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Social capital, indigeneity and identity politics: The Jos crisis in perspective

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The thrust of the paper is to critically examine how the concept of social capital can be a useful tool in the building and advancement of peace, community trust, cooperation and access to justice in conflict-torn environments like Nigeria; that is, social capital to serve as a mechanism to mediate and/or moderate the inter- and intra-communal conflicts and enhance the capacity of the Nigerian state to pursue and promote non-repressive and accommodative policies of inter-intra ethnic equity and reciprocity.

Key words: Conflicts, indigeneity, identity politics, citizenship, social capital.

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that one of the major problems of modern nation state particularly Nigeria, is that of crisis of identity and consciousness which is often triggered by primordial loyalties, deeply ingrained ethnic cleavages, religious bigotry and forces of centrifugalism. To be specific, Nigeria is a country profoundly bifurcated along the lines of religious language, culture, ethnicity and regional identity. As Suberu (1997) put it, 'Nigeria's deep ethnic, regional and religious divisions have made the goal of institutionalizing an enduring system of democratic governance paradoxically both structurally compelling and profoundly problematic'.

In recent times, particularly from the commencement of the present democratic dispensation, the country has increasingly experienced a plethora of traumatic religious, ethnic and communal conflicts and violence. This, perhaps, is as a result of primordial identities that have gained wide currency and greater political significance, especially in contestations over citizenship, indigenes, non-indigenes, migrants and settlers. It is a circumstance that absorbs an entrenched system of discriminatory practices, where non-indigenes, migrants and settlers are often shunted out or denied equal access to the resources, rights and privileges of a locality, community, town or state, to which sons and daughters of the soil have first or exclusionary access. Reacting to these

injustices has often led to massive and gross destruction of lives and property. These include Tiv-Jukun conflicts, Hausa-Yoruba clashes, Aguleri-Umuleri crisis, Ife-Modakeke crisis, Kafanchan-Kaduna crisis (Albert, 1993; 1999; Otite and Albert, 1999; Okafor, 1997).

As Odofin (2004) remarked, though the cause(s) of these conflicts may be one or combination of factors, question of distribution of economic resources, the spontaneity and frequency of the outburst of these conflicts and the concomitant excruciating impact on the citizenry, and the gross incapacitation of the political leadership to tackle the problem are at the root of the unending debates about the essence of federalism and the question of citizenship in the contemporary Nigeria. The question one may ask is, why has it been very difficult for various nationalities in Nigeria to see themselves as one corporative, indivisible entity even in spite of some nuances in culture and ideology? The very fact that a country has different ethnic, communal, religious and racial groups, does not necessarily make division and conflicts inevitable. Empirical evidence reveals that division and conflict are not dependent on the degree of diversity, as some of the most diverse countries (Switzerland, Belgium, Malaysia, Britain, America and Tanzania) enjoy relative peace and stability, while some of the least diverse are the most unstable or violent (Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi) (Osaghae and Suberu, 2005).

The point is that the continuous violence and clashes between ethnic groups and communities in Nigeria poses

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serious threats to the socio economic development of the country. A situation where a Yoruba or Igbo who resides in the North is given the impression that he is not a citizen from that region or geopolitical zone; and a Hausa in the south alienated because he is not from the south, is not in any manner a good development for the country. In most of the advanced democracies such as the United States, Canada and Germany, there is little or no emphasis on the issue of indigene and non-indigene, or religious identity. What rather matters to these advanced nations is on how to improve on human development and not indulging in ethnic chauvinism or religious bigotry. As Richard Jolly et al. (2005) noted, 'the goal of development is the improvement of human well-being and the quality of life. This involves the eradication of poverty, the fulfillment of basic needs of all people and the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development. It requires that governments apply active social and environmental policies and that they promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms on the basis of democratic and widely participatory institutions'.

However, several factors have underpinned the recent Jos crisis in Nigeria. They include poverty, unemployment, conflicting claims to land or land ownership, elite manipulation of ethnic symbols in their quest for political power, the fear of domination which often develops in the minds of minority groups, the ethno-structured systems of stratification where individuals define themselves and are defined in terms of the ethnic group to which they belong, an inclusivity notion of common citizenship by which is meant that all citizens qua citizen are equal before the state (Osaghae and Suberu, 2005; Osinubi and Osinubi, 2006). For instance, an inclusivity notion of common citizenship begs the question of access to the state and the privileges deriving from it: to whom (to which ethnic group) does the state belong? Whose or which ethnic group or ethno-regional interest does it promote or obstruct, protect or frustrate? In Nigeria, what this does is to generally heighten and deepen the consciousness of ethnic differences in public spaces.

In the light of the foregoing, the paper is organized into three sections. Section one has already been taken care of, that is, the introduction. Section two delves into theoretical clarifications, trying to define the key concepts. Section three examines the Jos crisis, highlighting and analysing some of the claimed causes of the most recent crisis while section four examines how the concept of social capital can be a useful instrument (or an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in promoting peace in conflict-torn communities in Nigeria.

THEORETICAL CLARIFICATION: CONFLICT

Conflict is ideally the negation of peace and stability. In other words, where there is no peace and stability,

conflict or violence abounds. Conflicts can be defined as situations involving people or social groups with different interests and mutually antagonist tendencies and opposing influences competing for the use of limited resources to ensure or enhance the livelihood (Means et al., 2002). Their manifestations, dimensions and level of intensity vary greatly. They can be implicit or explicit, proximate, local, national or international. To Weber (1971), conflict is any action that is oriented intentionally to carry out actor's own wish against the resistance of the other party or parties. For Coser (1966), conflict and social conflict in particular is a struggle over status, rank, position, power and scarce resources in which the sole aims of the parties involved are not only to gain the desired value but also to also neutralize, injure or eliminate rivals. Just as we have social conflict, there is also an ethnic conflict which is very common in most of the developing nations.

For the past two or more decades, ethnic conflicts have been recognised and rated as one of the most fundamental threats to institutional cohesion in the multi-ethnic societies of the Third World. It is also estimated that at least half the states of sub-Saharan Africa including Angola, Chad, Burundi, Rwanda, Liberia, Somalia and Nigeria have experienced either civil war or deaths in the thousand from conflict based on ethnic or racial divisions (Diamond and Plattner, 1994; Horowitz, 1985). Thus, most definitions and interpretations of ethnic conflicts, its sources and nature have been variously attributed to the emotional power of 'primordial givens' or cultural ties, the struggle for relative group worth, mass-based resource competition, elite manipulation, false consciousness, defective political institutions and inequitable state policies. In most purely divided or pluralistic societies, control of the state is a central ethnic conflict objective. Mosca (1939) sees ethnic conflict as 'the struggle for preeminence'.

According to Horowitz (1985), most definitions of ethnic conflict embody an element of struggle, strife or collision. The phenomenon strains the bond that sustains civility and is often at the root of violence that results in looting, death, homelessness and the flight of large numbers of people. It also emphasizes domination-subordination relations in which the subordinates groups are denied social and economic equality as well as freedom in equal measure. Though, the root causes of ethnic conflicts are complex and far-reaching, and so single categorization is inadequate, constructing loose typologies of conflict based on the prevalent causes helps to create a framework in which we can examine the nature of contemporary conflicts. These constructs according to Rupesinghe and Anderlini (1998) are as follows: i) resource-based conflict, where competition for economic power and access to natural resources are given more attention; ii) Conflicts over governance and authority, based on competition for political power and participation in political processes; As Ronen (1975) puts it: not to be

in power means not only to be out of power but also to be ruled by another region or regions which are in power, it means not only to be 'out', but also to be under, to be politically overpowered by others. Iii) Ideological conflicts, based on competition between rival ideologies and value systems; iv) Identity conflicts based on competition between rival ethnic, political and economic power and social justice. Irrespective of what causes conflicts, they are known to have dire consequences earlier stated elsewhere.

Identity politics

Identity politics is a factor in inter-ethnic relations where the struggle for survival acquires the character of inter-ethnic group competition as groups tend to perceive their material advancement or otherwise in terms of the activities of other groups (Nnoli, 1980). Put differently, identity politics is recognition of the presence of a repressed or suppressed culture, people, values and way of life. It is a political action to advance the interests of members of a group that claim to be oppressed by virtue of a shared or marginalized identity such as race, ethnicity, gender and religion (Kauffman, 1990).

Following Erikson (1968) characterization of identity as the intersection between group and individual identity, the concept can be viewed as any group attribute that provides recognition or definition, reference, affinity, coherence and meaning for individual members of the group acting. Young (1989) and Kymlicka (1999) conceive identity politics from the vantage point of 'group representation rights'. The demand for 'representation rights' by disadvantaged groups is a demand for inclusion. Groups that feel excluded want to be included in a larger society and the recognition and accommodation of their 'difference' is intended to facilitate this. Nonetheless, the major problem with the notion of group representation rights is on how to measure, determine or identify the truly disadvantaged groups, as many groups claim to be disadvantaged in some respects. For instance, some liberals strongly object to group representation rights on the grounds that institutionalising group differences, and ascribing political salience to them would have serious implications for social unity. To Iwara (2004), the term identity politics suggests a situation in which considerations of ethnicity, cultural and religious affinity predominate and influence policies and decision-making in terms of political appointments and distributions of other public resources. In Nigeria, the concept refers particularly to the political system in which political elites campaigning for votes tend to rely, not so much on the strength of their political ideas and programmes but essentially on their ethnic, religious affiliations and connections. The voting patterns of the 1959 and 1979 presidential elections largely demonstrated this fact. It was a situation characterized by

overwhelming victory for the three core ethnic political leaders from the East (Igbo), West (Yoruba) and the North (Hausa/Fulani) representing, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo and Sir Ahmadu Bello (Shehu Shagari), respectively.

In any case, it has been observed that identity politics has a lot in common with ethnic identity only that the former is somewhat broader than the latter. Ethnic identity has its foundations in combined remembrances of past experience and common aspirations, values, norms and expectations. That is, it is a feeling of belonging and continuity in-being resulting from an act of self ascription or ascription by others to a group of who claim both common ancestry and cultural tradition. To Ahmed (1998), ethnic identity is an important variable in societal interaction, and which serves as important psychological and emotional role in social life and also as a basis for collective action.

Indigeneity and citizenship

For decades now, Nigeria has been plagued by recurring episodes of inter and intra - communal violence as a result of who is an indigene and a non-indigene. An indigene is one who claims to be the 'son' of the soil, a recognized citizen of a given space while a non indigene or settler is a stranger, a migrant who does not have rights of occupancy. In a social environment pervaded by mutual fear, it has become important to possess some space from which potential enemies can be excluded. In view of this, indigeneity has become inextricably bound up with other sources of inter and intra communal tension in Nigeria and many of Nigeria's bloodiest inter communal conflicts in recent times have pitted indigene against 'settler' communities.

The entrenchment or indirect institutionalisation of indigene, non-indigene principle in the system produces and sustains a hierarchical, unequal and ranked system of citizenship that has provoked violent conflicts across the country, and goes to the very heart of the national question. In Nigeria, indigeneity is associated with land ownership and ethnic group. This implies that the individual belongs to Nigeria through belonging to an indigenous group which is different from simply saying a Nigerian citizen is one either of whose parents or grandparent is a Nigerian. The relevant question is, which group or groups are indigenous in Nigeria? A Nigerian can belong to only one type of group and the status of this group determines to a large extent, his own status. To the extent that all groups are not equal, all Nigerians are not equal both in terms of national relevance as well as access to power. This lays credence to Eme Awa's argument that one major which explains the indigeneity syndrome is, our acceptance of land as a primary form of property in the traditional society, and its source as a form of wealth (Awa, 1985). The principle has also

cumulatively engendered various forms of self-determination agitation by different groups. It could be recalled that it was largely the issue of indigeneity and problems of citizenship in Nigeria that led to the emergence of 'Northernization' policy.

The 'Northernization policy' was proclaimed in 1954 and implemented with vigor in early 1958 when the Northern government discharged over 100 clerks of non-northern origin from the regional civil service and 600 non-northern daily paid workers from the public works department (Daily times, January 19 and 25, 1958; West African Pilot, September. 10, 1958). In August, 1958, the premier of the North told the House of Assembly that a total of 2,148 Southerners had been dismissed from the Northern public service since January 1954 (Sklar, 1963; Daily Service, August 5, 1958). To say the least, the 1950s were years of acrimonious ethnic politics in Nigeria. During this period, the greatest immigration of southern Nigerians into Kano took place. Igbos formed the great majority of the immigrants. The Kanawa saw this unprecedented immigration of stranger elements into their midst as a political device by which southerners would take over Northern Nigeria. This suspicion perhaps helped to solidify the Hausa-Fulani identity in Kano as they began to see themselves in social, religious, economic and political competition with the Southerners (Albert 1993). The question is, who is truly a Nigerian citizen, what are the bases or criteria for identifying a true [Nigerian] citizen? The father of philosophy, Aristotle in the 4th century stated in his 'politics' that a citizen is not a citizen because he lives in a certain place, since resident aliens and slaves share in the place, rather the special characteristic of a citizen is that he shares in the administration of justice, and in public office (<http://www.student.britannica.com/comptons/articles/citizenship>). From the 1990s, citizenship has become one of the key issues of the political debate. The notion is changing at a great pace because of the great economic, social and political changes that have occurred in the recent time. However, a citizen is a person owing loyalty to and entitled by birth or naturalization to protection of a given state while citizenship means therefore the status of a citizen with its attendant duties, rights and privileges (Ogban-lyam, 2007). Citizenship is an important notion because it defines the constitutive elements of the democratic state and elaborates the relationship between state power and individuals. It spells out procedures and sets of practices defining the relationship between the nation-state and its individual members. Citizenship atomises society into multiple sovereign individuals and reintegrates them into a nation. Unequal class or status relations are denied and a structure and ideology of common objectives are superimposed. Citizenship in Nigeria infers an equality (of rights) bestowed on all who are Nigerian citizen backed up by adequate constitutional provisions in order to ensure that this is so. In other words, in principle, all Nigerian citizens are equal no

matter the circumstances of their birth and whether or not they reside in their places of origin. But in practice, one is a Nigerian citizen only in his state of origin. Outside one's state of origin, he is not a citizen. Thus, no matter for how long one resides or domiciles in a state other than his own, even though he performs his duties as a citizen, he is not seen as a citizen in the state he resides. The crisis of citizenship in Nigeria especially the controversy raised by the distinction between indigenes and settlers has been a source of conflict in Nigeria. The challenge becomes even more daunting because of the continued ambivalence of the elites to the issues.

The point is that the concept of citizenship is problematic in Nigerian society due largely to increasing growth of primordial ties, ethnic or tribal sentiments. As Irukwu (2005) captured it, 'by the end of 1951, ethnic politics had become the order of the day. Instead of Nigerian nationalism, what prevailed was ethnic or tribal nationalism as represented by the three dominant political parties, Northern peoples congress (NPC), action group (AG) and National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC). Historically, it impacted negatively on the relationship between the Yorubas and the Igbos particularly in 1951 when Nnamdi Azikiwe was forcefully asked by his colleagues from the western region to go back to the Eastern region to continue his political career; and between the Igbos and the people from the South-South when within the same period Zik was sent back to the Eastern region, Eyo Ita who was not an Igbo was also sent packing by his colleagues from the Eastern region House of Assembly. In March 1953, Anthony Enahoro, an Action Group member, moved a motion on the floor of the House of Representatives asking that Britain should grant Nigeria her political independence in 1956. Members of the NPC easily imagined the disadvantaged position of the northerners under such an independent Nigeria and opposed the motion. The House, therefore, became divided: North against South. The Southern lawmakers decried the action of their northern counterparts in disparaging language. This angered the Hausa-Fulani who felt the southerners wanted to drive them away from the Nigerian state (Albert, 1993).

Hitherto, many things are done in the Nigerian society based on issues of indigeneity and citizenship. These include, admission into tertiary institutions, admission into other similar institutions such as, military, Naval, Air Force Schools. Employment opportunities are also based upon what is termed, state of origin. In Nigerian universities, it has become very difficult for a non-indigene to become a Vice-Chancellor and/or any of the principal officers. This again, has maximally affected human development in Nigeria as the right people are not often put in the right place as a result of citizenship problem. It suffices to say that it is in the midst of this circumstance, that the concept of social capital is brought to the fore. Over the last decade, the concept of social capital has risen dramatically to become one of the most

fertile concepts in social science literature (Bourdieu, 1983, Portes, 1998, Coleman, 1988, Putnam, 1993; Woolcock and Narayan, 2000, Durlauf, 2002; Gillinson, 2004). Some of the pioneering scholars of social capital such as Bourdieu (1983, 1985), Coleman (1988) and Putnam (1993) conceived the phenomenon as resource for action, which is developed and accessed through membership in formal organizations. Putnam defined social capital as the features of social organizations such as social networks, social interactions, norms, social trust, reciprocity, cooperation that facilitate coordination and that enable people to act collectively for mutual benefits.

Social capital

Typically, social capital describes the relations that knit together communities through a sharing of trust. It stresses that for a society to be orderly and prosperous, the representative institutions and the legal frameworks of the state need to be embedded in a supportive social context (Callahan, 2005). According to Fukuyama (2002) social capital is an instantiated informal norm that promotes cooperation between two or more individuals, that is, the connections that people develop with relatives, friends, co-workers comprise informal networks which can produce private and public goods. The concept consists of the stock of active connections among people: the first, mutual understanding and shared values and behaviours that bind the members of human networks and communities and make cooperative action possible (Cohen and Prusak, 2001).

Uphoff (2000) argues that social capital can be perceived from the vantage point of two distinguishable but interrelated categories: Structural and Cognitive. The former comprises information, sharing, collective action through established roles and social networks supplemented by rules, procedures and precedents while the latter consists of shared norms, values, trust, attitudes and beliefs. However, both can be far more productive with productive with whatever physical and human capital they draw on especially if they can agree on a broad form of coordination. Another useful dimension of social capital is what Putnam (2000, 2002) termed bridging and bonding social capital. Bridging social capital refers to the structural relationships and networks which cross social groupings, involving coordination or collaboration with other groups, external associations, mechanisms of social support for information sharing across communities and groups. It can generate broader identities and reciprocity. It is also outward looking and capable of building networks of network. Bonding social capital on the other hand is viewed as the social cohesion within groups or communities resulting from relationships between people of similar ethnicity, social status and location, based on local ties, trust and shared moral

values, and reinforced by working together (Pretty, 2003). It bolsters people's narrower selves, that is, it is inward-looking and can build strong community identities. Besides, both networks can come into conflict in what Putnam (2002) termed, 'fraternity at war with itself'.

Essentially, the different aspects and dimensions of social capital determine whether a community can act as a cohesive union, that is, bonding, whether people comply with the norms by laws, that is, structural, whether they have links with other community organizations which reflects bridging, or whether they can access and influence institution sight more power and resources which demonstrates linking, for managing natural resources, including conflicts.

JOS CRISIS

Jos is a city in Nigeria's middle belt and also an administrative capital of Plateau State. During the British colonial rule, the city was an important center for tin mining. Jos is a sharply divided society, a split into indigenes and non-indigenes. The indigenes are largely Christians while the non-indigenes are mostly Muslims. Thus, when there are any quarrels between the two parties, they usually go after each other's places of worship for destruction. The weather in Jos is quite nice, a mixture of temperate and tropical climates, most especially on the upper section of the state. Perhaps, that is why a lot of expatriates or foreigners like settling in Jos (<http://www.plateaustategov.org/visit/jos/html>).

More significantly, Jos has been known in the last decade as an explosive city in terms of conflicts and violence. The centre stage of the conflict is usually Jos North local government council of the state. The journalist reports revealed that no council election has been held in Jos North Local Government since 1999. The government has always been scared to conduct election in the area because of the rivalry between the Hausa-Fulani (who are assumed to be strangers or non-indigenes) and the indigenes (who are predominantly Christians) over who will produce the Chairman of the council (The NEWS December 15, 2008: 28). To be sure, when elections were held in other councils of the state in 2003, former Governor of the Plateau State, Joshua Dariye in the light of the Jos ethno-religious crisis of 2001 felt it was unsafe to conduct elections in the area as it might again precipitate another round of crisis. Consequently he (Dariye) appointed one Danladi Atu as sole administrator of the local government. The step was later construed as a plot by the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) government of Dariye to prevent possible take-over of the council by the All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP) which was dominated by Hausa-Fulani, the single largest ethnic group in the local government (The NEWS December 15, 2008: 28).

In April 2004, there were demonstrations by the Berom

(the indigenes and predominantly Christians) over the appointment of the Hausa man as chairman of the Jos-North Local government area. This forced the then government to appoint a new chairman, a Berom, which subsequently led to not only intermittent outbreak of violent killings involving the Hausas and Beroms, but also the imposition of a six-month emergency rule on the state and suspension of Dariye as Governor of Plateau State by the Olusegun Obasanjo government (TELL, December 15, 2008: 21-24). The recent outbreak of conflicts in November 28, 2008 seemed to have been another sign of tetchy relationship between the Hausa/Fulani and the indigenous Plateau population. While Hausa-Fulani continue to claim that they have lived long enough in the state and that their demographic size should at least make them major stakeholders, the Berom have always resisted this, claiming that they are the 'sons' of the soil hence the administrative powers and governance of the Jos-North should be theirs. That is why appointments into the Jos-North have been problematic for some years now. In the process of the struggle, reports showed that rampaging youths burnt down many vehicles, churches, mosques, filling stations and private houses. In all, more than 500 people were reported dead while thousands had been displaced and were taken refuge in several locations (The Guardian, November 29, 2008: 1-2; Punch November 29, 2008: 7). Interestingly, this was supposed to be a political issue, but it snowballed into an ethno-religious crisis. Instructively, the protest of the Berom, may not be a peculiar case in the North-central geopolitical zone. This is because the Zango-Kataf, Kafachans and other Middle belt peoples have had cause to revolt against Muslim-Hausa hegemony. As Bamguje (2009) remarked, it is all well and good to pontificate on constitutional rights of all Nigerians wherever they reside within the country, but many middle beltters and southerners cannot help wondering why only Hausas should be insisting on such citizenship rights given that Muslim Hausas in their home states of the core North deny other Nigerians such rights, and privileges. Take the issue of 'Northernization policy' which is still operational today.

Apparently, most non-indigenes in the core north seem to have more or less accepted their second class status and make no attempt to vie for any major political office. Even this very modest unambitious expectation of peaceful co-existence is often denied non-indigenes by Muslims in the core North who 'habitually' organize massacres and bloodbaths of Aarma (non-muslims) based on flimsy excuses such as Danish cartoons. The non-indigenes also content with other unconstitutional practices such as severe restriction on non-muslim places of worship and imposition of Sharia not only on non-muslims but also on secular muslims (Bamaguje, 2009). Granted that institutionalized discrimination against non-indigenes is not peculiar to the Northern region, however, it is mainly in the core North that non-

indigenes are under the constant threat of religious violence, thereby intimidating and subjugating non-indigenes to second class citizens. Concerning the supposedly rigged Jos North chairmanship election, the mistake of the Jos indigenes was to have allowed the creation of Hausa majority local government in their ancestral homeland. For instance, in Kano metropolis, the predominantly non-indigene areas of Sabon Gari, Brigade, Yakudima/barracks, Bompai and Dakata are enough to constitute a local government, but this was not done for obvious reasons. Rather they were divided and placed at Hausa dominated areas just to ensure that non-indigenes never dominated any political space in Kano.

But the question is, did Jos indigenes have much of a say in the delineation of the local government area that was created by executive fiat of Mulsim Hausa-Fulani oligarchy controlled military dictatorship. Apparently, the same Sanni Abacha that created (decreed) the tribally segregated Jos North Hausa enclave into a local government did not deem it fit to accord the same privilege to non-indigenes in his home city of Kano. Beyond all this, it suffices to argue that the thinly-veiled mutual distrust between the native Berom and the Hausa-Fulani settlers was given executive vent as the Federal government of Nigeria under the influence of President Musa Yar'Adua and the (Jos) state government under the authority of Governor Jonah Jang constituted two panels of enquiry to probe causes of the crisis. President Yar'Adua, on 24 December, 2008 set up an Administrative committee of enquiry headed by General Emmanuel Abisoye (rtd) while Jonah Jang on 30 December, 2008 constituted his own Panel headed by Prince Bola Ajibola, on the ground that the president Yar'Adua lacked the constitutional power to do so. This has directly or indirectly affected the relationship between the president and the Governor and exacerbated the tension on ground. The contention between the two ethnic groups, the native Berom and the Hausa-Fulani settlers over who should set up a Panel of enquiry clearly indicate a division along ethnic and religious line that is capable of leading to a fresh round of violence.

Social capital as an alternative mechanism for social harmony

It is common knowledge that mechanisms for managing conflicts often vary with the conflict type, nature, levels and stakeholders or actors involved. However, studies have proven that people generally rely on some (general) mechanisms to manage conflicts such as: avoidance, negotiation and mediation, arbitration, adjudication and coercion. In many situations, there is a combination of different resolution mechanisms. Interestingly, these mechanisms correspond to, and are activated by different types of social capital.

Social capital as a mechanism for social harmony and

peace-building encompasses, civic (engagement) community, political equality, solidarity, trust and tolerance, and social structures of cooperation. One of the main ingredients or agents of social capital in relation to institutional or societal reforms and development is community. Etzioni (2001) argues that community is a web of affect-laden relationships among a group of individuals, relationships that often criss-cross and reinforce one another rather than merely one-on-one or chainlike individual relationships. In other words, it is a measure of commitment to a set of shared values, norms and meanings and a shared history and identity. Following this, civic community or engagement facilitates communication and creates social bonds, and social trust which in turn makes collective action easier. Engagement in civic life exposes the citizens to politically relevant information cum coordination and cooperation for mutual benefits. Citizens in a civic community are meant to be helpful, respectful and trustful towards one another even when they differ on matters of principle and substance. Though, civic community is not holistically conflict free, its citizens have strong views on public issues, and also tolerant of their opponents.

Similarly, citizenship in the civil community entails equal rights and obligations for all. Such a community is bound together by horizontal relations of reciprocity and cooperation, and not by vertical relations of authority and dependency. That is, citizens interact as equals, not as patrons and clients. For this to be effective, moral dialogue will be encouraged and emphasized. Moral dialogues are social processes by which people take part in deliberations that involve not merely facts and logic, reasoning and national exchanges but also intensive discussions in which their normative commitments are engaged. In fact, a good society relies on moral dialogues to determine the values that will constitute the shared cultures of its communities rather than merely base issues on tradition (Etzioni, 2001; Granovetter, 1985). But can there be genuine moral dialogue between communities if there is no trust? Trust is an emergent property of the social system, as well as a personal attribute. Handy (1995) argues that trust is required to make people work and it inevitable requires some sense of mutuality, and of reciprocal loyalty. To Beem (1999) trust between individuals thus becomes trust between strangers and trust of a broad fabric of social institutions which subsequently becomes a shared set of values, virtues and expectations within a society as a whole. Lack of trust gives rise to fear of domination, dehumanization and alienation.

The point is that by the time the two bodies that comprised Jos North local government area imbibe most of these elements of social capital, there are chances that there will be peace and social harmony in that environment. In this case, religion which has increasingly become an instrument of discord and political instability both in the core North and the middle belt may then be viewed as a source of social capital that facilitates

common identity, common beliefs in one God. It only requires a leader who is capable of harnessing the core shared values and norms of the community.

CONCLUSION

This paper focused on the trajectories of citizenship, identities and identity conflicts in Nigeria. It also placed much premium on the significance of social capital as mechanism for preventing ameliorating intra-communal conflicts like Jos North Local Government area of Plateau state. In all, the paper argues that in a society where the elements of social capital are well emphasized, communal strives are reduced to the lowest ebb. In this case, fear of domination and intimidation, the asymmetry of group claims and group representation rights will be taken care of.

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