and the government. In addition, in a plural society, particularly where the population has significant grievances, conflict usually becomes an effective political strategy for pursuit of their interests and goals. Also, even if the custodians of power and authority in the society are willing to concede to the demands of the groups, they are usually neither trusted nor believed to have credible means of committing the warring factions to agreement. The warring groups might be afraid that once they hold the olive branch the custodians of power and authority would renege on any agreement (Collier et. al 2003). Furthermore, it is also contended that it is even difficult for the custodians of power and authority to concede to demands of the warring groups because such could encourage the flowering, proliferation, mushrooming and radicalization of other groups, which often have opposing objectives. Also, a significant pattern to lengthy conflict is the extremely unequally distributed income and a very low average income, possibly on account of the cost of sustaining conflict is low if there is an expansive layer of economic destitute and possibly significantly weak institutions such as the security agencies, which are unable to deter and apprehend violators of the laws. More so, sustaining conflict has become easier because the warring groups have easy access to armaments for prosecuting conflict (Collier et. al 2003).

Yet, very important to the lengthy pattern of conflict is that once a conflict has occurred a template is raised. It becomes difficult to return to status quo. Presumably, conflict reinforces hatred, and may shift the balance of influential interests in favour of continued conflict. Also, the criminal entrepreneurs that profit from the conflict would do anything including sabotaging peace process for it to continue. According to Paul Collier et. al. (2003:12):

> *violence entrepreneurs, whether primarily political or primarily commercial, may gain from conflict to such an extent that they cannot credibly be compensated sufficiently to accept peace. Those who see themselves as political leaders benefit from war because they can run their organizations in hierarchical, military style with power concentrated in their own hands, something much more difficult to justify in peacetime. Those who see themselves as extortionists benefit from the absence of the rule of law in the areas they control. However, leaders see themselves as if they will have invested in expensive military equipment that will become redundant once they agree to peace. Asking a rebel leader to accept peace may be a little asking a champion swimmer to empty pool.*

Following from the above assumptions, the conflict trap theory is apt and relevant for the appreciation of the challenges of ethno-religious conflict management in Nigeria. It offers deep insights to the interlocking factors that sustain conflict. It presupposes that once conflict has occurred it lengthens and becomes challenging to restore peace on account of a number of factors such as ethnic pluralism, proliferation of arms, existence of income disparities, existence of expansive republic of hoodlums and the activities of criminal entrepreneurs.

The conceptual and theoretical excursion reveals various perspectives for the appreciation of violence. Notably, each of the perspectives may be perfunctory, deficient, incomplete and restrictive but in sum they are illuminating and complementary.

CHALLENGES

Just like the situation in the country generally, the past eleven years of democracy in Plateau State is an admixture of the good and the bad. Whichever way it is viewed, majority of the people feel that the period is better than several years of military rule. However, the unending crisis in the state since 1999 is a major minus as all efforts to restore peace have not achieved the desired end. It would seem that democracy has increased the culture of impunity in some people while political differences are believed to have fueled some of the violence that have erupted. It was crisis that made Plateau State go down with the unenviable record as the first state in the Fourth Republic where a state of emergency was declared. That was in 2004 following violence in Yelwa, Shendam. The failure to find a solution to the violence has also been blamed on the inability of politicians to separate political interest from the corporate interest of the state. Thus we now have a situation where the same politicians that 'ganged up' against the former Governor, Josuah Dariye now find a common enemy in the incumbent Governor, Jonah Jang. They are already in the trenches perfecting their strategies for the next general election in 2011.While some are poised to stop Jang from getting a second term for his alleged inadequacies, his supporters and strategists are also making deft political moves to brighten his chances and frustrate his political opponents. (Obateru, 2010)

Several reasons have been dished out as catalytic to the orgy of political and ethno-religious conflagrations in Plateau State. Ethno-religious entrepreneurs who fan the embers of violent ethno-religious in the past are evidently mobilizing negative ethnicity, religious schism, sentiments and are pitching one ethno-religious group against another. Also, competitive partisan political activities are used as avenues through which groups are mobilized, identities rigidly reinforced and, often infused with excessive religiosity. Furthermore, a large proportion of the youth who are able-bodied but idle, unemployed, frustrated and aggrieved with the social system are willing and ready to be recruited and mobilized to engage in political and violent political and ethno-religious conflicts because such offer them the opportunity to break into public and private property and cart away whatever they can find (Imobighe 2003b). In addition, the recurrence of the political violent conflicts has been blamed on significant gap in the inability of the security agencies to guarantee security of lives and property as well as bring those responsible for the conflict to book (Abah, 2009).

Expectedly, the trend, dimension and casualties associated with the circle of violent ethno-religious conflicts in Plateau State have generated serious concern locally and internationally. The orgy of violent conflicts apart from being condemned by all has generated calls from local and international arena on the need to address it.

SOLUTION

It is worrisome to note that the Nigerian security system is more reactive than proactive, waiting for crises to break out before rushing to put off the fire. The strategy may have worked in the past but we cannot use the solutions of yesterday to solve today's challenges. The practice of sending Special Military Task Forces for internal security duties, even if they work in the most professional and saintly manner, is only meant to put off the fire. It should only be a short term intervention measure because by their training and operational system, the military is not in a position to find solutions to the civil crises. It is therefore illogical and to an extent ridiculous that people are relying on them to solve the crises. Several analysts have criticized the present system where all the intelligence gathering and crises response mechanisms are concentrated in a few location, usually very far away from the well-known flash points of crises. This plans naturally leads to extremely slow response to early warning signals, and in fact, is so slow that it has become counter-productive (Gomos, 2011).

MODERN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Modern Conflict management is concerned with interventionist efforts towards preventing the escalation and negative effects of ongoing conflicts, especially violent ones. Rarely are conflicts completely resolved. More often, they are reduced, downgraded, or contained. Such developments can be followed by a reorientation of the issue, reconstitution of the divisions among conflicting parties, or even by a re-emergence of past issues or grievances. Conflict management when actively conducted is, therefore, a constant process. Conflict management should not be viewed as a simple, linear or structured process. Those assuming or charged with such a task must usually overcome an intensely chaotic situation. Conflicts are frequently managed directly by the society in which they occur. When not possible or when conflicts become national in scope, government normally assumes the task, provided it is not a party to the conflict. In cases where a government is unable or unwilling to intervene, international organizations increasingly assume the role of conflict manager (Lijphart, 1977).

The major challenge of this mechanism is that sometime the 'third parties' who are charged with the settlement of dispute or conflict may become partisan. Also, most disputes especially in fragile states involve the state as actor. This becomes very problematic as the state is also often charged with the selection and appointment of the arbiters. In many cases, the state itself flouts the terms, conditions and sometimes the resolution of the dispute settlers.

MODERN PROCEDURE FOR RESOLVING CONFLICTS

In Western and modern Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism, we have elements such as:

(a) **Grass-root community based activities:** This include village festivals like the new yam festival among the Igbos, initiation rites and puberty festival for young people, marriage ceremonies, the sharing of village community land. When unity/solidarity is lost to violent conflict, as was the case in the conflict between Ife and Modakeke communities of Osun State, the Chamber/Jukun and Kuteb of Taraba State, and the Umuleri/Aguleri of Anambra State all in Nigeria for instance, the importance of such community virtue cannot be over-emphasized (Suberu 2006; Suberu 2008).

(b)   **Good Governance: This** may be defined as the running of the affairs of government in positive and progressive manner beneficial to the governed and which delivers the public goods. Its attributes include: due process, transparency, responsiveness on the part of government, power sharing, rule of law, competence, separation and devolution of powers, a free press and a free virile civil society. There are several dictatorial democracies in Africa. Such regimes do not promote and practice good governance. These are the conflict generators of the African continent.

(c)   **Communication:** This is the process of sharing and exchanging information between individual, groups and potential parties in a conflict situation. It is also the process of interacting and relating with others, meaning that parties to a conflict situation still talk.

(d)   **Collaboration:** The collaboration process is one in which parties work together on their own to resolve problems through constructive dialogue or other activities like joint projects, sharing of community schools and health centres, markets, bridges and culverts, as well as other utilities (Aghedo and Osumah, 2009).

(e)   **Negotiation:** This is the process whereby the parties within the conflict seek to settle or resolve their conflicts. Also negotiation is a direct process of dialogue and discussions taking place between at least two parties who are faced with a conflict situation or a dispute. The benefits of compromised solution, it is believed, out-weigh the losses arising from refusal to negotiate. The goal of negotiation, is to reach agreement through joint decisions between parties. Negotiation is a key approach to peaceful resolution of dispute and conflicts that may arise among parties. It is also within the reach and control of parties.

(f)   Conciliation: Conciliation is close to mediation. It is a third party activity, which covers intermediary efforts aimed at persuading the parties to a conflict to work towards a peaceful solution. Conciliation involves facilitation.

(g)   Mediation: Mediation has been presented by the United Nations University for Peace as the voluntary, informal, non-binding process undertaken by an external party that fosters the settlement of differences or demands between directly invested parties.

(h)   Arbitration: This is another type of third party intervention that is a step higher than mediation in the conflict management spectrum or process. The parties to a conflict who select to use arbitration, even though they choose a non-violent method of settling their disputes, lose more control over their situation than those who select mediation and other lower levels of intervention.

(i)   Adjudication: Adjudication is another non-violent method of conflict management. This involves the use of the courts and litigation processes. Parties to a dispute may choose not to use any of the methods we have so far discussed. They may opt instead to take their case to a court of law, before a judge of competent jurisdiction. Legal counsel may represent them.

(j)   Crisis Management: This is an extreme situation of conflict, which has reached a turning point, where critical decisions have to be taken or else the conflict may escalate to a point of extreme violence. Sometimes, a crisis is a degenerated state of conflict, where threats to human security, intense violence characterized by fighting, death, injury, large-scale displacement of populations occurs. Once a crisis

occurs, it is the responsibility of the government of a state to de-escalate the situation and bring a cessation to violence. This may be done through various means, including the use of the coercive state apparatus, where necessary. (Fred-Mensah, 2000).

CONCLUSION

In summary, it is clear from above exposition that there is no one eternally-divined way of resolving a conflict. Each conflict is unique in its own sense and calls for a peculiar solution after careful review of its cause(s), actors involved and their willingness to work for an amicable solution of the contentious issues. The unending conflict and crises in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria since 1999 is a major test on our nascent democratic experiment as all effort to restore peace in the area has proved abortive. For some, it would appear that our brand of democracy has imbued in the people the culture of impunity while for others, it is political differences and intolerance that has fueled some of the violence that has erupted in Jos. It is the position of this paper that politicians in addition to adopting any or all of the modern procedures for resolving conflicts outlined above should mend their ways and move away from the current tendency of working for themselves, to serving the people. This is the only way to keep the military permanently in the barracks and allow peace to reign in Jos in particular and Nigeria in general. Therefore, the present administration of President Goodluck Jonathan should as the current Chairman of ECOWAS, harness all the administrative, political and military resources at its disposal to ensure that the current debate on sustainable development in African is maintained and also halt this perennial bloody contention that clearly stands out in our traumatized country, Nigeria in particular and African in general.

The paper further concludes that with the upsurge of violence, seeing it as the most significant factor impeding constitutional democracy not only in Nigeria but in Africa generally is a source of serious concern. Social disintegration could well be the most acute danger facing democracies, undermining the human rights and civil liberties on which democracy stands.

Nevertheless, in spite of the pockets of conflicts and violence in some parts of the country, majority of the people still feel that this period of democratic rule is better than several years of military Praetorianism

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