

Type: Research Article

ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA: A THREAT TO THE QUEST FOR NATIONAL INTEGRATION

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Nigeria as an independent nation cannot discuss her history without recounting her sad experience of one conflict or the other. Notable among these conflicts are those of communal, political and ethno-religious conflicts which often result in destructive violence. Out of all these, ethno-religious conflicts appear to have more implications to national development, security and integration in Nigeria. This paper is an empirical survey of existing literature through secondary investigations. The paper posits that colonialism and its capitalist ideological underpinnings and the transplanting of the same character traits to Nigeria bourgeoisie elements largely accounts for the ethnic

The Indonesian Journal of International Clinical Legal Education

DOI: [10.15294/ijicle.v4i1.50116](https://doi.org/10.15294/ijicle.v4i1.50116)

Submitted: Sept 21, 2021 Revised: Dec 11, 2022 Accepted: Jan 15, 2022

Available online at <https://journal.unnes.ac.id/sju/index.php/iccle>

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divide pervading the Nigerian system. Over and above this argument is the malicious ethnic structures initially created by colonialism which has brought about continuous and contending ethnic strife in the Nigerian state to date. The position of this paper is also that the new trend of criminality and the gory tradition of terrorism and security lapses ravaging the country in most states of the North during the Jonathan's administration and most states of the North-Central during the Buhari's administration is akin to ethnic and sectional sentiments as well as ethnic bias. In view of this, the paper therefore attempts to draw explanations on why ethno-religious conflicts have become a permanent feature of Nigeria and its implications to national integration. This paper further takes a peep into the effects of ethno-religious conflicts on economic development in Nigeria. The paper sums up with policy recommendations and conclusion for peaceful co-existence in the 21st century.

Keywords: *Ethnicity, Religion, National Integration, Nigeria*

I. INTRODUCTION

Ethno-religious conflicts in Nigerian state are the main challenge to the achievement of national integration. It is a commonplace fact that Nigeria is a multi-ethnic nation state with socio-cultural differences between its component ethnic groups all of which have resulted into cultural dissimilarity. This cultural dissimilarity has been manifested by, for instance, the differences in language, diet, dress and types of social system (Salawu & Hassan, 2011). Today, rather than integrating into a cohesive community with a common sense of identity and destiny, citizens of Nigeria are returning more and more to primordial affiliations for identity, loyalty and security. Instead of forging a united front and presenting a concerted effort to face the challenges of development in an increasing competitive and globalized world, Nigerians are busy waging ethnic and religious wars, struggling for control over mineral resources, resisting marginalization by dominant ethnic groups, and contending with diverse problems of basic survival (Fatile & Adejuwon, 2006).

Historically, ethno-religious conflicts that Nigerian state had witness since independence owing their origin to the expression of socio-economic and political deprivation of the affected ethnic and religious

groups. According to Usman (2003), the Zango-katat riot of April 11, 1992 was about the relocation of market, was viewed as the kataf resentment of Hausa-Fulani domination of cultural, political and economic life in Zango-kataf. Also, Fwa (2003) pointed out that the Hausa-Fulani Community who are settlers controlled the market and the Kataf Community who see themselves as the real indigenes became angry which resulted to riot that leaving over 27 lives loss. Also, the Jos crises of September 13, 2001 and November 8, 2008 are a result of struggle between indigenes and settlers to have access to decision-making, political representation and economic control. In the course of this, ethnicity and religion become a vital tools to be used in the achievement of political power and economic control.

Predictably, the mixtures of ethnicity and religion faith have taken the strife to unimaginable, deadly heights. Many villages in Nigeria have been leveled, neighbours who had lived in harmony for decades have turned on one another with murderous fervour, thousands of lives have been loss, numerous buildings and other valuables have been razed, the cities and indeed states that used to hold a lot of attraction for tourists, especially Jos now find it hard to sustain even the love of the indigenes and fear has become a common denominator in Nigeria. Therefore, a discussion of the effects of ethno-religious conflicts on national development, security and integration in Nigeria is or seems to be highly desirable. It even becomes necessary given the cry of political marginalization coming from various ethnic groups in the new democracy. It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to look at the challenges posed by ethno- religious conflicts on Nigeria's match towards national integration.

II. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

A. Ethnicism

Like any other terminology employed by social scientists, the concept of ethnicism is a term that does not lend itself to easy definition. To fully understand this, some related concepts like 'ethnic group' and 'ethnicity' need to be defined. According to Cohen (1974) ethnic group is an informal interest group whose members are distinct from the members of other ethnic groups within the larger society because they share kinship, religious and linguistic ties. This means that ethnic groups are social formations, which are distinguished by the communal character of their boundaries (Nnoli, 1978). In an explanation of the idea above, Nnoli, emphasized that the most important or crucial variable in ethnic identity is language. This then means that an ethnic group consists of those who

are themselves alike by virtue of their common ancestry, language and culture, and who are so regarded by others (Salawu & Hassan, 2011). Ethnicity on the other hand means the interaction among members of many diverse groups (Nnoli, 1978). Also, Osaghae (1992) defined ethnicity as a social formation resting upon culturally specific practices and a unique set of symbols and cosmology. Therefore, ethnicity is a phenomenon, which involves interaction among various ethnic groups and which by itself does not pose any serious threat to either development or democracy, national security, and national integration. On the contrary, it is the phenomenon of negative ethicism (a hangover of ethnicity), which is the rejective attitude towards those regarded as outsiders that threatens development, national security and national integration (Salawu & Hassan, 2011; Edewor, Aluko & Folarin, 2014; Koku, 2015).

In the context of this paper, the term ‘ethnicism’ denotes ethnic loyalty. This is the feeling of attachment to one’s ethnic group (Pepple, 1985). A survey of political scenario in Nigeria since independence will show the extent to which ethnic loyalty has affected the nation’s dream to have democratic governance (Adagbabiri & Okolie, 2017). Ethnic loyalty has had a lot of negative consequences for the nation’s movement towards democratization and national integration to extent that it remains an enduring threat to institutionalization of democracy in Nigeria. Among its resultant negative consequences as observed by Babangida (2002) and Adagbabiri & Okolie (2017), are wastage of enormous human and material resources in ethnically inspired violence, encounters, clashes and even battles, heightening of fragility of the economy and political process, threat to security of life and properties and disinvestments of local and foreign components with continuous capital flight and lost of confidence in the economy, and increasing gaps in social relations among ethnic nationalities including structural suspicions and hate for one another. Currently, Nigeria lacks the necessary democratic values, social security and distributive justice and hence, the rampant social unrest in the polity.

A conclusion that can be drawn from our discussion so far is that it has led us to belief that ethnicism leads to primordial sentiments in multi-ethnic society. The ideology of ethnicity therefore finds expression in sectionalism, prebendalism and it is in itself a manifestation of outward show of support or lack of support for persons occupying places of authorities in a nation’s psyche (Ogundiya, 2010). Incidentally, however, ethnicity breeds hate, suspicion, lack of support for perceived ‘foreigner’ in the helm of affairs of governance, insecurity and strange group agitations, tension and socio-political instability and hence, calls for a swift change of government. Whichever angle one looks at ethnicity, it is clear that the political trajectory in Nigeria since independence in 1960

has been those of very serious ethnic arithmetics either in terms of struggle and competition for space, mobilization of support for those in government, creation and making of artificial violence in Nigeria; and, even war of words (Esidene, 2012). All of these have propelled the Nigerian state into peaceful oblivion and things are really falling apart on daily basis which the government seems not to be strong enough to forestall emerging trends of insecurity in the country. These happenings is a pointer to the politics of self, egotism and sectionalism which has been part of the Nigerian project since the colonial masters left the shores of Nigeria to date.

B. Religion

Religion as the oldest discipline in human society is the most difficult concept to define. This is based on the fact that many people have different perspectives according to their disciplines and also because religion has several segments from which people approach it. Religion therefore, is an elusive and imprecise concept. It is difficult to define with precision and objectivity because it is emotion laden (Ngele, 2008; Egwu, 2011). Religion has been variously defined as a belief pattern of an individual making him or her to commune with a superior but unseen power. It is rather a function of morality, spiritually which creates a balance, maintenance of order, and harmony in the human society. It therefore, has the capability of producing good citizens in our society (Akinlaye, 2003). According to Ayinla (2003) and Danjibo (2012), religion is defines as a particular system or set of systems in which doctrines, myths, rituals, sentiments, and other similar elements are interrelated. More comprehensive definition of religion was offered by Ekwunife (1992:1) as “man’s awareness and recognition of his dependent relationship on a transient Being- the Wholly Order, expressible in human society through beliefs, worship and ethnical or moral behaviour”. Here, the Clergy recognized or appreciated man’s knowledge of a higher Being more than him which is the origin of faith in religion. Ngele (2008) observe that every religion in relation to policies functions as a catalyst to man’s ultimate problems. Alao (2015) also view religion as man’s interaction to that which he regards as Holy regardless of whether the Holy Being is supernatural or even personal to the individual. It is a known fact that religion controls man, his value and environment. It is also a known fact that some individuals will die for it (Odeh, 2010).

Nigeria is pluralistic in terms of religious beliefs. It is a secular state and there are three major religious beliefs; the Islamic faith, Christian faith, and African Traditional faith; all of which play significant role in our national life. However, the most popular and dominant

religious in present day Nigeria are Islam and Christianity. Nigerians are regarded as committed religious people even if the practice has not translated to peaceful co-existence, harmony, and progressive socio-economic development (Alao, 2015). Religion is said to be a pivotal factor of conflicts in multi-ethnic and religious societies such as Sudan and Nigeria. Observations show that violence is intricately linked with religion in Sudan and other countries in Africa where a strong religious ring is associated with ethnicity and nationalism (Danjibo, 2012). In Nigeria, indigenous Muslims are in large numbers in Noerth - East states and are in small minority in the south-south while practitioners of African traditional religion can be found all over the country. Some are syncretistic, combining Islam or Christianity with traditional religion (Yakubu & Rothfuss, 2012). In the South-East, Christianity dominants. Therefore, one would think that the presence of these religions would foster peace-coexistence and unity in a multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic society like Nigeria but multi-religiosity has tended to impact negatively on the nation creating tension and social unrest. This made Dukor (1988) to affirm that religion is not a concept which is intrinsically bad, it is rather an integrating force. Religion as a disintegrating force is attributable to the organizers, the organization, the preachers, the preaching, the propagators, and the propagation of religions.

According to Salawu (2010), in the last two decades, religion has been at the heart of most violent conflicts in the word. This may be the reason why religion has been referred to as one of the key security challenges facing humanity since after the end of the Cold War (Nwankwo, 2015). Religion that supported or promoted peace and salvation has been used to mar rather than make our nation Nigeria. This was possible because of the powerful controlling influence the religions has in human existence. With this, religion is used as a veritable tool for political mobilization, fulfillment of parochial and selfish interest, and ethno-sectional aspiration (Odeh, 2010). Also, Jega (2002:22) observed that “socio-ethnic conflicts are deflected and fought under inter-religious banner. This is because there is a strong overlap between ethnic and religious boundary in Nigeria’s plural setting”. Lending credence to the above, Adejo (2002:248) asserted that “each conflict does not just happen..., they are rooted in some basic dissatisfaction or grievances which await detonation at the slightest opportunity”. From the foregoing, therefore, religious values are now manipulated by political anarchists to perpetuate violence and terror by making it as an avenue for expressing socio-economic and political grievances. Koku (2015) also pointed out that the question of personal gain, political, selfish ends, egocentrism, question for power to dominate, made the agitators to use religion as a cover. This has led to suspicion and unhealthy rivalry among the diverse ethnic groups including adherents of Islam and Christianity.

In Nigeria, the clash of religion is usually between Islam and Christianity. Muslims and Christians allow religious identity to generate avoidable conflicts which tolerance could have contained. This made Danjibo (2012) to affirm that modernization theory has not succeeded in sending religion to the grave. Judging by incidence of religious conflict, the Northern region has become the hotbed of religious extremism (Yakubu & Rothfuss, 2012) making people scamper for safety and turning many into refugees in their own country. The recent upsurge of Boko Haram Islamic fundamentalism, which detests western education and Christianity, has exacerbated the conflicts already in existence. Thus, the religious-political history of Nigeria is characterized by unprecedented upsurge in ethnic and religious conflicts leading to loss of lives and looting or destruction of valuable properties worth billions of Naira.

C. Conflict

Conflict has been defined by scholars in different ways, but it's origin comes from the Latin word 'Configere' which means to strike together, but on technical level it is defined as opposition among social entities directed against one another (Wright, 1990 cited in (Koku, 2015). This means that people in the society are either in cooperation or in opposition. Similarly, Aboki (2004) viewed conflict as a struggle over values or claims to status, power and scarce resources. Schmid (2000) asserted that conflict is about incompatibility among values, where the achievement of one value can be realize only at the expense of some other values. He posit for that conflict is serious competition between two or more groups, each of which aim at gains advantage of power, resource interests, values, and needs over the others. There is a general agreement among scholars that conflict is a normal character in the interaction between human beings, whether in their individual's capacities or in groups and the aims of the opponent or group is mainly to neutralize, injure or eliminate the rivals (Bercoritch & Zartman, 2009). Therefore, conflict is the manifestation of dissatisfaction among individuals or groups. It can also manifest as a result of the struggle for power and material gain by leaders and followers alike.

To have a thorough grasp of conflict, therefore, one must cautiously examine the various actors and their interrelationship in each conflict situation (Wolff, 2006). Also, material value or economic viability of the territory is vital in conflict dynamics. For instance, if the territory is rich in natural resources such as oil, gold, diamond, timber or if there are cultural attachments to the territory, there would be more stakes in it. Similarly, Otite (1990) argued that most conflicts in Nigeria are premised on land space and resource competitions; disputed

jurisdiction of traditional rulers; creation and location of local government council headquarters; scarce political and economic resources; micro and macro social structures of Nigeria; population growth; and disregard for cultural symbols. Conflict may either be violence or non-violence. Notably, what constitutes violence and non-violence conflicts varies depending on the context or perception of the legitimate in the rule over men of authority (Wolff, 2006). Violence in this context can be categorized to be physical and psychological. Physical violence is an act that palpably involves physical means such as bombardment, whipping, stabbing to death, over powering, poisoning, forceful intrusion, malevolent intrusion among others. Its destructive effects are swift and direct. On the other hand, psychological violence is an act that involves brainwashing, indoctrination, and threat. Its destructive effects are gradual and cumulative (Turpin & Kurtz, 1999).

D. National Integration

The concept of integration has been variously defined by historians, political scientists, and social anthropologists. The consensus in these definitions is that, it is the cord that binds or holds a society (geopolitical clime) together for their mutual benefits. According to Ojo (2005), integration is the process of unifying a society which tends to make it a harmonious city, based upon an order its members regarded as equitably harmonious. Ogunojemite (2000) sees integration as a political phenomenon which covers a range of human relationships and attitudes. That is, the integration of diverse and discrete cultural loyalties and the development of a sense of nationality; the integration of the rulers and the ruled, and the integration of the citizens into a common political process. Applied this way, integration is meant to create homogeneity out of heterogeneity, and reduce or eliminate parochial attachment to cultural and regional political identities. Integration comes in five different ways: territorial integration; value integration; elite-mass integration; integrative behaviour; and national integration. However, our focus will be on national integration. According to Oni and Ogundiwin (2009), National integration refers to the building of a national state but of disparate social, economic, religious, ethnic, and geographical elements which entails the translation of diffused and unorganized sentiments of nationalism into a spirit of citizenship through the creation of state institution that can translate into policies, programmes, and aspirations of the citizenry. For Jega (2002), national integration is a situation in which citizens of a country increasingly see themselves as one people, bound by share historical experiences and common values, and imbued by the spirit of patriotism and unity, which transcends traditional and primordial diverse tendencies. In post-colonial societies, such as Nigeria,

in particular, it embodies a strategy of forging unity in diversity, and connotes a striving to be a unified people in a modern, colonially created, nation-state. National integration has become a major post-independence project, which was perceived to be necessary and critical to national progress and development. It sought to create patriotic citizens out of disparate, often antagonistic groups (Edewor *et al.*, 2014).

Indeed, while at the level of rhetoric, national leaders espoused beliefs in, and commitments to, national integration. At the level of real politics, they simultaneously pursued ethno-religious, regional and other divisive agendas, whipping primordial sentiments and generating conflicts which further disunite rather than integrate the people. This tendency reached its peak under prolonged military rule. Clearly, there is a connection and relationship between the failure of purported efforts at national integration, as evidenced by increased violent political and communal conflicts, and socio-economic instability, which in no small measure, is a constraint to progress and development. In fact, the democratization process of the last couple of years has been exploited to pursue division and potentially disintegrating agendas by reckless members of the political class. Ethno-religious jingoists and warlords have used the relatively expanded political spaces created by democratization to push extremist notions of self-determination, resource control, and political restructuring in Nigeria (Edewor *et al.*, 2014).

From the foregoing, ethno-religious conflict can be described as those ethnic conflicts that assume to be religious conflicts. This transformation of ethnic conflicts to religious is a result of ethnic groups identification with a particular religion (Koku, 2015). Ethno-religious conflict is the clash, contention, confrontation, battle, rivalry, controversy or quarrel among ethno-religious groups. Ethno-religious conflict stem from an irreconcilable posture with regards to symbolic values to the groups concerned. These symbolic values which cannot be compromised, are religion and language (Uhunmwangho & Epelle, 2011). In all political activities in Nigeria, the factor of ethnicity is reflected. It is particularly obvious in areas like voting, distribution of political offices, employment and government general patronage of the citizens. Ordinarily, it is difficult, although not possible, in a pluralistic society to promote a strong bond of citizenship while at the same time accommodating socio-cultural diversity (Kymlicka & Norman, 2000). What role the elite play is largely responsible for success or failure in this endeavour. In the case of Nigeria, complicating factors such as the convergence of religious value-orientations with ethnic differences have combined with the greedy disposition of the elite, as well as their deliberate and willful manipulations, to make things much more difficult to manage and/or contain; indeed to heighten mutual fears and suspicions of the 'other', to reinforce perceptions of domination and marginalization by the 'other', and to erect rigid barriers to cordial and

peaceful inter-ethnic, inter-religious, and inter-communal relationships (Idike & Okechukwu, 2015). Therefore, Nigerians who are in the privilege positions in order to perpetuate themselves in those positions, they used ethnic and religious as cover. Obasanjo (2000) remarked that the elite in the country are most times the brain behind ethno-religious conflicts.

III. CAUSES OF ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA

Nigeria at the age 58 is still searching for a new political order. The full realization of this objective has been made impossible because of the dominance of the factors of ethnicism and religion, the factors which has affected the survival of democratic rule and national integration in Nigeria. The frequency occurrence of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria over the years was as a result of the return of democratic rule in which Nigerians exercised their freedom of expression and power. It is obvious that in the last few years, Nigeria witness series of conflicts. Among of the prominent ones are: Zangon kataf in Kaduna State; Tiv- Jukun in Wukari, Taraba State; Ogoni-Adoni in Rivers State; Ijaw/Urhobo in Delta State; Ife-modakeke in Osun State; Aguleri- Umuleri in Anambra State; Yoruba-Hausa community in Shagamu, Ogun State; Ijaw-Ileja in Ondo State; Hausa/Fulani in Jos and Fulani/Irigwe and Yelwa Shedam, both in Plateau State; the intermittent clashes in kano State; Hausa/Fulani Sawanya in Bauchi State; Hausa/Yoruba clashes in Idi-Araba in lagos State; Boko Haram-Christians in North-East and the Fulani/Herdsmen in Benue State. Many factors can be held responsible for the rampant cases of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria as shown below:

1. Ethnic-Regional Identity

Ethnic-regional identities are major factors responsible for ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria because they have been associated with perceptions of discrimination and inability of some groups to exercise certain rights and civil liberties. The main issues have been the control of political power in general, and specifically, control of the armed forces, the judiciary and the bureaucracy. There is also the question of the control of economic power and resources (Ibrahim & Ibrahim, 2003). These issues are compounded by the lack of trust among various ethnic groups as a result of deep rooted misconception, lack of religious tolerance, poverty and fear of economic and political domination.

2. **Legacy of Colonialism**

The origin of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria is traceable to the nation's colonial experience, particularly the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates of Nigeria in 1914. According to Osadolor (1998), the act of amalgamation was not a federal idea. Lugard had neither a unitary nor a federal or confederal agenda for the country. Rather, the two regions were brought together for administrative convenience and reduction in administrative cost. This explains why the successive constitutions developed for governing the country between 1914 and 1951 can hardly be categorized either as unitary, federal or confederal (Salawu & Hassan, 2011). The political restructuring produced the 1954 constitution that established a federal framework for Nigeria. The federal framework notwithstanding, the seed of mutual suspicion and fear of domination has germinated and was fast growing among the major ethnic groups in the country such that the workings of the new constitution became difficult. The point being made here is that federalism in Nigeria was not a deliberate design of the founding fathers but an accidental adoption, having found themselves in a tight situation with no better alternative available. It is obvious that colonialism left behind for Nigeria a non-hegemonic state that further aggravated the crisis of ethnicism in the country (Salawu & Hassan, 2011). Also, Aluko (2003) identifies the legacy of colonialism and monopoly of power by the major ethnic groups and their consequent marginalization of the minority groups as major factors promoting ethnic nationalism in Nigeria. Uchendu (2010) observed that the growth of ethno-religious intolerance in the country has its foundation on the activities of the colonial masters that brought Christianity with them and antagonized African Traditional Religion as idolatry.

3. **Political Leadership**

One of the major causes of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria can be traceable to the over bearing character of the post-colonial Nigeria state, greed, selfishness, parochialism, pettiness, and irresponsible conduct by those who are supposed to be leaders. Nigerian leaders pursue self-serving objectives in the power game and in the process of accumulation of wealth and tend to aggregate these with and project them as a part of an ethno-religious group agenda. The leadership in Nigeria has failed to provide the basic needs of the people. This has contributed to the emergence of large number of frustrated population who are ready made tools in the hands of extremist (Egbefo, 2015).

4. **Religious Intolerance**

Religious intolerance in this context is the failure to recognize and accommodate views and opinions of others is one of the major

sources of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria. Also, Nigeria religious adherents, especially the Muslim and the Christians have demonstrated intolerance attitudes which have resulted to violence outburst that spill over the political and economic lives of the citizens (Alananmu, 2005 cited in Koku, 2015). Also, Christian fundamentalists and activities are concerned mainly with what they regard as the threat of Islamization of the country, imposition of the sharia on non-Muslims and the use of state resources to subsidize Muslim activities. In fact, to entrench the sharia Court in the constitution is to legalize the inferiority of non-Muslims and the superiority of Muslims...The claim therefore, the courts cannot be used as instruments of evangelism is totally false. The sharia is Islam and Islam in Sharia. Sharia is a total way of life; it is evangelism (Sabiya, 1979).

5. Poverty and Unemployment

Poverty and unemployment also account for the bulk of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria due to such problems like inadequate housing, physical and social infrastructures. The present unequal distribution of scarce resources in Nigeria Societies has created the problem of poverty which is partly responsible for the creation of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria (Obateru, 1994). Leading credence to the above, Salawu and Hassan (2011) stated that mass poverty and unemployment created alienation and insecurity, which in turn encourage Nigerians to experience and prefer accommodation within the social insurance system of ethnic nationalities or identities which is the major source of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria.

6. Attitudes of the Media/Press

In recent times, attitudes of the press in reporting conflicts are another source of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria. The main objectives of the mass media are to inform, entertain, and educate the society. In Nigeria, experience has shown that the media reports, news analysis and features are capable of a positive or negative role in the interaction between ethnic and religious groups depending on the journalist concerned. The actions or reactions of Muslims to Christians or Christians to Muslims are determine by the mass media reports (Alananmu, 2005). In Nigeria, in many occasions, the embers of ethnic and religious conflicts are fanned by such negative and sectional press reports and news analysis. For instance, the April 1991 religious riot in Katsina was caused by an article titled 'Would you marry a known prostitute turned born again,' written by Orland Emmanuel Giwa (Giwa, 1991). Also, te role played by mass media in reporting the 1987 kafachan riot was negative. Members of the society were grossly misinformed by the press with bias reports,

which created another crisis between Muslims and Christians (Bidmos, 1993). Even as at today, the unbridled actions of Nigerian media houses towards ethno-religious conflicts are capable of causing violence that may results in the loss of lives and destruction of valuable properties.

7. The Lack of Genuine Desire to Understand each Other's Belief and Culture

It is true that institutions of higher learning here and there offer some courses under various names but a careful study of such programmes has shown that they were not intended to foster understanding and respect. Instead they are used as a means of black mailing and incitement, under the cover of academic freedom.

8. Campaigns of Hatred and Black Mail

Both Christians and Muslim are actively involved in campaigns of hatred against each other. It has manifested in various forms including: distortion of fact about each other, incitement, blocking each other's chances as demonstrated in the issues of Shariah and organization of Islamic conference.

9. The Inadequate Recognition of One Another

Muslims in particular, believed that Christianity does not recognize Islam as a religion that is entitled to exist and consequently, it does not recognize their (Muslims) other rights. They believe and maintain that if there is any recognition of Islam by the Christians in Nigeria, it is simply because the Muslims have refused to be ignored.

10. Extremism

Extremism from both the Christians and Muslims is another important reason behind religious crisis in Nigeria. In most cases this extremism is based on poor knowledge of the teaching of the religion being defended by the group in both sides.

IV. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

For the purpose of analysis in this paper, the classical model theory and the frustration-aggression theory are considered appropriate in explaining the causes of ethno-religious conflicts and its implications on national integration in Nigeria. The theory that best captures and explain ethnicity and identity crisis is the classical model theory by Clifford Geertz. The classical model theory which is titled "integrating revolution" offers an explanation for the difficulties in nation-building in the new states and on the other hand, how the problem can be overcome. Following Geertz distinguishes between "primordial" ties which are affinities based on the "given" of life which seem to flow more than natural than rational choice (blood and kinship ties, tribe, region, religion) and "civil" ties which are affinities based on socio-economic

grouping (class, status, part, professional group). Primordial ties by their very nature, (and especially because being territorial defined, they can be based for asserting the right to national self-determination) tend to be highly resistant to civil order. Civil ties, on the other hand, are usually cross-cutting cleavages with crisis-crossing memberships and are therefore, more amenable to civil order. If the “nation-state” is to survive which presupposes the resolution or a process by which primordial ties will be supplanted by civil ties and ultimately subjected to civil order. Applied to Nigeria, the crisis of national identity and ethnicity is explained by the prevalence of primordial sentiments. Contrary to the expectations of adherents of the detribalization thesis, increasing modernization has heightened the importance of these sentiments. This is the paradox of African development which exacerbates the crisis of national identity. In the words of Crawford Young, „in dialectic symbiosis with the apparent triumph of the nation-state model has been the emergence, reinforcement or diversification of social and political expressions of cultural pluralism (group identities founded upon affinities of ethnicity, religion, language, race, region)(Crawford Young, 1979).

Studies have also shown that violence has been perceived as an instrument of survival under difficult circumstance. In this perspective, the frustration-aggression theory is the most explored. The exponents of the theory identified major conditions in which the individual or group deploy violence. To them, the obstruction or blockade of efforts by the individual intended to achieve desired ends such as power, wealth, social status, security, equality and freedom leads to frustration that breeds violence. Also, a causal link has been drawn between unfulfilled rising expectation and violence. In this perspective, it is contended that tension or violence arises from unfulfilled expectation to people who had experienced hardship or enslavement but suddenly promised improved material condition or freedom. Furthermore, a relationship has been drawn between relative deprivation and violence. In this sense, the objective material condition is believed not to nurture violence but rather the sense of deprivation in relation to others around them, or their own past condition is believed to be responsible for violence with the intent to redress the situation (Dowse and Hughes, 1982). The greed and grievance analytical framework ascribes violent conflicts to grievances arising from limited economic opportunities, poverty and inequalities. There are two strands of contentions in this analytical framework. The first perceive violent conflicts as under-girded by irrationality originating essentially from hatred. In the second perspective, violent conflict is hinged on a number of grievances such as systematic discrimination and gross human rights violation, inequality in economic and political power, or dearth of resources especially in multiethnic state. In this regard,

violence is perceived as instrumental like any means for seeking redress. Violent conflict has also been explained from the industry perspective. It is believed that the dominant propellant of violence is economic benefits and commercial interest rather than grievance. This presupposes that the preoccupation of the belligerents and insurgents is the economic spoils and booty that they appropriate from the protracted violence. Another theoretical explanation for the etiology of violent conflicts is systemic pathologies arising from the dialectical changes in the structures and processes of society. According to Potholm (1979:149 cited in Deeka 2003) when a system does not deliver what its leaders had promised and the political elites continue to ask the masses to make sacrifices that the elites themselves are unwilling to make much of the aura of legitimacy gained during the decolonization period will be dissipated.

In another theoretical prism, eruption of violent conflicts is linked with group pluralism and interactions to achieve their diverse objectives (Deeka 2002). In seeking relevance or retention of political power, the elites manipulate and massage religious and ethnic sentiments. Many of the ethnic clashes and sectarian conflagrations are rooted in the context of the group conflict theoretical assumption (Jega 2002). Violence has also been perceived as structural and institutional (Coady 1999). Structural violence is the form of violence rationalized on the basis of a great range of social injustice and inequalities prevailing in a state. In this perspective, reformers, leftists and even terrorists rationalize their violence and opposition against the state on the basis of seeking to correct the prevailing social injustice and inequalities in the state. The form of violence in this context often involves a direct physical attack in response to and defence against acts perceived as unjust and inequitable in the society. On the other hand, institutional violence is a quiet violence that arises due to systematic deprivation in the way of transactions within a state (Abah, 2009). Several other factors such as over population, impotence, loss of power, displacement, the quest for social values, as well as natural phenomena such as natural disasters, earthquake, environmental scarcities, disease outbreak, drought, and famine can be identified as contributory to violence.

V. THE EFFECTS OF ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The resultant effects of religious crisis in Nigeria are enormous. It pervades all the sector of the economy. Generally, crisis breeds insecurity, discrimination, mutual distrust and slow economic development. This is the case in Nigeria where in addition to gratuitous killings and maiming of thousands of persons properties worth billions

of naira have been destroyed. Certainly, these huge losses have deprived the nation of needed manpower and services for the growth of it are wobbling economy. Another major consequence of religious conflicts on the economic development of Nigeria is on the reputation of Nigeria in the international community. Many countries have started seeing Nigeria as a terrorist country which affects our business men and women that travel round the world to do business. Religious conflicts portray Nigeria in a very bad light internationally. It depicts our leaders, at all levels and in different facets of life as weak, naïve, selfish and self centered. In an environment of strong dedicated and selfless leadership, the diversity and complexity of the Nigerian society would have been harnessed and channeled into national development efforts. In an atmosphere of peace, the economy tends to grow more as more foreign investment and earnings are attracted via FDI and tourism. Nigeria would have been a tourist heaven, but the frequent occurrence of ethno-religious conflicts in different parts of the country at different points in time will International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences definitely discourage foreign tourists (Onwumah, 2014). The effect of it is that, foreign exchange needed to drive development that could have been brought in by foreigners is lost.

Though Nigeria is richly endowed in terms of tourism and resources, it is said that, by African standards, her performance is an abysmal failure. Places like Kenya, Ghana, Egypt and others have more people coming into their countries than Nigeria. The reason for this is not farfetched. Nigeria is perceived as unsafe and indeed not conducive in terms of security caused mainly by communal and religious crisis. Religious crisis has had devastating effect on Nigerian educational standards ranging from incessant closure of schools, destruction of school facilities to abduction and raping of schools children which has serious effect on the psychologies of school children in the nation. This assertion was supported by Adebayo (2010) who posits that education is very vital in any sustainable developmental program. The nation is striving to put in place amenities for the purpose of elevating the education standard of the country. This is, however, hampered by incessant closure of schools and institutions in places where religious crisis are being witnessed. Many schools had been burnt down while many were forced to close down for months. The education of innocent youths was equally disrupted under tumultuous situations created by religious and ethnicity crises, as many were forced to emigrate from crisis area.

One of the major implications of persistent conflicts is the insecurity of lives and properties which tends to hinders foreign economic relations to jumpstart the economy. Top in the list of social crises in Nigeria is the problem of corruption, which has negative impact

on the economy. The widespread of corruption in the investment budget will not only reduce the rate of return on new investment in the country, but will also affect the rate of returns coming into the government purse from its existing infrastructure. For example, due to the high level of corruption, returns from toll collections on major roads in Nigeria were nothing to write home about, not because of few road users, but the diversion of revenue to private pockets, which impeded the availability of funds for the maintenance of these roads. This forms part of the reasons why the toll gates were dismantled by Obasanjo's administration. Corruption which manifests in form of bribery, big bureaucratic red tape, poor tax, and custom administration reduce not only domestic investment, but also foreign direct investment, which is very crucial in Nigeria's economic development. Corruption often leads to capital flight, whereby money that could have been used for developmental purposes in the country are illegally transferred into foreign accounts. For instance, capital accumulated by corrupt leaders in Swiss banks and other foreign banks all over the world is a net loss to the country. Other forms of social crises, like vandalization of infrastructure also negatively impact the economy, leading to great losses by the country. For instance, as a result of oil and gas pipeline vandalization, illegal bunkering and smuggling, the country lost about 397,000 metric tonnes or N10.102 billion worth of petroleum products in 2000, while in 2005, a total of 647,632 metric tonnes or N42,102 billion worth of petroleum products were lost. Between 1999 and 2009, the country has lost over USD10 billion due to pipeline vandalization (Bakindo, 2010). The advent of illegal bunkering, pipeline vandalization and product theft has also massively impacted on the capacity of Nigeria's oil and gas sector to function optimally. For instance, as a result of incessant attack on the pipelines belonging to the Royal Dutch Shell between 2005 and 2006, the company was forced to shut down for several months, an estimate of 455,000 bpd of its oil production (Energy Information Administration, 2007). In 2002, the NNPC shut its crude pipeline from Escravous terminal to Warri (120,000 bpd) and Kaduna (110,000 bpd). The vandalization of Shell's pipeline in Andoni local government area of Rivers state also forced the company to slash its production by 170,000 bpd in 2006, while another attack on its Bonga deepwater oil field in 2008 also led to the stoppage of output from 200,000 bpd facilities (Shosanya, 2009).

In the same vein, the victims of ethno-religion conflicts are forced to abandon their economic activities to take refuge in refugees camp for a long period before they could find a new conclusive place to settle. Moreover, during this period, most of them were denied the opportunity to engage in creative activities or to be optimally engaged in their normal economic activities. Underutilization of facilities or under capacity production resulting from economic sabotage has forced the government

to resort to importation of fuel to meet its energy need. Consequently, in 2001, the NNPC was said to have expended the sum of N91.6 billion on the importation of fuel. By implication, the foreign exchange that could have been used for the purchase of capital goods (equipments or machineries) that are needed for the development of other sectors of the economy are used for petroleum product imports. Like the case of pipeline vandalization, public and private facilities are usually destroyed during conflicts. The cost of repair of destroyed facilities tends to reduce the amount of funds available to the government for other development purposes. For example, vandalization of pipelines tends to worsen the problem of environment degradation and the pollution of waterways. Environmental problems are not confined to their sources. Water and air pollution, for instance, travels far and wide to impact on more than one region.

Hence, oil spillages into waterways not only destroy the marine and aquatic lives of the immediate environment, but other regions too. More so, fire disaster caused by vandalization of pipelines, apart from the destruction of forest and farmlands, increases carbondioxide accumulation in the atmosphere, which could intensify the level of global warming. One of the keys to economic development of a nation is the quality of human resources. It represents the subject, the object and the process, in building a nation socially, politically and economically. Nigeria is blessed, not only in terms of natural resources, but also human resources. However, crises in Nigeria not only result in material loses, but also human loses. For example, between 1999 and 2009, more than 2,550 people have reportedly died as a result of explosion from oil and gas pipeline vandalization (Shosanya, 2009), while more than 10,000 people have been killed in sectarian and communal attack in Nigeria. As human resources is the engine of economic development, so also is the growth and development of educational sector crucial to human resources training and development, hence every nation is striving to provide the necessary amenities to enhance the standard of education of its citizens. However, the attainment of this vital objective could be hampered by incessant closure of schools and high institutions in conflict prone areas. Overall, consequences of social crises, especially ethnically and religiously inspired violent clashes are threat to security of life and properties, domestic and foreign investments with continuous capital flight, and loss of confidence in the economy (Babangida, 2002). Eventually, this may lead to increase in the level of poverty in the country.

VI. ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS: A THREAT TO NATIONAL INTEGRATION

Nigeria as one of the largest countries in Africa is made up of many ethnic groups with diverse cultural, religious, and social backgrounds. These ethnic groups have different political, social religious and economic interests to protect and they do this by using any machinery at their disposal even if it is at the detriment of the country. Ethnic and religious issues form part of the most recurring phenomena in Nigeria's politics. The issue has permeated the nation's political and economic landscape in the last few years, and there seems to be no solutions to it. In Nigeria, ethnicity plays a major role in almost everything, whatever is done or anticipated to be done in Nigeria particularly in government quarters has ethnic and religious undertone. From employment, admission into schools, distribution of social amenities and even in social relationships, ethnic and religious affiliation and attachment are consciously manifest. Attachment of the average Nigerian first to his ethnic and religious groups before the national is the best of Nigeria national integration (Egbefo, 2015).

Between 1990 and 2018, so many crises stimulated by ethno-religious reasons have engulfed Nigeria. Ethnic and religious bigotry has become a serious issue undermining the very foundation of Nigeria's unity. Mutual fear and suspicion, absence of cordial relations, ethnic alignment and re-alignment, ethnic affiliation and attachment have being very strong features of Nigeria since 1960. Nigeria has become a theatre of war characterized by an increasing number of ethnic and religious conflicts. Religion in Nigeria function as a means for the perpetration of violence, fuelling ethnic consciousness, and solidarity, acquisition of political power and socio-economic gains, massive killings and the wanton destruction of lives and vandalizing of property of those considered infidels or who pay allegiance to their religions. This is traced to the acrimony between the two dominant religions-Islam and Christianity which had often resulted in the struggle for power and supremacy, bitter fued and wanton destruction of lives and properties. This religion madness had like a cataclysmic vortex devastated the ground for sustainable socio-economic development of Nigeria (Ngele, 2008).

National integration, otherwise termed nation-building, national unity, national cohesion, national loyalty, or the national question involves consensus on the limits of the political community and on the nature of the political regime (Liddle, 1970 cited in Enaruna, 2014). In Nigeria, the existence of multiple nationalities within the same nation state tends to create problems for the stability of the state. The persistence of the ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria which the resultant effects

within the nation is disagreement, disunity, and distrust, collapse of economics and political systems, threat to health conditions, displacement of people, environment degradation, destruction of land and agricultural produce and other natural resource (Adesanya, 2005) were strong testimonies of the lack of the broad national consensus and nationalist identities that could form the constituent elements of an all-Nigerian culture (Onyeoziri, 2002). It is because of this critical lack of national integration that the erstwhile Biafran leader, author, and polemic, Emeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu, declared sadly that: “the true problem with Nigeria is that she is fully embroiled in an identity crisis. The Nigerian of today is a sociopath in search of a national programme. We live in a country in search of a common character” (Odumegwu-Ojukwu, 1989:1). What then are the factors which discourage national integration in Nigeria? According to Ojo (2009) and Nwankwo (2015), the most obvious of these factors includes ethnic cleavages, religious extremist, economic underdevelopment or dependence, and a weak sense of nationhood arising from a short period of independent statehood.

In addition, the antagonistic centrifugal forces heralded and entrenched musters that have always consumed Nigerians and their collective desires for unity and development as manifested in the form of tribalism, politics of prebendalism, elitism, greed, antagonism, civil strives, occupation, etc., were strong testimonies of bad leadership. Okene (2005) observed that the greatest cause of ethno-religious and indeed other identity based conflicts in our country is the enthronement of bad leadership. National integration cannot take place in a country in which her leadership is characterized by sycophancy, greed, dishonesty, endemic corruption, fuelled by personal aggrandizement, political authoritarianism, budgetary abuse, political patronage, etc. therefore, the effects of ethno-religious conflicts and leadership failure to integrate the divergent and multi-nationalities in Nigeria are the greatest impediment to the achievement of national integration.

VII. MANAGING ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY FOR NATIONAL INTEGRATION

The following three assertions can be made about Nigeria: First, there is significant inequality within regions as well as nationally. Second, state policies are likely to be highly regressive, with an extraordinary share of state expenditures captured by national and regional elites. And, third, ordinary as well as elite Nigerians tend to view their society in ethnic or religious terms. Therefore, the questions for us here are: (i) to what extent are the ethnic (or religious) patterns in Nigerian politics the product of a

primordial cultural diversity? (ii) To what extent are they the product of a struggle for spoils in a specific institutional context? (iii) To what extent are they the cause and the consequence of political conflict? (iv) What constitutionally backed institutions can be developed to manage these ethnic/cultural diversity and conflicts? (v) How do we achieve national integration in Nigeria?

Years before the attainment of independence, Nigeria's constitutional development experiences were concerned with the principal goal of managing ethnicity which had shown clear signs of subverting the nationbuilding project. Federalism, the creation of regions and states and local governments, the shift from parliamentarism to presidentialism, the institutionalization of quota systems, the prohibition of ethnic political parties, consociational politicking, and the adoption of the federal character principle are some of the approaches that Nigeria has taken to manage ethnic diversity (Ukiwo, 2005). These mechanisms have enjoyed the intellectual backing of institutionalism who posit that there is a connection between ethnic conflict or peace and the nature of political institutions (Horowitz, 1985). Several works on ethnicity in Nigeria have been committed to examining the impact of these approaches to the management of ethnicity (Ekeh and Osaghae, 1989; Adamolekun, 1991; Ekekwe, 1986; Horowitz, 1985; Mustapha, 1986; Nnoli, 1995; Osaghae, 1998; Suberu, 2001, Edewor, & Aluko, 2007).

The verdict of such scholars who have examined the issues from different theoretical standpoints is that while these initiatives have solved some old problems, they have generated many unintended consequences that have exacerbated ethnicity. What is more, they have been destabilizing for the Nigerian state system. As Suberu (2001) has noted with respect to revenue allocation and states creation: The establishment of nine separate commissions on revenue allocation since 1946 has led to neither development of an acceptable or stable sharing formula nor the elaboration of an appropriate framework of values and rules within which a formula can be devised and incrementally adjusted to cope with changing circumstances. Given the sheer multiplicity of fluidity of the territorial and cultural cleavages that can be used to justify the demands for new states and the federal resources they bring with them, there is no certainty that the states-creation process will ever be concluded in Nigeria. Analysts have attributed the limitations of the ethnic management policies to improper implementation, distortion of visions and lack of political will. Some, however, doubt the possibility of a state that generates fissiparous tendencies (Ibrahim, 2000) and a predatory class that is endlessly looking for formulas to divide the Nigerian peoples (Mustapha, 1986) implementing policies that promote ethnic peace and harmony. Also, the viability of these new states created is unclear, with the exception of the oil-producing states in the south. Some of these states have recently become conduits for the personal enrichment of the elites

at the expense of alleviating poverty and creating job opportunities for the rest of the population. There have been reports of disparities in the distribution of oil resources in Nigeria for many years. This contentious issue has fuelled most of the recent ethnic conflicts in the country. Some ethnic groups, especially those in the oil producing areas argue that they are not receiving enough funds for their own development (Irobi, 2005).

These are the dynamics behind the Ogoni crisis and the recent sporadic ethnic violence in the oil producing Niger Delta states. We would argue that unless this issue is resolved, the economic base of the country will be jeopardized. The undemocratic 1999 federal constitution lacks the support of the citizens. The constitution was drafted by military dictators and handed over to the people. It has not gone far enough to resolve the problems of ethnicity that the country has faced since independence. National integration in the Nigerian context has been an attempt to forge “unity in diversity” and aggressive attempts to ignore, if not dissolve, historic differences. Successive military rules sought to wish away socio-cultural differences and impose uniformity in spite of complex cultural diversity.

Unfortunately, the more such projects were pursued, the more acute the contradictions become, the more conflicts erupted; and the more problems were created, which posed obstacles to unity, peaceful coexistence, progress and stable development. National integration in a multi-cultural state like Nigeria is unattainable without an entrenched public culture because this comprises the values shared by all groups and constitutes the common grounds on which the diverse groups conceptualize and appreciate the state. In Nigeria, groups strive to impose their particularistic definition of public culture on the entire polity. The area of society-wide agreement which constitutes public culture is still too narrow (Ikpe, 1991). People, therefore, struggle to overthrow existing public culture rather than identify with it due to its parochialism. National integration and its attached benefits, like democracy and political stability can be realized only with the development and entrenchment of a supportive public culture. What is to be done? Perhaps, the best way to begin to address these threats to “national integration” is to recognize that unity does not mean uniformity, and that understanding, respecting and tolerating differences occasioned by socio-cultural diversity, is by far better than strenuously striving to wish them away. A complex, plural colonially created “nation state” such as Nigeria can only survive and flourish in the 21st century on the basis of tolerance and accommodation of socio-cultural differences, rather than on a narrow-minded pursuit of an exclusivist and parochial self-interest (Jega, 2002). Also, since the rules for sharing federal revenues clearly provide incentives for regionalist politics, Suberu (2001) recommends a further decentralization of funds through further revision of vertical division of revenues,

together with a revised horizontal division with increased rewards for local revenue generation. In general, however, federalism is a bad way of getting public resources to the poor, and it is unclear how far reforms can overcome this.

VIII. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper recommends that the actualization of a last social peace, sustainable development, and national integration in Nigeria is contingent on the following:

1. Nigeria should see their pluralism in terms of diverse religion, political and ethnic affinities as a blessing that would make her a multi-coloured nation with divers potentialities to given leadership to Africa, the third world and the globe at large.
2. There is the need to transform ethnic politics into mutually beneficial relationships. To do this, Nigeria must withdraw from its old and ineffective approaches and develop new institutions and mechanisms that can address poverty, revenue allocation, and other national issues peacefully.
3. Government at all levels must ensure the democratization of the national economy to accommodates all categories of cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistics groups of various constituencies.
4. The media houses and the press should always be fair in their reports, especially when it involves crisis of ethnic and religious in nature.
5. There is need to address the leadership crisis. Attempt should be made to discourage the idea of choosing a leader because of his/her ethnic group, religion, and political affinity. Whoever would serve to the best interest and *Sonum Bonum* (general good) of Nigerians should be given opportunity to serve Nigeria especially at the presidential level.
6. There should be a deliberate programme of political and social reorientation of the entire citizenry. Such reorientation will go a long way in changing the negative stereotypes and values that have characterized the Nigerian citizenry.
7. The role of good political leadership cannot be overemphasized. Nigeria has been less fortunate in its leadership. Ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria have continued because political leaders are corrupt and split along lines of religion and ethnicity. This has resulted in ethnic rivalry, suspicions and hostility among leaders. Therefore, without a bold and articulate leadership, conflict management, prevention and national integration will always be a mirage.
8. Religious leaders should give proper orientation to their followers and should emphasize that religion pursues peace and not violence.

9. Nigeria government needs to undertake steps that would provide lasting solution to socio-economic problems like unemployment, power imbalance, inequitable distribution of resources, poverty, and the Niger delta quest for justice in her God-given mineral resources.
10. Government should empower the religious and traditional leaders to improve inter-ethnic and religious communication, peace and harmony among their subjects. The use of civil society organizations and NGOs could be another effective tool or key to peaceful ethno-religious co-habitation and national prosperity.

IX. CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, the quest for national integration is an important, serious and demanding task. A more deliberate effort must be made to develop a feeling of oneness among Nigeria. The process of national integration in Nigeria has faced challenges from ethnicity, religion, and politics. These social dynamics have weakened and hampered the development of institutions necessary for building a nation. The problem posed by ethnic and religious conflicts is a threat to Nigerian's corporate existence and its desire to engender national integration. This paper has attempted to demonstrate that ethno-religious conflicts retard national integration in Nigeria and that ethno-religious conflicts arise as a result of socio-economic and political deprivation. However, if the above recommendations are strictly adhered to, then the incidence of ethno-religious conflicts currently threatening the country's national integration can be reduced, given way to lasting peace and harmonious living in Nigeria.

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Conflicting Interest Statement

All authors declared that there is no potential conflict of interest on publishing this article.

Funding

None

Publishing Ethical and Originality Statement

All authors declared that this work is original and has never been published in any form and in any media, nor is it under consideration for publication in any journal, and all sources cited in this work refer to the basic standards of scientific citation.

Cite this article as:

Udom, I. D., & Okolie, U. C. (2022). Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria: A Threat to The Quest for National Integration. *The Indonesian Journal of International Clinical Legal Education*, 4(1), 61-88. <https://doi.org/10.15294/ijicle.v4i1.50116>