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The Challenges And Prospect Of Effective Government Response To Ethno-Religious Conflicts In Nigeria

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Abstract:

The persistence of direct violence on account of sectarian conflicts and the inability of Nigerian governments to restore lasting peace motivated this study. The study was descriptive and data obtained from secondary sources. The study found that ethnicity and religion were over played and often used as political weapons to achieve selfish goals; the traditional models of conflict transformation were no longer very effective while crime on account of conflict is becoming a business, as offenders often go unpunished. The government lacked the political will to address the issues of conflict but largely embarked on palliative measures. The study concludes that power sharing is the primary issue engendering conflict. In addition, the issues associated with most conflicts are surmountable given sincerity of purpose by intervening agencies. The study recommends that the traditional models of conflict transformation be strengthened as well as the involvement of Non- Governmental Agencies (NGO) while security reports on a potentially explosive situation should not be ignored. The governments need to develop sufficient political will to confront the issues of conflicts and implement previous relevant reports. Finally, good governance based on fairness and equity is a prerequisite peaceful coexistence while the press moderates sensational news on conflicts.

Key words: Conflict, conflict transformation, direct violence, government response and peace

1.Introduction

It is not an exaggeration that Africa and of recent Middle East is theatre of conflicts of different magnitude. For ease of classification, scholars largely refer to them as sectarian conflict because of the difficulty associated with water tight separation of ethnic from religious, political or economic conflicts. Boulding (1979) observes that there are over 5000 ethnic minorities in the world apart from the majority ethnic groups while Omatoseye (2008) puts the total number at 6000. The common feature of most nations is that of heterogeneous composition in terms of ethnicity and religion. Prominent religious affiliations in Africa are diverse Christian and Islamic faithful groupings. In addition, traditional religions are also diverse in nature. One observable trend however is that traditional religions have not generated too many conflicts when compared with other religions.

The Minorities at Risk Project (MRP) cited in Albert (2005) adds that competition and struggle between ethnic groups have occasioned over 70% of conflicts worldwide since the end of the Cold War. Hawkins (2008) observes that the conflict or crisis related death since the end of the Cold War in Africa was over 9 million. Between 2009 – 2013 in Nigeria, unestimated number of lives had been lost on account of ethno-religious conflicts and of recent, the Boko-Haram scourge added another dimension. The number of internally displaced people in Africa as at 2008 was 6.4 million (UNHCR Statistical Database, 2009).

The first recorded ethno-religious conflict/crisis in Nigeria was that of Kano that started on May 1, 1953 and lasted for four days but claimed many lives. The increase in the number of conflicts in Africa, with specific reference to Nigeria, leads to questioning the efficacy of various mechanisms for managing conflicts. The paper acknowledges the difficulty of isolating government intervention in conflict management as it is interwoven at times with traditional models and voluntary organization involvement, but it focuses on government being the last agencies when other efforts at resolving conflict fuelled. This calls to question the efficacy of the institutional mechanisms adopted by government in resolving the conflicts. This challenge constitutes an issue that this paper attempts to explore.

2.Statement Of Problem

Conflict is an integral part of human nature; the violent dimension (direct violence) that ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria assume in the last decade leading to loss of lives, destruction of property and many becoming refugees in their nation is worrisome. This has led the government to divert huge unaccountable resources that could be used for developmental purposes to unmanageable conflict

management. The latest wave of migration on account of ethno-religious conflict from the Northern parts of Nigeria is disturbing as not only the stranger elements are migrating but the locals for safety. This has constituted serious challenges to host States as well as reduction in productivity (industrial and agriculture) in home States of the refugees. The general believes that government is helpless and incapable of handling the situation, given that other peace agents failed, is unacceptable in a civilized nation. The challenge constitutes the issue that this paper intends to examine.

3.Objectives Of The Paper

The specific objective of this paper is to examine how government intervention in Nigeria could minimize the explosive nature of ethno-religious conflicts and guarantee lasting peace. Other secondary objectives are to examine measures adopted in managing ethno-communal conflicts, the failure of such mechanisms and the prospect of future successful intervention by government.

4.Theoretical Framework

Many theories are capable of explaining the preponderance of conflicts. Dollar, et al (1939) propounded frustration-aggression theory with many variants. Others are structural functionalism by Parson (1951) and system theory as adopted in Political Science by Easton (1965) among others. This paper relies heavily on coalition and elite theories. The theories provide explanatory, predictive justification for the persistence of ethno-religious conflicts as well as and the tendency to provide the necessary insight for addressing them.

Coalition theory was derived from Games theory and simply exhibits the tendency for two or more groups to agree for some time over a particular issue that is expected to bring about mutual benefit or satisfaction. Peterson, et al (1982:504) defines a coalition as “cluster of people and groups that can agree at least for a while on a desirable outcome”. The theory was propounded by Riker (1962) and observes that the coalition that would be formed was the minimum winning coalition (MWC). He opines that the coalition that will not be won if one of its members defects while it did not take into consideration the capability of inviting another member to join the coalition given that one of the members withdraws. The basic challenge as rightly noted by Dudley (1978) is that it is usually difficult to talk of cohesion of the coalition since the partners in the coalition do have divergent views and competing claims.

The elite theory became popular after the end of World War II, though it was used to criticize democracy and socialism. Parry (1977:13) defines elites as the “smallest minorities who appear to play an exceptionally influential part in political and social affairs”. The elites according to Pareto (1939) consisted of governing elites and non Governing elite while his attention was largely focused on governing elite. Mosca (1939) observes that the governing elites try to find a moral and legal basis for its being in the citadels of power. Michel (1942) opines that leadership is a necessary phenomenon in every form of social life and all organizations must exhibit aristocratic features. This, he notes, that as the group grows in size, more functions are delegated to the inner circle of leaders, while the generality of members are systematically disconnected from assuming control. The situation allows the inner caucus to grow in freedom of action and power but at the same time develops a vested interest in their position and become almost irremovable.

The relevance of these theories to the challenges and prospect of effective response of government to ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria is that since the First Republic, various coalitions have been formed in Nigeria (NPC and NCNC, 1959: NPN and APP, 1979). The political parties were also formed largely on ethnic basis and by implication, could be traced to a specific religion or a mixed religion. Though the coalition remained unstable, the goal to a large extent was not to advance the cause of democracy and good governance but for the elites’ selfish reasons and to choke the life out of the opposing groups. Due to their avowed commitment to remain relevant and hold on to power, the issues of ethnicity or religion were overplayed by the elites and the political landscape often overheated, thereby generating conflict of different magnitude using religion and ethnicity as launching pads. It is therefore noteworthy that the disunited elites without national outlook are largely placed in the positions of authority to manage and resolve conflicts in which they were interested parties. Hence, the ruling elites could not develop a strong political will to confront the issues of conflict. Given that the elites were sincere and genuine concern about the fate of Nigeria, the coalition formed could be developed like in Malaysia to bring about peace and stability.

5.Conceptual Clarification

5.1.Conflict

Conflict is a persistent feature of human relations. Deutch, Coleman and Marcus (2006) define conflict as disagreement in varying degrees between two groups. Bercoiritch and Zartman (2009) add that the aim of the opponent or group is largely to neutralize, injure or eliminate the rivals”. For the purpose of this study, the conflict of interest is the ethno-religious type. In the literature of conflict, Nordlinger, (1977) refers to sectarian conflict as “intense or severe conflicts” and that a large number of conflict group members attach overwhelming importance to the issues involved. This type of conflict is of the same category that Azar (1990) refers to as “protracted social conflict” that are more difficult to resolve. In addition, Notter and Diamond (1996) add that such conflicts have created patterns that have become part of the social system while Galtung (1995) notes that such conflicts are highly complicated and much more difficult to resolve. Lederach, (2005) observes that conflict resolution framework is incapable of ensuring enduring peace in such situation.

Dibie (2004:31) notes that conflicts rest on four premises that are relevant to the Nigerian society. First, that contention and disputation can be a useful way of forcing problems to the attention of those in position to solve them; that is the government. Second, that change and disequilibrium are not to be shunned or avoided. Third, the causes of social and political problems often reside within

socio-political institutions and lastly, change in institutional behaviours will therefore result in resolving social and political problems. This position is further reinforced by Sears (2008) that:

Societies are defined by inequality that produces conflict, rather than which produces order and consensus. This conflict based on inequality can only be overcome through a fundamental transformation of the existing relations in the society, and is productive of new social relations.

The above positions provide the platform for understanding ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria bearing in mind that conflict may not always be bad when it is productively handled.

5.2. Ethnicity

The defining characteristic of an ethnic group includes the perception that they are a distinct group of people, and identifiable on the basis of cultural, racial or linguistic characteristics, and these characteristics are used as a means of differentiating themselves from others. Otite (1990) views an ethnic as a group of people characterized by cultural criteria of symbols including language, value system and normative behaviour as well as a familiar and reassuring anchor in a climate of turbulence and uncertainty. Enloe (1973:3) notes that of all the groups that man attaches himself to, ethnic groups seem the most encompassing and enduring. Ethnicity can be a building block, but also a potential stumbling block on the road to modernity, as no ethnic group can remain isolated or static in terms of their interest and relationship with other groups. It is also essential to acknowledge that ethnic groupings equip an individual with a sense of belonging. According to Ojo (2000) there are about one thousand ethnic groups in Nigeria while Otite (1990) put the number at about three hundred and seventy four, 3 of the ethnic groups are often regarded as the majority groups. These include the Hausa/Fulani in the North, the Yoruba speaking people in the South/West and the Igbo speaking people in the Eastern part. The power sharing arrangement among ethnic groups have consistently constituted tension that generated conflicts in Nigeria.

Ethnic identity as used in Nigeria provides the rationalization for why a particular individual fails to attain his own selfish agenda and the place where individuals can build up support for selfish interest that may not be to the benefit of such group. This agrees with the view of Irobi (2005) and Osinubi & Osinubi (2006) while Nnoli (1978:11) observes that "Ethnic contradictions have an objective basis in the social structure of society. As an element of the ideological superstructure of society, ethnicity rests on, and is determined by the infrastructure of society and the mode of production".

It is important to note, as rightly acknowledged by Otite (1999) that changes in social environment such as contestable access to new political positions, or perceptions of new resources arising from development in the physical environment, creation of states and local governments are fertile grounds for conflicts weave around ethnic or religious sentiments to germinate and grow.

Contrary to the perception that ethnicity is responsible for many conflicts in Africa, this paper identifies with Osaghae (1998), Irobi (2005), Osaghae and Suberu (2005), Osinubi & Osinubi (2006), and Adekanye (2009:75) that ethnicity is a political behavior. It is exploited among and between ethnic groups to achieve individual and group interests in competition with others and that it does not exist in pure form. It usually manifests in conjunction with other cleavages like religion, race and regionalism binding the group. This explains why Ibeanu (1997) associated it with democratization process since 1997 and Adekanye (2009) linked it power sharing challenges.

5.3. Religion

Religion is a belief system anchored on the existence of a supernatural being and worshipped by the adherents with reference based on commonly agreed code and largely associated with emotional and social attachment rather than reasons. In another sense, Abdulsalam (2002) defines religion as man's relation to that which he regards as holy, regardless of whether the holy being is supernatural or even personal to the individual. Africans, particularly Nigerians are generally regarded as religious even if the belief system as practiced has not translated to peaceful coexistence, harmony and speedy socio-economic development.

As for the secularity of the Nigerian State, Article 10 of 1999 Constitution stipulates that the government must not adopt any religion as State Religion while Article 38 provides for freedom of religion. However, since the late 1970s, the role of religion in the Nigerian political system has been contentious as no religion is completely free of disharmony while more crises are witnessed in Islam religion starting with Maitasene of 1980s to Boko- Haram of recent.

Religious conflict therefore is a disagreement, violence or otherwise, by adherents of the same religion or between different religions in respect of perceived incompatibility as regards the mode of worship, resource allocation, mistrust or other associated issues (Popoola and Alao, 2011). This position agrees with Ayantola (2005) that religious conflict arises when each of the two religious persons (or groups) in the same religious space claims monopoly of religious truth.

In essence, religion in itself is not a strong factor that can engender conflict given that the provisions in the Constitution are faithfully adhered to. If religion is a means of attaining salvation for the soul and favour of God, there is no reason for groups or individual to act God and claim monopoly of knowledge of God provided the god that is being served is not a weakling that cannot defend himself. Undue government interference in a purely religious matter is a serious challenge as this manifested in Government secretly join the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC). This explains why Rotgak (2004) notes that government partisanship with religious bodies has rendered it ineffective as an interested umpire because it has one way or the other sponsored or identified with a particular religion or its activities.

6. An Evaluation Of The Mechanism Adopted By Government In Managing Ethno-Religious Conflicts In Nigeria

It is imperative to note that the mechanisms for managing ethno-religious conflicts are beyond the government intervention. These include the traditional models, religious bodies, Non Governmental Organizations, leaders of the affected communities and the court system among others. Government intervention became necessary when other measures are unable to achieve lasting or temporary peace due to security reasons.

Extant literature observes that there are so many approaches to public policy that form the background for government intervention. These include rational decision making model, incremental policy making model, mixed scanning policy model, game theory, elite theory and the political process model. Most interventions by government largely revolve along political process. Jones, (1984) and Ripley (1985) in Dibia, (2000) observe that political process consists of the underlisted stages that are relevant to this paper. These include the demand for government action to resolve a problem or take an advantage of an opportunity, agenda building consisting of items that the policy maker (Federal/State Government) were discussing and considering with a view of intervening in the conflict and policy formulation. Others include policy adoption aiming at making the intervention a success and policy evaluation that is the assessment of the impact of the policy.

Therefore, the first reaction of government to a violent ethno-religious conflict is the deployment of security personnel to conflict zone. This has become a ritual as manifested in all direct violence as witnessed Kano, Jos, Kafancha, Erinle/Offa, and Saare/Tsaragi among others. The implication of the deployment of security forces as observed by Omoregbe and Omohan (2005) is that the "intervention is coercive, while their deployment is directed at controlling direct violence. It had been found as rightly noted by Oromaregbe and Akpator (2005:601) that "The problem with the deployment of security forces that are not backed by intensive mediation effort is that it unnecessarily prolongs the stay of such security forces deployed in different parts of Nigeria".

The operation of security forces often added another dimension of violence as victims that ought to be protected were often subjected to rape, beating, and other forms of abuse as reported among others in the Niger-Delta crisis. Their presence did not stop the resurgence of violence in the near future. This might have informed the request by the people in Jos asking for the withdrawal of military personnel serving as peace keepers.

The security deployment is often followed with the setting up of Panels of Inquiry, or Judicial Commissions of Inquiry like in Jos, Sango-Kataf, Kano, Tiv/Jukun in Taraba State, Ijaw-Itsekiri in Delta State, Tiv-Hausa/Fulani in Nasarawa State, Sayawa-Hausa/Fulani in Bauchi state and Saare/Tsaragi conflicts. It was however not unusual for more than four or five committees, panels and judicial commissions to have attended to the same issue without convincing outcomes like in Saare/ Tsaragi or Jos conflict/crisis. For instance, on account of Saare/Tsaragi Conflict in Kwara State between 1976-2008, 6 panels/Commission of Inquiries were set up by the Kwara State Government. These include Justice Ekundayo Panel of 1976, Justice Mamman Nasir, (National Boundary Adjustment Commission 1976), Sayomi Administrative Panel of 2000. (Sayomi was the Deputy Governor under Mohammed Lawal Administration), Engineer Sarafa Panel, 2004, The Technical Committee of the State Boundary Commission, and Justice Mamud AbdulGafar Judicial Commission of Inquiry, 2008. Also, in Jos, between 2008-2011, three panels were set up including General Emmanuel Abioye (2008), Justice Bola Ajibola panel (2009) and Ss Panel Solomon Lar Panel (2011). The interventions to a large extent have not removed the root causes of the conflict or ensure lasting peace.

A critical examination of the politics of panel constitution revealed that government used the approach to buy time and create an impression that action is being taken while for political and other extraneous considerations the same government knew that no concrete action would be taken. The loss of confidence among the conflicting parties regarding government intervention largely accounted for resurgence of conflict at the slightest provocation noting that the only language understood by government to wake them up from slumber is direct violence. In addition, the victims or the group that suffered the greatest loss regroup for the opportunity to revenge. The scenario therefore produces an endless circle of violence.

This is not to suggest that the government is completely helpless or failed in all instances of direct violence. For instance the intervention of the Federal Government in Ife-Modakeke conflict through the setting up of Olabode George Commission of inquiry and adoption of 'consociational arrangement' (Adekanye 2007:46) currently institutionalize a regime of peace. Another instance of intervention by a State Government that was able to achieve some results was that of Bauchi State and peace was achieved through the bold implementation of Yelwa Kagadama Judicial Commission of Inquiry Report (Bogoro, 2009) before the scourge of Boko Haram. The relative success of government intervention at resolving conflicts was further reflected in the study conducted by Alao (2012:198) where only 26.8% of the respondents expressed satisfaction with the decision of Kwara State government intervention at resolving the Saare/Tsaragi conflict.

7. Challenges Of Institutional Mechanisms Adopted For Managing Ethno- Religious Conflicts In Nigeria

Studies such as Polit (2008), Bogoro (2009) and the findings of by Justice AbdulGafar Judicial Commission of Inquiry of 2009 (3.2.iii) into Saare/Tsaragi conflict of 2008 reveal that ethno-religious conflicts are on increase. This is in spite of huge human and financial resources that governments have committed to managing or resolving such conflicts. This paper identifies the underlisted challenges:

First, the intervention by the government was often motivated by the scale of violence and not necessarily a proactive measure to prevent structural and cultural contradictions that eventually led to the conflict, direct violence or resurgence of it (Galtung, 2010).

Second, the inability or carelessness of the government to monitor conflict dynamics as to locate early warning signs to prevent outbreak of hostility. For instance, prior to the outbreak of hostilities between the Tiv and Hausa/Fulani in Nasarawa State, the Security agencies since the first half of 2001 had alerted and advised the State Government of the likely threat to peace. Also, Polit

(2008:54) noted that since September 1, 2001, the Civil Liberties Organization (CLO) among others personally called the State Police Commissioner's attention and the Government authorities to what they perceived as imminent threats to peace, but unfortunately, the authorities failed to respond. The Guardian (2009) reported that Nigerian authorities ignored dozens of warning about violent Islamic sect until it attacked police stations and government building. It could therefore be argued that the inability of the policy makers in Nigeria to act promptly and equitably to emerging conflicts constituted a serious challenge to the management of conflicts generally.

Third, the inability of government to implement relevant findings of uncountable panels and commissions of inquiry set up by them due to lack of political will is a serious challenge. This inaction led to conflict parties to believe that the government would not act and they have to take appropriate measure they deem fit to protect them. This explains why Bogoro (2009) noted that:

"Kagadama Judiciary Commission white paper is commendable and timely, because the non-implementation of white papers in many conflicts in the past is responsible for the recurrence of ethno-religious crisis in the state".

Fourth, the paper found that sensational news and over exaggerated and celebrated conflict news items in the print and electronic media largely contributed to the challenges of an effective government response to conflict situations. The implication of sensational news that are blown out of proportion is that those who perceived themselves as victims often strategized to revenge thereby leading to a circle of violence. The situation has the tendency to confuse the government in ascertaining the causes of violence whereas the resurgence could be a reprisal attack.

Fifth, the failure of government to take decisive measures to punish the agents of conflict and their sponsors which could have served as deterrents to others was a noticeable trend in the management of ethno-religious conflicts. The exceptions were when the government had more than an official interest on the issue like the jailing of retired Major General Zamani Lekwot, a Sango- Kataf leader, without a similar treatment for the Hausa/Fulani leaders. This had the tendency of increasing the magnitude of conflicts in Nigeria and the preference of conflicting parties to engage in greater violence in future conflicts as a retaliatory measure. The inability of the government to act decisively against the agents of conflict could be traced to the fact that most of the miscreants were at one time or another engaged as political thugs by either the government in power or the opposing parties. This agreed with the position of the Crisis Group Interview (2006) that the election of the year 2003 provided the much need ammunition for various militant groups as both leaders of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP) engaged the services of the militant as thugs. For instance, the same report had it that the Leader of the Niger-Delta Vigilante Group (Dokubo) claimed that Governor Amaechi of Rivers state contributed a sum of fifty million Naira to his group to procure arms for 2007 electioneering campaign in support of the ruling party. Though the Governor denied it, the level of atrocity perpetuated by this group and allied ones like NURTW in States like Oyo and Lagos spoke volume.

The sixth, is the failure of the government to redress perceived injustice due to political interference in ordinary community issues such as minor boundary or chieftaincy dispute that sincere and forthright traditional rulers or Local Government council could have resolved. For instance, the Sayawa-Hausa / Fulani conflict as well as Kataf-Hausa/Fulani conflicts in Bauchi particularly in the 1990s were based on peaceful agitation for self-determination in terms of having their own chiefdoms and indigenous chiefs which were earlier refused by the government before it turned violent. Given that fair play, justice and equity dominated the socioeconomic and political order in Nigeria, most of the ethno-communal conflicts would have been issues of the past.

Seventh, the adoption of colonially inherited mechanisms and processes of conflict prevention, management and resolution that found expression in western conflict resolution and the court system have not proved so successful in transforming conflicts. The arrangement does not provide for win-win arrangement and the reintegration of the offenders back to the society as found in traditional models of conflict transformation.

8. Prospect Of Successful Government Intervention In Ethno- Religious Conflicts

The paper so far discussed the nature of ethno-religious conflict and the challenges of government successful intervention with a view of institutionalizing a regime of lasting peace in communities like Tiv/Jukun, Kano, Jos, Bauchi, Maiduguri, Offa/Erinle and Sango-Kataf among numerous others. The study observes that the issues of these are not beyond transformation or resolution but require a change of the mind set by governments towards the management. It is important that government cannot consistently apply fixed unworkable agenda on all conflict situations and expect successful result.

In effect, the government must modify its approach in handling ethno-religious conflicts. The security approach often adopted by governments is to a large extent counterproductive. According to Galtung (2010), the security approach views the opposing party as an evil party, with strong capability and evil intention, a clear and present danger of violence. (Allied forces versus Saddam). Also, it focuses on strength to deter or defeat the evil party, and in turn produce security, which is thought to be the best approach to 'peace'. On the other hand, he notes that the peace approach sees a conflict, which has not been resolved/transformed to possess a danger of violence, while conflict transformation, through empathic and creative-nonviolent approach has the tendency to produce peace which is the best approach to 'security'. In this sense, to achieve lasting harmonious co-existence, it is preferable to focus on peace rather than the security approach often adopted by governments. To achieve this, government need not wait for an explosive situation before engaging the conflicting parties in rounds of all embracing and sincere dialogue to achieve peace.

Second, peace depends on transformation of another relation between parties, while violence is seen as the outcome of untransformed conflict according to Lederach, (1995). Government is in better position to create a structure that can peacefully lead to transforming the relations between the conflicting parties. This is best achieved when governments embark of proactive measure that will accommodate the views of significant majority of the cross sections of the conflicting parties. For instance, Alao (2012:266-282) in

his study on Saare/Tsaragi conflict found that only 68% of the respondents claimed that they were not involved in the peace process which could have made the intervention to be of marginal success.

In addition, for government intervention to be successful, the action of government particularly on boundary issues must be guided by Section 7 & 8 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria rather than State governments unilaterally altering the boundaries. This situation often led to government inconsistencies in decision making and eroded the confidence of the conflicting parties in government intervention. For instance, in the case of Saare/Tsaragi, Government position in one of the recommendations acknowledged that boundary matters were beyond State government's jurisdiction. The same government in a Kwara State of Nigeria Gazette No.15, vol.44 of September 23 2010 titled "Final Settlement of Saare/Tsaragi Boundary Dispute contrary to the report of the State Technical Committee the Office of Surveyor-General as contained in its letter ref. no. CN 18.3/111/503 of January 13, 2010, allocated 11 out of 18 disputed villages to Edu Local Government (Tsaragi) and 7 to Ifelodun.

Furthermore, the efforts of the governments stand respected if they can develop sufficient courage to properly identify the parties to the conflict beyond those engaging in direct violence, confront the issues involved and minimize excessive political interference in explosive issues as found in most of the ethno-religious conflicts. This entails a thorough investigation of the remote and immediate factors and be fair and just in resolving the differences among communities and religious groupings. Such courage will manifest in government prosecuting and punishing known agents of conflict that might be found government circles or among the members of the public to serve deterrent to others.

Lastly, the governments need to overcome the challenge of confusing pacification with conciliation. After each instance of direct violence, the aspect that catches the attention of government is the degree of violence and the accompanied destruction. The government engages in pacification through the payment of compensation and dumping of the findings that could have address the issues of conflict until there is another round of direct violence. The paper opines that why there is nothing wrong in ameliorating the hardship that the victims of the conflict might be going through, such action needs not constitute an end in itself but a means to it. For instance, the study by Alao (2012:261) revealed that after the first direct violence of 2000, the government of Kwara State set up 3 different committees before the resurgence of direct violence 2008. It is sad that the major finding were not implemented while efforts were largely focused on payment of compensation. A total sum of twenty million nine hundred and fifty five thousand, five hundred and seventy seven Naira, seventy seven Kobo (₦20, 955,577.77) was spent on payment of compensation as contained in Kwara State of Nigeria Gazette (2009) White Paper on the Report of the Judicial Commission of Inquiry on Share (Saare)/Tsaragi Boundary Dispute.No.7, Vol.43. The position of this paper is that there is the need for government to take further positive step after pacification rather than confusing pacification through compensation payment with conciliation.

9. Conclusion

It is an understatement to say that the entire landscape of Nigeria is dominated with multi dimensional sectarian conflicts. The scenario was captured by Obasanjo (2004) 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; businesses have lost billions of naira and property worth much more destroyed.

The scenario now is worse than that painted above as large percentage of ethno-religious conflicts could be attributed to the structure of the Nigerian state, the allocation of resources, the modernization process and lack of fairness, justice as well as over politicization of issues while the efforts of government to towards integration of the system is not yet a success.

Nonetheless, the study concludes that most the challenges originated from human wrong judgment while the solution to them could be achieved if the perceptions of the ruled and the rulers are transformed to accommodate tolerance, fairness, sincerity of purpose that will devalue political and religious ethnicity that are current given prominence than national integration and peaceful coexistence. The study further concluded that there is need to adopt what Mazrui (1968) called "African short memory of hate". This as further buttressed by William (2005) that involves demonstrating love, forgiveness, forgetting the past and magnanimity as this is the symbol of African Jurisprudence.

10. Recommendations

The underlisted recommendations are hereby proposed to ensure efficient and goal oriented management of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria to minimize direct violence.

- Governments need to modify its approach to handling ethno-religious conflict by forcing largely on peace than security consideration as the best was to be secured is for peace to prevail.
- There is the need for governments not to see pacification as the main purpose of intervening in conflict situation but to reconcile the conflicting parties as the primary goal.
- Governments to engage in proactive measures to monitor conflict dynamics and put in place immediate action to prevent minor disagreement turning into direct violence.
- While people from various communities are in government occupying various positions, there is the need for governments to be neutral in their mediatory roles as this will enable them to develop strong political will to implement relevant reports of panels set up by them and respond early to security reports.
- Governments should desist from adopting fixed agenda in all conflict situations while imposition of government agenda on conflicting communities without the involvement of wider spectrum of the communities is counterproductive.

- Though it has been observed that governments sleep too long on disagreements until they are assuming violent dimension, it is essential for communities to embrace peace even if there are forces that encourage violence, realizing that peace has never been achieved in any conflict situation without dialogue. Hence, dialogue should be embraced.
- Government should reconsider financial compensation to conflicting communities but materials immediately required to ameliorate the suffering of the victims as the cash released as compensation could be deployed for procurement of arms and ammunition in anticipation of resurgence of violence.

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