Ethno-Religious Crisis in Northern Nigeria States and the Search for Peace and Security: Challenges of National Cohesion

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Abstract:

Nigeria is a country of great diversities characterized with multiple identities in her ethnic and religious domain. The multi- ethnic identities can be traced to the origin of the country itself prior to the amalgamation of the existing forces within the geographical boundary of colonial Nigeria. Nigeria is made up of different ethnic nationalities numbering about 250. Prior to the incursion of the Arab slave traders from Middle-east and North Africa in the 9th Century and the colonial missionaries in the 15th Century, the African Traditional Religion (ATR) was widely practiced according to ethnic and cultural diversities. The emergence of Islam and Christianity in Nigeria transformed the Nigeria religious space to three dominant religions – Traditional religion, Islam and Christianity. The immediate years after the attainment of independence witnessed the politicization of ethnicity and religion. The duo identities have redefined Nigeria political spaces. Since the Maitatsine incidence of 1980 rooted in ethnic and religious diversities, Nigeria has witnessed several ethno-religious conflict predominantly in the northern region. The consequence of this conflict transcends Nigeria socio-economic and political space to gross effects on humanity. A significant number of ethnic conflict usually takes on religious tag in it execution likewise religious conflict mobilize ethnic sentiments. Hence, the essence of

"ethno-religious" conflict as the subject matter of the study is to capture the connectivity of these recurring themes in Nigeria. The paper interrogates ethno-religious conflict towards providing recommendations useful for national cohesion. The paper put into consideration cases of ethno-religious conflict, effects and examines the question of peace and security. The motivation for this study is hinged on the apparent intractability of ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria and the question of national cohesion.

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Introduction

Most episodes of violence in Nigeria especially in northern states of Nigeria in the past three decades are associated with ethno–religious conflict characterized by high level of violent confrontations among ethnic and religious groups often under the influence of "settler-indigene dichotomy" and "Christian-Muslim" debacle respectively (Abdul 2000). The resurgence of ethnic and religious violence in Nigeria has without doubt, been central to the National question and the socio-economic and political process of the country. Undoubtedly, Nigeria has become an epicenter of ethno religious violence in which most times, an attempt to resolve this violence exacerbate it further, thereby posing a serious challenge to nation cohesion, unity, integration, sustainable democracy and development (Abdul 2000).

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society. Nigeria consists of over 250 ethnic groupings (Arase and Iwuafor 2007). Nigeria also has three main religious diversities namely – The African Traditional Religion, Islamic Religion and Christianity Religion. The history of Islam is traceable to the trans-Saharan slave trade, the cultural and religious influences from the Arab and Middle East state. The religion receives significant boost under the aegis of Usman Dan Fodio's and the religious Jihad of 1804- 1810. The history of Christianity is likewise traceable to the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade, and the activities of early Christian missionaries in pre-Nigeria geographical spaces like Badagry, Lagos and other southern coast states (Falola, Uhomoibhi, Mahadi &Anyanwu 2003).

From the above discourse, Nigeria has a long history of ethnic and religion diversities. Lamentably, they have turned out to be a significant source of insecurity and poses challenges to national unity. Ethnic and religious conflicts are inter-related. Several ethnic conflict takes on religious tags in it execution likewise religious conflicts mobilize ethnic sentiments (Dogara 2010). Since the Maitatsine of 1980, ethno-religious conflict has become prominent. In Northern states of Nigeria, matters regarding ethnicity and religion have become susceptible to violence such as killings and maiming along ethnic lines, destruction of religious centers and communal clash etc. These states by nature are heterogeneous with multiple identities and

diversities. For instance, Kaduna, Kano, Niger, Zamfara has a vibrant identity with about Forty (40) ethnic groups, and predominantly a population of Muslims and Christian's adherents.

Ethno-Religious Conflict: Conceptual Insight

Ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria can be described as a cycle of bloodletting. The plural nature of Nigeria reflects the weak state of the country to guarantee fundamental liberties and right, dignified existence for its populace, distributive justice and essences of social contract. Ethno-religious pluralism becomes a problem in Nigeria when opportunities in life and access to important socio-economic opportunities are dependent on membership of particular ethnic and religious group. Jakob Rosel (1995: 123) defines ethnicity as groups which see themselves as constituted by the real or imagined bonds of a common decent religion, language, culture and history. Ethnicity defined according to Osaghae, (1992) as a social formation predicated on culturally specific practices and unique symbols. Alegbeleye (2014), defines ethnicity as a situation in which individuals in a particular ethnic group consider themselves or are considered by others to have common affinity which distinct them from other groups in the society. Abdul (2002: 146) described religion as an identity issue, which implies solidarity and setting boundaries between those who are consider believers and those that are not. This deals with issue of sentiments, and norms that are result of shared experiences. Ethno-religious conflict is a situation in which the relationship between members of one ethnic or religious and another of such group in a multiethnic and multi-religious society is characterized by lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion and fear, and a tendency towards violent confrontations (Achumba et al. 2013; Salawu, 2010). The upsurge of violence resulting from ethnic cleavages and some elements of religious coloration can be said to be ethno-religious conflict

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English (2000: 239) defines the concept of conflict from four different perspectives. One, conflict is construed as "a situation in which people, groups or countries are involved in a serious disagreement or argument"; second "is a violent situation or period of fighting between two countries and third is a situation in which there are opposing ideas, opinions, feelings or wishes" and fourth "is a situation in which it is difficult to choose between two or more opposite needs, influences". Wright (1990: 19) defines conflict from a conflict resolution expert perspective. Wright contends that the concept of

conflict connotes opposition among social entities directed against one another. Coser (1956: 8) sees conflict as "a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aim of the opponents are to neutralize, injure and eliminate their rivals. Within the context of this paper, conflict is considers in line with the submission of Oladosu (2013: 115) "as a state in which people, ethnic or religious groups or countries are involved in a serious disagreement which may or may not result in bloody confrontation. A conflict triggered under the aegis of ethnic identities is referred to as ethnic or racial conflict and similarly those triggered under the influence of religion is defined as religious conflict. Beyond the above argument, conflicts are evidences of social relation and are not inherently negative if necessary preventive and early warning mechanisms are put in place to prevent it from degenerating into incessant bloody or violent confrontations. Human identities often promote conflict because by virtue of their intellectual endowment, cognitive potentials, freedom of thought and ability to reason, Homo sapiens cannot agree on all issue. The argument of this paper is that conflict is not an abnormal phenomenon when it occurs among human and groups, however the degeneration of conflict into violent confrontations remains the problem of contemporary social relation discourses

Causes and Cases of Ethno-Religious Conflict in Northern States

The history of ethno-religious conflict dates back to the colonial government that forced various ethnic groups under different authorities of Empires, Caliphate and kingdoms together to create protectorates and colony and finally amalgamated in 1914 to become an entity known as Nigeria (Essien 2009: 153). Bradat (1979: 154-157) describes the amalgamation as an "unholy alliance" which was not only undemocratic but autocratic in nature, making conflict inevitable. The inevitability of ethnic and religious conflict was argued by Nnoli (1980: 87) that the differential treatment of ethnic groups during colonialism was responsible for the intense competition in Nigeria society. The intense competition has thus led to violent confrontations and bloodletting today. Ethnicity and religion are contested over the year in Nigeria political relation and public spaces. Essien (2009: 154-155) captures the historical and contemporary perspective of the subject matter

> At this time (1947-1966), ethnic and sub-ethnic loyalties threatened the survival of both East and West while the North was divided religiously between Christianity and Islam. It was a period of politicized ethnicity and competition for resources which worsened the relationship between the ethnic groups … since independence, the situation in Nigeria has been fraught with ethnic (and religion…emphasis is mine) politics whereby elite from different ethnic groups schemed to attract federal resources to their regions (as well as building and maintain patronage networks on ethno-religious identities) neglecting issues that could have united the country

In the case of the Northern states and the implication of ethno-religious crisis, the entire social order in the north has transited from its humane and friendly character of the past into a hostile seedbed of violence and uncontrollable destruction of lives and property in recent times (Bahir 2005). Ethno-religious conflicts in northern states of Nigeria are traceable to the politicization of the duo. The politicization of the ethnicity and religion creates a separate identity for Nigeria politics. Political supports are garnered along ethnic and religious rather than creating a national perspective of the political process by the "elite class". Bala Usman (1987) contends through his "manipulation thesis" that the "elite" are the major force manipulating religion and ethic consciousness to serve their individual or group interest. "Ethnic identity and diversity are not inherently negative rather, they are reality of individual identity and an attempt to erode it might leads to identity conflict (Bahir 2005). By implication, politicians exploit ethno-religious diversities and consciousness of the populace.

Samuel (2001) traces the numerous cases of urban violence including ethno-religious violence to the effects of the Structural Adjustment Programme in the 1980s. Similar position was reached by Tunde Olawuyi (N.d) who considers the 1980 as a unique period in the history of Nigeria due to the frustrated hopes and societal tension caused by the failure of Nigeria second republic (1979-1983) and the introduction of harsh economic measures under the Structure Adjustment Programme of 1980s. From this period onward, Nigeria experienced a militarization of ethnic and religious conflicts beginning from the 1987 Kafanchan riots which introduced which introduced severe dimensions of religious conflict between Christians and Muslims in what is referred to as civilian equivalent of a coup d'état (Dogara 2010: 5). Salawu (2010) identified some of the causes of ethno-religious conflict such as religious

fundamentalism, High level of poverty, illiteracy, youth unemployment, ethnic idea of "political favoritism". Otite (2001: 1-33) also enumerate the causes of ethnic conflict such as land space to which both indigenes and settlers lay claim, communal boundary disputes, ethnic, sectional or individual competition over access to political power economic resources and clash over cultural interest, values preferences and perception. Albert (2001) also identified factor leading to religious conflict such as superiority complex of a religion adherents, misconception of one's and other religion, aggressive and insulting methodology in the course of propagation, fanaticism and overzealousness and misinterpretation of religious text. In Nigeria, ethnicity and religious bigotry has become the fulcrum of various forms of nationalism ranging cultural autonomy, religious dominance and demands for local political-autonomy and self-determination.

Victor Dike (2001:87) argued that ethnic and religious conflicts are common "currency" in the volatile Middle Belt axis. Similarly, Kano State in the north-eastern axis has a high propensity of ethno-religious violence. In 18th -29th December 1980, a series of religious riots broke out in Kano and spread to other three northern state, recording a death tolls of 5000 with many unaccounted death. On 30th October, 1992, a related outbreak broke out in Bulunkutu near Maiduguri where another 4000 people were killed, over 2000 were left homeless and over three million worth of properties were destroyed. Yola and Jimeta in the former defunct Gongola State is another vivid case Violence broke out in February 1984 with nearly 1000 lives claimed and destruction of Jimeta only modern day market with total property damage worth five million on the 26th April, 1985 in Gombe (Falola 1988 137-193).

The Kaduna confrontation between Christians and Muslims started in Kafanchan on Friday March 1987 and spread quickly to Kaduna, Kano and Zaria. The Yakubu Yahaya and Katsina riot of 1981, the Bauchi violence of 1991, violence in Kano 1991, Violence in Zangon-Kataf 1992 are cases of ethno-religious violence in northern Nigerian states. The Kaduna anti-Sharia conflict on 21st February, 2000 was follow by a protest by thousand Christians against the proposal to introduce Sharia law as the criminal code in Kaduna State. Between February-May 2000 over 1,000 people died while rioting over the introduction of Sharia in Kaduna state alone. On 28th February, 2000, hundreds of ethnic Hausa were killed in reprisal attacks in Aba,

Abia State. (Igbokwe 2000). In 2001, the religious violence that spread across the Middle-Belt states of Benue, Plateau, Taraba, and Nassarawa which claimed over 2,000 life's with thousands displaced (Christian Solidarity Worldwide 2012). The outbreak of religious conflict in Jos created pandemonium in the Middle Belt region. In 2004, Christians and Muslims sectarian clash broke out in Jos between Fulani herdsmen and the Nigerian army. The conflict led to the deaths of many innocent citizens, destruction worship centers residential homes and burning down of seventy-two villages in the densely populated residential area of Jos (Pandem 2008: Kwaja 2009).

Religious violence erupted with a Muslim protest demonstration on 10 May 2004, as a protest against the killing of over six hundred Muslims in the small town of Yelwa in Shendam Local Government area of Plateau State (Olasope 2012: Christian Solidarity Worldwide 2012). The Miss World contest of 2002 in Kaduna and Abuja over a columnist comments that the Holy Prophet Mohammed would likely support the pageants, an event some Muslims felt was indecent. The 'blasphemous' article suggested that the Prophet Mohammed would have liked to marry a Miss World beauty queen (The Straits Times 2002). Some Islamic fundamentalists perceived this as an insult to Islam and eventually led to riots in which many people lost their lives. More than 2,000 people died in the rioting that followed. In 2006, riots over Danish cartoons depicting Prophet Mohammed led to the deaths of nearly 200 people in several Nigerian Northern cities (Hill and Asthana 2006).

Tafawa Balewa conflict of 1991, 1995 and 2001, the Jos conflict of 1994, 2001, 2007, 2008, the Kano conflict of 1980, 1982, 1991, 1994, 1996, 1997, 2001 corroborate the argument of Otite and Albert (1999) that there is high degree of religious intolerance in Kano. Religious violence also erupted in Kaduna after a market row clash between Hausa Muslims and Adara Christians in Kusuwan Magani among wheelbarrow porters where death toll of 55 was confirmed (BBC 2018). Ethno-religious clashes occur in Jamaa local government area of Kaduna State where six were confirmed dead (Vanguard 2018). Killing also occurred in Gwar East District of Benue State in North Central Nigeria where 19 death was reported (Vanguard 2018), 73 death recorded in Makurdi in 2018, 15 Villages were destroyed with mass-slaughter of Christians in

the conflict that ensues in North East of Adamawa with over 80, 000 internal displaced camps (New York Times, 2018)

Effects of Ethno-Religious Conflict

In all parts of northern states of Nigeria, ethno-religious conflicts occur in an alarming rate in the past three decades and the probability of future occurrence remains high amidst socio-economic and political strife facing the country. It has occurred in state of Kano, Bauchi, Nassarawa, Jos, Taraba, Kaduna, Niger, Borno, Maiduguri, and Benue State respectively. Ethno-religious identities have become disintegrative and disparaging social rudiments menacing the peace, stability and security in Nigeria. The frequent ethnic conflicts and religious clashes have posed a major security challenges. The long protracted ethno religious conflict leads to destruction of lives and properties. The number of lives and properties consumed because of these crises cannot be statistically determined. The skirmishes which follow the major confrontations, leaves several people wounded and several thousand people displaced from their homes. Ethno-religious conflicts have brought about economic shocks and political instability in spite of natural resources abundance in these states. Ethno-religious conflict leads to the loss of human and resources capital.

The increase of internally displaced persons (IDP's) is another consequence of ethno-religious conflict. The apparent intractability of this conflict has made it difficult to know the exact figure of IDP's in Nigeria. The Yeldam-Shendam conflict generated large number of IDP's in the history of ethno-religious conflict with over 60, 000 IDP's and over 800 women and girls either abducted, raped, sexually assaulted, or turned to slave labour (Dogara 2010). Internally Displaced Person's spreads across all the thirty-six state of the federation. Over 1.6 million are fleeing violence while 2 million in North East lived in hunger (Punch 2018). An estimation of 10,000 Kano residents, mostly Christians flee from their homes in troubled parts of the city, took refuge at the main military and police barracks on 11 May 2004 (Vanguard of 16 May 2004). At least 57,000 people fled their homes following sectarian violence involving Christians and Muslims in north-central Nigeria. More than 30,000 Christians were displaced from their homes in Kano (Dogara 2010). In addition, over 27,000 displaced people had sought refuge in

Bauchi State following a massacre of Muslims by Christian gangs in the neighboring Plateau State earlier in May 2004 (Mashood 2014)

Ethno-religious conflict has reduced the state Foreign Direct Investment. The high level of insecurity prevents investors from making huge investment in the economy due to their unguaranteed safety from ethno religious violence. Onwumah (2014) posited that in economic terms, ethno-religious conflict damages resources and facilities, which took the government time to acquire. No foreign investor will like to invest funds in a country that is prone to communal and ethno-religious conflicts (Onwumah: 2014). The fears of the investors are in two forms. Firstly, the basic aim of Foreign Investment is to make profit, which is seems impossible in a volatile ethno-religious environment. Secondly, the resources invested already will definitely go down the drains. This hampers Nigeria reputation in international economic relations. Nigeria is blessed with several tourist centers, which several are located in northern state. The malfunctioning nature of the industry in northern Nigeria can be attributed to ethno-religious conflict as it is out of logic and reasoning to embark on tourist tours in a violence zone area. Onwumah (2014) also affirms that ethno-religious conflict portrays Nigeria in a very bad light internationally. Nigeria is perceived as unsafe and indeed not conducive in terms of security caused mainly by communal and ethno-religious crises.

Ethno-religious conflict has a devastating effect on Nigerian socio–economic structures and infrastructures such as education, agriculture, and health. The incessant abduction and raping of school children affect the growth of education in the state. Burning of schools, churches and mosque, destruction of community projects are problems that do not only affect the community involved but compiled the national problem of Nigeria underdevelopment. In the agriculture sector, farmers desert their farm lands to safety zones where there is no probability of getting new farmland, food insecurity and prices increases as a result of farmer inability to farm. This has a great deal of influence on Nigeria agricultural sector, which has been the mainstay of the economy.

Ethno-religious conflict also leads to psychological problems. Victims of ethno-religious conflict suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSS) (Dogara 2010: 94). Onwomah

(2014) asserts that conflict periods bring forth the worst instincts and impulses in man. Socio-economic vices such as increase level of crime rate and struggle over scarce resources. In post ethno-religious conflict, actors in this conflict remain reservoirs of ethno-religious knowledge of factual or distorted information. The aftermath of these crises distrupt social relationship as actors sees no reason to live happily together with one who destroys one family and society. This creates room for another phase of conflict in the future. From a matrilineal perspective, women are vulnerable to psychological effects; they are vulnerable as prisoners of wars, abducted, sexually abuse, raped, made slave labor, and sexual instrument. Psychologically depressed individual as a result of ethnic-religious conflict cannot contribute meaningfully to the national development drive.

Ethno-Religious Conflict and the Challenges of National Cohesion

The struggle of Nigeria government to establish free and just societies has been hindered by lack of a genuine national cohesion since the 1914 amalgamation. Sir Tafawa Balewa comment on the status of unity as follows:

> Since 1914, the British government has been trying to make Nigeria into one country, but the differences in historical development of the people, their religious beliefs and customs and the people themselves do not show any sign of wiliness to unite. Nigeria unity is only a British intension for the country (James 1958)

The responsibility of ensuring successful genuine national cohesion is the responsibility of all and sundry regardless of ethnic and religious diversities Ethno-religious conflict has affected the fabrics of genuine Nigeria national integration and thus, a threat to the stability, development and future of the state. Ethno religious conflict has deepened the north-south dichotomy. The north-south debacle has made Nigeria a theater of conflictual interest. The south, dominated by the Christians and the north, dominated by the Muslims have created an interface between domination and influence of these two religions. Ethnic sub-nationalism has today complicated the Nigeria political interplay. Politicians and elite use the aggregate interest of protecting the Christians in the north gather support and influence. The phenomenon of a patriotic Nigerian has not been realistic; Plural loyalties and citizenship identities along ethnic

and religious lines continued to play a dominant role in the Nigeria State. Ethnicity and Religion has become the basic problem of north-south dichotomy employed as a fundamental political factor. Nigeria Politics even when pitched on other lines of (North-South divide), always ends up being largely about Christianity and Islam (Kukah 2000). 'Religion factors become dangerous when they are linked to politics but even more so when they are linked to ethnicity and North-South Division' (Strategic Conflict Assessment Report 2003: 19)

Sustaining a pluralistic and heterogeneous society can be upheld through unity in diversity. In the light of recent happenings, Nigeria operates on the verge of diversity in unity. Several ethno-religious crises have occurred due to the inability to tolerate others ethnic identity and religion or religious perspective, lifestyle, political views and ideas. National cohesion is rooted in the ability to tolerate others. Conflict itself is an evident of human and social forces relation but the management of this violence remains paramount before it degenerates into warfare. Ethno-religious conflict poses threat to sustainable democracy and development. The nature of governance and the conduct of election in Nigeria have become worrisome. These democratic processes are exhibited within ethno-religious ideas, which have appropriately leads to underdevelopment, democratic retrogression, and lack of democratic consolidation. This nature of challenges constitutes a greater proportion of what the state is facing today in its quest for national unity and integration. To ensure sustainable democracy and development, it necessitates the ability to meet the needs of the present generations without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their needs. It is a concept that does not just address the current well-being, issues and challenges (Social, political, economic, welfares) but well-beings across generations. Ethno religious conflict is compromising such great ideas that could protect the interest of all and sundry.

Mutual suspicion and the quest for socio-economic and political supremacy have characterized Nigeria political landscape. Political elite to further their own interest have adopted ethnic and religious strategies. As for Olakunle (1980 114), he described those who violate religious ethos as "Uncommissioned soldiers fighting not for God but for their pockets and vested interest and secondly as religious bigots suffering for quixotic zeal and propagating unacceptable particularity". The quest for socio-economic and political supremacy escalates into violence

and conflict, it affects relationship that have been existing between ethnic groups and Muslim-Christian relations will widen the north-south divide.

Peace and Security in Northern States of Nigeria: Perspective

Ethno-Religious clashes and violence has littered the socio-political and economic landscape of northern states in Nigeria and it is degenerating into ungoverned spaces as well as spreading like wildfire to other states of the federation. In spite of the fact that these crises have dominated national question since the 1980s, they are not been effectively addressed and thus, turn into a full-scale national conflict. With the immense effects as discussed above, peace and security remains essential. This sub-section captures preventive measures such as early warning mechanisms, resolution of conflicts, which are the top priorities of governmental tiers, non-governmental organization and societal stakeholders not only in northern states but also in other states where such conflict looms. Peace and Security is essential for two major understanding. Nigeria identity as a multi-ethnic and multi-religious state cannot be contested. As a matter of fact, the diverse nature of Nigeria has earned her the reputation as one of the most famous divided societies in the world (Brewer 1991: 179-191). If we do not search for lasting peace and security solutions towards addressing ethno-religious conflict, this implies that we are passing over to the younger generations the inability to manage a heterogeneous Nigeria which poses a future problem beyond present generations. Similarly, if we continue to persist to politicize ethno-religious identities for selfish interests, the present generations have successfully planted the dosage of ethnic and religious intolerance.

Northern states in Nigeria are without doubt constitutes important sub-structures. It is impracticable to underestimate the input of these states to the social, economic and political fabrics of Nigeria. Peace and security is the realities of today confrontations emanating from ethnic and religious diversities are very topical, auspicious and timely. The ultra heterogeneousity, the consistent display of communal violence, inter-groups squabbling, and communal clashes rooted along ethnic and religious lines have systematically transform the northern state into a dangerous terrain. Premised on the above, the paper argues that peace

and security must remain a key objective of the Federal, State, and Local government agenda and other relevant Civil Societies and Non-governmental organizations.

The primary responsibility of the government is to see to the protection of the lives and properties of its citizens. Therefore, there is need to adopt a very effective and efficient early warning mechanism to curb ethno-religious conflict. In cases where conflict has occurred or the age-long effect of conflict still persist; there is an urgent need to devise conflict management style and conflict resolution procedures that capture all actors (warring factions) involved in conflict. The government must also engage the religious bodies to fight ethno-religious conflict by creating and organizing constant dialogue and communication sessions. Government also needs to be sensitive to the needs and aspiration of various ethnic groups. State and local government should be grant needed resources to be involved in matter of security than before because they are closer to the local population often involved. The governments should become sensitive to policies and decision that can create ethnic and religious resentment. Government must collaborate with religious organization as well as depoliticized their relationship with ethnic and religious groups and rule out distinction between religion and the state. Government should embark of a re-orientation strategy for enlightening the citizen. The strengthening of citizen welfarism and adequate security are also essential for a just and fair ethnic and religious relationship. Government through its educational sector should task educational bodies and curriculum developers to incorporate inter-religious and peace studies at all level of educational institution to inculcate the values, and attitudes of tolerance and brotherliness in younger generations.

Religious bodies, ethnic community organization and civil societies also have a complex role to play ensuring peace and security. Religious bodies such as the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC), which consists of both Christian and Muslim clerics, Interfaith Mediation Centre of Muslim Christian Dialogue Forum (IMCMCDF) based in Kaduna, International Peace League (IPL), have encourage pluralism religious tolerances, and understanding across religious and ethnic boundaries (Olu-Adeyemi 2006). The Heinrich Boll Foundation, National Supreme Council for Islam Affairs (NSCIA) facilitates inter-faith dialogues and helped in religious dialogue in their peace efforts. Heinrich Boll Foundation developed an approach to organizing

dialogues and has proved effective over years in Kaduna, Kano, Bauchi and Jos. Furthermore, the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, the Christian Association of Nigeria, Jamaâ'atu Nasril Islam and the Conflict Management Stakeholders Network, should encourage inter-faith collaboration in planning local, educational, and infrastructural projects aimed at promoting religion and ethnic tolerance in the state (Paden 2008; Yusuf 2008).

Religious organizations should be organized to protect the interest and solidarity of their religion and ethnic groups amidst confrontations, controversy, governmental policies and ethno-religious violence. Religious bodies must purge itself of misrepresentation and create a common ground. There should be intense religious and ethnic dialogue and by doing so, Ethno-religious bodies should adopt an holistic and systematic approach to ethnic and religious conflict by collaborating with governmental and non-governmental bodies; facilitate and imbibe Christianity and Islamic values of forgiveness and reconciliation; foster mutual respect and art of dialogue as a personal and social process; organize different peaceful event for youth to engage in inter-religious dialogues to facilitate national cohesion due to the vulnerability of the youth

The peril of ethno-religious conflict is spread through the exhibition of intolerance act. Ethno religious acts bordering on intolerance has assumed multi-facet dimension. The Maitatsine uprising of 1980 borders on the issue of individual intolerance. Scanton (2005) argues that tolerance requires us to accept people and permit their practices even when we strongly disapprove them while the anti-thesis is intolerance connotes the inability or the incapacity to contain divergent and contrary religious beliefs, conviction practices and experience. The Sharia issues, which led to conflict in Kaduna in 2000 and several other violence, are resultant effects of individual and group intolerance and suspicion. In cases where policies and legislation made did not favor an ethnic groups or religious bodies, reverting to violence should not be a considered option. Tolerance promotes the agglomeration of ethnic diversities with integrative and cohesive mindsets for individual and societal interest. Tolerance is accepting a common ground in religious ethics, values and morality rather that dwelling on the difference. National cohesion above ethno-religious conflict is foster through individual heroic act of tolerance. The case of 200 Muslim who protected Christians from attack during service at the

Christ Evangelical Church Sabon Tasha, Kaduna South is an example of such acts. The Nigerian Imam who saves 262 men, women and children from Muslim gunmen in Plateau is an act of heroic deed. In the same attack, 83 died, houses burnt, churches destroyed, shops looted (B.B.C News 2018) and also a Muslim gateman named Mallam Mohammed Sanni of Keystone bank and Rev. Father Aiyatine Ghado who risked their life's to save Christian and Muslims from Mob attacks are all heroic and patriotic deeds needed to foster national integration, unity and cohesion.

Concluding Remark

The paper is a modest academic submission in an attempt to understand how ethnic and religious diversities of a multi-ethnic and religious identity of Nigeria have led to intense source of conflict. The multi-identity nature of Nigeria has led to inherent challenges facing the process of national integration, cohesion and nation building process. The study examines the factors and issues associated with this recurring theme of ethno-religious diversities and conflict in Nigeria peace and security history. The study advocate for an inclusive role of the government, religious bodies, leaders, and civil society to incorporate ethnic and religious consciousness towards promoting national integration, cohesion, development and democratic sustainability. Religious and ethnic diversities should not be a source of conflict in Nigeria considering the rise of global citizenship identity. As thus, necessary preventive mechanism, early warning mechanism, conflict management and prevention should be employed as ultimate tactics of governmental, civil societies and non-governmental bodies. In conclusion, good governance and national patriotism should be collective watchword.

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