Article

The impact of ethno-religious conflict on Nigerian federalism

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Ethno-religious crises are part of issues that are of grave concern in Nigeria. With different development plans by the government targeted towards sustaining the nation, little or no results seem to be forthcoming. Nigeria is the largest black nation however, what exists mostly is mutual suspicion and lack of cordiality among various ethnic components. The issue of how to share the national wealth among the component units that make up the federation in a manner generally acceptable to all has been a problem. This paper attempts to draw explanations on why ethno-religious conflicts have become a permanent feature of Nigeria.

Key words: Ethnicity, religion, and federalism.

INTRODUCTION

Federalism can be perceived as a political arrangement which appreciate the existence of a central authority and a number of regionalized governments in such a way that each unit including the central authority exists as a government separately and independently from the others. Operating directly on persons and properties with its territorial area, with a will of its own apparatus for the conduct of affairs and with an authority in some matters exclusive of all others. In other words, federalism is a process of unifying powers within the unified states. Nigeria, just like several other countries in the comity of nations is a federation (Ojo, 2005). In fact, it is one of the oldest and successful federations in Africa. Federalism in Nigeria dates back in the year 1954 when the Littleton Constitution gave autonomy to the three regions. Ever since, federalism in Nigeria has been operated both in fiscal and political context. In the fiscal context, the constitution provided for three main legislative lists, namely: the exclusive for the federal government, the concurrent to be handled by both federal and state government and lastly the residual for the state government. In the political context, however, the federal structure has tremendously transformed from its initial three regions into a 36 states formation and its federal capital territory cited in Abuja. Be that as it may, federalism in Nigeria has very often been regarded as a crippled one vitiated by various ‘ethno-religious’ conflict. By ‘ethno-religious’ conflict, it means 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). In Nigeria, it is interesting to note that ethnically and religious bigotry has become a fulcrum of various forms of language, cultural autonomy and self determination. All these sometimes lead to some forms of contextual discrimination of members of one ethnic or religious group against another in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society. This is characterized by lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion and fear as it is the case among ethnic and religious groups in Nigeria.

In fact, this mutual suspicion and lack of cordiality among various ethnic components explains why ‘ethno-religious’ conflicts have become a permanent feature of Nigeria as a nation as far back as 1980 to date. Since the
attainment of independence in 1960, many parts of Nigeria have become theatres of war, characterized by an increasing number of ethnic and religious crisis notable among are the Maitatsine religious disturbances in parts of Kano and Maiduguri in the early 1980s, Jimeta Yola crisis religious disturbance (1984), 2 ango Katof crisis in Kaduna State (1992), Bulumkutu Christian – Muslim riots (1982) and Kaduna polytechnic muslim-christian skirmishes (1981 – 1982). The spate of ‘ethno-religious’ conflict in Nigeria has however, increased with the birth of the fourth republic. The frequent occurrence of ‘ethno-religious’ conflict with the coming of democracy is due to freedom provided by democratic rule. The first leg of ethnic and religious riots in Nigeria in recent time was in July 1999, when some Oro conflict in Sagamu in Ogun state accused a Hausa woman of coming out when the cultist were outside with their Gnome. This led to some altercations, which eventually led to full blown crisis. Many people, majority of Hausa and Yoruba tribe lost their lives. The infamy was however, temporarily put to check only when dusk to dawn curfew was imposed on the sleepy town of Sagamu. Unfortunately, however, as the infamy was put off in Sagamu, reprisal killings started in Kano, a major Hausa city. As a result, many people died and properties worth billions of naira destroyed. Kano residents of southern extraction who had lived all their lives in the ancient city of Kano had to return to their native land to count their losses. When Kano city was settling down for peace, Lagos erupted with another orgy of violence, visibly as a mark of vengeance of the Kano mass killing of the Yoruba tribes men. This time, the O’dua People’s Congress moved against the Hausa/Fulani traders in the popular mile 12 market and for two days, the area was turned to a killing field.

The recent and most recurring ‘ethno-religious’ conflict is the Jos crisis the capital of Plateau State. Jos at present is regarded as a physical and metaphorical cemeter. It has become the physical graveyard for hundreds of people including children cut down midstream in the insipid bloodletting now the lots of Jos and its environs. While the disturbances were the toga of religious finalism in the Maitatsine days, its true colour began to show with the recent democratic dispensation. In 2001, the riots surged and virtually claimed hundreds of life including the political life of erstwhile Governor Joshua Dariye. At its inception. Jos first experienced a violent ‘ethno-religious’ crisis on September 7, 2001, which broke its innocence as a religiously tolerant state. Since the Jos has lost its acclaim as the city of “peace and tourism”. Today, it is sarcastically referred to by public observers and commentators as a city of a pieces and terrorism. In 2008, the November crisis evolved after a state wide local government council election. The crisis lasted four days, leaving in its trail, loss of lives and properties. On Sunday 17th January 2010, Jos witnessed another ‘ethno-religious’ conflict which was a consequence of religious intolerance and again Jos was engulfed in a major orgy of killings, mayhem and wanton destruction of houses and business premises. The level of destruction assumed new dimensions in Bukuru particularly as houses were completely brought down to their foundations. The tensions spread to Bauchi, Kano, Kaduna, Nassarawa and Gombe States. States government of Ondo, Oyo, Benue and Nassarawa sent buses to transport their students and other citizens to their home states. An imminent national calamity became rife and palpable. In conclusion, ‘ethno-religious’ conflict has become problematic and unsolvable. This is because various measures have been proved to be inadequate and ineffective. The measures have been characterized by lack of sincerity and political will and have become even monotonous. Even the panels of inquiry that have been variously set up to investigate crisis have been plays by government to buy time and a psychological trick in order to allow people to pour out their anger and frustrations.

In order words, such inquiries have only cathartic effects without true commitment to implement recommendations that arise there from. Most panels end up as talk Jamborees and even membership of some panels have raised controversies and complicates issues.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

The concept of ethnicity and religion

Ethnicity

Ethnicity as a concept is an immensely complex phenomenon that portrays different perceptions. Even a search through the literature has revealed that ethnicity is a relatively new concept and it made its first appearance in the literature less than half a century ago. According to Osaghae (1992), ethnicity refers to a social formation resting upon culturally specific practices and a unique set of symbols and cosmology. A belief in common organs and a broadly agreed common history provide an inheritance of symbols, heroes, values and hierarchies, and conform social identities of both insiders and outsiders. Ethnic culture is one of the important ways people conceive of themselves and culture and identity are closely intertwined. As a social construct, ethnicity can be regarded as the employment of ethnic identity and differences to gain advantage in situations of competition, conflict and cooperation (Osaghae, 1995). In his own conception of what ethnicity is, Despres (1975) defined ethnicity as largely a subjective process of status identification. Hence ethnic groups are formed to the extent that the actors use ethnic identities to categories themselves and other for the purpose of interaction. In similar view, ethnicity can be conceived as an interaction or relationship that exist among people of different ethnic groups who decides to base their relationship on the
difference, such exist when two or more ethnic groups, interest relate with one another, which normally brings about competition on issues like power or wealth.

The concise oxford dictionary defines ethnicity as how the aspirations and interest of ethnic groups are pursued in relation to other groups. To help it off, someone can say ethnicity is the contextual discrimination by members of one ethnic against the others in the process of competition for national resources.

Religion

Religion means different things to different people. There is no consenting of opinion on its meaning. That is why Egwu (2001) argued that religion is a difficult subject of inquiry including attempts at its definition and conceptualization. Religion is thus defined in many ways and the definitions usually vary among scholars. According to Adeniyi (1993), religion is a body of truths, laws and rites by which man is subordinated to the transcendent being. This implies that religion deals with norms and rules that emanated from God and which must be followed by the believers. Ejizu (1993) provides another definition of religion. According to him, religion is man's intuition of the sacred and ultimate reality and his expression of that awareness in concrete life. Many scholars such as Goody (1961) and Horton (1960) agree that the nation of 'sacred' at once indicates the idea of transcendent, supernatural realities and the sacred; as a system of language and practice that organizes the world in terms of what is deemed holy and the ultimate conditions of existence. From the foregoing discussion, someone will not be faulted of defining religion as a system of relation which linked man to an ultimate being or ultimate value epitomized in God.

FEDERALISM: A CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

One of the major problems of social science concepts is the lack of a universally acceptable definition. The concept of federalism is one of such chimera which is still haunting social science scholars and which is still begging for a globally agreed definition. Of course, there are reasons for the lack of universal focus in the definition of the concept. These are derived from the diverse intellectual and ideological background of the various scholars who have attempted a definition of the Omnibus character and components of concepts (Gboyega). The definitional problematic of federalism was aptly identified by F. A. Carnell when he suggested that, 'it is major complication that federalism is not easy to define; it has meant different things to different people. There is a classical version and there are other versions' (Carnell, 1963). Consequently, the literature of political science is heavily laden with different definitions and characterizations of the concept. However each scholar had tended to modify the definition to suit specific interests and orientation. Thus a plethora of definitions have surfaced which in varying degrees have tended to define federalism as a form of government a process of governance or as a system of intergovernmental relations. In the process of defining the concept, many scholars have been unwillingly saddled to descriptive normative and prescriptive commitment depending on their individual interest and intellectual perspective. While some scholars define federalism from the perspective of the description of the political arrangement in an existing political system, others define it from the perspective of what ought to be or what should be based on their analysis of the geo-political arrangement in existing or potential political systems.

In spite of the observed differences in emphasis, one cannot but admit that most of the contemporary writers on federalism owe their intellectual origin to the works of K. C. Wheare who is to federalism what Fredrick, Taylor is to scientific management. His classic works on what we can aptly refer to as scientific federalism remains the major source and reference for writings on federalism. In
his epochal thesis on federalism, Keneth C. Wheare said it entails:

’a division of powers between one general and several regional governments, each of which in it’s own sphere is coordinate with the others, each government must act directly on the people; each must be limited to its sphere of action; and each must within that sphere be independent of the other’ (Wheare, 1959).

The critical ingredients that can be deduced from Keneth Wheare’s definition of federalism are that for any political system to be so described it must have:

a) Two or more locus of power where values can be authoritatively allocated.
b) A central government and co-ordinate level (tiers) of government each of which must be recognized as a functional unit by the constitution.
c) Constitutionally recognized areas of competence and process of interaction.

Thus in defining federal structures from this legal constitutional point of view, K. C. Wheare canvassed for and envisaged a degree of independence of action based on mutual recognition of jurisdictional authority. Besides elucidating the major characterizations of a federal system. Wheare also identified six important conditions precedent for the existence of federal arrangement, these are:

a) A previous experience of the federating states as distinct colonies or states with distinct governments of their own.
b) A divergence of economic interest between the federating states leading to the desire of the state to remain independent for certain economic purposes.
c) Geographical obstacles to effective unitary government that is, large areas and poor communication.
d) Differences of race, religion, language of nationality.
e) Dissimilarity of social institutions.
f) Force of imitation that is, the prior existence of a federal constitution to serve as a model.

In his definition, A. H. Birch suggested that:

A federal system of government is one in which there is a division of powers between one general and several regional authorities each of which in its own sphere is coordinate with the others and each of which acts directly on the people through his own administrative agencies (Birch, 1962).

In the same vein, J. A. Corry and H. J. Abraham argued that:

‘Federalism is a dual form of government based on a territorial and functional division of powers calculated to reconcile unity with diversity’ (Corry and Abraham, 1964).

In similar view, long has defined federalism as an institution arrangement aimed at addressing governmental problems that board on maintaining unity while at the same time preserving diversity? It has been offered as an institutional solution is the disruptive tendencies of intra-societal ethnic pluralism (Lonf, 1991-1992). This is because, it involves organization of the state in a manner that would promote and preserve the existing diversities within an over arching national entity. Ayoade (1980: 20) suggested that federalism is but a device for the management of diversity. This definition presupposes the existence of opposing and often conflicting groups and interests in the state, all of which must have to be accommodated in an over arching national union through, pull them apart. Federalism is thus a process of bringing equilibrium between the centrifugal and centripetal forces in the society (Akande, 1988: 417). Ramphal (1979: 14) has also defined federalism as a methodology of limited union directed to the production of limited unity. This is because; it allows units to exercise jurisdictional control over their territories which it also provides hegemony for national institutions. It makes this possible through a constitutional power sharing arrangement between the central and unit’s governments in such a manner that the jurisdiction of each level is recognized and constitutionally protected. Such an arrangement has the advantage of managing or reducing conflict that may arise from inter-relationship between the diverse groups or units in the state.

All said and done, it can be reasonably concluded that federalism no doubt, represents an institutional mechanism through which intra-societal plural elements can be accommodated and protected.

**ORIGIN AND RATIONALE FOR NIGERIAN FEDERALISM**

Nigeria, like several other Countries in Comity of nations, is a federation. The choice of federalism bothers on both historical antecedents and peculiar existential realities. The journey towards having a federation of Nigeria started in 1964 under the Richards Constitution with the institutionalization of regionalism in the country. Each of the three regions then created had its constitution attached as a schedule to the federal constitution. The federation was finally established in 1954 with the Oliver Lythleton constitution which granted substantial autonomy to the regions in some matters including establishment of regional Civil Service and judicial system. Prior to these periods, the country was administered as a unitary set up though with some level of power devolution. Subsequently, from three regions in 1954, Nigeria grew to a four region federation in 1963 with the creation of mid-western State. By 1967, it was
Further Balkanized into twelve state structures by the general Gowon administration and in 1976, the number of States increased to 19. 1989 witnessed another increase in the number of States to 21, 30 States by 1991 and by 1996, it has become a 36 States structured federation. This situation of continuous structural division of the country has led some scholars to liken the Nigerian federation to a biological cell capable of sub-dividing and re-producing itself. Elucidating why Nigeria is a federation, historical perspective recalled that before the advent of the European, the geographical entity called Nigeria was not in existence at least by that name. This is because prior to the amalgamation of Northern and Southern protectorates by Lord Lugards in 1914, the components units of the federation were not only separate entities but had almost little or nothing in common other than inter-tribal or kingdom relationships and economic contacts. Hence, the realities of our historical past made federalism to be attractive to nationalist leaders before independence (Ojo, 1998: 1).

Another school of thought argues that Nigerian's choice of federalism could best be explained by her population and land mass most especially after the amalgamation of 1914. With land area of (913, 07304) square miles and now over 150 million population size (Ojo, 1998). Other than the teeming population and enormous size of Nigeria, the amalgamated country has over 400 ethnic groups. Hausa Fulani in the north, the Yorubas in the west and the Igboas in the east, the minority groups together, however, are more or less equal in number to the big three combined (Jovre, 1972). Because of fear of domination and suspicion of one segment of the country by the other, the British colonial administration and nationalist leaders opted for federal solution. The assumption and expectation was that of the centri-petal and centri-fugal antagonistic forces were to be reconciled. Federalism appears to posses the capability and magic wand. A federal system is not only decentralized, it is also exercise by the States in the inter-governance of their peoples. While the federal governments acts as the constitutional and political scaffold for the guarantee of defense and security and regulation of international relations, among other common functions (The Guardian, 1997: 14). One other reason of Nigeria's choice of federalism is the imposition by the British Colonial administrators. This was not accidental; Proudhon in the 19th century had characterized the English as the most federal of all races (King, 1972: 102). This is because the United Kingdom created a large number of federation in different parts of the world perhaps in addition to the British federal instinct, the federal solution was applied in Nigeria then because federalism had become the fad in twentieth century. Prevalence of the federal virus at this period can be explained by the fact that it was a strategy for decolonization, such a strategy was either proposed by the colonial authorities to reduce the cost of colonial administration as in East and central Africa or to stem internal divisive tendencies as obtain in Nigeria (Ayoade, 1988). One would not forget to recall the uncompromising attitude of Nigerian nationalist leaders. For instance, pre-independence period was dominated by the fictionalization of nationalism and the regionalization of politics.

The national council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) ceased to enjoy nation-wide support and 'tribal' political parties which were in fact offshoots of cultural organizations developed in 1949, in the North and in 1950, in the West. The Northern people's congress (NPC) and Action Group (AG) from this time began to play dominant roles in constitution making. The Action Group (AG) led by the chief Obafemi Awolowo developed from the Egbe Omo Odudua founded in 1948 and the NPC led by Ahmadu Bello developed from the Jamiiyar Mutanen Arewa, which was founded in Kano in December 1949 by the educated elites in the North particularly, Aminu Kano and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa among others (Ojo, 1996). With the emergence of these regional parties, the question of what type of federalism Nigeria was to have became the subject of negotiation between the parties (Ojo, 1996). Nigeria's unity was still not in secure ground and whenever a party felt sufficiently aggrieved over issues, the natural things for it to do was to threaten to secede from the federation (Peli, 1976: 115). Indeed, for convergence of reasons, non of the regional leaders was ready to surrender or sacrifice his region for a unitary state that would brew suspicion and fear of domination or hegemony. Hence, federalism became attractive to them all (Ojo, 1998: 3). Conclusively, there are one certain facts that become obvious about the origin and rationale for federalism in Nigeria. It is clear that certain objective factors made federalism desirable if the country is to remain united hence, one can hardly query the foresight of the Nationalist leaders who out of the desire for self rule plus shared rule opted for the federal solution.

Similarly, the British overlords could not have pretended not to know that it was the most appropriate for a heterogeneous society like Nigeria though other personal considerations may follow. Added to this is that the British would not have imposed federalism in the country if circumstances had dictated otherwise. In other words, adoption of federalism in Nigeria is neither an exclusives action of the British nor that of the nationalist leaders alone but rather it was a mutual desire of the two parties.

**ETHNICITY, RELIGION AND FEDERALISM**

Ethnicity, religion and federalism are but clutches, they are inter-wined and experience has shown that they are more likely to be together than being separated. This is because federalism is the only system of government that
accommodates and satisfies the desire for a national identity. Coincident with the retention of separate local identities and for a concomitant distribution of governmental power naturally and locally. This informed why Long (1991: 192) defined federalism as an institutional arrangement aimed at addressing government problems that border on maintaining unity while at the same time preserving diversity. In a case where ethnic and religious bigotry results into conflicts and engender civil stress lack of cordiality and fear, federalism, where it is truly practiced is believed to be capable of mediating the potential and actual conflicts arising from the heterogeneity within a nation-state (Ojo, 2006). To solidify this argument, it is suffice to quote Elaigwu who posited that:

‘Federalism is a compromise solution in a multinational state between two types of self determination. The determination to maintain a supernatural framework of government which guarantee security for all in the nation state on one hand, and protects the self determination of components groups which seek to retain their individual identities on the other hand.’

However, it is assumed that no federation is tension free. Tension usually arise in a federation if the units have varying arise in an opportunities and potentials, the economically advantaged units have been known to exhibit reluctance in sharing their “wealth” with the other less endowed units. The result is that while fiscal imbalance remains a common feature of all federations. The issue of how to share national wealth among the component units that make up the federation in a manner generally acceptable to all has been problematic. This could therefore create tension and crisis, in such situation therefore ethnic and religion can serve as a means for peace and order. Ethnic leaders perform this role by sensitizing their people on the importance of peace and orderliness, while religion through its moral preaching can as well restore peace in a federation. Even Karl Marx who asserted that religion only helps to perpetuate patterns of social institutions and the social order as a whole. Asides, most federations in the world are heterogeneous in nature that is, there is usually the composition of various groups in a federation. This is because the basic principle of federalism entails the methodology of dividing powers so that general and regional governments are each within a single nation of several territorial units, but are so distributed between national and unit governments that each within its own is substantially independent of others.

From the aforementioned discussion, one can argue that the three variables have dependent on each other. This is so because where federation causes conflict or crisis, ethicist and religion restore order and vise-versa. This explains why federalism has often been defined as a process of unifying powers within the unified states.

THE IMPACT OF ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CONFLICT ON NIGERIAN FEDERALISM

Federalism represents a unique form of governmental arrangement. This is because, it involves organization of the state in such a manner as to promote unity while at the same time preserving existing diversities within an overarching national entity (Muhammad, 2007: 2). Implicit in this is that it is a system which mediates the potential and actual conflict that often arises from the heterogeneity within a political entity. In the case of Nigeria, federalism has become problematic in the sense that many factors have impaired it practicability. Among are the problems of ethnicity, resource control, ‘ethno-religious’ crisis, electoral crisis, legitimacy crisis and so on. In this context, the effect of ‘ethno-religious’ conflict on Nigerian federalism shall be fully discussed. First and foremost, it must be noted that ‘ethno-religious’ conflict does more harm to the federalism than good. Ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria have presented many challenges that border on security and the corporate existence of the country which is the fundamental reason for the adoption of a federal system. What we are witnessing through this crisis is a transfer of aggression from one grievance to innocent Nigerian. Therefore, creating hatred among Nigerians as well as demeaning the sense of belonging to one Nigeria. The ‘ethno-religious’ crisis in Jos have very often served as a tenterhook to national unity and integration for instance, in the Jos crisis, the Hausa-Fulani have been piqued against Christians instead of confronting Plateau State government in order to resolve their areas of disagreements.

In other words, the crisis has weakened patriotism, commitment to national deals and true nationhood, giving rise to parochialism, ethnicity and other cleavages which ‘ethno-religious’ Jingoists exploit for their interest and advantage. More so, the Plateau crisis has had enormous negative consequences on the economy. For instance, President Obasanjo in justifying the declaration of the state of Emergency in plateau State stated, among other things, that:

“Violence has reached unprecedented levels and hundreds have been killed with much more wounded or displaced from their homes on account of their ethnic or religious identification. Schooling for children has been disrupted and interrupted; business lost billions of naira and property worth much more destroyed (Obasanjo, 2004).

President Obasanjo went further to observe that visitors and inventors have fled or are fleeing Plateau State and the neighbouring states have had their economies and social life disrupted and dislocated by the influx of internally displaced persons (Obasanjo, 2004). To further stress this point the president said that the Federal Government and the neighbouring states to Plateau State
are incurring huge expenses in managing the socio-political and economic consequences of the near collapse of state authority and the breakdown of law and order in some parts of Plateau State and elsewhere (Obasanjo, 2004). In a research report presented by participations of the senior executive course No. 26 of the National Institute, the economic consequences of ‘ethno-religious’ conflict were noted as follows: "In addition to the irreplaceable loss of lives, losses in terms of property (goods, houses, business premises) have not yet been fully ascertained. Some survivors have permanently lost all they labored for in their lives. As a result, one can safely argue that the aggregate of such instances negatively impact on the overall economy of these communities and by extension, the rest of the country; new armies of the unemployed, the destitute and highly aggrieved are added in the streets with its attendant consequences. Victims are also generally made and belonging to the economically active segments of the society (NIPSS, 2004).

Also, the various ‘ethno-religious’ disturbances were a critical and potent force for socio-political instability, they portrayed the gross inadequacy and ineffectiveness of the state security, security of lives and property could not be guaranteed. The climate of insecurity usually created by violent conflict deters investments. It is a truism that an insecure, crisis – and – violence - ridden polity can never attract foreign investment. No investor knowing full well that the polity is a security risk would venture his capital there. And where the polity is scaring away foreign investment, the economy becomes stagnant and democracy dividends equally become a mirage. Be that as it may, it is hereby envisaged that the full acceptance and implementation of the recommendation aforementioned will see Nigeria emerge really as a free and democratic society; a society where for the worth and dignity of the individual is accorded to all irrespective of religious and ethnic inclination. Indeed, if all hands will be on to root out the menace of religious and ethnic bigotry from the social system, there is hope that Nigeria of today and onwards will be a society.

CONCLUDING REMARK

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that ‘ethno-religious’ violence retards the practice of federalism in Nigeria, contaminates social relations and undermines the economy of the state. Ethno religious bigotry in Nigeria have become a fulcrum of various forms of Nationalism ranging from assertion language, cultural autonomy and superiority to demands for local political autonomy and self determination. The realities of ethnic and religious conflict in Nigeria are alarming and require very urgent, apt and continued attention. The use of ethnicity, religious and politics should rather unite us as Nigerians in order to promote peace, harmonious peaceful co-existence and unity. The reverse of this has consequences for Nigeria as there were ‘ethno-religious’ conflicts that claimed so many lives and property. Put simply, the spate of ‘ethno-religious’ conflict in Nigeria since independence has produced a catalogue that resulted in an estimated loss of over three million lives and unquantifiable psychological and maternal damages. In spite of the widespread of ‘ethno-religious’ conflicts in Nigeria and their long history, the Nigerian governments (past and present) have failed to tackle this problem through articulate policy actions. The country in conflict management has been poor as the government continues to rely on coercive method and always resorts to the use of white-paper emanating from them are often not implemented.

Our experience in this research has so far revealed that ‘ethno-religious’ conflicts are inevitable in a multi ethnic and mullet-religious society like Nigeria. Be that as it may, it is hereby envisaged that the full acceptance and implementation of the recommendation aforementioned will see Nigeria emerge really as a free and democratic society; a society where for the worth and dignity of the individual is accorded to all irrespective of religious and ethnic inclination. Indeed, if all hands will be on to root out the menace of religious and ethnic bigotry from the social system, there is hope that Nigeria of today and onwards will be a society.

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