Perspectives on Religion and Ethnic Identity Dynamics: Conditions for Violent Collective Actions in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined the salient determinants of violent collective actions carefully embedded in religious and ethnic sentiments. It evaluated the politicizations of these identity markers in the framing and advancement of group interests and goals within the context of a divided and underdeveloped setting such as Nigeria. This paper observed that the deep rooted political and economic crises that characterised the contemporary Nigerian state have far reached effects on the well-being of the mass of its marginalised population. The global economic melt-down and the recent COVID-19 pandemic have resulted into severe economic and supplies challenges across major world economies. This has further impacted on access to most basic but scarce resources as well as a spike in the nature and frequency of collective agitations and expressions. These disruptions especially among dependent economies and fragile democracies such as Nigeria have farther impacted negatively on the already underdeveloped and polarized identity groups begging for inclusion, relevance and dominance. This paper concluded that unless the socio-economic and political issues masked in identity enclaves sustaining the exclusion, marginalisation and manipulation of the vast majority especially the vulnerable youth are urgently addressed, youth-driven socio-political and economic violence from several identity platforms will remain a dominant culture of violence with far reaching societal consequences on unity, progress and development.
Keywords: Ethnic Identity, Identity Dynamics, Religion, Violent Collective Actions

1. Introduction

Contestations over indigene rights and political representation resulted in Christian-Muslim riots in the Nigerian city of Jos where, between 2001 and 2010, over 5,000 people were killed. This study complements existing literature on the spatial dimension of violence by focusing on how Jos's neighborhoods were transformed from everyday residential areas to spaces of ethnic differentiation and violence. Series of outbreak of collective action and violence in Plateau State led to the emergence and development of ethnic strongholds and frontiers, two kinds of socio-spatial settings have been conceptualized which explained the spread and patterns of violence across Jos's neighborhoods (Madueke, 2019). The experience in Jos is a reflection of the reality regarding collective actions based on ethnic and religious sentiments in Nigeria.

The objective of this paper is to examine the how religious ideas and ethnic affiliation provides ground for collective violence. It has been observed that majority of the episodes of collective violence in Nigeria and other parts of Africa, the actors, foot soldiers and shadows of the violence are mobilized along ethnic and religious identifies and narratives. Therefore, attempt has been in this paper to provide a sociological explanation for the phenomenon of collective violence in Nigeria.

2 Theoretical Literature

An attempt is made here by the Authors to provide a theoretical lens through which this identity-based violence is conceived and expressed. The scenario in Nigeria is complex as several identity platforms are available for use under different contexts that can be dynamic and overlapping in many instances. When the issues in contention are ethnic, group

mobilization follows through such platforms, the same with religious grievances. These models are presented:

2.1 The Human Ecology and Ethnic Competition Models

An early sociological explanation of ethnic conflict is the human ecology model. This model heavily anchors on and or borrowed the biological conceptions of invasion and succession; Park and Burgess (1921) envisaged ethnic conflicts as part of a universal and natural process which is likely to be more pronounced in urban settings. They maintained that the invasion of new ethnic groups [especially within the context of urban contestations] induces group competitions which in turn cause ethnic conflicts. However, it does not specify the conditions under which competition engenders ethnic conflict. Different socio-political and economic arrangements and outcomes are possible conditions that can define the nature and characteristics of such group expressions.

On the other hand, the ethnic competition model is an attempt to refine the human ecology perspective advanced earlier. This model treats ethnic conflict as an outcome of ethnic competition and specifies the mechanisms that link competition with conflict. For instance, in Barth's (1956) old but largely relevant analysis, a key mechanism through which competition is transformed into active conflict is what he calls *'niche overlap'* - the exploitation and occupation of the same resources coveted by other competitors. This is the essence of the contemporary competition model, that competition between two or more ethnic groups for the same social, economic or political resources flames ethnic conflict. Thus, conflict and violence occur when such ethnic groups struggle to control limited resources among other competitors, and such competition encourages exclusion, exploitation and marginalization of other

competitors, (Olzak, 1992). In Nigeria, competition for the same but limited scarce resources such as economic resources, land, political offices and power are certainly important determinants in explaining the ethnic conflict model.

Furthermore, the imbalance in power and resources for instance between groups may be as crucial in explaining why conflict is most likely to arise between the politically powerful (not entirely in numerical terms) group and the weak group, example is the contest over power to control the soul of Jos-north LGA between the Hausa and Fulani settlers and the indigenous Berom, Afizere and Anaguta ethnic groups(Wika, 2014, 2018). Conflicts often occur between dominant groups and subordinate group, and therefore, the reason for conflict must be sought in the unequal relations between dominant group and marginalised group. Accordingly, within this theoretical context, the fundamental source of conflict lies in inequality and marginalisation among ethnic groups. In other words, when any group is economically exploited, culturally deprived and politically disenfranchised by a dominant group, this domination and its resistance unavoidably would breed ethnic conflict and violence.

2.2 Identity Politicization and Violent Contestation

In trying to understand the issues central to group formation for violence, explanations surrounding the politicization of ethnic and other forms of identity are critical within the context of most violence occurrences in Nigeria. Egwu(1998) provides a more detailed and perhaps, convincing categorizations of these identities that also serves as a rallying point for mobilization and group formation. He examines the primordial/cultural anthropologist explanation which views ethnic identity as given because of primordial affinities derived from race, skin colour, ethnicity, religion and language. He argues that, since each ethnic group especially within the social and public spaces have a different historical experience, hence,

these identities are thus determined. From this perspective therefore, human beings generally have always been grouped together on the basis of these given primordial characteristics and considerations these views were also shared by Geertz, 1993, & Ahmed, 1996. Analysing Geertz (1963, 1973); Egwu, (1998) further provides one of the best accounts of these explanations. He argued that by its nature, humanity is culture-creating and it is this creative capacity that makes human beings different from other animals. He observed that, the human creative culture not only provides him/her with cognitive, aesthetic and moral standards, but is also provides the major element of this transformation, and therefore, becomes the primordial given of social existence.

Similarly, Keyes (1981) observes that ethnicity, in its primordial context; derive its roots from a cultural interpretation of descent. He observes metaphorically, that ethnic identity maybe a gyroscope, which vacillates in particular contexts, forms and precincts overtime, but still, maintains a central point of reference. The most important and instructive point of note in this account is the emphasis on its emotional and effective dimensions for mobilization on whatever identity platform the group is standing on.

Another interesting perspective to the study of ethnicity is the modernization approach. This approach believes that ethnicity is associated with traditional societies or societies in the process of modernization such as Nigeria. Two broad arguments are advanced in this perspective. At one level, it is argued that increasing urbanization, education, mass media, and transportation facilities will lead to the integration of diverse ethnic groups and reduce conflict. Arguing on the role of increasing modernization in conflict mitigation, Nnoli(1978)argues that:

> The values associated with modernization, higher income, education, information and political participation are increasingly being shared by all members of even the most culturally plural nations, and that to the extent that increasing modernization is characteristic of new nations, the achievement of

these values, or the perception that are being achieved will help to moderate conflicts based on differences in values and traditional cultures (Nnoli, 1978:15).

Furthermore, the modernization perspective conceives ethnicity as being triggered by the competition for public goods and all other ensembles of modernization. This explanation argues that modernizing goods or instruments like education, job opportunities, provision of social amenities, etc., are scarce relative to demand and therefore attracts competition. Groups therefore, try to maximise their advantage over others through the use of ethnic associations and in the process, conflicts and violence may ensued (Egwu, 1998).

The elite or instrumentalist approach also argues that, the elite play critical roles in the mobilization of ethnic identity groups in achieving their selfish interests. The elite according to this perspective are found in mostly the critical sectors of the society such as the military, the economy, religion, politics and the bureaucracy. They often manipulate and adopt these identities in competition for political power and privileges. This group of people often capitalise on existing inequality and differences which they often claim to address. For instance, Usman (1989), one of the major proponents of this school of thought, argues that:

The real basis of the manipulation of religion (and ethnicity) today is the need to obscure from the people of Nigeria the fundamental aspect of our reality, which is the domination of our political economy by a class of intermediaries who are being increasingly exposed. And this is to cover themselves with religion and ethnic disguises in order to further entrench division among our people, slowdown the awakening at any cost, even the unity of our country for which so much has been sacrificed (Usman, 1989: 23).

However, it is strongly observed especially within the spates of social movements and agitations in most developing countries including Nigeria that the refusal of the elite or

instrumental perspective to accept the essential dynamics of class struggle as a vehicle of change is one of its major shortcomings. The 2020 EndSARS movement was a clear reflection of such struggles by the youth against the oppressive ruling elite. Furthermore, the seeming dismissal of ethnicity (and also religion) as just manipulative tools, denies the opportunity to understand the dynamics of these identities especially in Nigeria where allegiance to religious and ethnic membership seem to be placed over and above the national arrangement called Nigeria.

Another explanation on the role played by ethnicity in the mobilization of groups for violent action is the constructivist or inventions explanations. The central argument here is that ethnicity is a construction or invention of the colonialists and colonialism. Sollors (1989) and Ranger (1993) argue that ethnicity was a direct product of colonial invention. They suggested that two factors account for the invention of ethnic groups. The first factor is the desire of the colonial authorities to create comprehensible and manageable units, and second, colonial imaginations were reinforced by Africa's acceptance of the ethnic communities and boundaries created by European administrators. In Nigeria, this colonial creation is explained and expressed in the ethnic hegemony theory whose argument holds that the British colonial state 'invented' three major ethnic or ethno-regional groups/ platforms that are not only in competition among themselves but also seen as dominating the minority groups (Kukah, 1993, Ibrahim, 2000). Under this scenario, competition among these groups was foisted by colonialism and subsequently setting in motion a process of hostility and violence during and after the colonial incursion. However, as good as this explanation of the origin and characteristics of ethnicity may seem, there are also shortcomings. For instance, Mafeje (1997) observes two shortcomings of these explanations. First, he observes that the approach

minimises the power of ideological indoctrination on ethnicity and secondly, it attaches little or no importance to the anthropological definition of ethnic identity as having the ability to evolve a sense of group rivalry, hostility and violence. Furthermore, Abdu (2010) observes that the theory is too state-centred and this has ultimately led to a lack of historicity, which can limit our understanding of significant aspects of previous inter-group relations. This state-centeredness often ignores the processes of identity formation in the pre-colonial period, which are of continuing relevance to contemporary developments.

The Marxist approach in the explanation of the role of ethnicity in group contestation and violence expression is in the opinion of Abdu (2010), the most political economy driven. An insight in to this perspective reveals that, historical movements are interpreted in terms of economic and social contradictions. Hence, social classes and forces of production are given primacy as determining in the final analysis the dynamics of any society and history. Furthermore, the perspective sees society in totality, the existence and reproduction of which is based in their economic or material conditions of production and exchange. Accordingly, historical movement of any society is interpreted in terms of economic and class contradictions. However, while recognizing class as ultimately the major determining factor, it is not seen as the only factor in shaping the group or class dynamics of society. Like any other element of the superstructure, ethnicities also have relative autonomy or its own specific dynamics which becomes evident in the course of any social interactions. On the issue of false consciousness, in strict Marxist perspective, it does not necessarily mean that ethnicity is unreal or that those who use ethnicity as a weapon of struggle are engaged in deliberate falsehood but it is an ideology to the extent that its involvement in social process conceals the social reality from

those who suffer from its implications (Abdu, 2010, Egwu, 1998). Perhaps, Mafeje (1971) presents this most succinctly:

> ...if anything, it [ethnicity] is a mask of false consciousness on the part of the supposed tribesmen [ethnic-group] , who subscribe to an ideology that is inconsistent with their material base and therefore unwittingly respond to the call for their own exploitation. On the part of the elite, it is a ploy or distortion they use to conceal their exploitative role. It [Ethnicity] is an ideology in the real Marxist sense (Mafeje, 1971: 259).

3 Religious Identity Construction and Collective Violence

Religion as a concept and conception is conceived differently by different scholars, it has also proved relatively difficult to provide an acceptable conceptualization. Different scholars therefore, understand religion differently. For instance, the anthropologists regard religion as a component of the cultural aspect of life, while the sociologists see it as being of social rather than political significance (Egwu, 1998, Barrett, 1991). A closer look at Barrett (1991) for instance, he identified three different perspectives used to grapple with the complexities of religion. These are the rationalist, intellectualist and the socio-cultural perspectives. Barrett argues that, the Rationalist perspective premises on the assumption that established religion is based on ignorance and the deliberate manipulation of the masses by the priests and other superiors. The Intellectualists presents religion as a mechanism for explanation, prediction and control of space, time and event. While the Socio-cultural perspective insists that religion is more than an idea, it is the social and structural changes in society that form the principal determinant of religious movement/group expressions in society (Egwu, 2001, Abdu, 2010).

Besides the contemporary thinking on religion, classical writers on religion have not been able to grapple with the whole essence of religion. Durkheim, Weber and Marx's ideas have been argued to be extraneous to contemporary experiences in the developing world (Barrett, 1991).

Durkheim in his study of religion presented arguably, the most influential interpretation of religion from a functionalist perspective. He argued that religion is based on the division of what is considered as the sacred and the profane. His conclusion was that the worship of God is nothing more than the worship of society, which has the function of ensuring solidarity and preserving society. He further argued that social life is impossible without the shared values and moral beliefs which define the collective conscience without which, there would be no social order, social control, social solidarity or cooperation. For Durkheim, religion is functional and tends to discount the divisive and disruptive use of religion in society (Abdu, 2010).

According to Karl Marx, religion is the sigh of the oppressed creator, the sentiment of a heartless world and the soul of soulless condition; consequently, it is the opium of the people (Haralambos, 1980: 460). Adopting the same line of thought, Bandura (1994) views religion from two related, yet separate angles. The first view is of the material sense which includes the religious establishment such as institutions, officials as well as social groups and movements whose operations are within religious concerns. The second view is of the spiritual sense which pertains to models of social and individual behaviour that help believers organise their daily lives. As a form of identity, religion is about solidarity and setting of boundaries between those who are considered to be believers and those who are not. This identity is used to create a sense of order, meaning and hope as counterpoint to the insecurity of everyday life or to what may be perceived as an unjust social order. Conversely, this identity can also serve as a distress and insecurity to those whom a group seeks to exclude (Egwu, 1997). In recent times, religious politics in Nigeria and other parts of the world has created conflicts and violent eruptions, particularly between the Muslims and Christians (Wika, 2014). Within the Nigeria's colonial

context, religion was also used in the strict Marxist parlance as a subtle instrument of control and hence, an integral element of the colonial superstructure. Religion has since this period, continued to be politicised. For instance, even though Islam in Nigeria cannot be argued to be a colonial creation, its structures were nonetheless fused into the context of the entire colonial enterprise in the north which has further experienced tremendous changes in context and even in practice, which to a large extent has define its contemporary character (Abdu, 2010).

Broadly taken, religious and ethnic identities in Nigeria are fundamentally mutually reinforcing rather than exclusive. On several occasions, there seems to be a thin line between religious and ethnic identities hence, the interpretation of ethnicity and religion is more relevant in Nigeria. Studies have shown how ethnic identity and religious allegiance overlap. For instance, Kersfelt (1994) shows how Christian religion became an essential component in the definition of identity among the Bachama people and other minority ethnic groups in Adamawa State. Salamane (1991) and Egwu (2001) demonstrate how religion provided means of shaping an ethnic identity in the resistance of outside forces of domination by Hausa, Kambari and Dukuk (Hume) in the pre-colonial Yauri province in the present Kebbi State. For Abdu (2010), the Islamic religion has provided a primary element in the definition of Hausa identity. Similarly, Paden (1970) also demonstrates the role of Islam in the acculturation and assimilation of ethnic groups into Hausa and the relatively widespread use of Hausa as a *lingua franca.* Wika (2002) reported that ethnic and religious identities were the major dividing lines between the indigenes and the settler groups in the 2001 Jos violent crises.

3.2 Effects of Youth Actors in Urban Identity Violence

Examining the role of the various contexts in which youth are exposed to violence could lead to a better understanding of how the youth are affected by violence. This is supported by

research demonstrating that youth are more likely to be exposed to violence either as perpetrators or victims in multiple contexts (Wika, 2018) and youth exposure to violence in one context increases their likelihood to experiencing violence in other contexts (Turner, 2007). Thus, examining youth exposure to violence in separate contexts may provide a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of its effects.

Generally, the perceptions of relative political, economic and social deprivation and marginalization are among the determining factors responsible for the emergence of a plethora of political, ethnic and religious militia and other criminal groups across Nigeria. According to Badmus (2006):

> The dramatic upsurge of ethnic and religious militias represents the most critical threat to the Nigerian State to date. State power flows from the ability to impose the national will on all segments of the society. [But] When this monopoly is challenged by force or by sustained disobedience or armed non-compliance, the state becomes a caricature or pathetic parody of its classic incarnation (Badmus, 2006:196).

Furthermore, ethnic and religious conflicts as well as the activities of their militia movements in Nigeria can only be meaningfully understood within the context of the linkage to what Egwu (1998), Badmus (2006), Abdu (2010) called the Nigerian identity politics. This is the enthronement and celebration of the politicization of ethnic and religious identities in both private and public spaces in Nigeria.

3.3 Ethno-Religious Militia and Identity Hate Groups in Collective Violence

Militia and Hate groups are not judiciously explained by the structural perspectives. This is partly because the motivation for their formation contains some psychological as well as socio-cultural dimensions, especially in the nature of violence that these groups commit which is not easily understood by analysing the existing structural social conditions. The Militia group may

be formed out of what is often referred to as 'survivalist' imperatives drawing heavily from political and /or religious orientations. Barken & Snowden (2001) observes that:

> ...these groups [ethnic and religious militia and hate groups] sometimes resembles [insurgencies and] terrorist organizations and at other times, cult groups. They are like cult when especially they wish to retreat from mainstream society and like terrorists when they wish to deliver messages that are aimed at overthrowing established governments (Barken & Snowden, 2001: 106).

The Boko-haram, ISWAP, IPOB, MASSOB, OPC and the so-called Bandits fits into this category especially within the context of their modus operandi in terms of their identities, group aspirations, solidarity and nature of attacks and responses to state structures and establishments. For ''Hate groups'', they resort to violence in order to achieve their goals by committing what Barken &Snowden (2001) referred to as 'vigilante terrorism'. Hate groups emerged when a group of people join together to oppose and even destroy another group because they often believe that such group is responsible for the negative changes in their society. These perceived negative anomalies could be economic, political, social or even religious. In Hate groups, like-minded people come together to promote their ideology and legitimise their rights to move simply from thought to action, action that in most cases is violent. The basis for a violent attack could be based upon any physical or socio-cultural characteristics which in the minds of the hate group members, separates the hated group from them in a negative way. In extreme cases, the mission of such hate groups is to rid the society of despised group (Jenness & Broad, 1997). Classical examples of this are the Boko-haram and the Maitatsine Islamic revivalists' insurgents and terrorists.

Similarly, Stuab (1989) believes that a continuum of destruction exists whereby hate groups and ethnic militia movement involve their members in a progression that could lead to heinous actions. In most extreme situations of ethno-religious agitation for self-determination in

complex societies such as Nigeria, various ethnic and religious Hate-groups assume militant posture and gradually metamorphosed into militia groups, each of which bears an identity and purports to act as the machinery through which the desires of its people (or even a few of them) are sought to be realised. The common features of these inspired movements are the resort to violence, preponderance of youth membership (Wika, 2018).

The contemporary ethno-religious collective violence as well as the activities of its militia movements in Nigeria can only be understood within the context of the linkage to ethnic and religious politics created and subsequently, inherited from the colonialist arrangements (Oyewole, 1987). The 1960-66 Nigeria's first republic saw the formation of political parties along ethno linguistic lines which were made to champion largely ethnic interests. The Yoruba Action Group (AG), the Hausa and Fulani Northern People's Congress, (NPC), and the Ibos (NCNC), all pit together in a serious competition, (Badmus, 2003). Subsequently, the military coup, and counter coup that truncated the first republic was heavily dictated by these ethno-religious tunes. This scenario repeated itself during the 2nd republic (1979-1983) and other series of military interventions culminating into the annulment of the June 12th 1993 presidential election results by the Babangida military junta.

The emergence of the Odua People's Congress (OPC) signals the birth of an ethnic militia movement in Nigeria. The emergence of this group is significant in many respects. First, it was the OPC that prompted the formation of the Arewa People's Congress (APC) in the Hausa and Fulani predominantly north. Second, the OPC agenda was to respond to the marginalization of the Yoruba emerging from the consequences of the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election of MKO Abiola. The OPC thus timely and relevantly, captured the resentment of the Yoruba ethnic nationality to their perceived marginalization by the north (Osaghae, 1991).

The revival of the democratic process in 1999 seems to have revived ethnic and religious awareness in many climes. The increasing spate of the ethno-religious inspired crisis and killings in Nigeria has become the most serious challenge for the Nigerian State. Furthermore, there seems to be a link between new and growing democratic experiments and the eruptions of collective conflicts and violence. In Nigeria for instance, the early post 1999 experience seem to suggest that the military had only presented delicate social, political and economic conditions which appealingly provides a fertile ground for group aspirations and competition within the context of the new 'democratic' order. The following studies support this idea. Snyder (2000) warned of the risk of an outbreak of communal and sectarian conflicts in the early phases of most democratization process:

> The developing countries recent experiences with conflicts run parallel to those of the historical European and the contemporary post-communist states. Political democratization increases the risk of nationalist and ethnic conflicts in the developing world, but the strength and outcome of this propensity varies in different circumstances. Such conflicts are more likely during the initial stages of democratizations than in transitions to full consolidations of democracy (Snyder, 2000: 310).

Uncontrolled conflict is more likely when mass civil participation increases before civic institutions are being extensively developed, as the contrast between Burundi and South Africa suggests. Similarly, ethnic conflict is more likely when the civic structure and institutions of the central state break down at a time of rising agitations and popular demands, as in India in the late 1980s and 1990s. Finally, ethnic [and religious] conflict is more likely when channels of mobilizing mass groups in to politics are ethnically [and religiously] inclusive as well as exclusive in a complex web such as in Nigeria.

However, it should be noted that not all democratic infancy were accompanied by incidences of collective violence, since there are records of peaceful transitions and consolidations.

Huntington (1991) cited in Tadjoedin (2002). Recognizes that almost all great political changes involved violent actions, but he also gives examples where such transitions took place peacefully. Czechoslovakia- a former satellite of the USSR separated in to two countries, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic without any bloodshed. Similarly, peaceful transitions can be found in Poland, Hungary and East Germany.

The plethora of Nigeria's ethnic and religious induced collective violence are likely to be part of the initial independence and democratization process in the early 1960s and the post 1999 self-rule experiences. The Hausa versus Yoruba Shagamu crisis in Ogun State, Lagos and Kano in July 1999, and between Hausa and Ibos in Aba and Kano, and those between the Hausa and Fulani versus the indigenous peoples of Jos and environs in 1994, 1998, 2001, 2002,2008, 2010, 2011, 2015, and 2021 violent attacks are classical examples. Furthermore, some other conflicts are intra-ethnic such as the Yoruba, Ile-Ife and Modakeke and the Ibo communities of Aguleri and Umuleri. The Egbesu, the APC and the Bakasi boys also operate under strict ethnic impetus and supervision. Instructively, the APC for instance, apart from its emergence to checkmate the OPC's perceived expansionist agenda as stated earlier, it also has a political motive of obstructing the bifurcation of Nigeria, thereby denying the north a share in the oil wealth. The APC also encouraged the tenacious hold on to power of the northern political class. For the Bakasi boys, their primary agenda was the realization of the Biafran (secessionist) dream after an abortive attempt that lasted between 1967 to 1970 following a bloody civil war with the Nigerian State. For the Egbesu boys, the perception of relative political, economic and social deprivation has produced a new dimension to the agitation of ethnic militias in Nigeria-that of resource control. This has also witnessed the criminalization of a struggle that was

hitherto non-violent through arson directed at national oil installations, kidnappings and high-profiled political assassinations (Osaghea, 2011).

Consequently, the activities of these militia and Hate groups variously expressed in political vendetta, ethno-religious politics, and inter-ethnic as well as intra-ethnic violent confrontations have become the trademark of Nigeria's political culture and a rich recipe for the destruction of its already struggling political structure. It is important to point out that these ethno-religious militia collective violence is often aggravated as a result of the sophistry of arms and weapons as well as the emergence of religious terrorism and the use of suicide bombers and improvised explosive devices. The wider and long-term implication of this is that these ethno-religious militia, insurgency and terrorists' movements have not served the interest of the corporate existence of Nigeria.

4 Conclusion

It is observed that, the most affected both as perpetrators and victims of these violent identity expressive actions are the large number of its youths who have remained at the fringes of decision making and engagement. This situation has been exacerbated by the growing unemployment rates, insurgency and terrorism, banditry, increasing numbers of out of school children and the perennial closure of institutions of higher learning thus exposing an army of frustrated foot soldiers who mobilize themselves to ventilate their grievances or are recruited on the basis of ethnic, religious and political identity platforms to perpetuate group grievances often expressed through the instrumentality of violence. Furthermore, the declining welfare system which appears to have been fuelled by intensive corruption and mismanagement of public funds and policy incongruence have exacerbated the deepening nature of marginalisation, unemployment, frustration and poverty among several groups within the

Nigeria's state arrangements. The so-called economic and social reforms often prescribed by the Nigeria's imperial metropolis have in recent years worsened significantly what was left as the social safety nets for the significant many. Recently, subsidies have been either partially or totally removed in virtually all critical areas ranging from education, health care, social welfare and other staple items including telecommunication, fuel and electricity. The result is a worsening decline in the outcome of livelihood of majority of Nigerians.

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