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**Aspect of Intergroup Relations in 21st Century Nigeria:  
Emblem of Ethnicity, Religious Fundamentalism and National  
Security Crisis 2000-2014**

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**Abstract**

*This paper is on the aspects of intergroup relations in 21st century Nigeria: Emblem of Ethnicity, Religious Fundamentalism and National Security Crisis, 2000-2014. The objective of the paper is to contribute to some existing literature on the state of intergroup relations in Nigeria. Besides, it would provoke further researchers on the subject because the Nigeria state is presently experiencing disintegrating challenges. It is already known by scholars that some contending issues and challenges have not encouraged intergroup relations in 21<sup>st</sup> century Nigeria but without their examining that of ethnicity, religious fundamentalism and national security threats as addressed in this paper using the available primary and secondary sources discussed in subthemes narration common to histories. With the triumphant entry of democratic rule and its gradual consolidation in this century Nigerians approached this development within a renewal of hope that inter-group contacts of the divergent ethnic nationalities started in the pre-colonial period would be consolidated before now. But the nation-state is yet trapped in woes of ethnicity, religious extremism and*

*national security crisis thereby, aiding the reasons why meaningful inter-ethnic/group relations are eluding Nigeria.*

**Key words:** Intergroup Relations, 21st Century, Ethnicity, Religious Fundamentalism, National Security, Crisis

### **Introduction**

...Ethnicity, religious fundamentalism and threats to National Security are not sufficient explanation for Nigeria disintegration. They are problems that can be solved and for national integration and sustainable development. It depends on the political elites and the will power...

This succinct quote from Omonze's (2007) phenomenal discussion, *Democracy and Contemporary Challenges in Nigeria*; is an auspicious basis to set the tone for this presentation. However this paper would need to discern how ethnicity, religious fundamentalism and national security threats as factors has been enthroned or, as it were, has encroached into Nigerians quest for intergroup relations. While we would attempt an insight into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and of course, how these challenges has soaked Nigerians political and constitutional evolution, obviously through the noisome vapours of ethnicity, religious extremism and national security crisis, these factors would provide the useful framework for the understanding of why national integration is eluding the federal-state and how these genie has presently come to constitute a major test of leadership and statesmanship and even governance in Nigerians body politics.

Be that as it is, the intrusion or the roots of ethnicity, religious extremism and threats to national security in Nigerians political life, since the 1930's, and manifesting profoundly in the present, has continued to encourage and reinforce the emergence of separatist and regional political outlook and cleadges to the extent that, it has obliterated the sense of a common Nigerian nationality, while indeed at the same time, providing a sustained recipe for disintegration, national precipe, factionalism, and at best, fierce rivalries among and within the constituents of the Nigerian state.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

This section of the paper defines the key concepts used in this presentation to avoid possible misunderstanding.

### **Intergroup Relations**

It has already been observed that as an area of study, intergroup relations appear to be one of the recent themes in African historiography. Behavioural

scientists like M. Sherif and C.W. Sherif, (1969) rationalized inter-group relations from the social psychology perspective put one of such insights forward. They conceptualized intergroup relations as “states of friendship or hospitality, cooperation or competition, dominance or subordination, alliance or enmity, dominance or subordination, alliance or enmity, peace or war between two or more groups and their respective members. Furthermore, they view a group as a social unit consisting of a number of individuals who stand in role and status relationships to one another and who possess a set of values or norms of their own to regulate their behaviour towards each other in matters affecting them.

Afigbo (1980) in his analysis of the Igbo and their neighbours offers another important theoretical formulation on intergroup relations. According to him:

Intergroup relations presupposes contact and interaction between groups each of which has an identity, to make some inputs into the relationship, in short, each of which has some scope and area of antonomous action.

This raises a number of fundamental conceptual issues regarding the phenomenon of intergroup relations that should be clarified. The first is that intergroup relations entail contact and interactions between groups. This ordinarily implies that it is the logical consequences of contact between people, in which case, it deals with human beings and is therefore a social phenomenon. Emphasizing this point Lohor (1998) observes that, intergroup relations “...refer to the *interactions* which take place between members of different groups and societies who come *in-contact* with one another. It pertains to the symbolical or face-to-face interaction between different societies...” The significance of this is that wherever and in whichever form it manifests (whether as inter-ethnic, inter-racial, inter-religious, inter-class, inter-generational, cross-gender, international or supra-national relations) intergroup relations reflects human actions which are also part of the process of existence channeled towards economic, political and social development.

It is instructive to note that though sometimes these relationships took the form of war and enslavement, they also expressed themselves through diplomacy, treaties, the visits of wandering scholars, the borrowing of techniques and above all, trade. Consequently, regardless of the fact that each ethnic group has its unique identity and occupies a distinct contiguous territory, there was and has always been considerable contact between groups which antedates contact with Europe.

From the above examinations, one can infer that intergroup relations can emerge both in the form of immediate interactions of the representatives of various groups as in the case of the Nigerian peoples, and in their own extremely mediated impersonal forms.

### **Ethnicity/Ethnic Identity**

The term ethnicity and ethnic identities is a complex one. A simple reference to it is “Ethnic Groups and Ethnicity”. It is important to distinguish between an *ethnic group* and *Ethnicity*. An ethnic group is a group of people linked by common bonds of kinship and communal relationship, which has identifiable language, economic and cultural traits as well as a distinct territory. According to Elaigwu (1994), when an individual identifies with the group as a basis for his primordial social identity, it forms his cultural identity.

Ethnicity, according to Mafeje (1997) is an ideologically loaded concept which is not a natural outcome of ethnic existence but is all about mobilization and politization of ethnic group identity drawing on those elements that mark out the group such as language, culture, territory, mode of dressing and sharing jokes. The term takes on a greater meaning in competitive situations, and where available resources are scarce in relation to the interests that grow around them (Nnoli, 1989).

The identity factor, as noted by Abagen, (2002), is a strong feature of ethnicity and thus usually starts with stereotyping and labeling to give various groups a ‘friend status’ based on race, nationality, religion, caste for the ultimate goal of self actualization, hegemony and survival. Thus, both cultural identity which is at micro-individualistic level, and ethnic identity branded as “an ideology” conceived to focus, advance and protect group interest and ensure its survival.

Extensive research into the problems of ethnicity identity in the 20th and 21st centuries Nigeria polity by Cohen (1969), Nnoli (1978, 1989), (Oтите (1990), Osaghae 1992, 2001, 2005) Elaigwu (1994) Egbu (2001, 2006 and 2010) have summarily pointed to five main issues:

- i. That ethnicity is bound to be in plural state;
- ii. It is characterized by exclusiveness, the common consciousness of the feeling of ones cultural superiority to the others;
- iii. It is a tool of competition for individuals and groups for scarce public resources such as contracts, employment, political appointments, scholarships, access to land as well as opportunities for lucrative trade and commerce;
- iv. It is a widely used political tool by all and sundry including the state to gather support or sympathy and
- v. It is a situational consciousness which alters in its form, role and place as the social process demands it. Egbu cited in Ali (1998)

Ethnicity, therefore, is used by the dominant and the subjugated constituents of the state, as both means of domination and resistance. It is also the fabric that binds sections of the ruling elite to those of civil society, to determine the context of what ethnic mobilization will take. In Nigeria, ethnicity has been the effort on the part of the elites or groups who mobilize ethnic symbols in order to achieve access to social, political and material resources, in the face of real or perceived threats acquired either passionately and or aggressively, as attributes when certain new elements enter into relations between groups Osaghae (1995).

### **Religious Fundamentalism/Extremism**

The term religion comes from either the Latin word *religare* (meaning to read or pursue together; the same roots goes to legible and intelligent), or much more likely and generally accepted, from the term *religare* (to tie back, to find fast). Eugene (2006) posits that as the consciousness of one's dependence on a transcendent being and the tendency to worship him, religion is a body of truths, laws and rites by which men is subordinated to the transcendent. On a the similar note, the *Oxford Learners Dictionary* explained religion as the belief in a super human controlling power that is entitled to obedience and worship. It goes further to state that it is a particular system of faith and worship that one is entitled to. Religion is one of the most sensitive conflict trigger in the world today due to fundamentalism/extremism.

#### **What is Religious Fundamentalism/Extremism?**

An apt starting point for discourse at this stage is an argument by Nasrin Taslim (1998) to the effect that: "Fundamentalism is an ideology that diverts people from the path of natural development of consciousness and undermines their personal right..." Fundamentalists believe in a particular way of life; they want to put everybody in their particular straight jacket and dictate what an individual should eat, what an individual should wear, how an individual should live, life-everything would be determined by the fundamentalist authority. Fundamentalists do not believe in individualism, liberty of personal choice or plurality of thought. They do not encourage or enter free debate, they deny others the right to express their own views freely and they cannot tolerate anything which they perceive is going against their faith.

Doubtlessly, concern over the rise of religious fundamentalism has generated widespread concern around the world. As several evidences in Europe, Asia and Africa have shown, its potentiality for fueling crises at the national and international levels is well documented. In Nigeria for example, the rise of this phenomenon and particularly, the attendant proliferation of diverse sects, across the religious divide, has been a source of concern especially as the acts continue to disintegrate the

Nigerian nation-state and paint Nigeria as an 'emergent failed state' at the international level.

### **Internal Security Crisis**

Internal security is very critical to the functions of any state. The essence of the state is the promotion of good life and the creation of political and economic conditions that would enhance the welfare of the citizenry. The state cannot perform these primary 'purpose of the state' unless maintenance of law and order is achieved. Therefore, internal security is quite an important but complex aspect of national security and development.

At the general level, security simply suggest freedom from danger of threats, safety-or the ability of the state to protect and promote its cherished values and legitimate interest and enhance the well being of its people. Therefore internal security crisis or threats exist when there is lack of freedom or the absence of those tendencies which could undermine internal cohesion or intergroup relations, Imobighe, (2009). In another light, Adams posits that internal security crisis exist when the state and it security agencies lack the ability to maintain vital state institutions, to promote its care values and sociopolitical and economic objectives as well meet the legitimate aspirations of the citizenry. It implies the absence of freedom from danger to life and property and the decline of a conducive atmosphere for the people to pursue their legitimate matters within the state. Imobighe, (2009).

From the above it is crystal clear that internal-security is threatened or experienced when the state is incapable to create and maintain agencies and mechanisms, and even institutions that would guarantee its citizens from danger. Therefore, threat to life and property be it from the armed robbers, religious extremists, ethnic-militias, civil disturbances, road blocks that endangered the road users and other distractions are symptomatic of lack of internal security or security crisis as presently experienced in Nigeria especially in the northern states where the report of intergroup relations is a tale of blood shed, pains and tears from the extremist activities of the *Boko Haram*, an Islamic movement noted for hatred and total dislike of western education and values. The activities of this group and several others pose considerable economic, social, and political threat to the sovereignty and co-existence of Nigeria and thus a threat to internal security. A general look at the nefarious activities of the members of these terrorist groups shows that they sometimes not only usurp the law enforcement functions of the police and the military, but also wear provocative uniform and openly brandish offensive weapons without any authorization. These activities therefore seriously violate general laws that were made for ensuring due process in law enforcement and criminal justice administration and for preserving public order and harmonious co-existence in Nigeria.

### **Situation of Ethnicity, Religious Extremism and Internal Security Crisis in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Nigeria Inter-group Relations**

Although contestations have characterized the history and practice of ethnicity throughout the history of humanity, it acquired a fairly complex form in Africa, given the peculiar history of state formation and the patterns of state-society relations arising from this. As Nzongola-Ntalaja (2003) has suggested,

Africans are not only the first humans, they are also the humans with the greatest attachment to ancestral lands, and it is on the basis of their experience in living in the society from the family to larger social units that their values of solidarity, such as ethnic allegiance and patriotism are born. It follows that attachment to ones community and, though it, to the soil of the ancestors or the homeland, is a fundamental dimension of the notion of ethnicity in Africa.

The problem as Nnoli (2003) puts it is not merely the fact that Africa states are multiethnic; they are also multi home land in the sense of emotional attachment deriving from its perception as the cultural earth and the geographical cradle of the ethnic groups.

Be that as it may, the intrusion of ethnicity flavor in practical politics, inaugurated in the 1930s Nigeria, reached its peak in the 1950s and beyond when the three major ethnic groups employed and manipulated ethnicity or ethnic identity as an instrument in not only subverting democracy and democratic principles, but indeed unleashed what has today been described as ferocious inter-ethnic rivalries in Nigeria politics today-a factor heating up the polity and mounting pressure on the Nigerian state. Indeed, with the entrenchment of ethnicity, or as were tribalism, in the nation's political life, has diverted latest energies, hitherto directed into national cohesion to that of fierce ethno-national rivalries, disintegration and contraption. The consequences of which is the stirinkage of the political space along ethnic tribal lines and elusion of intergroup relations. Therefore, a combination of factors such as gross intrigues, sheer devilry, outright and unreasonable tension mounted on the Nigerian state politics, have combined to arrest our common heritage and drive toward national development one major feature of good governance.

By extension, the morbid fear of domination competition, insecurity, corruption and unethical practices, failed leadership, state failure syndrome, elusion of good governance, ethno-religious crisis, religious extremism, economic injustice, etc. inherent in our national life today is the direct consequence of the manipulation of ethnic identity in practical politics on less a test for leadership and patriotic statemanship in Nigeria's political life. Anthony (2009) posited that one implication



of the manipulation of ethnicity is manifested in electoral frauds. Nigeria has a long history of electoral rigging and fraud that have been frustrating intergroup relations and the wishes of the people to choose those who exercise political power. Precisely, because of this history, elections in the country have often been associated with ethnicity or lineage identity, thereby resulting into violence and internal security crisis and the imposition of corrupt, unfocused, mediocre, and vision less leadership (Adekanye, 1990; Daniel, 2001; Jibril, 2006; Odigwe, 2009).

Historically, shortly after the attainment of independence, Nigeria was riddled with diverse problems which affected inter-group relations negatively. Such problems according to Beilly (2005) include bribery, corruption, ethnicity, nepotism, political acrimony and religious fanaticism. But out of these vices, religious problem speedily become a cankerworm, which till today, has eaten deep into the fabric of our national solidarity.

Religious fundamentalism has taken the front burner in contemporary discourse on Nigeria's quest for inter-group relations since the commencement of democratic rule on 29th May 1999 and the 21st century, religious extremism has come to occupy the center stage. The prevalence of religious fanaticism is attested to by the sheer dramatic rise in the incidences as well as the volume of destruction of lives and property that have accompanied them and the palpable tension and animosity it has generated in inter-group relationship between the different nations in the country. The chronology of significant categories of religious extremism experienced from 2000-2004 is enumerated below.

In July 2000, many people were killed and property worth millions of naira destroyed during a violent conflict between Yoruba traditional worshippers and minority Hausa groups in Sagamu, Ogun state. The brutal killing of a Hausa woman by the "Oro" masqueraders for running foul of their cult rule led to the crisis Ayinla (2004).

From 21 to 22 February, 2001, an unestimated number of people lost their lives in clashes between Muslims and Christians in Kaduna metropolis over the proposed introduction of Islamic criminal law. The Kaduna incident led to a reprisal attack in Aba, Abia state and about 450 persons were killed Olukoreder, (2002). It will be recalled that in May 2000, over 500 people were killed and property worth millions of naira were destroyed in a clash between some Christians and Muslims in Kaduna, the capital of Kaduna state Bakoji and Onoja, (2014).

Between 19th June and 4 July 2001, over 100 persons were killed in clashes between Muslims and Christians in Tafawa Balewa Local Government Area of Bauchi state Ayinla (2004). On 7 September, 2001, over 1000 lives were lost, about 1,000 people injured and property worth millions of naira destroyed in a clash



between Christians and Hausa/Fulani Muslims in Jos, Plateau state. The conflict 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 asylem granted to Osama bin Ladin, the leader of al-Qaeda movement balmed for the September 11 attacks in the United States Ndujihe, (2004; Ayinla, 2004; Abba, 2004). Between 22 and 23 May 2002, over 300 lives were lost in clashes between Muslims and Christians over the proposed introduction of the Islamic criminal code in Kaduna state Ayinla, (2004). In June, 2002, several people were killed in a clash between Christians and Muslims in Yelwa, Shendam Local Government Area, Plateau State. **Over Land and Indigineship Conflicts:** On 22 November 2002, over 200 people were killed and several buildings burnt in a clash between Muslims and Christians in Kaduna city over *ThisDay* newspaper reporting of the Missworld Beauty Peagent (Muhammed Cherian, 2002). In December 2003, the outlawed Maitaisine sect launched an attack in Kanamma town, head quarters of Yunusari local government are in Yobe State. A police station was burnt and a police man died, two civilians also lost their lives in the mayhem Onyeleboche, (2003).

On 23 February 2004, Hausa/Fulani militants murdered 48 persons in a church in Yelwa, Sherdam Local Government Area of Plateau state. From 20 May 2004, between 500 and 600 people mostly Muslims, were massacred, while 49 vehicles; 210 houses were destroyed in a reprisal attack to the 23 February attack in Yelwa, Plateau State (Bakoji and Onoja, 2004; Ayinla, 2005; Shobayo, 2004). In May 2004, over 100 people; mostly Christians and non-indigences died, several hundreds were injured and 30,000 displaced while property valued at billions of naira were either vandalized or looted in a religious crisis in Kano city. On 8 June, 2004, a total of 17 persons were killed and some worship centres destroyed in a clash between Christians and Muslims in Numan town, headquarters of Numan Local Government Area of Adamawa state. The clash was the climax of two weeks of tensed relations between the native Bachama Christians and the Local Muslim community over the location of the town’s central mosque, a few yards away from the Bachama paramount ruler’s palace.

The Christians thought that building the mosques minaret higher than the Kama Bachama’s palace was an assertion of dominance in the town Muraay and Ajose, (2004). On 21<sup>st</sup> September, 2004, members of the local Toliban now “Boko Haram” movement attacked the Bama and Gwoza police stations in Borno state. At Bama police station, six police officers, including the area commander, Ismail Sirajon, were killed. The station was ransacked, while arms and ammunition were carted away. At Gwoza police station, the Boko Haram killed more policemen while the police station was set ablaze and two civilians were killed (Lawa and Willaims

2004 and Abdul 2004). The Boko Haram group consists of young boys and girls, mostly dropp-outs from school and their attacks are on the public in different parts of Maiduguri and Abuja. Their major objective was to launch their own form of Shariah or Islamic law by force. They also believe that western education and civil service are for unbelievers (Umar, 2003; Lawal and Williams, 2004). The list is not exhaustive, as many other violent disturbances are not recorded and since then, relationship between the Christians and Muslims in Nigeria is dicey. In fact, their relationship can be likened to the proverbial 'cat and mouse' or the 'goat and hyena' relationship. This no love lost relationship has often created suspicions of the various groups on issues of intergroup relation, hence the frosty relationship between Christians and Muslims. When asked on why Nigeria has survived these religious extremisms, the respected politician, Alhaji Yusuf Maitama Sule could only mutter, "God loves Nigeria" (Adega, 2001). Thus religion rather than being a cohesive factor has turned out to be a divisive factor for the Nigerian people. This incident made Ahmadu Bello, the Saudana of Sokoto (1956) to lament that:

Religion which has become a cohesive factor in many societies has proved extremely divisive in Nigeria. In their search for religious sect, Nigerians have fallen back on prejudice, bigotry, extremism and parochial antagonism that only promote chaos, anarchy and disunity.

It is pertinent to note that, Christian-Muslim relationship in Nigeria have never had a jolly good time. They have always lived in suspicious of one another, in the colonial period, post colonial period and the 21st century because religion has taken political, economic and social dimensions.

Examining the issues of internal security crisis, its precarious nature in Nigeria has shown very clearly that the Federal-State is more threatened from within than from any external aggressors. In our attempt to explain threats from within, a separation of the causes and effects will be attempted here in order to address it from its root and to give room for functional and pragmatic solutions.

Some scholars have identified ethnicity, religious fanaticism, political instability, poor leadership, mismanagement of resources, sabotage, espionage, armed robbery, mutiny and coup d'état, poverty, youth unempowerment and so on as the main causes of internal security crisis in Nigeria. There are deeper structural problems arising from the inherent contradictions in our nation-state and that of the global financial economic crisis which are engendering conflicts and violence. These structural problems are:

- Issues of good governance and accountability that is still a mirage and lacking among our leaders, be it at the local, state and federal government level.

- Poor nature and scope of economic development. This centres on what has been happening to poverty. What has been happening to unemployment and what has been happening to inequality and other forms of economic injustice? (Alkali 1997, Muo 2007)
- The effects of rapid population growth on the economic development of Nigeria. This has been identified as a major cog in the wheel of economic development in Nigeria and reasons for internal insecurity threats since 1960. The governments at all levels have not been able to check and provide for it growing population. (Balarinwa, 1987 and Muiyiwah, 2006).
- Electoral fraud as impediment to Nigeria's search for internal security. Nigeria has a long history of electoral rigging and fraudulent practices either before the election, during the elections and after the election. This frustrates the wishes of the people in choosing those who exercise political power. (Chukwuma 2006 and Jibrin 2006).
- The growing rate of poverty and the hungry among Nigerians. About 50% of Nigerians live below poverty line and about 70% live in rural areas with no infrastructure, food, shelter, health facilities and so on. According to Aliyu, (1979) most Nigerians are hungry and always aggressive and intolerant.
- High rate of illiteracy among Nigerians. The rate of illiteracy is very high in the country. The figures from various educational departments showed that education in some parts of Nigeria has sustained a progressive decline over the years. The implication is that social, political and economic mobilization and empowerment policies of the government do not trickle down to the majority of the youths and others of peace (Alphonus 2004 and Suleiman 2010).
- The consequences of corruption and unethical practices in Nigeria. Generally the consequences of corruption and unethical practice in Nigeria are multidimensional and multifaceted. Anita (2009) intoned that since 2001, the implications of corruption are overwhelming and have far negative implications for the nations quest for internal peace and inter ethnic relations required for any meaningful development.
- The synergy between National Security and Democratic Rule. The political class is yet to realize the truth about the full meaning of 'democracy'. The linkage between national security and democratic rule in this present century is that of mutual transmissibility of impacts and repercussion. Therefore, probably the nexus between national security crisis and democratic rule is like addressing the fundamental question of national security.

Nigeria's perception of security is a reflection of a realist paradigm of projecting it power within a state centric system. This perception is increasingly becoming problematic. This is because a state centric perception in democratic role is an anachronism, along with growing internal opposition to the hegemonic statist idea of national security. (Olukoshi, 1992, Nweke 1988 and Imobigbe 1986, 1989 and 2000 in Cyril 2004) argued that state and dominant class interest eclipse national security in Nigeria. The consequences of this is that national security planners tend to strengthen the coercive apparatus of any government any time the nation-state is faced with internal security challenges thereby neglecting non-coercive and human security approaches (Egbefo, 2014). By implication therefore, we are all in a perpetual state of internal security crisis. As such security challenges cannot be reasonably and adequately confronted by military preparedness. Nwolise, 2008, observed that one of the themes of the new thinking in this century is the idea that security policy should have political accommodation as a primary and persistent aim. He further advocates for the emancipation of the individual as the actual security the state should be saddled with. To him emancipation means:

Freeing people from those constraints that stop them from carrying out work freely, they would choose to do of which war, poverty, oppression, and poor education are a few... It is emancipation, not power and order, in theory and practice that leads to stable security.

Dunmoye (2009) and Hank (2004) thinking along the same line posited that threats to national security can manifest when people are hungry, poor, homeless, fear about their immediate environment, entertain fear about their tomorrow, fear and tired about corrupt and visionless leaders, and fear about their stomach and pocket democracy demonstrated by those entrusted with offices-private or public

#### **Reasons Advanced for Ethnicity, Religious Extremism and Internal Security Crisis as Impediments to Intergroup relations in Nigeria**

Many Nigerian scholars and other stakeholders of the international community have identified the following, listed below as the main reasons nurturing and sustaining the embers of ethnicity, religious extremism and internal security threats in Nigeria.

- History of controversial censuses replete and coloured with controversy based on ethnic, regional and religious sentiments
- Inter-ethnic and communal protest on any issues termed 'not in our interest' no matter the liberal and rational views of others or those protesting.

- The principle of federal character (PFC). PFC is a derivative of the plurality of the Nigeria society. As laudable as this principle is, it has only encouraged mediocrity at the expense of meritocracy.
- Geo-political zoning of leadership which has led to the marginalization of the minorities in choice of leaders outside their zone. Dakeye 2009 and Otite, (2000).
- Wrong use of force by security agencies in the suppression, intimidation and subversion of popular will has further brewed distaste and animosity between the people and security personnel.
- Existence of ethnic and religious militias has multiple effects on society especially in our quest for intergroup relations. These militias are recruited by some political leaders to ferment trouble and disturb the relative peace the nation state need at this critical moment.
- The colonial period of Nigerian history witnessed an intolerant relationship between the different nationalities in Nigeria through the creation of ‘Sabon Gari’, ‘Tudun Wadan’, ‘Kaduna Christian South’, ‘Kaduna Muslim North’ Mission Schools, etc. All these encouraged and sustained disintegration instead of integration.
- Fear of domination among the Christian and Muslims faithful-which led to the introduction of western education in some parts of the North while it was introduced full scale in the South.
- On the political scene, religion has been so manipulated for political gains in Nigeria. To the Muslim good governance can only come through a member of the Muslim Umma hence, the others are second class citizens where there are Muslims. The Christians on their part have a phobia of the Muslim Sharia, which they fear would make them stateless and liable to attacks.
- In all, the Nigerian government (Federal, State and Local Government) has lost the moral authority to be the custodian of the people’s welfare. The governments seems unable to provide basic services to the people, check insurgencies, protect national interest, create the enabling environment for local and foreign investments. For example Adigun (2013) recently asked Why is there no power? The power problem in Nigeria is so endemic that people have lost hope of ever having power the way they should; and this is worrisome given that Nigeria has all it takes for constant power as experienced in Ghana.

### **Implications of Ethnicity, Religious Extremism and Internal Security Crisis to Inter-group Relations in Nigeria**

The implications of ethnicity, religious extremism and threats to national security are ill-wind that blows nobody good. It affects national interest and the cohesive aspirations of the country. We consider some of these effects;

- These disintegrative challenges have both short and long term consequences. In the short term, people become too cautious to transact with other groups and in the long term it may lead to devastation of lives, property and other resources.
- There has been increased urban violence coordinated by ethnic militia.
- Presently, secessionist movements have emerged such as the Boko Haram now agitating for the reconstruction of the Nigeria state on Islamic culture.
- Conflicts have destroyed the social fabric and basis for trust and mutual respect. It has induced serious fear into people such that many decline to inter relate.
- The deployment of government troops-the Nigeria police, the Army and others related forces to quell or control some of the internal security threats and religious violence is having adverse effect on the nation scarce resources.
- The incidence of mismanagement of state resources is well known and do not deserve our comment here. Except to agree that every kobo stolen in Nigeria contributes to national security threat. Leaders continue in this act because, they get ethnic or religious support when arrested to regain their freedom.
- These challenges have turned out to hinder effective political, economic and solid unification of the nation-state, efforts at nation building and a coherent national identity of the diverse ethnic groups.
- ‘Nigeria has witnessed a steady economic decline’ Adeze, (2009) courtesy of ethnic, religious and internal security crisis that is ravaging the country. As a matter of fact, foreign and local investors decline to make investment in volatile areas for fear of loosing their investments.
- Poor image in the international community. as a result of these disintegrative elements.
- Loss of human lives. Many lives have been sent to an early graves, courtesy of ethnicity, religious and internal security crisis. For example, when the “Boko Haram” attacked and invaded some part of Gwoza, Mumbi and Maiduguri 450 lives were lost. What a waste of nation’s human resources.

- Growing unemployment. The large scale of ethnic and religious crisis witnessed in this nation-state has discouraged investors especially the private sector.
- It has resulted in the instability of government because loyalties are fragmented by thoughts of fear and improbabilities, thereby destabilizes the institutions of national integration and intergroup relations.
- Labour flight of skilled graduates and professionals who go abroad to seek employment opportunities rather than stay and be engaged in productive activities for national development out of fear, threat and marginalization. Some Nigerian graduates prefer to live and work in Europe, America, and some Arab countries even with less salaries and loss of dignity.
- Ethnicity factor now forms the basis of any decision or policy made in the country.
- Again it's becoming more complex when people now talk of ethnicity and religious as elicited by the north-south dichotomy which in the recent past brought the country to a standstill as the Muslims dominated Kano and Kaduna engaged the resident Christians in a religious conflict. A reprisal attack was visited on the Muslim resident in Aba by the Christian's regional sentiment and federal character controversy abused by the majority groups in Nigeria.
- The implication of ethnicity, religious extremism and internal security threats/crisis on 21<sup>st</sup> century intergroup relations in Nigeria could be concluded that post colonial Nigerian emerged at independence as a nation state of a variety of nations loosely knotted together under the general nomenclature 'Nigeria', without any effective roots in the political psyche of the citizens Edohen, (2001).

#### **Some Integrative Mechanisms Adopted by Nigerian Governments towards Intergroup Relations**

- The constitution is one integrative measure of the Federal Republic of Nigeria when those of the regional constitutions were abolished before 1975.
- Federalism: This is a system in which governmental powers that exist in a state are shared constitutionally between the central authority and that of the components or federating units. Through this, the concept of national integration and internal-ethnic relations is given expression, Awolowo in Fagbamigbe (1981).



- Nation Anthem: A national anthem is intended to evoke a feeling of patriotism and make people of the country interact and work for the progress, unity and growth of the country among others.
- Revenue Allocation: To further strengthen intergroup relations for national ingratiation, revenues which are generated are pooled into a common fund, and shared thereafter to all tiers of government using agreed parameters. (See section 162 (2) of the 1999 constitution).
- Establishment of political parties with national spread of membership, activities, offices and leaders, to encourage inter group relations and integration. (See section 222(b) of the 1999 constitution and also section (223(2) of the same constitution.
- Federal character principle (FCP): The FCP states that the composition of the government of the federation or any of its agencies be carried out in such manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity and also command loyalty... (Section 14(3) of the 1999 constitution).
- State Creation: Decree No 14 of 1967 introduced by the Gen. Yakubu Gowon's regime created twelve states in Nigeria on May 27 1967; six in the north and six in the south so as to strengthen national unity. Along this trend, by 2009, the number of states has risen to thirty-six with the tendency of increasing further.
- Rotational Presidency and Rotation of Power: In its strong and determined desire to further strengthen the spirit of national unity, the still-born Gen. Sani Abacha's 1995 Constitution section 229(4) made provision for rotational presidency and rotation of power between the six geopolitical zones.
- Secularism Status of the government: The Federal Government of Nigeria has always upheld the secular status of Nigeria as enshrined in section 10 of the 1999 constitution.
- Enhancing the Human Security Threats in Nigeria: Through Poverty Alleviation Programs, Development of Basic Economic-Social Infrastructures, Establishment of the Economic and Finance Crime Commission (FFCC); the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other related offences ICPC; with other anti-graft agencies to check corruption, bad governance, and other unethical practices have been strengthened and refocused to help check issues of underdevelopment affect the nation-state.

- Recognition and financial support to Non-Governmental Organization (NGOS) to be actively involved in a wide variety of activities (political, economic and social) to help provide development and empowerment opportunities for grassroot communities and urban centres.
- Recent Government Synergy/Collaboration with some relevant agencies for Entrepreneurship, Vocational and Technical Education for Nigerian Youths. The followings are some of the agencies and institutions which the federal, states and local government are collaborating with for impartation of empowerment for the Nigerian citizens.
  - Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency (SMEDAN).
  - National Directorate of Employment (NDE)
  - National Office of Technology Acquisition and Promotion (NOTAP)
  - National Technology Incubation Centres NTIC for students' interest in production of animal livestock's.
  - Raw Material Research and Development Agencies (RMRDA).
  - Poverty Alleviation Programmes (PAP).
  - Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SUREP).
  - National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) and
  - State Economic Empowerment and Development strategy (SEEDS) other are:

These above listed agencies and some others established and managed by the government and some private agencies are providing empowerment of different type for the youths in the country but much is still needed for more youths to benefit.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has clarified the concepts of intergroup relation, ethnicity, religious extremism and national security crisis. It has shown the link between these challenges with the review using Nigeria as case study; it has indicated their implications on intergroup relations in Nigeria's 21<sup>st</sup> century and some integrative instruments established by the governments and other stakeholders. The sum points is that ethnicity, religious extremism and internal insecurity are still issues in Nigeria because of some inadequacies on the part of the governments and we made some recommendations that centred more on the enhancement of development through good governance among others.

### Recommendations

This paper recommends good governance good leadership and the rule of law as the preconditions for elimination of ethnicity, religious extremism and internal security threats in Nigeria. Nigerians must reflect on the intergroup relations of our ancestors before the imposition of colonial over-rule and embrace the good aspect for our own integration, religion tolerance and national security crisis which good governance, accountability, economic and social development, practice of true federalism, practice of the rule of law, and the use of intervention, dialogue, intercession by government agencies instead of the use of raw and brutal application of military might.

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