

Ethnic and religious conflict in nigeria

[Life](#), [Emotions](#)



Analysis of the challenges of religion and ethnicity on political stability in Nigeria's fourth republic (1999-2011) INTRODUCTION Background to the Study Basically, Nigeria is a plural society and heterogeneous in virtually all the facet of life. The custom and tradition of Nigerians is so diverse to the extent that Nigeria as a country is now confronted with the problem of religion and ethnicity towards their political stability. The origin and history of ethnic conflict (societal wars and violence) can be traced from eternal (internal) state rivalry to external (physical).

And its root cause is not very far from power competition and decision making over economic resources and other important human factor, like position. The implementation process has always involved more than one or two persons. In general concept, the author of this work traces conflict back to the first and early Patriarchal of human history and ever since then, there has been an increase (in various dimensions) of Conflict in the face of human world. Some are personal (internal) conflict, family, community, and group, intellectual, state, national and international in nature, to mention but few.

In conforming to this idea, Badawi (2006) in his statement titled " World Apart" stated thus, " indeed the greatest discord today is among the descendants of Abraham. These are the people of the book, the followers of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, who had in fact shared a common beginning in the religion of Abraham". In shedding more light in the above statement, Badawi statement goes far beyond religion, rather, he was tracing one of the earliest source of conflict which Badawi mentioned the off-springs of the said Abraham.

Even before Abraham, there had been conflict, so it is as old as human history down to the Abrahamic period, to ancient kingdoms, Dukes, and Kings. In about 88 B. C. , King Mithriadates VI of Pontus invaded Roman territory in Asian Minor. He advised Asian debtors to kill their Roman creditors. Happy to reduce their credit card bills, the Asians massacred 80,000 Romans. Ethno-political conflicts have greatly shaped our present world and of course have its structural phenomenon, (William Easterly, 2001). For instances, the conflict we now call Israeli and Palestinian war, has been an ever-lengthening sort.

The Assyrian, Babylonian war, by King Nebuchadnezzar of the hanging Garden in history, the Persia war, Alexander the Great (the Macedonian mad man in history), the German war of Adolf's Hitler, the Roman wars, narrowing all these down, we came to the horn of African continent which seem to be an epidemic field of conflicts of diverse kinds till date. The giant-lion of African continent, just like the origin of conflict is said to have stated very old in human history, even so in the case of Nigeria, which can be traced to the colonial period of history. Conflict takes different sizes and shapes with diverse reasons and purposes.

Majority of the conflicts takes time before their escalation and at such, could have been transformed right at their respective early stages. The history of ethnicity and ethnic conflicts in Nigeria is also traced back to the colonial transgressions that forced the ethnic groups of the northern and southern provinces to become an entity called Nigeria in 1914. In the case of Nigeria situation, disturbing history of colonialism, this generated hatred and conflict

among different ethnic groups. The task of addressing this seed of conflict planted by the British has been a complex one.

After weakening the former diverse kingdoms, Emperors, etc now called Nigeria and reordering the groups' politics, the colonial powers failed in nation building and providing for the people's basic needs. Hence, unemployment, poverty increase, and due to these, conflict over scarce resources ensue. The Southern and Northern protectorates were also being amalgamated into a nation. Thereafter, the merging of different colonies into one country called Nigeria was forcefully done without the people's consent. This was a major seed of conflict that is still troubling Nigeria today.

This article is focused on the historical incidents of ethnic conflicts in within Nigeria societies, the cause of the conflicts and perhaps, the government actions towards ethnic conflict in the country. In conclusion, this paper will explore into decision-making (by the elites and those in authority) process has contributed immensely in generating the syndromes of conflict in the said state. The Nigerian political situation has witnessed more breaking of heads, than counting them. In fact, even when it has been convenient for heads to be counted, the outcome has always been the breaking of heads instead.

Conflict in Nigeria is so intense because of lack of democratic behaviour. The head of the individual in the democratic context signifies citizenship. So when heads are broken in the Nigerian political community, the issue in respect of broken heads is citizenship. If conflict in Nigeria means the absence of democratic behaviour, it follows, therefore, that conflict in Nigeria is interwoven with the absence of democratic governance. Gurr (2000): has <https://assignbuster.com/ethnic-and-religious-conflict-in-nigeria/>

also shown that the incidence of conflicts at the global level declined in recent years with the deepening of democratisation.

Nation-states where conflicts persist are those where what obtains is the democratisation of disempowerment (Ake 1996). Beyond the veneer of elections, the state remains ambushed, privatised, repressive and unpopular. The people who were tantalised by the prospect of a democratic revolution that would terminate decades of alienation and pauperisation have been short changed and given a ‘choice less democracy’ (Mkandawire 1999). The ‘credibility gap’ which fostered the De-linkage of the people from the state, and ignited social forces to struggle for democracy, is not being bridged (Rothchild 1995: 58).

African peoples out of clear rational calculations sans atavistic attachments have turned their backs on the state ‘and given their loyalty to sub-national social formations such as the community, the sub nationality or ethnic groups’ (Ake 2000: 114). It is against this backdrop that the proliferation and exacerbation of violent ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria in the post-transition period can be appreciated. This article adopts an analytical framework that holds that The interface between ethnicity and democratisation is found in absence of effective citizenship and good governance in post-transition societies.

In the circumstance that democracy does not go beyond the conduct of multiparty elections to include improvement in the quality of life of the people, there is frustration, and people who already feel alienated from the state are vulnerable and likely to be mobilised around counter-elites who exploit extant popular alienation from the state by whipping up sectarian

sentiments. This has been the case in Nigeria and several multi-ethnic states of Africa (Osaghae 1994).

Although the foregoing theoretical discussion has focused on ethnicity, the term ethno-religious is adopted because some of the recent violent conflicts to be examined were triggered by religious issues. The relevance of religion is also underlined by the fact that in Nigeria ethnic boundaries tend to coincide with religion, with the exception of the Yoruba ethnic group (Ibrahim 1999). The Nigeria state was amalgamated in the year 1914 by Lord Lugard. The various geographical areas or territory which was amalgamated to form Nigeria by the colonialist comprises of various cleavages, clans, towns even there were kingdoms and chiefdoms with diverse culture, language, religion, norms values, customs and political structures etc. The focus of the research monogram is to examine the role of religion and ethnicity in Nigeria nascent democracy. In Nigeria especially, religion plays a very vital and influential role in the society that has manifested itself as a potent force in the political development of the Nigerian state from pre-independence to post-independence. Hardly can the Nigerian state be talked about without reference to religion (Kukah, 1994; Falola, 1990; Kenny, 2006; International IDEA, 2000; Suberu, 2009).

However, religion in Nigeria, at different levels, is mostly mentioned in negative terms. Or rather, historical events linked to religion tilts more towards its negative than its positive contribution to the Nigerian state. The Jihad, the civil war propaganda, the Sharia law controversy, the tensions provoked by the Nigerian accession to the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) and the incessant religious crises that have engulfed the Northern part

mainly indicate that religion cannot be ignored or wished away in the Nigerian political development. Several religious crises have occurred in Nigeria.

They have been documented as academic dissertations for some of them. This piece of work does not intend to start the discourse on religious violence anew but only recognizes the fact that as a recurrent phenomenon it is worth being explored further. Thus “ Boko Haram” menace which gained global recognition and even press support ranging from July 2009 till date is a the central focus of this study together with other riots which has engulfed the Nigeria state from 1999 till date which most Nigeria educated elite believed that religion and ethnicity were the basic causes.

The educated elite have conducted series of research on what the causes of this violent riots maybe. Most have concluded that it can be traced and linked to the failure of governance in Nigeria. 1. 2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEMS
The mistake of 1914 has polarised the Nigeria society together with its citizens in which loyalty to the State is a mirage instead people pay loyalty to their various families and ethnic groups the effect of this can be traced to 1967 civil-war which disintegrate the country or in the political system which almost lead to secession of the country with the easterner believed to be the aggrieved ethnic in the war.

Similarly Nigeria has a long history of religious crisis which has affected the political instability of Nigeria. The mainline riot of 1980 can be said to be the first major religious riot in Nigerian history, claiming about 800 lives. The Boko Haram insurgence in the northern part of the country which has been directed mainly against the Christians, they have suffered a lot both

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physically, psychologically, economically, spiritually and even politically in the far North which has led political writers and pundits to affirm that Boko Haram conflict has its roots in Religion.

The thrust of this work will be to examine the underlying reasons behind political instability in Nigeria using religion and ethnicity as a paradigm. 1. 3 SCOPE OF THE STUDY. The study will cover the impacts of religion and ethnicity towards the stabilization or in- stabilization of the Nigeria political system it will cover how religion and ethnicity have impacted on the political stability of Nigeria. Furthermore the study will emphasize more on the role the government is playing in stabilizing the un-stabilized country. 1. 4OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY The following can be regarded as the aims and objective of the study 1.

To know the meaning of religion, ethnicity, political stability, and political instability 2. To know how religion and ethnicity have negatively impacted on Nigerian political development 3. To develop possible solutions and panaceas to the problems of religions and ethnicity to Nigerian political instability 1. 5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS 1 What meaning does religion, ethnicity and political instability carries 2 How has religion and ethnicity impacted on the political stability of Nigeria 3 what are the possible solutions to the problem of religion and ethnicity in Nigeria political system 1. JUSTIFICATION OF STUDY Many a developing countries of the world are currently experiencing the problems which ethnicity and religion have caused. The ethnic problem which led to the apartheid era in South Africa is also the same ethnicity and religion problem which has almost disintegrated the Nigerian State. Recalling back to what happen during the civil war in the late

sixties and early seventies which led to the introduction of the national youth service corp. by the then military president General Yakubu Gowon which aim at integrating back the almost disintegrated country.

Books, Journals, Magazines, Pamphlets, and lot of researches have been written and carried out respectively on the issue of ethnicity and religion, and its impact on the Nigeria political stability. This research work will serve as an additional material to the issue on ethnicity and religion to political instability in Nigeria, this work will focus more on ethnicity and religion and its impact on Nigerian politics

1. 7RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology will be based on secondary data collections ranging from books, Journals Newspapers, News Magazines, Pamphlets and even the Internet.

In conducting any research basically there are two methodologies employed by researchers which are the primary and the secondary methods. This research work will be basically conducted using the secondary methodology as earlier mentioned.

1. 8DEFINITION OF TERMS

Ethnicity: According to the oxford advance learners dictionary ethnicity can simply mean “ the fact of belonging to a particular race” from the dictionary meaning we can deduced the fact that Humans believed in race and they have passion for race which leads to humans ethnocentrism i. e. highly ethnocentric in nature.

Ethnicity has a strategic interaction of persons and other actors, who have different beliefs, attitude's, values andgoalsas they decide particular conflict the distribution of resource's and general issues of political rules within a context of norms, expectations and institutions. Any of the rule, expectation and institutions may be reversed, maintained or inverted by the individual

who win the right to control them, in the course of those political negotiations that are sometimes called cooperation, and sometimes called war, and are usually somewhere between the two.

In another sense, ethnic identity are political resources just like money or vote. Instrumentalist like Micheal Banton and Micheal Hecthtar, argue that ethnic identity are not inherent in group or socio-formation of people. They see ethnic identity as socio-capital brought to bear on the political negotiation table by different groups and at different times. Hutchinson and Smith also argue that ethnic identity are an important resource that political Elite employ in securing the support of the masses as a strategy for gaining a desired good.

These goods and or goals are “ measured in terms of wealth, power, and status and... joining or national communities helps to secure these ends either by influencing the state, or in certain situations, through secession.

Religion: religion on its own part can be regarded as the belief in the existence of God or gods and the activity that are connected in the worship of them. Religion can also bestress further by meaning one of the system of faith that are based on the belief in the existence of a particular God or gods.

For example the Jewish religion, Christianity Islam and other world religion. Furthermore in the classical and ancient ages religion has achieved a lot in their politics for example the doctrine of Islam was used in many Arab nations has their constitution even up till the present age. The Ancient Romans, also, during the time of Constantine accepted Christianity as a religion and a mode of life which also affected their political terrain.

Religion in the 21 century is now used narrowly towards Christianity and Islam even though other religion still exist but the former two religion have elevated to prominence that other religion are now beneath them. For instance about Political stability: can depict the mean of a system of politics in which the government of that State is experiencing a stable government and peaceful existence in the State or in otherworld's a legitimately accepted government by the people. Democratically governed States are believed to be stable.

In the global sense every political entity must be ruled democratically without internal oppression or external aggression. Any country of the world that is free from the aforementioned point are regarded as stable political system in other words internal oppression has cause a lot of havoc to many democracies of the world which has infringed on their stability as noted by Ojo 2002. Descent Rule: These covers a larger set of cases that we commonly understand to be ethnic than the rules that ethnic groups must have a myth of common ancestry or common origin.

But it excludes several cases in which individuals routinely consider themselves, and are considered as members, of a group that we classify as ethnic even when their parents were not coded as members of this group. Take for example the category “ Yoruba” when it was invented in Nigeria in the nineteenth century. At this time period, the parents of those who were classified as Yoruba were not themselves classified as Yoruba for the reason that this category did not exist during their lifetimes.

According to Descent Rule, then, the category Yoruba in the nineteenth century would not be coded as ethnic. But the category Yoruba is universally

coded as an ethnic category by all comparative political scientists, without making a distinction between time periods. As another example, consider the category “ Backward Caste” in India, which included as members individuals who possessed a given set of last names and/or ancestral occupations. The category was introduced by the Indian Central Government in 1990.

Within a few years, 52% of the Indian population classified itself and was classified as backward. Yet the parents of those who termed themselves “ Backward Caste” were not coded by themselves or by others as “ Backward Caste” because, as in the case of the first generation of Yoruba’s, this category did not exist during their lifetimes Democracy: According to Abraham Lincoln he defines democracy as the government of the people by the people and for the people.

In this wise democracy connotes a system of government in which all the people in a country will have the outright say on the government of their country although in a representative manner meaning that they will elect representatives that will represent their interest in the government. Advanced countries if the world where democracy is practiced completely they have national identity as opposed to the developing world where they have ethnic identity.

Advanced democracies always believe in secularism in which every religion is accepted and embraced not a system in which part will have cognisance to a religion and the other will believe in other religion causing serious tension in such states like Nigeria. Federalism : Elasar (cited in Akande, 1996: 1)” the formation of European union (EU) which simply begun as a trading

partnership for coal and steel is now moving towards a more integrated political union founded upon federal principle of governance”.

The African union (AU) which is the federation of African counties where a central government intended to be created with sharing or division of power among the federating unit, even the world highest organization body united Nation have in some little degree, evolved the principle of federalism. Federalism is a system of government which embraces unity in diversity. Federalism as a system of government is one in which there will be central and regional governments each one autonomous of each other.