

Ethnicity, Ethnic Crisis, and Good governance in Nigeria: Implications for Sustainable National Development.

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Abstract

The Nigerian federation is a marriage of over 400 ethnic nationalities whose consents were not sought in its formation. This fundamental flaw is further deepened by the fact that these ethnic groups have very striking differences ranging from language, population, level of education and geographical terrain which was not factored into the crafting of the Nigerian State. Expectedly, the politics and governance of the Nigerian State continues to be rudely punctuated by very disturbing ethnic and ethnic related crises that threaten its continued existence as a Nation. This paper attempts a chronicle and analysis of some of these crises and finds out among others that; ethnicity has remained the single most threatening trigger of crises in Nigeria and it is strongly supported by abject poverty which leaves a larger part of its citizenry grossly frustrated and easily swayed by opportunities to vent this frustration. Similarly, its implication for good governance and sustainable national development is huge in that, employment and appointments into the public service hardly respect the merit rule because ethnic considerations are put ahead of merit and national interest. The implication is worsening underdevelopment and general failure of governance at all levels. This paper therefore recommends among others, that government should address poverty as a matter of urgency and priority by creating jobs and an enabling environment for direct foreign investment, the government should more than ever before invest in educating its citizens by making primary and secondary education not just free, but also compulsory and qualitative while making tertiary education qualitative and more importantly, accessible to all. There should also exist, a legal framework that makes the implementation of the recommendations of panels of enquiry into various crises in Nigeria, mandatory within a maximum of six months.

Keywords: Ethnicity, Ethnic crises, Good governance, Sustainable National development

1. Introduction

Nigeria is a country of over four hundred 400 ethnic groups and numerous sub-ethnic groups with different backgrounds. Though, these ethnic groups exist independently of each other, they had interacted with one another before the advent of colonial rule in the country. Colonial administration fostered ethnic consciousness among the people through the creation of artificial boundaries. Ethnicism was therefore brought to the fore in the political dispensation of the country (Ukiwo 2005).

As Nnoli (1980:5) cited in Babawale (2006:20, 21), that ethnicity comes in hand in a situation of inter-ethnic competition for scarce resources particularly in society where inequality is accepted as natural and material wealth is greatly esteemed. He also pointed out that ethnicity is not intrinsically negative, what often happens is the fact that the manipulation of the ethnic factor in political contestation often yield negative outcome. Nigeria as a heterogeneous society has continually faced the problem of ethnic consciousness as it has been entrenched in the Nigeria society to the extent that any activity or program of action initiated by the government of the day is seen as being influenced by ethnic considerations. This situation is fast becoming a value and consciously taught among each nationality in Nigeria and propagated to capture political positions has caused more harm than good to national integration and harmony. (Nnoli (1980:5) cited in Babawale (2006:20, 21).

Ethnicity is a phenomenon in form and conflictual in nature and content such that people from different ethnic groups sees each other as competitors in the quest for resources rather than compatriots. This can only exist within a plural political states such as Nigeria with over four (400) languages. It is the relationship between the diverse ethnic groups with the political environment that produces ethnicity. In the case of Nigeria, its conflictual nature stem from interethnic competition for power and scarce resources. It is often characterized by inter-ethnic discrimination in jobs, housing, admission into higher institutions, scholarships, distribution of welfare services, marriage etc. This is often accompanied by nepotism and corruption. Merit is quite often sacrificed on the altar of ethnicity, thus, ethnic crisis becomes the resultant effects. (Obaje 2002).

Obaje (2002), discusses some ways in which conflicts can be managed like, rights of citizens should be ensured for all Nigerians wherever they settled with appropriate privileges attached. He goes further to talk on how traditional institutions should be more involved at certain levels of decision making and development not

just constitution. He added that government should check the excesses of youth Militia used by some political leaders to cover their lack of performance and insecurity. Any minor misunderstanding involving members of two different ethnic groups could have a catalytic effect and push things beyond the precipice. There are two major types or sources of this category of tension in Nigeria that is associated with the character of relationship between the so-called settlers and the host community (indigene); and that is associated with perception of how kinsmen are being treated in distant location which attract reprisal attacks on sentiment. Nigeria is undoubtedly a very tense country, in so far as ethnic relationship is concerned. A combination of interrelated crises has stretched the bends of unity. The fabric of nationhood, as well as the ingredients of citizenship identity is very thin to a potentially snappy point (Obaje 2002). This study is set out to explain ethnic crisis and its implications on good governance and development in Nigeria.

1.1. Concept of Ethnicity and Ethnic Crisis

Nnoli (1978), he observed that in Nigeria, the colonial urban setting constitute the cradle of ethnicity. It provided the converging point for members of the different pre-colonial politics and diverse linguistic and cultural formation; it was here that ethnic group acquired a common consciousness. He went further to show that contact alone did not cause ethnicity, but the competition for scarce resources among different groups enhance people being conscious of the ethnic group they belong to. Nnoli tried to show how ethnicity does not exist in a pure form; it is always closely associated with political jurisdiction, religious and other social view which constitutes its important ingredient as well. To him ethnicity is a social phenomenon associated with interaction among members of different ethnic groups. These ethnic groups are social formations distinguished by the communal character, may be language, culture or both.

Ethnic conflict can be defined as the breakdown of accommodation of ethnic minorities within the state. This definition has a number of shortcomings. First, ethnic conflict can also result from failure to accommodate ethnic majorities within the state. Secondly, ethnic conflict can result from insufficient accommodation within the state for different ethnic groups. Breakdown may not occur if the different groups can accommodate one another, but breakdown will definitely lead to violent conflict (if not). Lastly, ethnic conflicts may not necessarily be caused within the state but by external influence, which then triggers off violent ethnic conflict. (Adebayo 2006:91).

Ethnicity is generally regarded as the most basic and politically salient identity in Nigeria. This claim is supported by the fact that both in competitive and non-competitive settings, Nigerians are more likely to define themselves in terms of their ethnic affinities than any other identity. Indeed, according to Lewis and Bratton (2002) ethnicity "is demonstrably the most conspicuous group identity in Nigeria". Their survey found out that almost (48.2%) of Nigerians chose to label themselves with an ethnic identity, compared to almost one-third (28.4%) who opted for class identities and 21.0% who chose a religious identity (Bratton and Lewis 2002). In essence, close to two thirds of the population see themselves as members of primordial ethnic, regional and religious groups. In other words, "Nigerians tend to cluster more readily around the cultural solidarities of kin than the class solidarities of workplace". What is more "religious and ethnic identities are more fully formed, more holistic and more strongly felt than class identities", as evidenced in the fact that "whereas those who identify with religious and ethnic communities are almost universally proud of their group identities-, those who see themselves as members of social class are somewhat more equivocal about their pride" (Lewis and Bratton 2002).

All of this is not surprisingly, considering that ethnic formations are perhaps the most historically enduring behavioral units in the country and were further re-enforced by the colonial and post-colonial regimes. In a major critique of modernization theory Melson and Wolpe (1971) asserts that, "inter-group conflicts are seldom a product of simple cultural diversity and in the Nigeria case, there is little that is "traditional" about the contemporary pattern of political divisions. On the contrary, Nigeria's political crisis is traceable directly to the widening of social horizons and to the process of modernization at work within the national boundaries". The article edited by Melson and Wolpe demonstrate that rather than eliminating, modernization managed to create and reinforce it (Melson & Wolpe 1971).

Achebe (1982:50) argues that ethnicity has proved a largely fertile word around us and will stay around as there is work for us to do. A Nigerian child seeking admission into federal schools, students wishing to enter college or university, graduate seeking employment in public service, a business man tendering for a contract, a citizen applying for a passport will have to fill a form to state or confess his state of origin. He goes further to assert that the formation and participation of polities are also based on tribal and ethnic affiliation. In the same vein, Barango (1983:14), affirms that the dominant characterization of Nigeria politics, such as intense ethnic and elite conflicts, the recurrent tendencies of crisis in governance and development, the trend towards

centralization of power and the excessive use of political repression, with the dependent nature of Nigeria is solely dependent on the operations and manipulation of international capitalist system. Ethnic conflicts have their origin in an antagonistic relation of production and exchange introduced into Nigerian societies first by merchant list system.

Barongo (1983), contested further that conflicting material interest in the society tends to divide society into hostile camps and structure themselves through organized institutions such as political parties, the workers, trade union or informally through the façade of ethnic and religious sentiments. That in Nigeria all the vagaries of crisis that usually develop into situation of bad governance are of ethnic or elite kind. And these conflicts are reflection of material interest of various groups in the society, which in the context of scarce resources, manifest in a sharp and intense political competition which brings about crises in governance and development in the political system. According to him, ethnic prejudices and antagonism are most prevalent and most violently expresses in situation where employment in the civil services, in industry, in universities and in other places that one may become suddenly conscious of one's ethnic tags and one's difference from competitors, depending on how one's employment needs and interest are satisfied or denied (Barongo 1983).

Chabal (1992) rightly sees the ethnic role in politics as being a recent development, that it is the architect of colonialism, and explained further that the various ethnic conflicts and violence was not much pronounced, but with the intrusion of colonialism, emphasis was more on their differences rather than what was common among them. Chabal argues further that:

“There were affinities based upon correspondence in a region and similarities of culture, traditions, legal and economic practices. However, an awareness of the group as a distinct entity in relationship with other cultural groups remains relatively a recent phenomenon” (Chabal 1992:102)”.

1.1.1. Concept of Good Governance

Scholars have divergent notions of governance. John (1991:396) reduces it to simple concepts such as efficiency and rationality in allocating resources, curbing corruption which inhibits development and investment, guarantee of civil and human right accountability to the people. In seeking to reform the state, “Institutional certainties” as rightly observed by Richard (1989:307) is to be “preferred to the arbitrariness of autocratic rule”. In the same vein, governance according to the Bretton Wood Institutions (BWIs) is essentially institutional adaptability to achieve the goals of macro-economic stability in a process, which allows for a responsibility to the creditors. These meaning stands in contradiction to the expectations of majority of the people, say for instance, in Nigeria, Nigerians want a government that can deploy the country's abundant resources to meet their basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter approximately as democracy dividends (Odion Akhaine 2004:3).

The concept of governance is a contested one. As John & Guy (2004:7) observed that, governance is a concept that is notoriously slippery. Frequently used by social scientist and practitioner without a concise definition. However, the range of definition that has surfaced on governance can be subsumed into two broad categories. On the one hand, are those who view governance in a technical sense. In this case, the concept borrows directly from its usage in the co-operate world. It implies the efficient management of state institutions. Issues of public accountability transparency in government procedure, rule of law, and public sector management are emphasized. This is the restricted view of governance adopted by the World Bank (1994 & 2004). The essence of this governance is to discipline the state and its institution for economic purposes.

On the other side, conceptual perspective to governance is a holistic one that transcends the state and its institutions. Governance is seen as the process steering state and society towards the realization of collective goals. It points to the dynamic but problematic and often times contradictory relationship between the state and society (Pierre and Peters, 2004).

The United Nations Economic Commission For Africa (UNECA 1999), viewed governance as a process of social engagement between rulers and the ruled in the political community, its component parts are rule making and standard settings, management of regime structures and outcome and result of the social part. The United Nations development programs (UNDP) view governance “as “the totality of the exercise of authority in management of a countries affaires, comprising of the complex mechanisms, process, and institutions, through which citizens and groups articulate their interest, exercise their legal rights and mediate their difference. It encompasses the political, legal, economic, social and judicial administrative authority and therefore includes government, the private sector and the society (UNDP 1997:9). While there are variations in this holistic conception of governance, there is consensus on the major actors or agency of the governance project.

Good governance flows logically from the concept of governance. According to Mohideen, governance becomes “good”, when it operated in accordance with legal and ethical principle as conceived by society

(Mohideen, 1997:9). In other words, good governance is a normative concept by which society seeks to provide a guide and direction to itself through standard and norms embedded in the governance idea. The urge to steer state and society according to defined rules and procedures, and ensuring that governance in all its ramifications serves the interest of the greatest number of people in society through a collective, participatory endeavor.

Good governance is not about a mode of polity, or a procedural arrangement, but a holistic and consequential variable. It is not about forms of government but the result of governance, it is not the process or course of political rule but its effective and productive governance. It is anti-ideological and best defined of ostensible rather than by semantic prescriptions (Chabal 1992:89 and Charlick 1991:278). At the micro-level, good governance denotes organizational effectiveness, which is the capacity of an organization to achieve task assigned to it within set of rule and regulations and favourable environmental conditions. At the macro level, good governance is about engendering public welfare and promoting the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people (Adejumobi 1999:39-40).

1.1.2. Concept of Development

Development has a lot of multi-dimensional meaning and interpretations among scholars. Development negates an easy or one sentence definition because like social sciences, it has a career of shifting meaning, understood variously by different people of different planets in time. From certain perspectives, a developed society is one in which the Gross National Product per capita income experience sustained growth. Other definitions stress the ability of the people to lead a modern or civilized existence through access to such facilities a good roads, health, water and education etc. (Iyoha and Onwuka 1996:1).

For Chemery et al (1976:11), development implies equitable distribution of goods and services. Development according to Seers (1969:2-6) involves certain questions and when these questions are answered positively, then there is development:

What has been happening to poverty?

What has been happening to unemployment?

What has been happening to inequality and illiteracy?

If all these have declined from high levels then beyond doubt there has been development for the nation or country concern. If one or two of these central problems has been growing worse, especially if the entire three have, it would be strange to call the result development, if even per capital income doubled. Seer's definition of development centers on the improvement in the living condition of the individual. By implication, it means that the economy could grow without developing. Economic growth is distinguished from economic development. Economic growth is a concept that is used to describe the rate of change in the national product over time. If the real national product is increasing over the years, one can say the economy is growing, but it is not economic development. Countries are regarded as developed when their total incomes are increasing and income distribution is getting more and more even. Consequently, before we talk of economic development, growth must lead to sustained and viable changes in human welfare. Such changes must include reduced income inequality, improvement in health and higher life expectancy of masses, decent shelter and clean water.

Iyoha and Owuka (1996:23) defined development as "the ability to provide the basic necessities of life such as food, jobs, affordable and accessible health care, good durable and motor able roads, water, electricity and education for all the people within a free and participatory climate". To achieve this, development must be beneficiary specific, with the individual and specific communities being the central factor. To this end, the imperative are poverty alleviation and eradication within a climate of an accessible opportunity.

According to Rodney (1972:3), development is a many sided process. At the level of an individual it implies increased skills and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material wellbeing. At the level of a social group, development implies an increasing capacity to regulate both internal and external relationship. In like manner, Todaro (1982:8) sees development as a multi-dimensional process involving re-organization and re-orientation of the entire economic and social system. Thus, involves in addition to improvement of income and output, radical changes in institutional, social and administrative structure as well as in popular attitudes, customs and beliefs. The contention of Todaro is that development is both a physical process as well as a state of the mind. Development must also entail structural transformation of the economy and its traditional institutions.

For Shamija (2006:4), development implies "increased capacity for dealing with the environment", i.e. available resources of an area. Development is therefore a process, and infact a continuous process. It is a multi-dimensional concept, development embrace both economic variables and non-economic variables. It entails economic development plus the standard of living of the people. It is therefore in this light that Onyekpe (2004:133) sees development as a generic concept which encompasses the achievement of greater capacity to

deal with the challenges of production and its expansion, political administration and governance and organizing, civil society as a community of people. Interrogating the issue of development. Simon (2004:134) stated that development is an improvement in the quality of life (not just material standard of living, in both quantitative and qualitative terms).

Furthermore, Fayemi (2009:14) opined that, development is the process of transforming a State or being into a better state. It details the process of expanding and adopting capacity of the society in satisfying the material and cultural needs designed to be achieved among others, increased productivity within a balanced economic system, the eradication of poverty and diseases and the liberation of the individual from constraints. Such a process necessarily involves individual freedom and social security, cultural buoyancy, educational and economic liberation, self-reliance and sustainable socio-political order.

It therefore follows that, the development of a country requires the improvement of economic variables like the level of income, consumption, employment, saving and investment, but in addition to the improvement of non-economic variables like accountability, transparency in governance, observing the rule of law, the redistribution of national wealth and the political will to enhance the quality of life the majority of the people (Jacob 2009:443).

In the view of Adebayo (2004:4) however, development means releasing human energy. It means providing an opportunity for people to make maximum contributions to their own development and to self-sustaining development of their community. For Adebayo, the failure of development strategies can be attributed to the apparent lack of popular participation. In Nigeria, the gross mismanagement of the economy, massive capital flight, unproductive use of resources, anti-rural bias, poor resources mobilization, distorted priorities and extensive interventions by the IMF and the World Bank has and above ethnic politics has disturbed developmental processes.

1.1.3. Ethnic Crisis in Nigeria (1999-2011)

Ethnic mistrust and tension run high in Nigeria politics, ethnic rivalry remains stronger than national loyalty. All the ethnic groups complain of one form of marginalization or the other. The Hausa/Fulani are accused by other groups before now of monopolizing the political power, the Hausa/Fulani accused the Yoruba's of dominating the economy and civil service, the Igbo blame their woes on the Hausa/Fulani political domination and also blame the Yoruba's domination of economy and federal bureaucracy. Minority ethnic groups accuse the majority ethnic groups of political, religious, and cultural oppression. Minority ethnic groups in the oil producing Niger – Delta region feel they are victims of a gang-up by the three major ethnic groups to share the nation's oil wealth among themselves. Ethnic sentiments permeate national life in Nigeria. Everything in the country has its own ethnic tag i.e. allegation of ethnic discrimination in appointment into jobs, admission into schools, business transactions and sharing of amenities, cuts across and can be heard in every state of the federation (Musa 2009).

Ethnic crisis has taken the front burner in contemporary discourse on Nigeria's democracy. Since the commencement of democratic rule on May 29, 1999, ethnic violence has come to occupy the center stage. The prevalence of ethnic violence is attested to by the sheer dramatic rise in the incidences as well as the volume of destruction of lives and properties that have accompanied them and the palpable tension and animosity it has generated in the relationships between different religions and groups in the country (Egwemi 2010:171).

The chronology of significant categories of violent ethnic crises experienced from 1999 to 2011 is enumerated below.

Nigeria's fourth republic stands out as a uniquely violent and conflictual era. Imobighe (2003:13), maintained that the beginning of the new democratic dispensation which was enthroned on May 29, 1999 led to more escalated violent clashes in Nigeria both religious and ethnic wise. To capture this more graphically, Ugoh (2004) noted that within the first three years of Nigeria's return to democratic rule, it witnessed more than forty violent communal and ethnic violent clashes. Alubo (2006:2), added that over 80 major eruptions have been recorded in the various sections of the country in the 55 months of civilian rule with September 2001, witnessing more 6,000 persons killed in violence clashes. Alubo, further calculated that because of the persistence of the violence and disturbances, a figure of over 30,000 deaths would not be over estimate (from 1999 - 2011) which has never happened in any period of Nigeria's history (excluding the civil war).

On the 29th of May 1999, as President Obasanjo was taking the oath of office, fight broke out between the Ijaw and Itshekiri in Delta over the location of a local government headquarter at Warri. Soon after the Warri boiling, a similar conflict broke out between the Hausa and Yoruba traditional worshippers in Sagamu on July 1999 as a result of the brutal killing of a Hausa woman by the "Oro" masquerade for running afoul of their cult rule. More than 400 persons reportedly were killed in the process of the various clashes put together and

properties worth millions of naira were destroyed during the violence. Similarly in October 1999, the OPC attacked Ijaw, Itsekiri and Urhobo indigenes (Egbesu) in Ajegunle, Lagos, over disagreement between a resident and the vigilante (OPC). Also on 8 November 1999, the Egbesu group killed a police man in Odi. The remote cause of the incident was the kidnapping and killing of policemen by Egbesu youths in retaliation for the killing of their members. The government later deployed soldiers, who killed and razed down the town of Odi in Bayelsa state. Of course, you should know the consequences and brutality involved when a whole town was raid and razed (Thovoethin 2005 and Egbenyi 2005:137).

On April 14th 2000, Agyragu crisis in Nasarawa state led to the killing of their fellow indigenes. The violence erupted when the militant youths of the town of Agyragu protested the location of the local government headquarter against the choice of their town. On the 16 May 2000, also, a bloody ethnic feud between Akasa and Igwama communities in Bayelsa state claimed many lives on both sides. Ethnic crises championed by militant youths, which resulted in the killing on both sides, sparked off the ethnic feud. (Thovoethin (2005). The Kuteb and the Chamba of Taraba state clashed on August 11, 2000 of which about 200 persons died. The violence was closely followed by a clash in Lagos involving O'dua People Congress (OPC) on the 9th of September 2000. Okirika and Eleme in Rivers state took the stage on October 4th 2000, in a fight of land ownership (Egbenyi 2005:137 and Imogigbe 2003) other conflicts worthy of note between the year 1999 and 2000 are, the conflicts in Tafawa Balewa square and other parts of Bauchi State (2000), the conflicts in Mushin, Ajengule, Ketu, Agege and other parts of Lagos (1999 - 2000), conflicts in Kaduna metropolis May (2000), the conflict in Gombe state September (2000) and the conflict in Aguleri and Umuleri areas of Anambra state in 2000.(Adebayo 2006)

Few month after the clashes between the Muslims and Christians in Kaduna metropolis which an unestimated number of people lost their lives over the proposed introduction of the sharia law, a reprisal attack followed in Aba Abia State of which about 450 persons were killed i.e. between 21 to 25 February, in May 2001, the Tiv, Jukun and Fulani militias engaged in a feud over a disputed land and property in Jukun land in Tabara state. Also on June 2001, many lives were lost and property destroyed in Azara, town Nasarawa state, when the people revenge the killing of their traditional leader by the Tivs (Olukorede 2002) and Thovoethin (2005). Between 19 June and 4 July, 2001, over 100 persons were killed in clashes between the Muslims and Christians in Tafawa Balewa Local Government, Bauchi State (Ayinla, 2004).

In September, same year, over 1,000 lives were lost, about 1,000 people injured and properties worth millions of naira destroyed in a clash between Christian and Hausa/Fulani Muslims in Jos, Plateau State. The conflicts occurred over land ownership tussle between those that considered themselves as aborigines and those perceived as settlers (Ayinla 2004). On 12 October 2001, about 150 persons were killed in a religious Mayhem in Kano Sparked off by protests against the United State led military action in Afghanistan over asylum granted to Osama bin Laden, the leader of al-Qaeda movement blamed for the September 11 attacks in the United States (Ndujihe 2004 and Ayinla 2004). Worthy of note also, is the Zaki Ibiam case in Nigeria's continuing inter-ethnic violence. On October 22nd 2001, government troops carried out a brutal attack to avenge the killing of its 19 soldiers in Tiv land (Zaki Ibiam), Benue state. The army mission went away when 19 soldiers were abducted by a Tiv militia group and murdered apparently because the Tivs believed that the soldiers were disguised Jukun tribesmen. The federal government later sent soldiers for reprisal killing which were targeted at civilians as well as Tiv militia men with helpless civilians including women and children becoming the major victims (Thovoethin 2005).

On 18 January 2002, some people were killed and many injured in the Awe crisis in Nasarawa State. The old feud among the communities in the local government re-echoed as militants youth raided and killed people discriminately. Also, on February 12 2002, conflict sacked the Hausa residents in Idi-Araba, Lagos. Misunderstanding between a Hausa resident and the Yoruba degenerated into an OPC violent attack on non-indigenes. More also, on June 2002, about 15 people were killed and many injured when ethnic youth militias of Ozoro and Okpaile communities clashed in Isiko, Delta State (Thovoethin 2005). Worthy of note also is the clashes between the Christians and Muslims over the proposed introduction of Islamic code in Kaduna State between 22 and 23 May 2002 of which over 3000 lives were lost (Ayinla 2004). Similarly, in June 2002 several people were killed. In Yelwa, Shendam local government area, Plateau State over land and indigenship conflicts. On 22nd November the same year, over 200 people were killed and several buildings burnt in a clash in Kaduna over This Day newspaper reporting of the Miss World beauty pageant which made reference to Prophet Muhammad. (Cherian 2002).

April 25, 2003, the attack on the Navy and the Army by Ijaw militiamen left ten dead in Warri, Delta state. On 30th the same month, about five women were killed in itsekiri town in crossfire between the Ijaw and Nigerian security agents. In December 2003, the outlawed maitaisine sect launched an attack in kanamma town,

headquarters of Yunusari local government area of Yobe state. A police station was burnt and a policeman died, two civilians also lost their lives in the Mayhem. (Thovoethin 2005, Onyeleboche 2003). On 23 February, 2004, Hausa/Fulani militants murdered about 48 persons in a church in Yelwa, shendam local government area of Plateau state. From 2-4 May 2004 between 500 and 600 people, mostly Muslims, were massacred, while 49 vehicles, 210 houses were destroyed in a reprisal attacks to the February 23 attacks in Yelwa Plateau State (Bakoji and Onoja 2004, Ayinla 2005, Shobayo 2004). In May 2004, over 100 people, mostly Christians and non-indigenes, died, several hundreds were injured and over 30,000 displaced while property valued at billions of naira were either vandalized or looted in the Kano crisis. On 8 June 2004, a total of 17 persons were killed and some worship centre destroyed in a clash at the headquarters of Numan local government area of Adamawa state (Murray & Ajose 2004).

Furthermore, the situation in the Niger Delta at that time was a thing of concern with the actions of the movement for emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) in recent times becoming a thing of concern to the global community. The Niger Delta problem is as old as the minority cry of marginalization and neglect as well as the resources control controversy that has trailed the political equation of the Nigeria Nation state. Nigeria within this period that is from 1999 – 2011 has also lost a lot to various militant ethnic youth movements which are majorly used as war tools by the elites and ethnic groups to press home their demands. Such militant ethnic youth movements include Odua People Congress (OPC), the Arewa People Congress, the Ijaw Youth Council, The Egbesu Boys of Africa, The Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force, The Bakassi Boys, the movement for the actualization of the sovereign state Biafra, the Hisba or Sharia vigilante groups in the Muslim North and the militias of the Tiv, Jukun and other ethnic groups in Nigeria's many conflict zones.(Ambe-Uva 2010)

The 2008 Jos Local Government crisis, even though may not reflect a radical shift from the 2001 crisis, still mirrors the extent and level of struggle for control of political and by extension economic resources in Nigeria. In this crisis, what began as an electoral dispute quickly snowballed into an ethnic and religious conflagration with grave consequences for many lives and properties. It stemmed from a longstanding battle for control of political power and economic rivalry between different ethnic groups and between those labeled "indigenous" or "non indigenous" inhabitants of the area. (Ambe-Uva 2010)

Since 2009, increasingly frequent and sophisticated attacks emerge in Nigeria. There was a shift from all the above mentioned violence clashes, as in the use of gun machetes, bow and arrows etc to bombing. The frequent and sophisticated attacks and bombing attributed to Boko Haram and ensuring heavy handed counter insurgency operations have caused death, destruction of property and significant displacement (AI 24 January, 2012, IRIN 18 July 2011; SERAC 12 August 2011). According to Human Rights Watch, Boko Haram has killed more than 1,000 people since 2010 (HRW 1st March 2012).

There was another deadly crisis in Jos on 17 January 2010 at Michael's Catholic Church in Nasarawa Gwom Bukura of which about 362 casualties was recorded. Human Right watch confirmed that about 150 dead bodies were pulled from a village well in Krukaram and more than 8,000 refugees in the Toro Local Government of Bauchi State. Boko Haram is a group which has been growing in ambition and capability, initially targeted the Northern States Bauchi, Borno, Yobe and Kano. It began to operate beyond its home grounds in late 2010, when it bombed buildings in Jos and has since push further south bombing the police and United Nation (UN) headquarters in Abuja on June 16 and August 26 respectively (Shaka 2011:3, The Economist 27 August 2011, 8 November, 23 and 28 January 2012). It initially target police, government facilities and churches, but began attacking bars and beer gardens in June 2011. Boko Haram in Hausa which means "Western education is forbidden" was founded a decade ago in the North-eastern city of Maiduguri. It rose to prominence in 2009 after launching and insurgency against the government in several Northern states in which more than 800 people were killed.

In late December 2011, a series of attacks in which more than 100 people were killed and some 90, 000 displaced led the president, Goodluck Jonathan to declare a state of emergency in large part of the North and to send thousands of troops to fight the group. (Danjibo 2009:10, Je'adayibe 2010, Reuters 9 April 2012, ICG 2 January 2012, Economist 14 and 23 January 2012).

The issue of Boko Haram was included in this research because, it is the most current and serious problem that threatens national security. It impedes and retard development in Nigeria, aggravate fears in Nigerians as people no longer sleep with eyes close, people no longer go to social gathering nor go to church all because of the threats posted by Boko Haram. Boko Haram is now a thing of global concern as many people view it from different perspective. Some see Boko Haram from political perspective, others from ethnic perspective and also some take it to be a religious issue.

Boko Haram is both a political, ethnical and religious issue. It threats on non-indigenes residing in the Northern states asking them to vacate the state makes it ethnical, then by demanding further implementation of

Sharia Islamic law in the Muslim dominated states in the north and their demand on president Goodluck Jonathan to resign or convert to Islam among other things makes religious and apolitical.

1.1.4. Types of Ethnic Crisis/Conflicts

Most of the ethnic conflicts generally referred to as ethnic conflicts in Nigeria are not really so. In fact, most of them have nothing to do with ethnicity as they did not arise because the parties belong to different ethnic groups. Many factors such as religion, demographic explosion and struggle for scarce resources or state power could precipitate these conflicts. But what makes them look like ethnic conflicts or lends credence to the claims that they are ethnic conflicts is the fact that the contestants belong to different ethnic or sub-ethnic groups. (Adebayo 2006:91). The contestants do not attack each other because of their ethnic backgrounds, but rather on mere personalized or personified issues. Such issues and may not in any way have direct effect on the whole ethnic groups. The conflict starts on individual rather than ethnic bases but usually when such issues escalate, the close ethnic member become fully involved (Adebayo 2006:91).

- (i) **Intra Ethnic Conflict:** - This is conflict within the same ethnic or sub-ethnic group living within the same boundary or different boundaries. Political, religious, economic issues and so on, could precipitate such conflict. Examples of these abound in Nigeria between Ife and Modakeke, Aguleri and Umuleri (Adebayo 2006:91).
- (ii) **Inter-Ethnic Conflict:** - This may also occur between two different ethnic groups living within the same geo-political boundary or different boundaries. Various issues such as citing of local government headquarters, religion, and marginalization and so on could cause such conflict (Adebayo 2006:91).
- (iii) **Ethnic-Religious Clashes:** - Partly because of their tendency to spill over from their initial theatres into other localities, states, or even regions of the federation ethno religious clashes have proven to be the most violent instances of inter-group crisis in Nigeria. They have occurred mainly in the middle-belt and cultural borderline states of the Muslim North, where Muslim Hausa Fulani groups have been pitted against non-Muslim ethnic groups in a “dangerous convergence of religious and ethnic fears and animosities (in which) is often difficult to differentiate between religious and ethnic conflicts and the dividing line between the two is very thin” (IDEA, 2000). The major examples of violent ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria since 1999 have included the Kafanchan – Kaduna crisis in 1999, Zango – Kataf riot of 2001, Tafawa Balewa clash in 2000, the Kaduna Sharia riot of 2000 and the Jos riot of 2001.(Ambe-Uva 2010)

1.1.5. Causes of Ethnic Conflicts in Nigeria

Seven likely causes of ethnic conflicts in our communities as identified by Otite (1990) are;

- (1) The struggle for land space and the resource available.
- (2) Disputed jurisdiction of certain traditional rulers and chiefs. Where a king of one ethnic or sub-ethnic groups claims rulership over people belonging to another ethnic group;
- (3) Creation of new local government councils and the location of their headquarters;
- (4) Ethnic and individual or sectional competition over access to scarce political and economic resources;
- (5) The micro and macro social structures in Nigeria;
- (6) Population growth and expansionist tendencies to sustain ethnic-bound occupations-a type of conflict popular amongst the users of land resources; and
- (7) The perception or disregard for cultural symbols and the “pollution” of cultural practices.

A major dominant and perhaps powerful factor is poverty, which is manifested in unemployment and deterioration of infrastructure. Both unemployment and deterioration of infrastructure provide the bedrock for ethnic conflicts. Many people are out of job and those who are visibly working are underemployed. Many functional factories are not working to full capacity, leading to retrenchment of workers and an increase in the unemployment figure. This phenomenon is not limited to the private sector alone. Government establishment at federal, state and local government levels, all periodically retrench workers without adequate financial rewards. Government’s idea is to reduce the labour force and conserve public funds. The consequence of this is an increase in the unemployment rate. Those who luckily escape retrenchment and are still working find it increasingly hard to collect their salaries. Sometimes, salaries amounting to many months or at times years are owed workers by their employers with no hope of payment. Consequently, most families find it difficult to feed themselves and cater for other essential services like shelter. The family norms and values have gone and most parents could therefore not control their children, kith and kin. This situation provides ample opportunity for ethnic conflict. The unemployed youths and unfed children become ready tools to be used by selfish leader in fomenting trouble and causing ethnic conflict all over the country. The promise of a paltry sum of money with little enjoyment makes the youths more than willing to undertake such a venture. They are carried away by the

goodies and booties they enjoy without having a serious thought about the implication of their actions. (Adebayo 2006:94)

Poverty, also typified in deteriorating infrastructure such as bad roads, lack of potable water, electricity, proper medical care facilities, social infrastructure, food, schools, and so on, generates fear, distrust, hatred, frustration, hunger, jealousy and other vices. Under this situation, communities scramble for limited resources and it is very easy for some to believe that they have been marginalized in the scheme of things or they have been short-changed in the sharing formula. There may also be a scramble among the communities to edge out one another in order to gain control of the resources or have more resources accruing to themselves. The general belief is that if the other ethnic group(s) goes away, there will be enough for those left behind. (Adebayo 2006:95)

For instance, the Niger Delta crisis arose out of the refusal of the multinational oil companies to rechannel some of their profits to improve the lot of the communities as well as to rebuild the environment that suffers the direct consequences of their operations. The resultant effect is the restiveness among the youths, who are either jobless or underemployed, and so are ready to agitate on nearly a daily basis for money from the oil companies. A refusal on the part of the companies could mean seizing their workers (expatriates and Nigerians alike) as hostages and disrupting production of oil and allied products. It also results in vandalization, and wanton destruction of property, disruption of oil flow stations, and pipeline vandalization among others. This, in the long run, affects the generality of Nigerians as shortage of oil leads to an increase in the pump price and hoarding of the commodity to create scarcity and hardship for the citizens. (Adebayo 2006:95-96)

Conflict could also ensue when a community or ethnic group's feels that it has not been properly compensated or has not benefited properly from what government or companies are deriving from its lands or localities. Such people believe that they have been short-changed by the companies operating in their localities and what they get in return is not commensurate to what they suffer for the activities of the companies. This is the case with the Niger Delta. The people of this region have clashed severally with the government forces and oil companies over what they consider to be insufficient compensation by these companies, vis-à-vis what the companies take from their land and the deprivation they suffer due to their (oil companies) activities. They are also of the opinion that, the Federal Government too has not compensated them adequately in revenue sharing and there is therefore the need for them to agitate for more money from both the companies and the Federal Government. The inability of these companies to yield to local demands could lead to disruption of their operations and the holding of their workers as hostages. (Adebayo 2006:96)

This issue also generates intra-ethnic conflict within the Niger-Delta region. The notion by a large majority that few leaders (minority) among them, mainly the chiefs and a few political leaders are benefiting from what ought to go round the community, also fuels conflict. They opine that, these leaders negotiate on their behalf and embezzle what ought to go round the entire community, leaving the large population in abject poverty while they and their families live in affluence. Situations like these make the majority of the people rise against the corrupt officials, chiefs and political leaders alongside their corporate collaborators. Such agitations usually tend to be violent and at times lead to wanton destruction and killings. This was the case of the Ogonis against their leaders. (Adebayo 2006:97). Another problem that causes ethnic conflicts in Nigeria is that of domination and marginalization of one ethnic group by the other. This has usually been the case of the majority group dominating the minority group and also the marginalization of other groups in the sharing of amenities and political offices. (Adebayo 2006:97). This problem, no doubt, was engendered by colonialism and has lingered on in the country's polity. The different constitutions introduced in the country by the British and the many states created by the military leaders since 1967 were some of the efforts to free the minority ethnic groups from the dominance of the majority tribes however, every attempt at solving this problem through administrative fiat has posed new problems and the consequences of these administrative actions are the same. (Adebayo 2006:97). The attempts at solving the problems have created other lingering political problems in the country, dominant among which are:

(a) The emergence of new majority tribes among minority tribes. The creation of new states led to the emergence of new majorities which have driven the minorities crazy, encouraged fresh agitation and inflamed passion, giving rise to suspicion. An attempt to protect ethnic rights in the new administrative set-up soon generates serious problems, and the agitation for new political and administrative arrangements starts all over again. The creation of new states may draw the old minorities into another state where they could become a majority tribe and would naturally want to lord it over the other minority groups. These minority groups, in turn, begin a new wave of agitation against their dominance. Instances of these abound all over the country. For instance, the Tivs in Benue State and the Jukuns in Taraba State, who were once minorities, become majorities in their new states respectively. (Adebayo 2006:97)

(b) The stranger element, (better called the “non-indigene” or “son of the soil”) and stranger syndrome is also a factor. For example, the Tivs in Nasarawa and Taraba States are regarded as “strangers” or “settlers” in these states. Ironically, however, the Gwaris do not have the same problem in Niger, Kaduna and Nasarawa States. But Hausa in Jos have the same problem as the Tivs. So also the Ijaws in Ondo State and the Modakekes in Osun state are regarded as “stranger” on the land they have occupied for ages. Thus, reference to residents as strangers easily spark off conflicts and the indigenes normally laid claim to ownership of the land and its resources as, in the Ijaw/Ondo and the Ife/Modakeke conflicts. (Adebayo 2006:98)

(c) Closely related to this “settler” element is the land question. Some of the conflicts in Nigeria have been over grazing land, farmlands, fishing zones, and forests. When farmlands become scarce, strangers who are farmers or fishermen have problems, as an attempt by them to demand for more land or fishing area could generate conflict, since this could be resisted by the indigenes. Ironically, the struggle for land among the tribes was not as vicious as when the various states were part of a single administrate unit than when new states and local government were created. (Adebayo 2006:98)

Land ownership has also been a contentious issue between different ethnic groups within the same state or in different states. The problem of who owns the land in Warri had become a serious one among the Ijaws, Urhobos, Itsekiris and also between the Aguleris and the Umuleris in the riverine areas of Anambra State. The conflict over land ownership has been a reoccurring problem between the different ethnic groups with its attendant wanton destruction of lives and property. Similarly, communities in the Niger-Delta region have clashed with one another over territorial claims, most especially in areas where oil exploration companies operate and for which royalties, amenities and development projects are expected. (Adebayo 2006:98-99)

(d) Population growth and expansionist tendencies among ethnic or sub-ethnic groups, or different communities to sustain their occupation or growth, could also lead to violent clashes among them. This is a common phenomenon among land and water users. The demand for more land to sustain a growing population could lead to annexation of another group’s land, whether within or across the common boundary. Such an action tends to lead to conflict as ethnic groups in Nigeria jealously guard their land and water areas. The conflict between the Tivs and Jukuns in the Wukari local government area of Taraba state is a good example just as that of the Ilajes and the Ijaws in Ondo State. (Adebayo 2006:99)

Ethnic conflicts also arise out of a political situation. Politics is a game of number, but is also a game of financial muscle and financial base. (Adebayo 2006:99). Thus, politics and money go hand in hand, as they are inseparable. In some states, the majority tribes are not necessarily the kings or the kingmakers, because they lack the financial power to influence this, despite their numerical strength and superiority. In this situation, the minority tribes may possess the financial capacity and thereby become the kings and the kingmakers. Where a group is marginalized by money or raw political influence, there are bound to be problems. This is the case in Kaduna and Plateau States. It is also the latent fear in Taraba and Nasarawa States, where the Tivs are being suspected of muscling with their number and financial resources to dominate the others. If this trend is not checked, it could lead to ethnic conflict. (Adebayo 2006:99).

The creation of states or local governments invariably leads to the whittling down of the powers of the paramount rulers in these states. Such loss of power was never going to be taken lightly by the leaders. This was the case in Kaduna, Plateau, and Nasarawa States. Equally important is the creation of new chiefdoms, senatorial districts, constituencies and wards. These could also lead to agitation by groups that feel marginalized in the scheme of things. The indigene factor too cannot be removed as they try to prevent this. Again, we find this problem in Nasarawa State where the Tivs insist on some chieftaincy rights with other ethnic groups. Political comparative advantages tend to give political opportunities to one group or tribe, the opportunity to dominate other ethnic groups or tribes. The problems is that those with the political authority could use it in subjugating others or use it to their full political advantage by monopolizing all political offices and social benefits that ought to go round other groups. Political leaders therefore champion the cause of their tribes or ethnic groups at the expense of the others. The marginalized tribes or groups thereafter could show their displeasure at the present political disadvantages, thereby leading to agitation and ethnic conflict. (Adebayo 2006:100-101).

Ethnic conflict could also be caused when a dispute arises among traditional rulers or chiefs or between two ethnic or sub-ethnic groups over the issue of paramountcy. Issue such as this generate ethnic conflict as the subjects of the two conflicting kings or chiefs slug it out among themselves, leading to wanton destruction of lives and property. This was the situation in Warri where the Olu of Wari, a town inhabited by other ethnic groups, namely, the Warri, a town inhabited by other ethnic groups, namely, the Urhobos and Ijaws. The killings and destruction that accompanied this conflict left the town in a devastating and desolate condition. In 1989, the Delta State Government appointed three other paramount rulers of equal status as the Olu, two for the

Urhobo Kingdoms of Okere and Agbasa and the third for the Ijaws. The claims by the other paramount kings of equal status as the Olu led to another round of violent conflict in the town. (Adebayo 2006:101).

Aside from the political tussle that led to the conflict in Warri, there has been the question of who owns Warri? That is a land issue. This question has also led to series of conflicts in the town. The main issue is land ownership and the tussle is between the Itsekiris, who claimed ownership of the land and, by extension Warri town, and the Urhobos, who the Itsekiris claimed to have given the land to, to farm since they are traditional fishermen and middlemen traders. The Itsekiris see the Urhobos as intruders into their community. (Adebayo 2006:101)

The Ijaw/Itsekiri conflict started with the citing of the Warri South Local Government Area headquarters at Oghe-Ijoh, an area predominantly occupied by the Ijaws. The Itsekiris, protested it, arguing that they requested for the creation of new local government area and the sitting of the headquarters in Ogidighen, an enclave of theirs. The itsekiris accused the Military Administrator, Colonel David Dung, of the mix-up, an attempt which resulted in mayhem. The Urhobos cashed in on this situation to pay the Itsekiris back and to support the Ijaws (another immigrant group). This situation exacerbated the conflict which is yet to be resolved. (Adebayo 2006:102).

1.1.6. Implications of Ethnic Crisis on Good Governance and Development in Nigeria

Conflicts have the potential of destroying the foundation of national unity or nation-building. This is because ethnic and sub-national demands and aspirations often challenge nation-building and allocation policies and ultimately, the legitimacy of the state (Zartman, 1991). Continued ethnic conflict in Nigeria could destroy democracy and the unity of the country, and eventually lead to total disintegration.

Ethnic conflicts also consume a large and disproportionate share of national resources. In an effort to combat ethnic conflicts, government diverts a large proportion of the national resources, whereas such resources could have been channeled to the provision of infrastructure for the people. Similarly, government wastes a lot of resources on repairing its property damaged during ethnic conflicts. Multinational oil companies also suffer the same fate. A huge amount of money is spent on carrying out repairs on vandalized pipelines, damaged fuel stations and other properties destroyed during ethnic conflicts. (Adebayo 2006:103).

Ethnic conflicts have long-term effects on the economic activities of the country. Many of the conflict may occur during the farming season, thereby preventing people from going to their farms for fear of being killed or kidnapped. When such situation occurs, farming and other economic activities such as fishing and trading also suffer the same fate. During violent clashes, farmlands grazing lands and crops meant for farming and animals are destroyed. This situation could therefore lead to famine, hunger and starvation in the country. In most cases, men abandon their economic activities to participate in the clashes, thereby leaving the farms for nobody to work on. Continued crises in the country could lead to food shortage, hunger and starvation. (Adebayo 2006:103).

Ethnic conflicts also affect business houses, manufacturing industries, small-scale enterprises and other business ventures, as they would be closed down. People would flee from the streets and towns in panic and run away for their lives. Commercial vehicles too would be off the road and movement within and outside the community becomes impossible. Buying and selling too would come to a halt and communication within and outside the communities would become practically impossible. (Adebayo 2006:103-104).

Hospitals and health workers too would run away for their safety. This makes it impossible for the sick to receive medical attention. Ethnic conflicts lead to displacement of people and movement of immigrants into other communities, towns, local government areas and states thereby creating refugee and resettlement problems. Displaced people tend to lose all they have and lived for. They become homeless and go in search of a new accommodation and new means of livelihood. Aside from losing their homes and properties, children and aged people who cannot run are either killed or get missing during the crisis. Ethnic problems create restriction on mobility of labour as many Nigerians cannot work in states of their choice or get employment in their chosen field. Some states or local government councils prefer to employ expatriates instead of Nigerians, thereby keeping the country's unemployment rate on the increase. (Adebayo 2006:104).

The continued ethnic clashes in the Niger Delta region affect the production of petroleum which is the mainstream of the country's economy. Disruption of oil production and flow, and the kidnapping of oil workers (expatriates and Nigerians alike) lead to the high price of petroleum products in the country. A slight disturbance leads to a hike in the prices of the products causing untold hardship on the people. Ethnic conflicts have led to the proliferation of ethnic-based groups with their militant wings (comprising youths) that have an avowed mission to protect the interest of their tribes, as well as champion their political cause. Examples are the Yoruba Consultative Forum (YCF), the Afenifere and the militant Odua People's Congress (OPC), an

organization of Yoruba Youths determined to protect the socio-political and economic interests of the Yorubas all over the country. (Adebayo 2006:104)

While the Ohaneze Ndigbo is the pan-Igbo cultural group comprising all Igbos in the country while the Bakassi Boys are Igbo militant group. The Ohaneze group seeks to advance and protect the political and other interests of the Igbos, and the Bakassi Boys, who had faced a lot of criticisms and controversies even among the Igbos themselves, were ostensibly founded to combat armed robbery and other violent crimes in the South-East geopolitical zone. But their later activities have been so controversial that it is now a shadow of its old self. Other tribes too are ostensibly taking a cue from those mentioned above, having formed their own tribal groups to protect their rights. In the northern zone, there is the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) which seeks to speak for the north. It has a militant wing called the Arewa People Congress (APC). Although the APC appears not to be as militant as the OPC and Bakassi Boys, some of its influential member may have been active in fomenting ethnic crises in different parts of the north. (Adebayo 2006:105).

In the oil-producing region, a good number of militant and rebel groups comprising mainly the youths have emerged, with a mission to defend and protect the socio-economic and political rights of their people. The Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) is the most popular in this region and it has succeeded in internationalizing the plight and neglect of the oil-producing areas. (Adebayo 2006:105). The Egbesu Boys, a militant youth wing, is a nightmare to oil companies. There is also the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force led by Mujahid Dokubo Asari, a rebel group styled after the late Isaac Boro Group (formed more than three decades ago). The groups are fighting for autonomy in the country's oil-rich Niger Delta and have threatened an all-out war. (Adebayo 2006:105) The various groups in the Niger Delta are seeking job opportunities for their youths and adequate compensation from the oil companies operating in their regions for what the host communities suffer due to oil-production activities. Perhaps the activities of the Egbesu Boys and other groups in the oil-producing region are not the same with other group in the country. While the oil-producing groups are seeking outright political autonomy, employment and monetary compensation, and are gearing up for a possible war in their region if all efforts fail, the other groups are not so militant (as the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force), but merely seek to protect the rights of their people in the existing political structure. (Adebayo 2006:105-106).

Ethnic conflicts have tremendous effects on the country's political system. The country's national unity is being systematically eroded. Contest for political offices has been reduced to a primitive struggle among the ethnic groups. Tribal loyalty is stronger in the country than national loyalty, as Nigerians see themselves first and foremost as Hausa, Yoruba, Ibo, Igala, Egba, Ijebu, Bini, Kalabari, Ijaw, and Tivs, before calling themselves Nigerians. Nigerians who settle and work or make their living in other ethnic areas other than their own are not willing to contribute to the development of their host communities. (Adebayo 2006:106). They prefer to do this to their own home town or ethnic group than where they make their living. The issue of "son of the soil," "indigene" and "non-indigene" or "settler" is still very strong among Nigerians. The host communities still treat settlers as foreigners and refuse to fully integrate them while settlers also prefer to contribute to the development of their ethnic groups and home towns rather than their host communities. (Adebayo 2006:106)

Contests for political offices at the Local, State and National levels are ethnically based. Candidates are fielded and backed by ethnic groups in order to bring political gains to themselves and their ethnic groups. In the same vein, appointments as ministers, commissioners, chairmen of parastatals and into other political offices at all levels are ethnically based. The syndrome of "our own son is there" or "he is our son" is always the reason why people fight among ethnic group is dominating or marginalizing the other groups or that the interest of a particular ethnic group has not been taken care of, could also trigger off ethnic conflict. All these weaken the political base of a nation, and could lead to political anarchy, chaos and wanton destruction of lives and property. (Adebayo 2006:106-107).

Ethnic conflicts in the country are usually characterized by killings, wanton destruction of lives and property, including burning of houses, vehicles and other personal items, farmlands, fishing boats, business centers, and so on. They also lead to raping of women and young girls, starvation (as people would want to remain indoors, with no markets open and no food) refugee problems do not augur well for a democratic political setting. The recurrence of ethnic crises and the attendant sporadic killing, looting and arson could create an opportunity for a military take-over of political power (as it happened in 1966), thereby truncating the democratization process currently going on in the country. (Adebayo 2006:107).

Government should continue to use its material and human resources to curtail ethnic conflicts. Security forces are always deployed to the scenes of ethnic confrontation to quell such hostilities and to stop the wanton killing and destruction of property. After attaining a truce, government would set up a Commission of enquiry to look into the causes and x-ray the problems of the various ethnic groups that were engaged in the conflict.

All this shifts emphasis in government action from providing basic infrastructure to mending of fences. It also depletes government financial resources as energy is dissipated on maintaining elusive peace in the region. (Adebayo 2006:107).

Recommendations

1. Ethnic conflicts in Nigeria are largely a fall out of collective frustration over government's gross negligence in the provision of the basics of life like good roads, decent shelter, jobs, etc. Rather than spending millions of naira on trying to contain conflicts when they arise, government should make concerted efforts to address the issues that trigger such conflicts
2. A great deal of panels, committees and commissions of inquiry have been set up to investigate the remote and immediate causes of ethnic crises in Nigeria, and make appropriate recommendations to government that would bring about justice, equity, reconciliation and the prevention of a future recurrence. Most often than not, these efforts produce very detailed reports and commendable recommendations that gets ignored by the government for reasons that range from personal interest, to wanton corruption. The government should therefore canvas a legal frame work that makes the recommendations of such committees of inquiry of the status of an executive bill that is sent directly to the national Assembly for considerations and necessary action.
3. Furthermore, the government should come up with a statutory periodic forum of direct engagement with the electorates where Citizens are free to air their views and frustrations on how their country is being run. Such vents are important in the prevention of eruptions that could threaten peaceful co-existence.
4. Similarly, the National Orientation Agency should be empowered and mandated to carry a great deal of its orientation efforts to the rural communities where the people should be taught on the gains of peaceful co-existence and enlightened against some misconceptions handed down to them by self seeking individuals in society. This would be more effective than the present media campaigns the agency engages in, because most of these communities have no links to electricity and are very poor.
5. Finally, education is, and remains the most veritable tool for national development and transformation. No nation therefore ignores serious investment in this sector and will be able to purposefully drive development. The Nigerian government should therefore invest hugely in education such that primary and secondary education would be free and compulsory while post secondary education would be subsidized for all citizens but free for citizens who are indigent. This would be of huge asset to the Nation because an educated population would tend more toward analyzing issues carefully and objectively, as against a playable uneducated population. Besides, an educated population is better empowered to contribute economically and otherwise to the nation. In the final analysis, the education of the citizens of a nation is more of an asset to the government and nation than the individual citizen. Nothing therefore spent educating the citizens of a nation is in any way a waste.

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