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# ETHNO-RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND PEACE-BUILDING IN NIGERIA: A PUBLIC POLICY APPROACH.

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**Abstract**

*No country is prone to violent identity crises as a country with fissiparous tendencies. For more than fifty (50) years of existence as an independent entity, Nigeria still grapples with numerous insecurity threats, ranging from ethno-religious disharmonies to the agitation to secede. Today, Nigeria is characterized as a deeply divided state where political and other issues contest vigorously along complex ethnic and religious lines. There is need, therefore, to identity the implications of these crises as well as proffer overarching solutions to restore peace and promote nation-building. This study examines the implications of ethno-religious identity on peace-building in Nigeria from a public policy perspective. The study identifies some policies that are needed to fast-track peace-building as well as curb the alarming fissiparous tendency which has given rise to violent conflicts in the country. The study relies on secondary data with content analysis of newspapers, books, journals and internet sources. Findings revealed that ethno-religious disharmony is a clog on the wheel of peace-building in Nigeria. It was discovered that ethno-religious identity gives impetus to perceived unfairness and injustice by some ethnic and religious groups, especially as regards the distribution of resources among groups and regions in the country. Some of the recommendations of the study are: First, national recruitment policy should be adjusted to reflect strict adherence to federal character. Second, the issue of marginalization which has caused several conflicts in South-East Nigeria and has led to the region's demand to secede as against the initial agitation for resource control and 'true' federalism should be adequately addressed. Third, the country should be restructured in accordance with the 2014 national conference recommendations.*

**Keywords**: **Crises, Good governance, Peace-building, Secession, Violence.**

## Background to the Study

No country is prone to violent identity crises as a country with fissiparous tendencies. For nearly Sixty (60) years of existence as an independent entity, Nigeria still grapples with numerous insecurity threats, ranging from ethno-religious disharmonies to the agitation to secede (Duke, Odey & Etim, 2017). Globally, no state is totally devoid of ethnic sentiments and influences. Europe, for instance, was torn as a result of nationalism and ethnic identity (Adeline & Eme, 2015). Nigeria has numerous ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural groups. These groups are in constant struggle to gain advantage in the allocation of power and resources in the country. Osaretin and Akov (2013) noted that from 1999 when the country returned to democracy, violent identity conflicts have been adopted by different groups in their struggle and pursuit for political power and most dreaded among these conflicts is the Muslim-Christian feud which has claimed thousands of lives, destroyed properties worth Billions of Naira and displaced thousands of people. Violent communal crises have also robbed states like Borno and Plateau of peaceful co-existence, as they continue to record high cases of murder and displacements resulting from inter-religious and ethnic feud (Adebanwi, 2005).

This study examines the implications of ethno-religious identity[1] on peacebuilding[2]and the need for policies[3] to curb the alarming fissiparous tendency which has given rise to violent conflicts in the country. It has been noted that security (both of lives and properties) is the responsibility of government and any government that fails in its delivery, has failed in all (Abumbe, Peter, Etim & Akah, 2018). Governance is about the government interaction with citizens. Good governance, therefore, is the adequate handling of societal (citizens') problems and the proper allocation of resources to promote stability and create authoritative rule for collective actions (Parto, 2005; World Bank, 2006). To achieve good governance in Nigeria is to build peace and to eliminate ethno-religious identity and sentiments. Here, attention must be paid to policies that promote rationality, participation, transparency, efficiency, equitability (Hardt, 2012), rule of law and human rights (IFAC & CIPFA, 2013). Good governance can promote peace building, especially in a highly complex society like Nigeria. Peace-building is aimed at resolving prejudice using non-aggressive methods. Peace-building involves the development of positive inter-ethnic and religious relationships that promotes national unity and integration (Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, 2018). Peace-building and good governance are sides of the same coin and are needed to restore security and mutual respect in Nigeria.

[1] Ethnoreligious identity is the feeling of belonging to a particular ethnic, cultural and religious group as well as individual's loyalty to such groups.

[2] Peacebuilding is addressing root causes and effects of conflicts and the establishment of lasting peace through political and economic transformation, reconciliation and institution building.

[3] Public policy according to Dye is what government chooses to do and what it chooses not to do.

**Statement of the Problem**

Nigeria is now characterized as a deeply divided state where political and other issues contest vigorously along complex ethnic and religious lines (Smyth & Robinson, 2001). According to Adeline & Eme (2015), ethnic and religious mobilization can often be found at the heart of political competition, where these differences in interest offers amply potentials for violent conflicts. No state of the world today is devoid of ethnic influences. For instance, Europe was torn apart in 1940s as a result of ethnicity and nationalism. The Balkans also suffered from the effect of similar sentiments in 1990s. In Nigeria, the high point of ethno-religious identity and sentiment was felt in late 60s, during the civil war that claimed many lives. From that point till now, violent conflicts traced to ethnic and religious identities have taken an ascending order (Okpanachi, 2010).

Several efforts have been made to identify and solve the problem of breakdown, civil strife, violent clashes, ethno-religious conflicts and civil wars, which are regarded as unusual in normal states (Canci & Odukoya, 2016), and to build peace and unity across countries. For instance, Dike (2005) and Ogbeide (2012) submitted that poverty and injustice as caused by corruption weakens any sense of mutual tolerance, social solidarity and promotes hatred and violence. In Nigeria, Adeline et al attributed the problem to the nature of the country's politics and weak democracy (p73). Okpanachi explained the discord and alliance that emerged over sharia policy as well as its implications on the transformation of state dynamics (pp 2-3). Other issues considered by scholars of social and management sciences on ethno-religious identity and peace-building in Nigeria include; marginalization, restructuring, and sanitization. These are pertinent factors to be considered in peace-building process in Nigeria. However, amidst these efforts, the problem of ethno-religious identity and its resultant consequences persist.

It is therefore the thrust of this study to examine the impact of ethno-religious identity and bad governance on peace-building in Nigeria. The study juxtaposes social contact, which emphasizes the mutuality that arise when people meet frequently or talk to each other in events and programmes like sports, National Youth Service Corps, inter-marriages, to mention a few, and peace-building in Nigeria. The study also investigates the impacts of preventive diplomacy and early warning system on ethno-religious conflict management and peace-building in Nigeria.

**Objectives of the Study**

i. To identify the major causes of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria.
ii. To examine the impacts of ethno-religious identity and bad governance on peace-building in Nigeria.
iii. To highlight some policies to curbing the negative impacts of ethno-religious identity in Nigeria.

**The origin and causes of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria**

The origin of ethno-religious crises in Nigeria's Fourth Republic (1999-2018) can be traced to May 29th 1999[4], when His Excellency Olusegun Obasanjo was sworn into office as the

[4] There may have been earlier cases of ethno-religious crises but this paper addresses the crises that took place when the country returned to democratic rule in 1999.

President and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federation. An historic event that was supposed to be celebrated by Nigerians for ages to come also marked the inception of another phase of ethno-religious conflicts in the country. It all started when the residents of Aritom were sacked by the Ijaw Youths. On the same year, some Hausa and Yoruba groups clashed in Shagamu in Ogun State. In Lagos, the Ijaw's, Ilaje's and Yoruba's fought and killed more than 500 people (Oyelede and Akinteye, 2001). Also, the introduction of Sharia legal system spurred Muslims youth into deadly actions. For instance, Zamfara and Kwara states had alarming cases of religious intolerance which claimed many lives and Churches were destroyed. Uyo, Aba and Port Harcourt had their experiences of ethno-religious crises (Amor, 2002). The sitting of a Church in a Muslim dominated area in Borno State led to a serious conflict. The trend goes on and on. In Kafanchan, the attempt of government to introduce the Sharia Law also led to another Christian-Muslim feud which divided the once peaceful settlement along ethnic and religious lines and claimed many lives and properties. From records, it appears that some Muslim fanatics have adopted more of militant approach in this struggle for dominance. This is evident in the message of Boko Haram (BH), an Islamic terrorist sect, who advocates for an Islamic Nigeria with a full application of the Sharia Law.The list of ethno-religious violence causal factors in Nigeria seems inexhaustible (Jega, 2002; Ani & Saliba, 2010; Oriakhi & Osemwengie, 2012). This section highlights those factors that often trigger violence in a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria, as identified by both Christians and Muslims in affected states[5].

i. **Colonialism:** the *'divide et impera'* policy adopted by colonialists in Africa capitalized on the pre-existent cases of inter-ethnic conflicts that existed in the continent. It is a well-articulated fact that many Africans failed to see themselves as one indivisible people as compared to their contemporaries in Western societies. This does not in any way erase the fact that colonialists also manipulated and altered most of the belief systems in Africa. In Nigeria, the people were divided alone ethnic and religious lines. For colonialism to succeed, the African people were not to come to self-realization. They were to remain disunited and all the factions were to consider, erroneously, that the white (colonialists) were the best things that ever happened to them, irrespective of the fact that the Whites were only interested in the abundance of resources in the Continent. According to Nnoli, colonial administration purposefully created ethnicity through its indirect rule policy where it categorized Africa into tribes and separated natives from settlers in urban areas.
ii. **Religious Intolerance:** there is hardly any country as religious as Nigeria. Falodi notes that "the rise in unprovoked attacks on Christians amid failure by the security agents to prosecute perpetuators is creating tension in Nigeria". Going by the Nigerian Constitution, freedom of worship and association should not be deprived from anyone. A deprivation of this fundamental human right can only lead to political instability, fear and chaos. This malicious assault by one religious group on the other threatens the foundations of Nigeria's unity and must be given careful attention. Everyone has the right to what he chooses to worship and this right must be respected at every point in time for peace sake.
iii. **Ethnicity:** ethnicity has been adopted as a weapon by regional based elites in the quest to secure state power for them. Going by the instrumentalist theory, ethnicity was the major cause of the Nigerian Civil War as ordinary Nigerians had nothing against each

[5] There are several other factors that often trigger violence in a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria that have not been mentioned here. However, this list shows major causes of the violence.

other but the elite class needed to achieve their selfish ends. This selfish ends are often polished as the interest of the general masses. It is worthy to note that inter-ethnic contact alone is not potent enough to spur conflict between groups. This implies that there are several other factors that must come to play in order for this contact to become antagonistic in nature.

iv. **Theological Factor:** this is one's obsession about his faith or his belief in the supreme (supernatural) being. It is usually expressed in one's uncritical sentiments in his dealings with others (out-group). Other related issues to religious fanaticism are fundamentalism and extremism. Religious fanaticism has gone beyond Muslim-Christian feud. It exists even in the midst of a particular religious. For instance, in Borno State, BH burnt down some mosque and claimed that those Mosques belonged to infidels. They were referring to worshipers who they perceive not to have fully applied the teachings of the Prophet. The external influence of religion cannot be exonerated as one of the causes of religious violence in Nigeria. Christianity is credited to European imperialism while Islamic religion is credited to Suadi Arabia.

v. **Poverty/ Illiteracy:** this can be explained using the class theory. Poverty most often than not influence the way people think and behave in their society. Ethnicity as identified earlier is a vital instrument which is used by the elite class to press home their demands to control state power. They actual struggle is done by the poor who perhaps lack full idea of the political underpinnings of what they are fighting for. A typical case is the MENDS in the Niger Delta and BH and Herdsmen in the North and Middle Belt. The people fighting and killing innocent citizens are the poor who are actually promoting the interest of the elites who sits at the comfort of their homes to give instructions. Also, from records the illiterate citizens in Nigeria have constituted the majority in inter-ethnic conflicts.

vi. **Wrong Religious Orientation**: religion is supposed to be a unifying factor and not the other way round. When religion becomes a source of conflict and antagonism among people who are supposed to live together and co-exist in peace and harmony, then there is a problem. In Nigeria, the concept of religious infidelity has generated countless cases of murder and injuries. Religious leaders have not helped in many cases as they constantly criticize the other religion. Hence, their members develop hatred for the opposite religion and their practices. There is need to instill the spirit of mutual respect for an individual's belief of the supernatural. This in itself is security.

vii. **Unguided Media Reports:** many media organizations in Nigeria often aim at portraying the views of their owners, especially during crime reportage. It is a well-known fact that he who pays the piper detects the tune. So professionalism has been thrown to the dust in Nigerian journalism. This has often resulted in several crises (Bashir, 2002). Also, the social media has been used negatively by some Nigerians to trigger violent conflicts and hatred. The social media is of great benefit to our society today, but its application in times of chaos determines the perception of a good number of persons, who were absent in the site, on the true nature of the situation. Records have shown that the social media have been greatly abused in Nigeria. Nigerians should therefore be sensitized on best practices in social media application as well as the need to promote peace in every post.

viii. **Indigene/Settler Problems:** Many communal disputes in Nigeria have been bordered on indigene/settlers intolerance. The hostility of indigenes in some Nigerian villages and community is so alarming. This has rendered the agitation for one Nigeria unattainable as settlers, though from Nigeria, believes they are not welcomed outside their community

of birth, states of origin, or region. There should be an instillation of high sense of mutual respect and peaceful co-existence on the minds of Nigerians through social contact programmes as explained in the later part of this work.

ix. **Partisanship of Security Agencies:** the perception of neutrality among security operator is very important in solving ethno-religious crisis in Nigeria. However, the reverse is the case, when there is no confidence in the security agencies. It is evidence is several cases in Nigeria that security agencies are most often than not used as witch hunters in the hands of those who control the state power. For instance, the current activities of Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and ICPC, DSS, etc in Nigeria have shown that the ruling party is using those agencies against their political opponents.

x. **Corruption**: the negative impacts of corruption have been felt in almost every sphere of the Nigerian economy and politics. Corruption has robed the country of its unity in diversity, as corruption politician and public office holders have resorted to religious and ethnic supports to win elections or occupy public offices. The fight against ethno-religious intolerance and crises in Nigeria is usually sabotaged by some people who have built their source of livelihood around religion and ethnicity.

xi. **Resource Control:** resource control can be seen as a major cause of ethno-religious crises in Nigeria. Many states in Nigeria are clamoring to control the resources within their territories as against the current practice, where the Federal government controls all the resources and allocates a fraction to the States. There have been perceived lack of transparency in the system as many Southerners posit that the proceeds from the resources are not properly allocated, as many oil producing states in the country lack refineries and are still wallowing in poverty. This group of people challenges the position of the Federal Government to build refineries in states without resources, instead of building them where the resources are available. This agitation threatens the peaceful co-existence of different origin and tribes in the country.

xii. **Herdsmen Attack:** recurrent Fulani Herders' attack on farmers in Borno and other States in the country has also fueled more dislike between ethnic groups in the country.

**Identity Politics in Nigeria**

Identity diversity can be explained using Geertz's work of 1963 which distinguishes primordial ties by 'life's givens' which may include, but not limited to kinship and ethnicity and civil ties (interest groups, party affiliation, class, among others). Identity politics, as a theoretical perspective explains how identity construction came into existence, its fundamentalization, as well as its recourse to violent conflagrations. It is a well-established fact that no country is prone to violent identity conflicts as a country with fissiparous tendencies. This is most often than not identified by the social cleavages of the society (Osaretin & Akov, 2013). Members of groups (ethnic, religious, political, etc) seek greater self-determination, economic and social advantages while uniting around their experiences of perceived injustice on the distribution of same in the society where they find themselves (Ambe-Uva, 2010).

Self-identification, as explained by identity politics may go beyond religious, cultural or ethnic consciousness to political sentiments where the people involved unite and assert themselves in the society (Osaghae & Suberu, 2005). It becomes important to note that the groups identified here always believe that they are victims of societal injustice or operation

by opposing groups. This perception of injustice is often evident during development plans, government programmes, appointments and elections. Often, it graduates to the agitation and struggle for territorial dominance. There is no boundary to the reach of sentiments in the discourse of identity politics, especially in a pluralist society like Nigeria. No matter the level of advantage gained by an ethnic or religious group in a pluralist society, it is believed that more have been left undone. This perception brings about perpetual dissatisfaction which transforms itself into disagreements and violent conflicts. In Nigeria, religious and ethnic sentiments have constituted the major causes of violent conflicts. This sentiment influences the agitations for resource control and other political privileges. It also stands against the drive towards 'one Nigeria'.

From independence in 1960 till date, Nigeria has failed to enjoy merit and neutrality as a country, during elections and appointments, as major religious groups (Christians and Muslims) are in constant struggle for dominance. In areas where it seems the Christian and Muslims are calm on the quest for political dominance, ethnic and cultural groups take the order of the day with parochial interests (Duke, Odey & Etim, 2017). Going by the identity politics theory, no region in the country is exonerated from these sentiments. Solving this problem means overhauling the entire political and administrative systems of the country, especially as regards recruitments, appointments and elections.

**The implications of ethno-religious identity on good governance in Nigeria**

Political identity has to do with an individual's self-definition and the organization in which he belongs, be it a group or philosophical identification. This has a dreadful consequence on politics and national unity when not properly managed. There are some explosive forces that are potentially tied to identity politics. This particularistic and exclusionary identity politics as operated recently has caused more harm than good to the peaceful co-existence and unity in diversity in Nigeria. It becomes important, therefore, to approach and solve this ugly situation using good governance. Governance is an authentic power to control both human and material resources of a country (Akindele, 2002). According to Wilson, in governance, government interacts with its citizens. It is through governance that a society handles its problems and allocates resources to promote stability and create authoritative rule for collective actions (World Bank, 2006; Vo, Bauknecht & Kemp, 2006; Al-Habil, 2011). To achieve good governance, attention must be paid to rationality, participation, transparency, efficiency and equitability (European Commission, 2001; IMF, 2005; Kaufmann, Kraay & Mastruzzi, 2009; Grindle, 2010; Bracking, 2010). In good governance, there must be quality bureaucracy and a credible political authority. It consists of the promotion of the rule of law, involvement of stakeholders, understanding of modern governance, doing things right, performance and conformance, participation and the promotion of human rights (IFAC & CIPFA, 2013; Vries, 2013; Grzeszczak, 2015).

Presently, good government has been identified as having a significant positive correlation with the application of science and technology. Science and technology can therefore be applied to promote transparency, accountability, participation, effectiveness and efficiency in governance, especially in service delivery (Golob, Thomas & Amelia, 2001; Mukherjee & Roy, 2016). Science and technology leads to social media in governance, smart and safe transport system, agricultural empowerment, hygiene and disaster management,

security and adequate health management through improved research and development (Arangode, 2015). The application of science and technology in good governance will also lead to free, fair and credible elections, economic development, agricultural development (WHO, 2012), health care services improvement, security (Etim, Duke and Ogbinyi, 2017), education, improved legal system, media freedom, human rights promotion, job creation, rural development and infrastructural development.

At present, Nigeria witnesses high cases of religious crises in the North and middle belt, and ethnic crises in the South. As classified by Ross (1993) and others, constitutional provisions as well as societal configuration are the two major dispute fueling factors in Nigeria. Power distribution between the levels of government has also caused some problems in the polity. Knowledge of this, therefore, beacons on the government to step up its activities in addressing ethnic and religious differences through adequate policies and sanctions. It is a well-known fact that the Nigerian constitution is weak to the extent that it has failed to address, in totality, some security issues. For instance, the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 as amended in 2011 has not been able to clearly identify what a terrorist group should be or is. Consequent open this, there are conflicting positions as to whether or not the herdsmen are terrorist sect. also, the administration of justice in the country has often taken a very slow pace, thereby leaving many resolvable cases unresolved. Further, there failure of government to meet the basic needs of the people (especially the youths) have made them susceptible to criminal actions either by themselves or as directed by their sponsors. For instance, illiteracy as domiciled in many rural parts of the country has left the youths with no other option than to become agents of societal destruction as a result of their inability to divide truth from false from rational thinking. Hence, the call for good governance which will salvage the situation through the extensive application of science and technology which as mentioned above can solve many of the nation's security needs.

**Ethno-religious identity and peace-building in Nigeria**

Nigeria remains a highly complex society with multi-cultural, ethnic, religious and lingual groups. This bifurcate the country along diverse identity lines, which is made worse by bad governance (Osaghae & Suberu, 2005). The Christians and Muslims form a larger part of the Nigerian society (Paden, 2008). This diversity influences political competitions in many ways (Diamond, 1982), and has become a method of collective action (Oseretin & Akov, 2013). For instance, in Jos, the Muslim-Christian feud has led to the denying of citizens of their basic rights (Aapengnuo, 2010). This therefore gives impetus or reaffirms the position of identity politics theorist who believes that ethnic, religious and cultural identity propel some groups in the society to seek self-determination and political advantage for their members in the interest of the group (Ambe-Uva, 2010). According to Geertz (1963), two approaches can be used to explain Nigeria's diversity: the primordial (loyalty to kinship, ethnic group, etc) and civil ties (like party affiliation). These ties make it impossible for integrative revolution. From records, many conflicts in Nigeria that started as political disagreement, usually transform itself into ethnic and religious dimensions (Alubo, 2006). Many ethno-religious crises in the country can be traced to colonialism, bad governance, religious identity and intolerance, citizenship, politics and often results to waste of human and material resources (Ojukwu & Onifade, 2010).

As a country that has played host to diverse ethnic and religious conflicts, peace building attempts must be followed with careful attention and considerations. This is because any failed attempt may have drastic or dreadful consequences on the polity. According to Oseretin & Akov (2013) "the continual manipulations of these socially constructed categories trigger and drive violence in Nigeria. Consequently, efforts at peace building within the ethno-religiously divided entity have defied real and apparent solutions so far. On the one hand, government responses to the recurring conflicts have been widely perceived as ineffective, while on the other hand, the non-committal stance of the warring factions has given momentum to the collective destruction going on in the country". It becomes important, therefore, to review the country's constitution on citizenship, prioritize minority rights, education and security in the country. Also, for effective peace building in the country, religious, traditional and political leaders should take up the responsibility of educating their followers on the need to embrace peaceful co-existence amidst diversity in Nigeria.

## Policies of Peace-building in Nigeria

### Social Contact

Some major causes of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria were highlighted earlier in this study, where issues like religious intolerance, wrong religious orientation, ethnicity, favoritism and resource control topped the chart. Observably, during and after these conflicts, people are often hostile to strangers; some develop hatred for others, especially those of the out-group. Going by the Social Contact Theory (SCT), emphasis is placed on the mutuality that arises when people meet frequently or talk to each other and create common ground. It has been observed that contact is one of the best and most effective tools to combat discrimination among people of diverse beliefs, interest and culture. It is worthy to note that hostility as experienced in some parts of the country is caused by the consciousness of belonging to a particular group as well as the loyalty to the group an individual belongs. For instance, in the case of Plateau and Borno States, the Christian and Muslim feud could be explained using Social Identity Theory (SIT), where members of the in-group see others (the out-group) as threats or opposition and tries as much as possible to gain dominance over the out-group. This must be check through policies to strengthen and introduce new social programmes to add to existing ones like sports, National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), inter-marriages, among others. People should be encouraged to marry across various religions, tribes, cultures and languages. This will foster peace to a large extent and will go a long way to give new orientation to the people on the need to coexist in peace and harmony, in order to strengthen the nation's quest for unity in diversity.

### Preventive Diplomacy and Early Warning System

Preventive diplomacy has to do with the prevention of disputes between different people or groups. It also explains limiting the spread or escalation of conflicts through various means which includes, but not limited to negotiation, mediation, and peacekeeping (UN Secretary General Report, 1992). Early warning on the other hand, is a process that alerts decision makers to potential issues that may lead to violent conflicts or the escalation of existing conflicts. Early warning helps decision makers to understand the nature and impacts of

violent conflicts as it involves timely collection of data, analysis and a systematic monitoring are reporting of conflict indicators (Defontaine, 2019). Preventive diplomacy and early warning should be adequately incorporated into peacebuilding policies in Nigeria. Although it is difficult for the government to cater for all the needs of all the groups in the country at the same time, efforts should be made to ensure that while the government is doing its best to foster developing at the fastest pace it can go, threats to violent conflicts by groups that perceive marginalization should be curbed through preventive diplomacy and early warning. For instance, the secession agitation by south east region gave some early warning signs like the agitation for resource control, the agitation for adequate representation by individual from the region, etc. Also, before the outbreak of Boko Haram terror, indicators like the agitation for the application of sharia law and the moves against western education were seen and ignored. There is therefore the need to always apply preventive diplomacy and early warnings to curb escalation.

**Conclusion**

The goal of this paper is to examine the implications of ethno-religious identity on good governance and peace-building in Nigeria. Efforts have been made to highlight the origin and causes of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria and how the problem can be properly managed. It is the position of this paper that no country is prone to violent identity crises as a country with fissiparous tendencies. As a heterogeneous society, Nigeria is faced with numerous crises which are traced to ethnic and religious sentiments. These crises stand against peace-building which is expected to be achieved through good governance. Further, good governance which is the adequate handling of citizens' problems and the proper allocation of resources to promote stability and create authoritative rule for collective actions, has been neglected in the country by its leaders. For Nigeria to achieve the much anticipated peace and security, the government must ensure that citizens perceive fairness, equity and justice in its activities. No region of the country should be left in the dark as regards the distribution of the nation's wealth. The will of the masses (majority) on public policies should be respected at every point, as this will encourage political participation at all levels.

**Recommendations**

This paper recommends the following;

1. The issue of socio-economic marginalization should be given adequate attention. Socio-economic marginalization is believed to be one of the major causes of conflicts in South-East Nigeria, as the region demands to secede as against the initial agitation for resource control and 'true' federalism.
2. The policies of preventive diplomacy, early warning and social contact should be adopted by decision makers in Nigeria.
3. The government in partnership with relevant stakeholders should proffer lasting solution to the problem poverty and hunger in the country. Today, it becomes difficult for an average Nigerian to provide for his basic needs. This inability to provide for one's daily need is the root of many crimes and conflict in the territory.
4. Politics should be detached from ethnicity and religious sentiments. Merit should be a watchword during elections and appointments into public offices.
5. There should be sensitization of members of the public, especially the youths, on the need to mutually respect others irrespective of religious, political or ethnic affiliations.

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