



## Causal analysis and new management proposals for ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria

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### Abstract

Observers generally agree that Nigeria offers one of the best case studies or examples of ethno-religious conflicts. Nigeria, which has more than 400 ethnic groups distributed among the two main religions (Christianity and Islam), has experienced a number of inter-religious conflicts since its independence that are estimated to have claimed over three million lives and caused incalculable material and psychological harm. In order to control this social phenomena, which is quickly turning into a permanent aspect of Nigeria's social landscape, this study investigates the manifestations of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria, their origins, and makes recommendations for new management measures.

**Keywords:** management, ethno-religious, Nigeria

### Introduction

Since its independence, Nigeria has remained a multi-ethnic nation state with over 400 ethnic groups, many of whom are affiliated with different religious sects. Nigeria has struggled to address both the issue of ethnicity and the issue of ethno-religious conflicts. This is so that various ethnic militias, such as the O' dua People Congress (OPC), the Bakassi Boys, the Egbesu Boys, the Ijaw Youth Congress (IYC), and the Igbo People Congress, have been created as a result of the phenomenon of ethnic and religious intolerance over the years (IPC).

Others include the Ohanaeze N'digbo (Daily Trust; 20/8/2016! p.; 16), the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), and the Arewa Peoples Congress (APC). Due to the rise of these ethnic militias and the severe ethnic divisions present, religious intolerance has escalated into a deadly, violent, and devastating phenomenon, with ethnic militias acting as the agents of an ethno-religious agenda.

Due to a lack of proper statistical data, it is true that it is impossible to determine the precise number of ethno-religious conflicts; however, it is interesting to note that roughly forty percent (40%) of such conflicts are attributed to the Fourth Republic of Nigeria. The fact that there has been a recent rise in the frequency of ethno-religious disputes in the nation makes it a topic that should be discussed in modern Nigeria and serves as a lesson for other countries across the world with multi-ethnic and multi-religious populations. Additionally, due to the violent nature of ethno-religious conflicts, which frequently manifest in riots, acts of sabotage, assassination, armed conflicts, guerilla warfare, and secession in Nigeria, it is clear that these conflicts have repercussions for the political and economic development of the nation, making them a topic that needs to be discussed. Given that there is a phenomenal recurrence of ethno-religious conflict across the nation, which raises the level of general insecurity, particularly in the areas where such conflicts had ever occurred, the debate of ethno-religious conflicts in whatever context even becomes more vital. The final section of this essay investigates the manifestations of ethno-religious conflicts

in Nigeria, their causes, and suggestions for new management tactics against this backdrop.

### Conflicts between Ethno-Religious Groups in Nigeria

In a multi-ethnic and multi-religious community, ethno-religious conflict refers to a scenario in which there is a lack of cordiality, mutual mistrust and fear, and a propensity for violent confrontation between members of different ethnic or religious groups. It's noteworthy to observe that in Nigeria, claims of racial and religious superiority as well as calls for local political autonomy and self-determination have all come to center upon discrimination towards different ethnic groups and religions. On the basis of distinct systems of socio-cultural symbols and religion, all of these can occasionally result in some types of contextual discrimination between members of one ethnic or religious group and those of another. Because of this, relationships between people in a multi-ethnic and religiously varied country like Nigeria may be marked by a lack of cordiality, mutual mistrust, and dread, as is the situation among the ethnic and religious groups in Nigeria. In fact, the reason that ethnic and religious conflicts have remained a constant feature of Nigeria as a country since the 1980s is due to the mutual mistrust and lack of goodwill among the various ethnic components.

Thus, there were ethnic and religious wars prior to the current democratic experience in Nigeria that resulted in the loss of a great number of lives and property (Mohammed, 2015). These crises include the Jimeta-Y ola religious disturbances (1984), the Zango Kataf crises in Kaduna State, and the maitatsine religious disturbances in sections of Kano and Maiduguri in the early 1980s (1992). Other incidents include the Muslim-Christian riots at Kafanchan College of Education, Muslim-Christian clashes at Kaduna Polytechnic (1981–1982), and the cross vs. crescent dispute at the University of Ibadan (1981-1985). The Bulumkutu Christian-Muslim Riots (1982), the Usman Danfodio University Sokoto (1982), and the Muslim-Christian Clash during a Christian procession at Easter in Ilorin, Kwara State are just a few examples of early ethno-religious confrontations (1986).

In light of the aforementioned context, this indicates that many regions of Nigeria have long since evolved into war zones, marked by an increasing number of ethnic and religious conflicts. However, the advent of the Fourth Republic has seen an upsurge in the rash of ethno-religious violence in Nigeria. Due to the freedom offered by democratic governance, ethno-religious conflicts have increased in frequency with the advent of democracy. A Hausa woman was accused by some Oro cultists in Sagamu, Ogun State, of leaving as the cultists were outside with their gnome, sparking the first leg of recent ethnic and religious disturbances in Nigeria. Conflict arose as a result, which eventually exploded into a crisis. Many individuals died, mostly from the Hausa and Yoruba tribes. However, the notoriety was only momentarily restrained when a nightfall to dawn curfew was enforced on the tranquil village of Sagamu. Unfortunately, since the infamy was delayed in Sagamu, retaliatory killings began in Kano, a significant Hausa metropolis. As a result, numerous individuals perished and billions of Naira's worth of property was destroyed. Southern-born Kano natives who had spent their entire adult lives in the historic city of Kano were forced to travel home to weigh their losses. When Kano City was preparing for peace, Lagos burst into another orgy of violence, clearly in retaliation for the mass murder of Yoruba tribe men in Kano. This time, the O'dua People Congress took action against the Hausa/Fulani vendors in the well-known "mile 12 market," and the region was used as a killing field for two days.

The Kaduna/Enugu riots were another ethno-religious conflict that made a significant impact on Nigeria. The implementation of the Islamic Legal Code (Sharia) by some governors of the northern states of Nigeria was the primary cause of this series of riots. The Islamic Legal Code was first introduced by Zamfara State Governor Ahmed Yerima in October 2019, to scattered but indifferent opposition. At first, there weren't many negative consequences from the demonstrations against the establishment of the Sharia law. But when Kaduna State Governor Mohammed Makarfi tried it in February 2000, the previously contained fire erupted. Due to the long-standing hostilities between Muslims and Christians in Kaduna State in general and the state capital in particular, as well as the fact that both groups are almost equal in population, the two went to war, and many people were slaughtered in cold blood.

The Igbo tribe, which is a predominately Christian ethnic group, was severely impacted by the Kaduna riots. But just like the Sagamu event, rioting broke out in Enugu and other Igbo cities when many Igbo returned dead and others who were fortunate enough to escape had tales of misery to tell because they too had been attacked by the Hausa/Fulani in Kaduna. It's vital to notice that the ethnic and religious unrest in Kaduna and Enugu has some characteristics that resemble the Nigerian civil war of 1967–1970. In other words, as law and order broke down in the two districts, the riots created enough force to trigger a civil war.

Another ethnoreligious dispute broke out in October 2000. The Lagos-(Idi-Araba/Oko-Oba) Kano myhems were this. This was caused by a miscommunication between Hausa and Yoruba residents of Idi-Araba, Lagos, about a Hausa resident's usage of a convenience; as a result of this miscommunication, numerous Yoruba people of the region were massacred with bows, arrows, and machetes. In response, the Yoruba militia known as the O' dua People

Congress entered the picture, making matters worse. Later, Oko-Oba, a Lagos suburb with a sizable Hausa/Fulani community, joined the chaos. Later, the violence moved to Kano, and as was to be expected, the victims predominately came from the south.

After years of violence, the ethnic conflict in Plateau State between the Tivs and Iunkuns peaked in September 2019. The ethnic unrest in September 2019 was brought on by what can be called a mistaken identity. This indicates that some Tivs mistook nineteen soldiers for Iunkuns while they were dressed in a phony army uniform. They were taken captive and executed one by one by the Tivs teenagers. The Nigerian army forces launched severe reprisal attacks in Zaki Biam. The capital of Plateau State, Jos, also joined the frenzy in the same month. This resulted from the local council chairmanship being given to a Christian. It's interesting to remember that by the time sanity returned to the city, the chaos had claimed the lives of almost 160 people.

A second mayhem occurred in Kano the next month of the same year, in October 2019. However, this was brought about by a global incident when terrorists attacked the World Trade Center's twin buildings in the United States. An additional outbreak of ethno-religious violence broke out in Kano not long after the United States began an operation against the Taliban administration in Afghanistan. In this instance, some Islamic fundamentalists decided to set the city of Kano on fire because they believed that the United States of America had no justification for bombing Afghanistan. The Southern tribes of Nigeria were primarily affected by the ethnic-religious conflict in Kano, as they had been by earlier crises in the city. All of the above-mentioned crises, which have taken place both before and after democracy was established in 2019, serve as stark reminders that conflict hotbeds exist throughout the nation and are constantly simmering and ready to erupt at the slightest provocation. It is clear from the various ethnoreligious conflict examples given that there is no clear dividing line between ethnic and religious conflict. This implies that a conflict that starts as an ethnic one could turn into a religious one, and vice versa. This explains why ethnic and religious conflicts in Nigeria always have disastrous consequences.

### **Nigeria's Ethno-Religious Conflicts' Root Causes: A Review**

The ethno-religious strife that has engulfed the nation as previously described serves as a sharp warning that there are many conflict hotspots around the nation that might still go off at any moment. This demonstrates how ethnic and religious disputes are pervasive evils that, according to Jega (2016:36), constantly push the limits of togetherness to a possibly breaking point. What are the reasons for these ethnic and religious conflicts in Nigeria, which is the most sensible inquiry that follows from the foregoing?

Ethno-religious conflict, as we have seen so far in this essay, differs from other forms of social conflict in that it involves ethnic groups that practice several religions. It is crucial to note at this point that the bulk of the social conflicts that the Nigerian people have experienced involve both religious and ethnic components when analyzing the causes of ethnoreligious conflict in that country. Therefore, religion and ethnicity as they manifest in Nigeria have emerged as key components in interreligious violence.

People complain of past and present religious and ethnic discrimination, demand religious or ethnic rights in their state, and, most importantly, the state itself uses religion or ethnicity in political discourse or action. People experience religious or ethnic discrimination on various levels and at various times. The aforementioned indicates that there are multiple causes of ethno-religious conflict. Therefore, it is important to take this into account while discussing the causes of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria.

The claims and allegations of persecution, victimization, discrimination, marginalization, nepotism, and bigotry are a prominent factor in what we today perceive to be ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria. There is no universally accepted system for allocating wealth, power, and status among individuals and organizations in any country, Nigeria included. Additionally, there is no consensus on how to implement the required reforms and modifications. This is so that certain organizations' goals can be achieved while others are not, as different groups and people have different interests. This indicates that attempts by underprivileged groups and individuals to get a larger share of power and riches or to alter the prevalent values, norms, beliefs, or ideologies generally result in conflict, including ethnic and religious conflicts. In Nigeria, it appears that politics, ethnicism, and religion interact negatively, which has resulted in a rise in nationalism and militancy among different ethnic and religious organizations. This is supported by the several examples of ethno-religious conflicts given previously in this study. It's noteworthy to observe that this has had the overall effect of escalating the different ethno-religious disputes that are currently being seen across the nation in an effort to counter any perceived oppression, dominance, or marginalization.

Important to notice is that Nigerian authorities have failed to create effective institutions, foster national unity, and advance what may be described as real economic progress, which has resulted in widespread poverty and unemployment. Conflicts of a communal, ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic nature have now come to characterize Nigeria as a nation. Because Nigeria currently has a stock of poor individuals who warmonger as mercenary soldiers, poverty and unemployment have thus acted as a nursery bed for various ethno-religious conflicts in the nation. Theoretically, this means that unemployment and poverty increase the amount of people who are willing to kill or be killed for a certain cause with minimal benefit. This explains why a huge number of people—including children—have participated in fighting in every ethno-religious crisis that has ever taken place in Nigeria.

The disintegration of social control mechanisms including the family, education, law, religion, and political system that typified traditional African cultures and looked out for the welfare of its residents is a significant factor in the emergence of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria. In fact, the breakdown of all these significant institutions has exacerbated racial and ethnic tensions in Nigeria. For example, the inability of many households to make ends meet due to the family income tends to promote immorality, broken fatherless/motherless houses, divorces, and alcoholism, leading once more to a sizable pool of youngsters who could be used to carry out ethno-religious conflicts. It is also crucial to remember that the Nigerian educational system is in chaos today and is unable to even effect sound information, much less inculcate discipline and

the necessary type of morality. The religious organization is likewise failing to fulfill its promised tasks, while law enforcement officials openly and shamelessly commit crimes, demand bribes, and collect unlawful tolls from vehicles. All of the aforementioned send the wrong message to society and promote social vices, which serves as the basis for disputes in general.

Long-term military involvement in politics has a tendency to promote and legitimate the use of violence and force as tools for enacting social change and achieving predetermined objectives. From this, it is conventional to conclude that Nigerian body politics have developed a culture of using coercion and force to resolve disputes as a holdover from the military era. Uncontrolled arms supplies have accelerated the onset of conflicts and encouraged belligerents to continue hostilities rather than negotiate a peaceful resolution. This is closely connected. The disputes between different ethnic and religious groups in Nigeria also have certain historical roots, which is quite important. This is due to the fact that numerous state acts taken both during and after colonial rule greatly fostered the sowing of the seeds of the ethno-religious conflicts that are now pervasive in the Nigerian nation. Ikejiani Clark (2015) noted that numerous events in Nigeria over the years have contributed to the development of mistrust, intolerance, violence, and tense ties between the predominantly Muslim north and Christian south of the country. To this point, Ikejinai-Clark said that since the colonial era, there has unintentionally been an insertion of ethno-religious prejudice and incompatibility in the architecture of the Nigerian State. For instance, in 1931, the colonial government, under the direction of Governor Donald Cameron, discouraged the mixing of religions. This is demonstrated by a governor's recommendation. In order to ensure the stability of indirect rule, the Governor instructed the Christian missions to tread lightly in Moslem areas. The political events of the coup on January 15, 1966, and the countercoup in July 1966, further solidified Nigeria's ethno-religious structure. This is because the coup-related killings and counter-killings took on racial and religious overtones when Christian- and Muslim-dominated tribes in the south were pitted against one another.

A number of politico-religious issues on the international stage have some relationship with the ethno-religious disputes in Nigeria. According to Albert (2015), the Middle Eastern developments can be linked to Nigeria's religious crises. In this regard, he noted that with the end of the cold war and the rise of Islamism (a global social and political philosophy), religious concerns have been particularly prominent. Muslims all across the world, but especially those in the Middle East, were determined to resent the "socio-economic deprivation and psychological estrangement that emerge from failed modernization and excessive westernization in the post-cold war world" with the help of this new Islamic philosophy. This new Islamist worldview has also been linked to the recent rise in terrorist attacks across the globe (Cordesman, 2013; Booth and Dunne, 2016).

It is important to realize that the problem caused by the new Muslim ideology was not unique to the Middle East because developing nations with sizable Muslim populations are particularly vulnerable to militant forms of Islamism in the Middle East due to the global rise in feelings of relative deprivation and alienation. This explains why, from this

perspective, the rise in religious violence in Northern Nigeria (a Muslim-dominated region) since the 1980s is understandable. When the then-Nigerian Minister of International Affairs attempted to relate Nigeria's development difficulties to the world political economy in 1983, the impact of foreign factors on ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria became clear. The Federal Government of Nigeria believed that many of the ethno-religious crises had foreign support, and as a result, it issued an order requiring foreigners without valid visas to leave the nation within a fortnight. This deportation order's primary justification was that the immigrants' presence at the time jeopardized Nigeria's economic and political security (Albert, 2015). The government's action was specifically justified by the 1980 maitatsine riots, which were organized by Marwa, a Cameroonian. Major General Tunde Idiagbon brought out the foreign involvement in the ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria back in 1985 as well. He warned Nigerians about the crises' imminence and the outside assistance some religious fundamentalists were receiving in this area (Ilori, 1987:25).

The engagement of non-Nigerians in a number of urban insurgencies is another indication of the foreign involvement in ethno-religious issues in Nigeria. These foreigners have been discovered to actively take part in ethnic clashes throughout the nation, particularly in the Northern region between their Hausa-Fulani Muslim neighbors and the Christian-dominant "strangers" from southern Nigeria living among them. An altercation that began between an Igbo vendor and a Fulani security guard at the Sabongari Kano market spread to involve the entire city, and several non-Nigerians from neighboring African nations were apprehended supporting the Hausa-Fulani Muslims (Kano state, 1995:1617).

Along with the aforementioned, it is significant to remember that foreign preachers frequently contribute to the resurgence of ethno-religious crises in Nigeria. For instance, the religious upheaval in Kano in 1991 was linked to Evangelist Richard Bonnke's proposal to lead a campaign there called "Kano for Jesus." Serious problems between the Muslim and Christian populations loomed simply because the government had earlier barred a Muslim preacher from South Africa from entering Kano to preach in the city.

The theoretical framework developed by Ted Rober Gurr and used by him to explain ethno-religious conflicts can be used to summarize the causes of ethno-religious conflicts that have been examined thus far. Gurr's theoretical framework blends the group mobilization strategy with the relative deprivation strategy first introduced in his seminal book, "Why Men Rebel." Gurr's fundamental theory is relatively straightforward and is believed to be helpful in describing the kinds of ethno-religious conflicts that exist in Nigeria. The Gurr model includes three steps. First, he asserted that when an ethnic or religious group is discriminated against, it develops grievances. Second, these complaints aid in the political action mobilization of the racial or religious minority. Third, a minority is more likely to participate in political action, such as protest and insurrection, the more mobilized it is.

Therefore, it is instructive to note that religious discrimination and religious grievances based on such discrimination influence the level of protest and/or rebellion that the various ethno-religious groups in Nigeria engage in in Nigeria and from the various examples of ethno-religious

conflicts cited earlier. For instance, the advent of Sharia in Zanzara State and certain other regions of Northern Nigeria was prompted by a group's religious beliefs, which had an impact on other groups that did not share those beliefs. As we have seen, those measures violated those other groups' rights and sparked a contentious reaction. This holds true whether the group being violated has a dominating or subordinate position in society. All of the ethno-religious conflicts that we have seen in Nigeria fit this thesis.

### **Nigerian Proposals for a New Management Approach to Ethno-Religious Conflicts**

The multiple instances of ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria that were examined and discussed in the earlier section of this essay demonstrate that these conflicts are numerous and are only continuing to multiply. The government has always been challenged by the frequency of these ethno-religious disputes and their effects on the socioeconomic well-being of the Nigerian people.

As a result, various management strategies have been required to bring them under control. As a result, Nigerian governments in both the past and the present have been addressing the issues brought on by the numerous ethno-religious disputes in the nation. However, the responses from the various governments to these interethnic and interreligious disputes have been haphazard and unplanned.

For instance, Omorogbe and Omohan (2015) <sup>[9]</sup> claim that only two main conflict management techniques are frequently used by Nigerian governments to address the issue of ethno-religious conflicts whenever they arise. They refer to coercive and judicial procedures as their two strategies.

The coercive strategy, as its name suggests, involves sending troops into conflict zones in an effort to contain the situation. Depending on the severity of the crises at hand, Nigeria's use of this strategy for resolving interethnic disputes has taken many different shapes. For example, in a minor ethno-religious dispute, the traditional police are called to the scene initially and are later assisted by mobile policemen if the traditional corps is unable to handle the situation. However, if an ethno-religious conflict becomes very violent, the government may be forced to mobilize a unified military force that consists of the army, navy, and air force. However, due to the militarized nature of this type of intervention, the coercive method is typically linked to numerous crimes such as rape, beatings, and occasionally shootings of defenseless civilians (Omorogbe and Omohan, 2015; 556) <sup>[9]</sup>. As a result, this strategy for resolving ethnic and religious disputes has not been effective. According to Oromaregake and Akpator (2015), the issue with sending security forces (troops) into conflict zones to end the crisis is as follows.

The issue with deploying security personnel without a strong mediation effort is that it unnecessarily extends the time that these security troops are stationed in various locations of Nigeria. This is due to the fact that the mobile police or army forces routinely used to put down riots in Nigeria neither have the authority nor the training to serve as mediators (p. 601).

According to the verse previously cited, sending military to a crisis situation is never a wise way to handle the problem of interfaith conflict. Such troops always create more issues than they are expected to fix because they receive

insufficient conflict management training. In other words, they contribute to the issue they were asked to solve.

The appointment of a judicial commission or panel continues to be the second most important management technique utilized by the Nigerian government to address ethnic and religious disputes. The approach entails choosing individuals from a variety of backgrounds to look into the issues and make a report to the government based on the guidelines provided to the panel. This type of panel frequently solicits memos, schedules public hearings, and visits crisis areas. Such visits are intended to obtain a first-hand evaluation of the severity of the crisis (Ibid: 557).

In Nigeria, the judicial approach to conflict management has not been successful. Oromareghake and Akpator (2015) claim that such an approach has actually caused more bitterness than it has alleviated. Omorogbe and Omohan (2015) <sup>[9]</sup> provided commentary on the causes of the different failures of these two approaches to managing or resolving ethno-religious conflicts in the Nigerian context.

The main causes of the underwhelming performance of the frequently employed conflict management mechanisms are poor logistics, delays in the deployment of troops to the crisis areas, a lack of cooperation on the part of the parties to the conflicts, and the failure of the government to implement any white papers or recommendations made by the panel of inquiry, among other factors (P.577).

Due to all of the aforementioned factors, the two conflict management techniques that Nigeria has consistently used at various crisis points have not produced very encouraging outcomes in terms of effectively resolving the ethno-religious conflicts that have been a feature of the Nigerian political system.

Given the aforementioned facts, more comprehensive and well-articulated conflict resolution and conflict avoidance programs are required. Depending on the situation, such programs ought to be able to successfully end and avoid ethno-religious conflict. In order to help settle or prevent ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria, the article makes the following suggestions for conflict management. The government at all levels should work together to transition from the stage of conflict resolution to that of conflict prevention as a first step in resolving the issue of ethno-religious conflict. For this new process to be successful, the government needs to be more dedicated to providing each state with enough and effective security that can react quickly to any resurgence of ethno-religious crises anywhere at any moment. It is vital to note that the security organization that will serve this goal effectively must have sufficient and cutting-edge security infrastructure as well as training that will improve their capacity for swift response to interethnic and interreligious conflicts.

Government at all levels must support effective and functional platforms for ethno-religious leaders in their domains in order to make it possible to create a network for conflict prevention and management. This is another step in managing ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria. This suggestion is required since, in most conflict zones in Nigeria, the various governmental, religious, traditional, and ethnic leaders hardly ever gather to talk about what causes ethno-religious violence and how to stop it in the future. This implies that leaders rarely met in Nigeria, a country with a troubled history of interethnic and interreligious violence, to create understanding and mutual trust necessary to support a multiethnic society. As a result, leaders

frequently participate in the problems that they are supposed to be resolving rather than being part of or initiating the solution. A step in the right direction that will help heal religious and ethnic barriers is the recent government resolution to create a National Council of Traditional Rulers. However, it is recommended that such a council be enlarged to include ethnic, political, and religious leaders, and that the government support the already-existing Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC).

In managing the ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria, the civil society also has a significant role to play. Both Imobighe (2013) <sup>[3]</sup> and Ikelegbe (2013) have emphasized the need of civil society involvement in resolving ethno-religious disputes. The civil society can effectively intervene by concentrating attention on factors such as social organization and structural patterns of interaction, the types of violence used, the values of the parties involved, the causes of the conflict, the degree of goal incompatibility, and other factors (Omorogbe and Omohan, 2015:557-558) <sup>[9]</sup>.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Nigeria have unique roles to play in conflict management, much like the civil society. Therefore, all levels of government should support NGOs to do research and develop programs for neighborhood communities that promote environmental, civic, religious, and peace education (E nukara, 2015: 633). In particular, the NGOs should be set up so that they can act as mediators for talks between opposing parties.

In addition to all of the aforementioned procedures, the Nigerian government should improve the Public Complaint Bureau agency, which already exists in each of the Federation's states. The parties to the issue will be able to air their grievances through this facility so that the proper government agencies can take the necessary action. A systematic program of political and social reorientation for all citizens should also be implemented. Such political and social views will significantly contribute to eradicating the unfavorable stereotypes and ideals that have long defined the Nigerian people. Specifically, the National Orientation Agency (NOA), the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPS), Political Parties, and National Associations (like the National Youth Council, Nigeria Council of Women Society (NCWS)) should be strengthened in their various assignments as bridge builders that will deter the spirit of division among Nigerians and foster oneness, which is necessary for developing one nation with one dissenting voice.

Above all, the government must be pluralistic, representative, and just in its treatment of Nigerian residents if it is to resolve the issue of ethno-religious disputes in that country. Regarding matters of development and religion, it ought to forbid all kinds of prejudice, negligence, and marginalization. To limit the pool of potential recruits for ethno-religious conflicts, the government should likewise focus on reducing poverty among Nigerians.

## Conclusion

In this essay, we focused on the reasons and solutions to the issue of ethno-religious strife in Nigeria. From a theoretical standpoint, it is first important to note that the numerous ethno-religious conflicts that exist in Nigeria have a long history and are typified by violent clashes between the various ethnic and religious groups that make up the

Nigerian nation. According to the text, there are many different factors that contribute to these ethnoreligious disputes. The failure of Nigerian leaders to establish effective governments, the disintegration of traditional social control mechanisms, the long history of military intervention in politics, which justifies the use of force and violence as tools of social change and the achievement of goals, are just a few of the causes mentioned and discussed in this paper.

Despite the prevalence of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria and their lengthy history, the article demonstrates that both previous and current Nigerian administrations have fallen short in their efforts to address this issue through well-thought-out policy initiatives. Due to the government's continued reliance on coercive methods and constant usage of white papers coming from them, the country's track record in managing conflicts has been bad. Since inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflicts are unavoidable in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society like Nigeria, the paper has proposed the following mechanisms for conflict management: the government should shift from the stage of conflict resolution to that of conflict prevention; provide adequate and effective security in each state that will respond promptly to any ethno-religious insurgence; establish a functional and effective platform for ethno-religious leaders.

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