GOVERNANCE FAILURE, POVERTY AND ETHNO-SECTARIAN CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Since the advent of civil rule in 1999, the Nigerian nation has been confronted with new forms of ethno-sectarian conflicts. These conflicts arise in the main from the character of civilian leadership that emerged after several years of military interregnum, governance failure epitomized by unprecedented corruption, increasing delegitimisation of all institutions and tiers of government and wide spread poverty. Nigeria is slowly, following the onslaught of the ethno-sectarian militias becoming a hotbed of terrorist activities in Africa with its destabilizing multiplier effects in the West African Sub-region. The serial ethno-sectarian conflicts have exposed the underbelly and volatility of the state with corresponding negation of sustainable development. Indeed the paper argues that given the character of Nigerian leadership and the failure of governance, sustainable development will remain a mirage. The paper feels that in the light of the afore-stated, there is a compelling need to continuously interrogate development dynamics in Nigeria with a view to unravelling the challenges that obstruct sustainable development. The paper contends that it is expedient to go beyond the old hatreds and prejudices to deconstruct inter-group relations, foster a new sense of national integration and save Nigeria from an imminent apocalypse. The paper further insists that good governance, poverty reduction strategies, new sense of national values are in fact the antidote to the myriad of problems facing the country and would impact positively on sustainable development.

Keywords: Governance, Governance Failure, Corruption, Poverty, Ethno-Sectarian Conflicts, Sustainable Development

INTRODUCTION

Recent Nigerian history is replete with stories of national insecurity (Okpaga, Ugwu & Eme, 2012). The media is awash with heart rending documentaries and daily news relating to the incessant violence in Nigeria, particularly in the Northern part of the country (see The Nation Newspaper, Thursday: August 2, 2012, the Economist, Aug. 27, 2011). The Nigerian Public have become hysterical, deeply frightened and terrified as the custodians of state power continue to show gross incompetence and ineptitude (Animashaun, 2009) in the protection of lives and property, itself the raison d' être of the institution of the government and the state historically. With the persistence and precision of these violent attacks by ethno-sectarian Militias, the Nigerian President, Goodluck Jonathan confessed that one of the deadly groups, Boko Haram (meaning Western education is sin/forbidden) may have infiltrated his government. The ubiquity of these attacks means that the business of governance, of providing necessary amenities to the people, and improving their welfare cannot proceed unless the security challenge is tackled headlong (see Forest, 2012). In 2012 National Budget dubbed **fiscal consolidation, inclusive growth and job creation,** about one trillion naira was allocated to security, many times more than the provisions for education, health and other social services (FGN, 2012). Even with this huge expenditure, the Nigerian citizens have not slept with their eyes closed as the country is still crisis ridden and violence infested. These range from armed robbery, arson, kidnapping, murder, politically motivated assassinations, sectarian induced attacks and killings, and several other forms of violence that inundate the land (Jega, 2002: Okpaga, Ugwu & Eme, 2012). The current scenario is reminiscent of a season of anomie, a cruel reminder of the Hobbessian state of nature where life was solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.

The government's failure to reign in these entrepreneurs of violence and control the situation has been a source of anxiety and pain (Inokoba and Kumokor, 2012). This has created in the minds of some Nigerians a feeling of disillusionment; disenchantment and fatalism (see Akinwale & Aderinto, 2012). Some other Nigerians have been pushed to identify with "alternative hierarchies, based on ethnicity, religion or other factional identities" (International Crisis Group, 2006). This alienation of the citizenry and their resort to self help under the canopy of different ethno-religious cum sectarian persuasions has a colonial origin, but has heightened with the onset of "democratic" rule in the country. This is not surprising given the predilection of the Nigerian elite in the face of poverty of ideas, to manipulate ethnic and religious identities, to feather their nests and gain unmerited advantage in the elite scramble for the national cake.

Nigeria is a country of rich diversity. It is multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious (Ikime, 1985). There are more than 400 ethnic groups in the country (see Salawu, 2010, Nnoli, 2008) and several religions including Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion. Although Islam and Christianity predominate, several faithfuls of both religions are still attached to certain traditional practices and beliefs including witchcraft, sorcery, occult practices, cultism, charms, and even worship of shrines and deities (see Usman and Abba, 2010) all, relics of their pre-colonial history. Nigeria has an estimated population of 154.7 million people (see NPC, 2011, World Bank, 2011). It is Africa's most populous nation (International Crisis Group, 2006) and a major oil producer (UNDP, 2009, Okafor, 2009). The country's rich oil deposit has earned it more than 400 billion dollars in revenue since the 1970s (International Crisis Group, 2006).

It would be interesting to examine how this humongous wealth has been used or more appropriately abused to negate sustainable development (Ezekwesili, 2013). In more developed societies, the funds would have been used to provide basic amenities, improve people's livelihood and sense of wellbeing, make their environment conducive and secure, both

for present and future generations. Such colossal fund, with right leadership and clear and right choices would lead to optimum utilization, conservation of resources, and development that is sustainable. Successive regimes in Nigeria (military/civilian) have not been very prudent in managing resources (Ogundiya, 2010, International Crisis Group, 2011). Nigeria's economy is dependent on oil, yet oil bunkering, stealing continue on a daily basis. National reserves are depleted without caution. No effort to save for the rainy day, a sad commentary on how indifferent the Nigerian ruling class are to sustainable development. Man's existence is seriously threatened in Nigeria by reckless exploitation of the environment. The menace of gully erosion in South East Nigeria, desertification in the Northern part, environmental pollution are some of the devastating effects of leadership induced disasters that Nigerians still contend with till date.

The country however is an amazing paradox, characterized by scarcity in the midst of plenty, as more than 380 billion dollars have been stolen by its leaders (Ogundiya, 2010). Nigeria is a corruption heaven. About fifty two years after political independence from Britain in 1960, Nigeria is still plagued by gross underdevelopment. Basic social services including housing, "medicare, good roads, electricity, pipe borne water, schools are notoriously inadequate. Living standards have considerably declined over the years, that the elderly look at the past with nostalgia, and even say that their lives were better, in the 1960s than today. Life expectancy in Nigeria stands at 47years, a cruel reminder of the disaster that is staring Nigeria in the face.

Corruption is the bane of Nigeria, as the country is rated as one of the most corrupt globally (see Transparency International, 2011). The colossal mismanagement of the country's resources means that a majority of the populace have had their lives considerably devalued by gripping poverty. More than 70 percent of Nigerians live on less than one dollar a day, unable to provide food on their table and other necessities that are imperative for survival (see Eliagwu, 2005, World Bank, 2011). The miasma of poverty occasioned by governance failure is symptomatic of the "coalition of bad leadership" (Okunade, 2008) that has held the country hostage since independence. As Nigerians are hemmed in by poverty, unemployment, disease and threatened daily with sudden death, it is not surprising to see them besiege foreign missions looking for travel visas to escape from the country at the slightest opportunity. Making of coffins, and its allied profession, undertakers, seem to be the only thriving business in the country today. This is not to disregard the proliferation of several religious groupings whose fortunes have blossomed under the extant socio-economic environment. These religious sects with charismatic preachers and clerics have also provided succour to many in need. However, some of their activities have led to sectarian strife and violence. It is therefore necessary that we properly situate corruption as perhaps the most important obstacle to sustainable development in Nigeria.

The Nigerian demographics show interesting dialectics of ethnic, religious and regional divisions, with some regions manifesting a big mixture of religious identities. This has made way for a reinterpretation of inter communal violence along religious lines (IDMC, 2012). Constitutionally, Nigeria is a secular state (FGN Constitution, 1999). However the reality on ground suggests otherwise (see Usman & Abba, 2010) as the state has been actively involved in promoting or patronizing particular religious practices, and citizens define their personal, interpersonal, and hence inter-group relationships on the basis of religious propinquity. It is not unusual to see public funds being expended, and diverted to religious purposes. Sponsorship of pilgrimages to both Mecca and Jerusalem by Federal and State Governments is common place, draining the public treasury. The politicization of religion has received further impetus with the declaration of Sharia Law by Zamfara State in October, 1999, and several other Northern States by the end of 2001. This

created tensions and led to massive demonstrations, breakdown of law and other in Northern parts of the country with reprisal killings in the southern part (Ojo, 2010). This further aggravated the already existing feelings of mistrust, suspicions and thereby exacerbating religious intolerance, creating in its wake a pool of ethnic – militias who act as executors of ethno-religious agenda (Salawu, 2012).

The country is boiling and seems to be at war with itself, with some prominent Nigerians like Theophilus Danjuma, a retired general and former Minister of Defence warning about the looming "**Somalianisation**" of Nigeria, a reference to the failed state of Somalia. Nigeria is volatile. Indeed, the recklessness with which bombs are exploding daily may be aptly termed the "**Iraqinisation**" of Nigeria. Its fragile unity is threatened by renewed ethno-sectarian conflicts (see Gourley, 2012, Ojo, 2010, Akpan, 2008) in the face of disappointing governance at all tiers, even by African standards. Why is this so, and why has the deplorable condition persisted? It is imperative to investigate the root causes of the crises, expose its implications on sustainable development, but more importantly, attempt to provide realistic solutions, that will checkmate the continuous slide into infamy and further destruction, with avoidable loss of lives and properties. It is even more apposite to embrace and endorse wider and long term goals which shall enhance both current and future potentials with a view to realizing the people's needs and aspirations (see Ukaga 2005). It would be expedient to provide further insights on key conceptual issues that are germane to a proper understanding of the subject matter.

CONCEPTUAL AND CONTEXTUAL DISCOURSE

Governance: The concept of governance has received considerable attention in the literature. It refers to the process of formulating policies and implementing them based on several considerations that are premised on respect for the rule of law, and order, provision of necessities that enhance human dignity, observance of fundamental rights, popular participation in the democratic process, equity, transparency, accountability and unhindered access to information amongst others (see UNICEF, 2002). Ojo (2010) argues that the maintenance of order and the rule of law is a sine qua non of governance. Contemporarily, the discourse on governance has shifted to disaggregating the term into good governance and bad governance or governance failure. Ninalowo contends that governance is different from government, and consists "of the totality or administrative functions of the state, with a view to fulfilling terms of social contract or constitutional obligations to the citizenry, while government refers to position or office of authority to administer the affairs of the state (cited in Ologbenla, 2010:100).

Governance has been rightly conceptualized as the process by which a political system achieves such values as accountability, participation, openness (or transparency) and respect for the rule of law and due bureaucratic process (Inokobar and Kumokor, 2011, p. 141). Governance is therefore delineated by a capacity of the state, or its agent, the government to effectively distribute the greatest good to the greatest number of people in that community, to show care and concern for their rights, livelihood, welfare, and ensure harmonious existence among the people while protecting their environment and future. In a specific sense, good governance is somewhat synonymous with sustainable development.

Ogundiya (2010, 202) captures this aptly when he observed that governance is simply the process that is employed to achieve the noble end of the state, and which is, the promotion of the common good. The way these functions, activities of the state are executed determines to a great extent whether governance is good or bad. This distinction is necessary to

bring into bold relief the phenomenon of good governance, so as to contrast it starkly with the reality of bad governance that has been so pervasive in Nigeria. The Nigerian situation is replete with instances of mismanagement, misappropriation of public funds. The privatizations, of companies and national enterprises for friends and cronies, and satisfaction of personal gains have continued till date. The comprehensive criminalization of the state and primitive accumulation by successive ruling regimes in the country are emblematic of governance failure, or bad governance. Any governance that detracts from promoting the welfare of the people, ensuring their safety, and protecting their lives and property is not worth the term. The inability of the Nigerian state to provide for its teeming population (Ojo, 2010), and moderate the recurring conflicts is a major deficit in its governance profile. In this wise, governance failure refers to the apparent and obvious inability of public institutions to deliver on infrastructure – water, roads, power, healthcare, food, employment and security etc. A regime that is tainted by corruption cannot effectively deliver goods and services to its people. Governance failure is evident in corruption in Nigeria.

Corruption: The term corruption has also been variously defined by several scholars. Etymologically, the word is derived from the Latin word "corrumpo" which signifies, decay, rot or impurity. Corruption is defined as the exploitation of public positions for private gain (Ogundiya, 2009). It signifies betrayal of public trust for selfish purpose, particularly to gain wealth, power, or other favours (Obayelu, 2007). Dandago (2009: 12) sees corruption as "the perversion or destruction of integrity in the discharge of public duties through bribery or favour, or any other forms of influence or malpractice. It is accordingly, considered as a social or psychological situation in which the right or correct manner of doing things or handling responsibilities is abandoned for the improper manner as a result of certain selfish reasons. The United Nations Human Development report (1998:11) outlines what corruption entails to include among others *"acceptance of money or other rewards for awarding contracts, violations of procedures to enhance personal interests, including kickbacks from development programmes or multinational corporations; pay-offs for legislative support; and the diversion of public resources for private use, to overlooking illegal activities or intervening in the justice process. Forms of corruption also include nepotism, common theft, over pricing, establishing nonexistent projects, payroll padding, tax collection and tax assessment frauds."* It would seem that the afore-stated observation was an exclusive story about Nigeria, for it mirrored tellingly the reality in the country. To obtain any service in the country is at the cost of an illegal fee, cash or kind.

In Nigeria, several Commissions of Inquiry and Panels have been constituted to confront the monster of corruption (see Ochulor, Metuonu and Asuo, 2011). These currently include: Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB), and several other investigative panels. Economic and Financial Crimes Commission particularly under its former Head, Nuhu Ribadu, was most outstanding in its fight against high profile corruption by prominent Nigerians and leaders that were hitherto treated as sacred cows. Okafor (2009:119) observed that the "*Commission has made more than 2000 arrests and obtained over 100 convictions. It has recovered several houses, land, luxury cars, airplanes and oil tankers as well as other assets and cash worth over billions of dollars.*" Even a former Inspector General of Police, Tafa Balogun was arrested and successfully prosecuted by EFCC. Several other former governors of States, bank executives have been arraigned in court facing corruption charges. These successes of the EFCC, as unprecedented as they seem, still appear marginal, a mere scratch on corruption, because it has become endemic in Nigeria. The monster of corruption is still ravaging the land as is shown in the recent bribery scandal in the National Assembly between Femi Otedola, a Nigerian Oil

businessman, and Farouk Lawan, a member of the Federal Legislature, and also in the revelations coming from the Pension Bribe scam, where civil servants who earn less than N100, 000 monthly have become billionaires. Corruption seems endless in Nigeria as it has deep roots in the neo-colonial economy of the country with great consequences on deepening poverty and conflicts in Nigeria.

Poverty: Poverty is a multi-faceted social phenomenon which is depicted by an extreme lack of the basic necessities for human well being and decency. It consists of the deprivation in the lives of the people, which include the denial of opportunities and choices most basic to human development (Dinye, 2003). Townsend's (1979:84) definition of poverty seems apt and relevant, where he conceives *"poverty as the lack of the resources necessary to permit participation in the activities, customs and diets commonly approved by society."* Poverty depicts a state of being poor, frequently measured in level of income. Therefore the poor are those who earn less than $1 a day. But, Sen (1999:20) says that poverty "must be seen as the deprivation of basic capabilities rather than merely as lowness of incomes". *Relative poverty cuts across every Society, rich or poor, depicting the members of a given society who lack resources that are taken for granted by others"* (Macionis & Plummer, 2005:224). On the other hand absolute poverty refers to the condition that connotes lack of resources that is life threatening, (see Macionis & Plummer, 2005). The tragic thing about African countries, as Macionis & Plummer (2005:225) observed is *"that most people live no better than the poor in Western nations and many people are living close to the edge of survival."* Absolute poverty is real in Nigeria, where more than 60 percent of Nigerians live on less than 1 dollar a day (see National Bureau of Statistics, 2012 Report). Poverty crisis is deepening in Nigeria as a result of these persistent ethno-sectarian conflicts. Farmers are fleeing their farms in large numbers as a result of these conflicts (see the Guardian (2012, 27 March). In Nigeria, the fear of absolute poverty is the beginning of wisdom. That "Nigeria is a paradise of the kind of wealth that breeds penury is as widely known as the fact that the world considers us a poster nation for poor governance" (Ezekwesili, 2013:48). The trend of Nigeria's population in poverty since 1980 to 2010, for example suggests that the more we earned from oil, the larger the population of poor citizens: 17.1 million 1980, 34.5million in 1985, 39.2 million in 1992, 67.1 million in 1996, 68.7 million in 2004 and 112.47 million in 2010 (Ezekwesili, 2013). That perhaps explains why in Nigeria today, the gospel of prosperity seems to provide soothing antidote. Born again Christians are involved in ceaseless prayers casting poverty out of their lives like the dreaded HIV/AIDS disease, while marabouts and other Islamic clerics also attract significant followership owing to increasing pauperization of the masses that has proceeded unhindered. The result has been disastrous, with large numbers undergoing "spiritual pupilage" under preachers and clerics with doubtful mission. Most of these have played active roles in the intensification of ethno-sectarian disputes.

Ethno-Sectarian Conflict: This refers to all disputes that arise from ethnic and sectarian differences usually associated with malignant ethnicity, sectarian exclusiveness, beliefs and practices. It refers to the disagreements, often violent between people of similar ethnic origin who coincidentally also share same religious or sectarian affiliation and those of opposing primordial characteristics. A certain air of self-righteousness or puritanical disposition informs this feeling of superiority and a moral justification to carry out their ethno-sectarian violence. It is therefore not unusual for persons of similar ethnic coloration but different religious cum sectarian persuasions to engage one another in fierce violent confrontations. Ethno-religious conflict *"refers to a situation in which the relationship between members of one ethnic or religious group and another of such group in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society is characterized by lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion and fear and a tendency towards violent confrontation"* (Salawu, 2010: 346). Simply put,

ethno-sectarian conflicts refer to disputes arising from ethno-sectarian differences. Any of these causes, ethnicity or religion can precipitate crisis with one immediately transiting to the other.

Sustainable Development: Sustainable Development is defined here following World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (1987) (otherwise known as the Bruntland Commission) as development which meets the needs of the present without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development places premium on the preservation of the environment, the husbanding of resources in such a manner that the interests of generation yet unborn are not short-changed. Hitherto, man's quest for survival or developmental drives has proceeded simultaneously with a consequential deterioration of the environment (see Fagbemi, 2011). This has posed eternal threat to the eco-system, and specifically to planet earth. It was in the attempt to unravel gray areas that militated human development that the United Nations General Assembly established the World Commission on Environment and Development which was headed by the Premier of Norway, Bruntland. The concept of Sustainable Development contends that resources of society, the common patrimony of the people should be used in such a manner that it continues to be available for future generations, without jeopardizing their own needs.

Sustainable Development is not a project but a "process that comprises development of all aspects of human life with a view to enhancing economic prosperity, environmental quality and societal equity, while simultaneously providing safety guards for the interest of future generation. In sustainable development, the focus is not necessarily on the present, but the future. The utilization of societal resources in Nigeria, must recognise future generations as equal stakeholders and therefore ensure that their sustenance and livelihood is guaranteed.

The concept of sustainable development is given impetus by the idea of sustainability which seeks to replace or renew resources that are being expended. For instance oil will need to be systematically substituted or replaced by alternatives so that the exhaustion of oil will not translate to a restriction of the interests of future generations (see Okoye, 2007). Rather, what has been witnessed is a massive despoliation of Nigeria's resources, with disastrous consequences on sustainable development. The appropriate response, according to Ezekwesili (2013:48) "would have been to use the revenue extracted from oil over the period 1959 to date in accumulating productive investment in the form of globally competitive human capital and physical asset of all types of infrastructure and institutions. Such translations from one form of non-renewable asset to renewable capital would have the right replacement strategy for a wasting asset like oil"

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

For a proper understanding of ethno-sectarian conflicts and its relationship with governance failure, it may be expedient to trace it to the character of state formation and the Nigerian political economy since colonial rule. Therefore the current conflagration has deep roots in Nigeria's troubled history (see Prah, 2005). The nature of initial contact between the British colonialist and the indigenous people culminated in the arbitrary creation of Nigeria, and it's forced incorporation into global capitalism (Ihonbere & Ekekwe, 1988). This mainly served to further metropolitan economic interests with a simultaneous neglect of local needs and desires, not a civilizing mission as the British had claimed. The mission was strictly economic to exploit and use African raw materials for British industries. To do this successfully, the British colonial administration balkanized the country into regions and through a policy of divide and rule, ensured that these regions remained perpetually at war with themselves.

In the North, the colonial masters administered through a policy of indirect rule, retaining the rights, privileges and powers of the feudal lords – (the Emirate system), left their Islamic religion in tact with little intrusion, and also did not encourage the introduction of Western scholarship. Thus, a large dose of the Islamic tradition was retained. The indirect rule system allowed colonial officials to pass instructions and ruled through the indigenous political authorities. This maintained a façade of continuity of indigenous rule. Every effort was made to separate and isolate the South from the North (see Ikime, 1985) even through residential segregation in the cities. In the south, the British ruled through District Officers, and also allowed the missionaries to penetrate the hinterland, with their strange ways of worship, providing access to western education. This later proved pivotal in post independent Nigeria. The creation of a monolithic North and a lopsided federation by the British colonial masters was a sure recipe for political instability (Olukoju, 1997), as the North could, if they wished, hold the Nation to ransom. The amalgamation in 1914, of Southern and Northern protectorates, was a marriage of strange bedfellows whose terms of engagement have remained largely in contention.

The post colonial state that emerged after independence in 1960 did not differ significantly from the colonial state as the transition was merely cosmetic. Rather, the consolidation and reproduction of unequal relations to satisfy foreign capital continued. The state was still totalitarian, deeply involved in economic reproduction and allocation of values. The skewed nature of Nigerian federation has forestalled the emergence of a visionary leadership with a Pan Nigerian outlook (Olukoju, 1997). In the absence of such a leadership, the Nigerian state retained its rentier, prebendal and patrimonial character, dispensing privileges to favoured kinsmen, as well as cronies and associates. Access to state power is a sure route to prosperity as occupants and their relations help themselves to the public till. Governance in Nigeria is a cesspool of corruption (Oshewole, 2010). It is characterized by politics of the belly where the primary motivation for the ruling elites is to continue to eat from the resources of the state (see Bayart, Ellis and Hibou, 1999). In the light of this, the loss of national power by the Northern political class since 1999 may be one of the under currents fueling ethno-sectarian tensions in the North.

Given the scenario of zero-sum politics and de-legitimization of public institutions, majority of the populace are excluded from the public sphere as represented by the state and are pushed to seek solace in primary groups like sects and ethnic origin for identity. This condition is further aggravated by persistent impoverishment and socio-economic insecurity that have been the lot of many Nigerians (Duruji, 2010). The aftermath of introduction of Structural Adjustment Programme has led to deindustrialization in Nigeria. Several companies have closed down (Onyeonoru, 2003). This would lead to a groundswell of grievances. The new process of democratization after the recent 15 years of military rule (1984-1991) has allowed the expression of these grievances (IDMC, 2012).

Tedd Gurr's (1970) seminal thesis on relative deprivation brings this out clearly when he submitted that men and women compare their fortunes with those of their neighbours, and significant others, and if they feel that their situation or conditions are inequitable, or, that they are being shortchanged, they will attack their perceived enemies or those they feel are responsible for their suffering. Therefore the "*potential for collective violence varies strongly with the intensity and scope of relative deprivation among members of a collectivity*" (Gurr 1970,24) The poor masses witness daily the discrepancy between their deteriorating social and material conditions, and the corruption and conspicuous consumption of the political class. Thus, relative deprivation is considered to be a major cause of civil war, as well as sectarian and

routine violence (see Collier and Hoeffler, 2004). The ease with which the "*Almajiris*" in the North and "*Alayes*" (touts) in the west of Nigeria, swell the ranks of ethno-sectarian militias is better appreciated. This is compounded by acute and absolute poverty where about two thirds of the population are poor.

Therefore mass poverty and unemployment serve to condition the minds and attitudes of Nigerians making them susceptible and vulnerable to elite manipulation (Jega, 2002). It should be realized that the changed status of former warlords in the Niger Delta who have become stupendously rich may be an incentive for the prolongation and sustenance of ethno-sectarian conflicts in the North. This justifies the use of the greed hypothesis in explaining the recurrence and duration of these sectarian based conflicts (Keen, 1998). It is reasonable to suggest that the frustration faced by several youths, coupled with their feeling of unfair treatment from government may be a catalyst in the ongoing bloodshed. However, the multiple causal factors that generate ethno-sectarian conflicts compel the use of the different theories to benefit maximally from their complementary analytical insights.

DISCUSSION OF ETHNO-SECTARIAN CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA AND IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

Apart from the massive killings in Nigeria, in the early sixties that were both the immediate cause and effects of the Nigerian civil war, the country's political history has been marred by serial ethno-sectarian violence. It is common knowledge that since Sept 11, 2001, the world has woken to a new reality that the greatest threats to international peace and security, no longer come from states, but from non-state actors, extremist groups driven by, internal state crisis, hate propaganda and material considerations (see Baker, 2007). It is therefore important that we do the needful by documenting clearly these violent manifestations and interrogate their underlying conflict drivers to be able to recommend ways to stem their escalation. One can safely posit that the close relationship between ethnic and religious violence is the congruence, in several respects, of the two categories that are mutually-reinforcing. It is also important to interrogate how these conflicts have obstructed the process of development. It is safe to suggest that a conflict prone society may not be a fertile ground for sustainable development.

The International Crisis Group (2006:24) observes that "*as much as it would be erroneous to depict Nigeria's ethnic divide as infighting among the big three Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo, it would also be misleading to describe Muslims and Christians as massed against each other. Much bloodshed has been the result of sectarian violence within the communities themselves.*" Some examples would suffice.

SECTARIAN VIOLENCE IN KANO

This major religious upheaval occurred first in the Northern region, precisely in Kano metropolis before it spread to other parts of the country. Kano had become an important, attractive city before colonialism, a major trading route and centre, and owing to its strategic importance attracted great number of southern migrants (Albert, 2007). The contest was initially between rival Kadiriyya group and fundamentalist Muslim denomination led by the then spiritual leader Mohammed Marwa (Maitatsine), a Nigerian of Camerounian origin. His teachings led to riots which ignited commensurate response from mainstream orthodox Islam. Soon, Christians became the targets of their attack, not inexplicably, in view of their mainly ethnic difference, segregated residential quarters (Sabongari) and visible commercial means of livelihood like shops, offices, etc, which could easily be looted (Albert, 2007). The violence

spread rapidly to other cities in the North, until a combined police/military operation was able to dislodge Maitatsine, killing him and several of his followers. Their dispersal however meant a spread of sectarian fundamentalism and irredentism across the Northern part of Nigeria.

It must be reiterated that the Maitatsine riots came from the heretic teachings of Mohammed Marwa who engaged in rituals, and other practices considered vexatious by orthodox Moslems. For instance, he preached against *"Modernization, and branded as infidels all Muslims using wrist watches, motor cars, bicycles, etc, and even asked God to punish whosoever refused to accept his teaching"*, (Albert, 2008). This informed his nick name Maitatsine (meaning he that curses, and his thousands of followers were called yan tatsine (the children or followers of he who curses) (Albert 2007:285). Marwa proved to be a menace beyond the society's laws. He erected buildings in unapproved areas, he was asked by the then State government to demolish his illegal structures on which he camped thousands of his followers. In protest, he called on his followers, to attack the infidels, including orthodox Muslims and police. In four years, (1980 – 84) across several Northern cities, the death toll following the sectarian violence was more than 10,000 lives (International Crisis Group, 2006:25).

There were other separatists, sectarian groups like the Shiites initially led by Malam Ibrahim El zak-zaky. The sect like the Maitatsine was also anti-establishment and anti-orthodox Islam. The Shiite in Kano became increasingly radicalized and fundamentalist when they started using threats and violence to intimidate other Muslims to do their bidding. Their heretic, insolent posture, their denigrations of otherwise respected caliphs and faithfuls led to violent territorial contests between these Shiites and other conservative Moslems leading to loss of lives (see Albert, 2007). Much of the ethno-religious conflicts were mainly sectarian, up until the late 1980s.

With religious populism manifesting in Pentecostal revivalism and Muslim fundamentalism, the stage was set for inter-religious conflicts, however exploited by sectarian movements. The clandestine smuggling of Nigeria into the Organization of Islamic Conference by the Babangida regime polarized the country, and sharply aggravated inter-religious tension (see Falola, 1998). In *"this highly inflammable environment, a series of violent incidents occurred throughout the 1990s: clashes between Muslims and Christians in Kano, Katsina, Bauchi and Zango Kataf ... left several thousands dead"* (International Crisis Group, 2006:26). One of the most prominent conflicts then concerned the license given to Reinhard Bonkie, a German preacher and several other American Evangelists, and the publicity attendant thereto, which Muslims saw as religious affront. One of the posters read "Jesus for all by the year 2000" (Makh-tar cited in Albert, 2007). Bonkher's arrival in Kano on 13th October, 1991 coincided with violent outburst where the Sabongari (residential area of Southern Nigerians) area was the theatre of war resulting in death of several hundreds of people and millions of property destroyed.

Similarly, the Gideon Akaluka incident in 1994 in Kano was also another major battle field between Muslims and Christians, who mainly were easily identifiable southerners. The crisis started with the beheading of Gideon Akaluka, a Southern Christian who was alleged by Shiite fundamentalists to have desecrated a leaflet of the Koran. These Muslim fanatics went into the federal prison in Bompai, Kano where Gideon was awaiting trial forcefully abducted and beheaded him, danced round the streets of Kano with his head stuck to a spear (Albert, 2007). This infuriated many Christians and led to bloodshed with reprisal killings of Muslims in Aba, Onitsha (large cities in South East, Nigeria).

OTHER FLASH POINTS

However, ethno-sectarian violence is not restricted to the North. In Shagamu Ogun State, near Lagos, the refusal of a Hausa lady to heed the warnings of members of a local sect, the ***Oro cult*** group led to serious violent confrontation between Yorubas and the Hausa settlers. Several people lost their lives (Saadu, 2004)

Plateau State, for some historic and geographical reasons, but more importantly, for its specific demographics has been a centre of intense – ethno-sectarian conflicts; a major fault line that underscores the volatility of inter-group relations. The contestations over land, power, and dominance led to massive bloodletting and breakdown of law and order which led to suspension of democratic institutions for several months and an appointment of a military administrator Gen. Chris Ali by the President, Olusegun Obasanjo. Since then Plateau had turned from a centre of tourism to rendezvous of unrest. The problem in the Plateau had always been the mistrust and fear of domination mutually expressed by both indigenous Berom ethnic group (Christians) and their Hausa-Fulani herdsman (settlers) who are mainly Moslems. This indigenes/settler categorization has been one of the sources of senseless carnage, in some instances, ethno-religious cleansing of whole communities. In the last count, several thousands have been killed and tens of thousands displaced. Only last month in July 2012, the senator representing Plateau State in the Federal Parliament, senator Dantong and the Majority Leader of the House of Assembly, were killed, while attending mass burial of relations that had been killed in previous ethno-sectarian attacks. The centre of Tourism is boiling since then, and the state seems incapable of stopping this pogrom.

As already highlighted, the adoption of Sharia Law by Zamfara State in 1999, and twelve other Northern states, soon after, was the single most important factor that set the tone for a resurgence of ethno-religious contestations in Nigeria's new attempt at civil rule. Not surprisingly, noted (Egwu, 2006), religious violence and mass destruction of lives and property have greeted the introduction of Islamic legal code in key northern cities such as Kaduna and Kano. In just two days February 21-22, 2000, an "*estimated 3,000 people lost their lives in a clash between Muslims and Christians in Kaduna, capital of Kaduna State*" (Saadu, 2004:57). Reprisal killings also occurred in Aba, an Igbo enclave in the South.

Again, in 2002, in Kaduna State, a publication in This Day Newspaper which contained a disparaging remark about the Holy Prophet Mohammed in the context of International beauty pageant sparked off serious ethno-sectarian clashes killing hundreds of people, while thousands were displaced from their homes. There have been previous ethno-sectarian conflicts that are well documented in the literature (see Saadu, (2004), Albert, (2007), International Crisis group, 2010, They include Zango-kataf crises in Kaduna State, Zaki-Ibiam massacre Kafanchan College of Education Muslim-Christian riots, Kaduna Polytechnic Muslim-Christian skirmishes (1981-82) and the Cross versus Crescent conflict at the university of Ibadan (1981-85), Usman Dan Fodio University, Sokoto in 1982, and the Muslim-Christian clash during a Christian Procession at Easter in Ilorin, Kwara State" (Salawu, 2010:346). The population characteristics of several northern cities predispose them to violence. The streets of these cities are crowded every day by many young idle hands **"Almajiris"** (children from Islamic schools) roaming the streets begging for alms, different categories of hawkers, street hooligans, touts who in the event of slight disagreements between the sects or religions always become willing tools and merchants of violence (Albert, 2007).

THE RISE OF BOKO HARAM

As stated earlier, Islamic sectarian revivalism and Puritanism had gathered momentum with the declaration of the Islamic legal code in Northern Nigeria. The ground was therefore very fertile for the proliferation of several sects. The fear of Christian domination as represented by the seizure of state power since Obasanjo's presidency in 1999, the massive unemployment and deepening poverty in the far Northern Regions, the history of religious and sectarian identity all conspired to produce sects like Boko Haram. Several reformist movements and autonomous mosques sprang up in different areas challenging the teachings of the largely moderate Islam as represented by the Qadiriyya and Tijanniya Groups (see Gourley, 2012). Among these groups are the **Movement for Islamic Revival** (MIR), **Islamic Movement in Nigeria** (IMN) and **Jama'atu, Abilis-Sunnah, Lidda Awati Wal Jihad** otherwise, called **Boko Haram** (western education is sin or forbidden). The official name however of Boko Haram means people committed to the propagation of the prophet's teachings and Jihad (Okpaga, Ugwu & Eme, 2012).It is instructive to interrogate Boko Haram's conduct in terms of its motivating ideology. This ideology "*portrays the world in terms of an epic struggle between good and evil*" (Forest, 2012:13) The founder of Boko Haram was Mohammed Yusuf who operated from the North Eastern city of Maiduguri, Borno State, and gained popularity and substantial followership for his trenchant, virulent attacks on western life style, and beliefs. He singled out western education for condemnation, noting that it brought nothing but grief, misery and suffering to the region. Aside from his contempt and disdain for authority and establishment, what attracted attention was the security report that the sect was amassing weapons of all descriptions (Okpaga et al, 2012). The group was said to enjoy considerable support and patronage from sections of the political class who used them for political purposes. In 2009, the group in open defiance of the law on wearing of helmets while riding motorcycles had some of its members arrested.

A furious response ensued with government and security buildings torched, infidels (unbelievers) attacked and killed as the violence spread throughout Northern Nigeria. In a heavy handed manner, the government responded by drafting the military into the fray. Yusuf was captured and allegedly shot dead in Police custody (see Okpaga et al, 2010). Since then, the immensity of sectarian violence and the possible metamorphosis of Boko Haram to an Al-Qaeda franchise have led to International attention (Gourley, 2012). The group itself has become more daring with its suicide bombing of the United Nations compound in Abuja, in August, 2011, the suicide bombing in the Headquarters of Nigerian Police, the Christmas day bombing of St. Theresa's Catholic Church, Madalla Niger State, and the bombing of several other churches during church activities. All of these have become emblematic of Boko Haram's strategy. There are other sordid attacks on schools, banks, prisons; government security establishments like Immigration, Customs, etc, even mosques are also not spared, which in fact is a new dimension. The events in the North have translated into what Soyinka, the Nobel Laureate in literature called a daily decimation of our humanity (This Day April 29, 2012:105). The attacks masterminded by Boko Haram are horrendous as the aged, women and children are not spared. Emirs, the traditional bastions of the North are also not spared as dare devil attempts by suicide bombers are made on their lives to send them to early graves. Even the President himself is not immune to the intimidation of Boko haram as they demand the Presidents immediate conversion to Islam as a condition precedent to dialogue (see The Nation, 6 August, 2012). Massive displacement of large Sections of the populace is continuing with its attendant multiplier effects. More than a million persons have become refugees in their country owing to the war waged by Boko Haram (Punch, 23 March, 2012)

Boko Haram has also made real its threat of bombing Media houses with the twin attacks on This Day Offices in Abuja and Kaduna. Recently, the seat of the Moslem caliphate – a place considered a no go area for the sectarian fanatics was visibly terrified at the multiple suicide bombings that claimed several lives. Also in Kaduna, Kaduna State, the residence of the Vice-President, Namadi Sambo, was attacked killing innocent bystander and wounding Policemen (The Nation July 31, 2012:1). On Sunday, June 17, 2012, Boko Haram using its inexhaustible suicide bombers attacked once again 3 churches in Zaria, and Kaduna metropolis killing more than 16 people, with 50 others injured (Nation June 18, 2012), totaling more than 70 different a ttacks. Since then Boko Haram has grown in sophistication now deploying several Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (VBIED). The manner of their attacks, organization, dare devilry and precision suggest that Boko Haram is no longer a local sectarian militant group, but an emerging terrorist organization with possible links to Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) for logistic support (Gourley, 2012). The threat by Boko Haram can no longer be handled with kid's gloves as it is rapidly spreading down to the Southern part of Nigeria. Nigeria may be sitting on the throes of a new Jihad which consequences will be more devastating than the ethnic cleansing in Rwanda, or Bosnia-Herzegovinia. Ignoring or undermining Boko Haram or treating it as merely a local threat is to hasten a disaster and humanitarian tragedy of international proportions. The situation in Northern Nigeria is no different from the troubled Middle East (see Economist, Aug . 27, 2011). The problem with the incessant attacks in Nigeria by these gunmen is that the environment that will profit sustainable development has been greatly imperilled. In 2013 alone, about 1 trillion naira was budgeted for security, an amount that would have been put to productive, regenerative use on infrastructure, job creation, social services and the like.

RESOLVING ETHNO-SECTARIAN CONFLICTS

Given that available evidence suggests a multiplicity of causes that precipitates ethno-sectarian tensions; solutions that will be employed to address the problem(s) must be multi-faceted. These include:

a. The centrality of the state in the provocation of internal

b. Insurrection has been demonstrated. The state's role is therefore crucial in deploying strategies for its resolution (see Egwu, 2006). In Nigeria, the role of the state as a wealth mine for the preservation and promotion of particular privileges needs to be discarded or reformed, to embrace the interests of diverse groups. The state should provide equal opportunities and be more proactive in addressing deep seated grievances that bother on marginalization and neglect. Addressing poverty related issues in a comprehensive and pragmatic manner by providing employment to the huge idle population may be a good starting point. An idle mind is the devil's workshop. The economic background which intensifies the grievances should be addressed (Gourley, 2012) to take the youths off the streets.

c. A deliberate value reorientation policy through an engagement with some respected Islamic clerics who have not been labeled saboteurs by the protagonists may be used to regain the confidence of these youths. A forum to canvas inter-faith dialogue needs to be promoted. This will deconflict the situation.

d. Similarly the provision of relevant and necessary education will help the vulnerable youths in banishing ignorance and also empower them to make informed choices about their lives and future.

e. A deliberate policy of reinventing the nation must be instituted by addressing problems of corruption; ostentatious life styles, and conspicuous consumption. This moral burden must be jettisoned. The fears of minorities' cum settlers should be addressed with a commensurate recognition of rights of indigenes (Gurr, 2000). Indeed a constitutional amendment is urgently needed to make citizens out of Nigerians with patriotic and nationalistic identification rather than current primordial loyalties. As we get closer to election year in 2015, it may be necessary to reexamine the role of political succession in the intensification of violence by ensuring a single term for all current elected office holders. This may take the wind of some sections of the political class that may be manipulating sectarian, terrorist agenda for political ends.

f. Strengthening of security particularly the national borders to check the influx of illegal Aliens and Small And Light Weapons (SALW) that have been used in these attacks seems very urgent. Retraining of the security personnel to come to terms with modern technology, weaponry, intelligence gathering on counter insurgency is very crucial to addressing the challenge of Boko Haram(see Forest, 2012).

g. Addressing the contagious effect of militancy in the Delta, by also creating a Ministry of Northern Affairs, just like the Niger Delta Ministry to assuage age old feelings, bring together the disparate groups and harmonize their interests as an inevitable road map to reconciling the nation. By doing this, a sense of equity, fairness and justice will have been delivered.

CONCLUSION

Nigeria is currently bedeviled by ethno-sectarian violence. Although, a national problem, ethno-sectarian violence in the last 3 years has resonated more in the North, with no signs of abating. A constellation of factors have been identified as enablers and conflict drivers. They include the very poor quality of governance in Nigeria, corruption, endemic poverty, the dynamics and demographics of Northern cities, state volatility and crisis, and questionable credentials and mission of clerics and preachers. Serial governance failures at all tiers of governance have cast doubts about the capacity, vision and mission of successive ruling regimes in Nigeria. Nigeria's resource, oil has turned a major curse as the indulgent political elite class and their collaborators continue to make tragic choices which have put Nigeria in poverty trap and arrested the wheel of sustainable development. The poverty of ideas, the prodigality and profligacy of Nigeria's ruling elite, now exacerbated by myriads of ethno-sectarian conflicts have conspired to ensure that Nigerians are not reaping expected benefits from the abundant valuable natural resources. These resources, but for the weaknesses afore-stated, ought to have culminated into very high living standards for Nigerian citizens on a sustainable basis, as their counterparts elsewhere enjoy. It is hoped that a frugal management of scarce resources, with focus on wealth creation, rather than the monthly ritual in Abuja, the Nation's Capital, where the Federal allocation, commonly called the national cake is shared, shall become the guiding principle of state policy. Nigeria needs to come to terms with the incessant violence urgently so as to engage its creative potentials on a development roadmap that will be sustainable. The paper recommends a reinvention of state and redirection of the purpose of governance with a simultaneous attack on poverty and unemployment, strengthening of the security apparatuses, creation of a forum for interfaith dialogue, and a Ministry of Northern Affairs as practical ways of addressing the endemic grievances in the country.

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