

Ethnic Conflicts and National Security (A Study of Nasarawa South Senatorial District)

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ABSTRACT

In Nigeria, there have been incessant cases of ethnic conflicts in recent time. It has become a recurrent decimal in the quest for national integration and unity. Ethnic conflicts have constituted serious security challenge in the country. There is no part of the country that is spared from its ugly deficiencies. This study set out to identify various causes of ethnic conflicts and how it threatens national security using Nasarawa South Senatorial District as a case study. The study employed the use of survey design to obtain the relevant information. 250 respondents were systematically selected from the study area and questionnaire was used as a tool for collecting data. The findings revealed that there has been a frequent occurrence of ethnic conflicts in the area which have adversely affected its development. The study concludes that ethnic conflicts have resulted into enmity and hatred between the people who have lived together in peace for years in the area. The resultant consequences of the above were the gross loss of lives and destruction of millions of Naira worth of properties which had adversely affected the activities in the area. It therefore recommends among others that efforts should be geared towards peaceful co-existence in the area by all stakeholders if sustainable development is to be achieved and national security guaranteed.

Keywords: ethnic, conflicts, national security

INTRODUCTION

Most developing countries are ethnically diverse. For many years, social sciences preferred to ignore the brute fact of ethnic identity. More recently, evidence is accumulating that is detrimental to economic performance. Journalistic accounts of wars in Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, and several other countries of sub-Saharan Africa in the 1990s have raised concern that ethnic cleavages and overlapping affiliations of religion and race may undermine prospects for economic and political development in much of Africa (Kamla-Ra, 2006). This perception is fostered both by some graphic individual scenes of inter-ethnic violence, and by an aggregate

correlation: Africa has not only the highest ethnic diversity, but also the highest incidence of ethnic conflicts.

With the heterogeneous nature of the country, the tendency of the various nationals is towards parochial consciousness at the expense of national consciousness. A far reaching and in-depth survey of Nigeria public opinion carried out by the International Foundation for Elections Systems-IFES on behalf of United States Agency for International Development-USAID in 2000 found out that ethnicity is the strongest type of identity among Nigerians. Almost half of all Nigerians (48.2%) choose to tag themselves with an "ethnic" identity. (Osinubi, 2006).

Ethnic conflicts in Nigeria and Africa in general arise as a result of scarcity of political resources, multi-culturalism, religion, militarization of ethnicity among others. These conflicts cannot be ignored. It is therefore patently clear that realistic measures to solve these problems are needed. This study, therefore, aimed at examining the influence of ethnic conflict on national security using Nasarawa South Senatorial District, Nasarawa State as a case study. It also examines the effects of ethnic conflicts on the country's search for unity and identifies the possible issues for resolution.

Statement of the Problem

In the world over, conflict is perceived as something abnormal, dysfunctional and therefore detestable, yet indispensable. For the aftermath has often been trailed by circle violence with attendant loss of lives, wanton destruction of property, infrastructural damage, maiming, population displacement, and have been conflict induced by ethnic-religious factors. Beginning mainly from 1960's, these phenomena has become hydra-headed monster which has threatened the fundamental basis of global peaceful co-existence, with great doubt to have effects on people for a long time across all sections.

Many states in Nigeria, especially in the northern axis have had their own share of conflict, most recent are the ones unleashed on innocent citizens by fundamentalist Islamic sects like the Maitatsine, Sara-suka, Kalakato, and Boko Haram etc (PIDAN, 2010). For over a decade the once uniquely calm and peaceful people of Nasarawa South of Nasarawa State, Nigeria has continued to witness seemingly unabated spate of violent conflict. Although conflict situations are not peculiar to the people of Nasarawa South it has tended to linger in some communities in Nasarawa South with very intriguing implications. For instance of late, the conflict in and around Nasarawa South have graduated from localized dispute to scenarios of more extreme and unacceptable dimensions. With the senseless dangerous acts of return attacks which results to mass killing of innocent

women and children in Giza, Ekye, Tudun-Adabu, Azara, Assakio and several other communities.

One of the greatest challenges confronting the contemporary Nasarawa South is the endemic conflict that engulfed the once peaceful area and why the conflict has been dragging for too long. There is now a widespread sense of loss and insecurity within the area because of the ethnic, religious divide and a deep sense of animosity between different communities (i.e. the Hausa/Fulani, who are mostly Muslims are seen as migrants and Eggon, Alago, Gwandara, etc) who are seen as indigenes.

Research Questions

The following questions were set to guide the study;

- i. What is the nature/extent of ethnic conflicts in Nasarawa South?
- ii. What are the inherent causes of ethnic conflicts in Nasarawa South?
- iii. What are the effects of ethnic conflicts on national security?
- iv. What are the possible ways to resolve these conflicts in Nasarawa South?

Objectives of the Study

The aim of this research is to examine the extent at which ethnic conflicts has constituted threat to national security using Nasarawa South of Nasarawa State as a case study.

Among the specific objectives include the following:

- i. To analyze the nature/extent of ethnic conflicts in Nasarawa South Senatorial District.
- ii. To identify the cause of ethnic conflicts in Nasarawa South Senatorial District.
- iii. To identify the problems associated with ethnic conflict on National Security.
- iv. To explore, suggest and specify ways of addressing the problem of continued crisis in Nasarawa South Senatorial District.

Hypothesis

Hypothesis is stated in null form, the research is dependent on the following assumption:

- i. There is no significant relationship between ethnic conflict and national security

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Concept of Conflict

Coser (1968:232) defines "conflict as a struggle over value or claim to status, power and scarce resources, in which the aims of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the desired value but also to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals" while, Wallenstein (2006) defines conflict as ".....as a social situation in which a minimum of two actors (parties) strive to acquire at the same moment in time an available set of scarce resources". It is generally accepted that the psychological and behavioral elements, as well as structural conditions for alienation, combine to fuel conflict, (Azar, 1986; Burton, 1990).

Generally speaking, conflict connotes disagreement, dispute or controversy in the ideas or view point held by two or more individuals or groups. Disputes involve negotiable interest while conflicts are concerned with issues that are not "negotiable" (Oyesola, 2005:106).

Ethnic Conflicts in North-Central Nigeria

Since the return of democracy to Nigeria on May 29, 1999, parts of the Middle Belt region now better known by its new geo-political identity as North-Central Zone, have witnessed a series of communal, religious, inter and intra-ethnic crises resulting into mindless destruction of lives and property. The most affected states in the zone are Plateau, Nasarawa, Benue and Taraba states. Although Kaduna and Bauchi states are not strictly within this zone, the crises in the two states have had some effect on the zone itself. Most of what we say here about North-Central zone is more or less applicable to both Kaduna and Bauchi states. The bloody clashes in Benue and Taraba states were inter-state and inter-ethnic; those in Plateau (Jos), Nasarawa (southern senatorial zone of the state) and Kaduna states were/intra-state and inter-ethnic. The crisis in Bauchi was both inter-ethnic and inter-state. There is thus a common characteristic of inter-ethnicity in all these clashes.

Causes of Ethnic Conflict in Southern Senatorial District of Nasarawa State

Udo (1999) posits that Nigeria is largely a tribal society in which various ethnic groups lay claims to territories to the exclusion of other groups. For emphasis, the contestation arising from the indigene-settler problematic stems from the conception, definition and perception of who is an indigene and who is not or who is a settler and what right does one have which the other should not have. The batch of identity also structures indigene-settler relations. Osaghae and Suberu (2005:27) define identity as "any group attributes that provides recognition, definitions, reference affinity, coherence and meaning for individual members of the group acting

individually or collectively". These values shape the attitude and behaviors of settler communities. According to Egwu (1999) and Best (2011), the settlers import their culture and tradition into their new-community to the discomfort of the host communities.

The settler (non-indigene) communities latch on the Constitutional provisions on human rights and the problem of definition of status to assert their rights in their places of settlement. For instance, many National Constitutions and Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees free movement, free association and ownership of property but at the same time enshrine the Principles of Federal Character and Quota System (FRN, 2003). Who qualifies as an indigene, a citizen or national of a particular place in Nigeria is an important debate especially in the spate of various violent conflicts which have affected thousands of lives, economic activities, and human development.

The Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, NIALS (2011) defines an indigene as a person who is a native (first people) to a territory as opposed to a settler (Later comer). Indices such as length of time, settlement in that location, exercises of control over the land and other resources in that location; successful effort at forging a sense of separate distinguishing identity defined indigeneship. On the other hand, citizenship refers to nationality, the possession of formal legal membership in specific nation recognized under both international and domestic laws (Mamdani, 2000). The nexus between citizenship and indigeneship creates an identity dilemma which often breeds hostile relationship between host communities and settler-communities as has been demonstrated in the Tiv-Jukun conflict in Taraba state, and the Eggon and Alago crisis, and the Agatu –Fulani crisis in Nasarawa state, with similar cases in Jos, Kaduna, Kogi, Benue etc.

Nnoli (2003) posits that ethnic conflicts derive from the constriction between indigeneship and citizenship in the 1979 and subsequent constitutions evident in such institutional requirements as, place of birth, quota, state of origin, catchment area, among others. The problem is compounded by the inability of the Settler or migrant communities to fully integrate themselves with the host indigene/native communities through acculturalisation. Rather what obtains is detribalization and marginal personality (Osaghe and Suberu, 2005).

Effects of Ethnic Conflicts in Nasarawa South

The effects of ethnic conflict on Nasarawa South and Nasarawa State at large was very adverse cutting across social, political, economical, commercial, education and cultural life of the people of Nasarawa South in particular and the state at large as lives and property worth millions of naira was lost during the crises and economic and educational activities were put on a halt.

Ethnic Conflicts and National Security

The concept of national security emerged with nation states and their interest in national survival which ultimately made national security a major concern for the nation state. Wolfers observed that "national security is an ambiguous symbol that may not have any meaning at all." Buchan while agreeing with Wolfers wrote that "security is a word with many meanings." There is a tendency by most authors to equate security with the absence of military threat or with rivalry. With diverse ethnic composition and in the Nigeria context of high level consciousness about identity and the mobilization for its defense including territorial space, this study has implication for nation building, peace or destabilization of the central region of Nigeria that has played some moderating influence between the three giant ethnic groups (Alubo, 2004). Furthermore, as the region that produces the bulk of food, civil disturbances have also implications for national food security. In addition, continue ethnic clashes could also bode ominously for the survival of Nigeria nascent democracy.

Indeed by December 2001, President Olusegun Obasanjo was sufficiently alarmed by the wave of civil disturbances to remark that "Democracy is on trial in Nigeria ...Internal threat to national security has assumed new dimension. Today, it is not just youth agitation but ethno-religious crises" (Gandu, 2001: 12).

The situation in Plateau state, to say the least, constitute a challenge to our democracy, negate the norms of rational human interaction, contradict the tenets of civil society and devalues opportunities for peace, stability, co-existence and social justice. It constitutes a grave threat to law and order and a great danger to security in Plateau state, and the neighboring state of Bauchi, Nasarawa, Taraba and Benue. It is therefore clearly a great threat to security and unity of Nigeria. Even if active conflicts and killings seemingly subside for now, it is a facade that will erupt again if fundamental actions are not taking now as it has subsided and erupted on and off since September 2001 (President Obasanjo, 2002).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Eco-violence theory and the theory of cultural pluralism

The study synthesized theories of eco-violence and cultural pluralism as its analytical framework. The theory of eco-violence is an emerging theoretical construct seeking to explicate the relationship between environmental factors and violent conflicts. Developed by Homer-Dixon (1999), the theory holds thus:

Decreased in the quality and quantity of renewable resources, population growth, and resource access act singly or in various combinations to increase the scarcity, for certain population groups, of cropland, water, forests, and fish. This can reduce economic

productivity, both for the local groups experiencing the scarcity and for the larger regional and national economies. The affected people may migrate or be expelled to new lands. Migrating groups often trigger ethnic conflicts when they move to new areas, while decreases in wealth can cause deprivation conflicts (Homer-Dixon, 1999:30).

Implicit in the eco-violence theory is the assumption that competition over scarce ecological resources engenders violent conflict.

Cultural pluralism theory labels ethnic conflicts as a result of cultural conflicts, because cultural differences are among the differences that usually divide ethnic groups.¹ Also there is a separateness of people who live in a plural society, and were differentiated by the colonialists for economic and commercial ends. This statement captures the scenario in Nasarawa state because; the introduction of free market economy in Nigeria set the stage for the emergence of settler communities. The establishment of the solid and mineral resources necessitated the creation of a large labour force, hence the different ethnic groups were brought by the colonial powers and a cause of conflict witnessed in these areas. Also, in a culturally divergent society, groups together form a common society, the structural imperative for maintaining this inclusive unit involves a type of social order in which one of these cultural sections is subordinated to the other.

From the foregoing explanation, it also explains what obtains in Nasarawa South because a kind of social order has been created, which is the stratification of these cultural plural society continued identity formation with a desperate search for ethnic security. This results into group or ethnic preservation and take the form of subordinating one ethnic group by another ethnic group for survival. This also translates into the belief that what would hold them together is through one ethnic group dominating the others, which could be economic, or socio-political. Smith further argue that, where there is ethnic pluralism, there is a strong, tendency towards domination by one of the groups, the quest for domination and instability and a clash of value because the moral axioms of one ethnic section are not the axioms of another, evoking differing interpretation of values thereby causing conflicts.

METHODOLOGY

Nasarawa South which is made up of Awe, Doma, Keana, Lafia and Obi local government has the population of eight hundred and eleven thousand and twenty two (811,022). (Nasarawa state divisional 2006 census result)

Nasarawa South has agriculture as the mainstay of its economy with the production of varieties of cash crops throughout the year. It also has deposits of solid minerals such as salt, Barite, bauxite, etc which are mostly mined by artisanal miners.

The research design for this study use descriptive research survey in ascertaining the nature of ethnic conflicts and how it affects national security in the area. This research design involves collecting data in order to test hypotheses and answer research questions. Population of this research consists of all five Local Governments Areas via Awe, Keana, Obi, Doma and Lafia. According to the 1991 population census, the total population of the Southern Senatorial District is put at 811,022. For the purpose of this study, the quota sampling technique is adopted. Due to the large nature of the population, a sample of two hundred (250) made up of fifty (50) each from the five Local Government Areas.

The instrument used to collect data for this study is questionnaire, but the researcher found that the strength and usefulness may be limited therefore, interviews was conducted so as to maintain some degree of reliability. Data gathered was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. 242 were duly completed and thus analyzed.

Data Analysis and Presentation

Table 1: Religious Affiliation of Respondents

Religion	Frequency	Percentage
Islam	160	66.11%
Christianity	78	32.23%
Traditional	4	1.65%
Total	242	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 1 shows that 66.11% represents Islam religion, 32.23% represents Christianity and 1.65% represents African traditional religion.

Table 2: Ethnic Affiliation of Respondents

Ethnic Groups	Frequency	Percentage
Eggon	28	11.57%
Fulani	22	9.09%
Alago	73	30.16%
Agatu	32	13.22%
Hausa	34	14.04%
Tiv	16	6.61%
Mighili	7	2.89%
Others	30	12.39%
Total	242	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 2 shows that 28 respondent representing 11.57% are Eggon, 22 respondents representing 9.09% are Fulani, 73 respondents representing 30.16% are Alago, 32 respondents representing 13.22% are Agatu, 34 respondents representing 14.04% are Hausa, 16 respondents representing 6.61% are Tiv, 7 respondents representing 2.89% are Migili, and 30 respondents representing 12.39% are for other ethnic groups.

Table 3: Occupational Status of Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Herders	58	23.96%
Artisans/Handcrafts	34	14.04%
Farmer	133	54.97%
Civil Servant	17	7.03%
Total	242	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2016

The above table shows 58 respondents representing 23.96% were herders, 34 respondents representing 14.04% were artisans, handcrafts, blacksmiths, 133 respondents representing 54.97% were farmers and 17 respondents representing 7.03% were civil servants.

Table 4: Extent of Conflict in the Area

Response	Frequency	Percentage
High	94	38.84
Very high	50	20.66%
Low	98	40.49%
Total	242	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2016

The above table shows the extent of conflicts in the area.

Table 5: The Nature of the Conflicts in the Area

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Incessant	145	59.91%
Frequent	86	35.53%
Not frequent	111	45.86%
Total	242	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 5 shows the nature of conflicts in the area, which respondents with incessant response has highest percentage of 59.9%.

Table 6: Does Ethnic Conflict arise as a result of Population Increase in the Area?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	131	54.13%
Strongly Agree	47	19.42%
Disagree	64	26.44%
Total	242	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 6 shows the result of ethnic conflict that arises as a result of population. The respondents agree that population also leads to ethnic conflict with the percentage of 54.13%.

Table 7: Does Chieftaincy Tussle and creation of chiefdoms increase the rate of Conflict in the Area?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	141	58.26%
Strongly agree	49	20.24%
Disagree	52	21.48%
Total	242	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 7 shows that chieftaincy tussle have to do with conflict in the area which the respondents that agree has 58.26%, those that strongly are with 20.24% and those that disagree with 21.48%.

Table 8: Do you agree that there is a relationship between migrants/settlers contention and ethnic conflict in the area?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	176	72.72%
No	39	16.11%
I Can't say	27	11.15%
Total	242	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 8 shows that 72.72% of the respondents agree that there is a relationship between migrants/settlers issues on ethnic conflict in the area.

Table 9: Religious Intolerance leads to Ethnic Conflict in the Area

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	146	60.33%
Strongly agree	53	21.90%
Disagree	43	17.35%
Total	242	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 9 shows that majority of the respondents (82%) believe that religious intolerance leads to ethnic conflict in the area.

Table 10: Land Dispute leads to Ethnic Conflict in the Area

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	189	78.09%
Strongly agree	41	16.94%
Disagree	12	4.95%
Total	242	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 10 shows that land dispute has been a major cause of ethnic conflict in the area with about 85%.

Table 11: Describe the effects of Ethic Conflict in the area?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Destructive	209	86.36%
Not destructive	33	13.63%
Total	242	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 11 shows how destructive ethnic conflict in the southern senatorial district with 209 respondents representing 86.36% and not destructive with 33 respondents representing 13.63%.

Table 12: Ethnic Conflicts in your area has brought Underdevelopment

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	141	58.26%
Strongly agree	69	28.51%
Disagree	32	13.22%
Total	242	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 12 shows the percentage of under development that ethnic conflict brought in the area.

Table 13: Ethnic Conflicts in the area has constituted a threat to national security

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	136	56.19%
Strongly agree	58	23.96%
Disagree	48	19.83%
Total	242	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 13 shows how ethnic conflict in the area has constitute a threat to national security, with 136 respondents representing 56.19%.

Table 14: Rank the following as it relate to the effects of ethnic conflicts in the area:

Effects	Frequency	Percentage
Loss of lives	98	40.49%
Loss of properties	44	18.18%
Destruction of farm products	32	13.22%
Destruction of infrastructure	30	12.39%
Destruction of houses	38	15.70%
Total	242	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 14 shows how lost of lives accounted for the highest demand with 98 respondents representing (40.5%), lost of properties with 44 respondents representing (18.2%), destruction of houses with 38 respondents representing (15.7%), destruction of farm products with 32 respondents representing (13.2%) and the lowest destruction of infrastructure with 30 respondents representing (12.4%).

Testing Hypothesis

Ho = There is no significant relationship between ethnic conflicts and national security. Level of significance chosen = 0.05 or 5%

ETHNIC CONFLICT CONSTITUTE A THREAT TO NATIONAL SECURITY	RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A THREAT AND NATIONAL SECURITY			Total
	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	
Agree	82	20	34	136
Strongly agree	30	18	10	58
Disagree	39	8	1	48
Total	151	46	45	242

χ^2 781.7 df, 4; 0.05; table value, 9.5

Decision: Since the calculated value is 781.7 is greater than the critical value 9.5, the alternate hypothesis is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

1. That the extent of conflicts in the area is very high and occurred frequently
2. Population increase is one of the major factors that led to conflicts in the area
3. Again issues of chieftaincy tussle and creation of chiefdoms is another source of conflict in the area.
4. Other issues like, land dispute, government policies, religious intolerance are also identified as potential factors that can translate into ethnic conflicts.
5. That ethnic conflicts in the area has been destructive and affected development

6. That the aftermath of conflict is poverty, hunger, lost of properties and loss of lives; and threat to National Security.

CONCLUSION

This study work has highlighted the nature of Ethnic Conflict and Threat to National Security of Nasarawa South Senatorial District of Nasarawa State. The prevalence of conflicts has serious implication for the development of any community or state. Ethnic Conflicts have resulted into enmity and hatred between the people who have lived together in peace for years in the area.

The resultant consequences of the above were the gross loss of lives and destruction of millions of property which had adversely affected the development of the area and endangered national security.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Base on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government should endeavor at all levels to work with the various communities to promote harmonized relationships across the religions and ethnic affiliation. This can be achieved through the building of inter-ethnic religions civil network at the community level, these networks can be targeted for skills and capacity building, programmed in conflict management and transformation by Government and International Development partners alike.
2. There is a need for intensive public enlightenment campaign on the need for tolerance and respect for norms and values.
3. The creation of job opportunities and micro-credit options would go a long way towards intimating the untoward features of alienation and internal colonialism, particularly as it affect the youths in the area. Their problem is particularly acute and have provided a highly explosive population-available for mobilization by political, ethnic and religious opportunist.
4. Inbuilt traditional cultural, mechanism for conflict resolution should be explored and used. Communities which today are engaged in war have lived in peace for many years. It is important that those factors which made peaceful co-existence possible in the past should be identified and promoted. Traditional rulers should be given prominent and constitutional role to play in this effort. This will challenge them to live up to expectation and indeed restore people's confidence in the traditional institution.
5. Security agencies requires a major reform, better funding and adequately equipped; and highly motivated to provide more effective internal security to the satisfaction of the populace.

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