Inter-group Relations and the Challenges of Ethno-Religious Coexistence in Contemporary Nigeria: A Study of Conflict and Peacebuilding Mechanisms.

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Abstract

This article examines intergroup relations and the challenges of ethno-religious coexistence in contemporary Nigeria with particular emphasis on the historical foundations of intergroup relations, the major drivers of ethnic and religious conflicts, and the strategies for sustainable peacebuilding and national cohesion. The aim of the study is to critically analyze the factors responsible for persistent intergroup tensions in Nigeria and to explore mechanisms capable of promoting peaceful coexistence and national integration in the country. The study adopts the content analysis method using secondary sources of data, including textbooks, journal articles, newspapers, government publications, conference papers, and credible online materials relevant to intergroup relations and peacebuilding in Nigeria. The findings of the study reveal that colonial legacies, political exclusion, economic inequality, religious extremism, indigene-settler disputes, weak governance, and the manipulation of ethnic and religious identities by political elites constitute the major causes of intergroup conflicts in Nigeria. The study further finds that these conflicts have negatively affected national unity, political stability, economic development, and social cohesion. The article also establishes that sustainable peace in Nigeria requires inclusive governance, equitable resource distribution, effective conflict resolution mechanisms, interfaith dialogue, civic education, youth empowerment, and institutional reforms aimed at strengthening justice and national integration. The article concludes that Nigeria's diversity should be viewed as a source of strength rather than division. However, achieving sustainable national cohesion requires collective commitment from government, political leaders, civil society organizations, traditional institutions, religious bodies, and citizens toward justice, tolerance, dialogue, and responsible leadership. The study therefore recommends proactive peacebuilding initiatives and inclusive policies capable of addressing the structural causes of intergroup conflicts in Nigeria.

Keywords: Intergroup Relations, Ethno-Religious Conflict, Peacebuilding, National Cohesion, Ethnicity, Nigeria

Introduction

Contemporary academic research on intergroup relations in Nigeria focuses on how ethnic identity and religious polarization intersect with resource competition, political patronage, and inequality to challenge social cohesion. Intergroup relation in Nigeria has become synonymous with hostility perception and assumed debilitating proportions. Notable threats to intergroup relations include ethnic politics, struggle for power and resources. Living together in a nation that is made up of different ethnic and religion groups demand a lot of

efforts in the area of peace education, confidence building and peacemaking to create the much-desired atmosphere of peace and stability, (Saleh et.al)

Nigeria is one of the most ethnically, culturally, and religiously diverse countries in Africa. With over 250 ethnic groups and multiple religious affiliations, the country represents a complex mosaic of identities, interests, and historical experiences. While this diversity has the potential to strengthen national unity and socio-cultural development, it has also generated persistent intergroup tensions, conflicts, and political rivalries. Ethno-religious crises, communal clashes, political exclusion, and struggles over resources have continued to shape intergroup relations in contemporary Nigeria (Otite, 2000). The recurring conflicts between various ethnic and religious communities have raised concerns about national cohesion, peaceful coexistence, and sustainable development.

Historically, intergroup relations in Nigeria have been influenced by colonial policies that encouraged regionalism and ethnic consciousness. The amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1914 by the British colonial administration brought together diverse groups with different political, economic, and cultural systems under one political entity (Coleman, 1958). Rather than promoting integration, colonial rule deepened ethnic divisions through indirect rule and unequal developmental policies. These divisions later manifested in political competition, distrust, and violent conflicts among groups after independence in 1960. The Nigerian Civil War of 1967–1970 remains one of the clearest examples of how fragile intergroup relations can threaten national unity (Falola, 1998).

In contemporary Nigeria, intergroup conflicts have assumed different dimensions, including farmer-herder clashes, religious extremism, electoral violence, indigene-settler disputes, and separatist agitations. These tensions are often fueled by poverty, unemployment, bad governance, political manipulation, and perceived marginalization of certain ethnic groups (Suberu, 2001). The increasing politicization of ethnic and religious identities has weakened national integration and created deep social mistrust among communities. In several parts of the country, intergroup conflicts have led to loss of lives, destruction of property, displacement of persons, and economic instability. Consequently, Nigeria continues to grapple with the challenge of building a united and peaceful society amidst its diversity.

Despite these challenges, various peacebuilding mechanisms and institutional frameworks have been introduced to promote peaceful coexistence among groups in Nigeria. These include federal character principles, unity schools, the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), interfaith dialogue initiatives, and community-based conflict resolution mechanisms. Traditional rulers, religious leaders, civil society organizations, and regional bodies have also played significant roles in mediating conflicts and fostering dialogue among communities (Best, 2007). However, the persistence of intergroup conflicts suggests that existing mechanisms have not fully addressed the structural causes of tensions in the country.

This article argues that the persistence of intergroup conflicts in Nigeria is largely rooted in historical injustices, political exclusion, socio-economic inequalities, and the manipulation of ethnic and religious identities by political elites. The article further contends that sustainable peace and national cohesion can only be achieved through inclusive governance, equitable

resource distribution, effective conflict resolution mechanisms, and deliberate efforts toward national integration.

Methodologically, this study adopts the content analysis approach using secondary sources of data. The research relies on textbooks, journal articles, newspapers, government publications, conference papers, and credible online materials related to intergroup relations, ethno-religious conflicts, and peacebuilding in Nigeria. Through qualitative analysis of existing literature, the article examines the causes, manifestations, and implications of intergroup conflicts as well as the strategies for promoting peaceful coexistence in the Nigerian state.

The significance of this article lies in its contribution to the growing discourse on intergroup relations and peacebuilding in Nigeria. The study provides a deeper understanding of the historical and contemporary factors shaping intergroup relations in the country. It also offers recommendations that can assist policymakers, scholars, and peacebuilding institutions in addressing the root causes of ethno-religious conflicts and promoting sustainable national unity. Furthermore, the article contributes to academic literature on intergroup relations by examining the intersections between ethnicity, religion, politics, and governance in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarifications

Ethno-religious Coexistence: It is the peaceful, respectful, and harmonious living together of different ethnic and religious groups within the same society. It requires mutual tolerance, active dialogue, and a shared commitment to upholding the rights and cultural practices of diverse communities.

Conflict:

Conflict is a struggle or clash between opposing forces, ideas, or interests. It occurs when parties perceive that their needs, goals, or values are incompatible, leading to friction or opposition. It can be an internal mental battle or an outward disagreement between people or nations. Conflict is a natural part of human interaction, not inherently good or bad. When managed constructively, it can lead to personal growth, better understanding, and positive change. If handled poorly, it can escalate into hostility.

Peacebuilding Mechanisms:

It refers to the methods, institutions, strategies and actions used to prevent, manage or resolve conflicts and maintain peace in a society, region, or between nations. It involves organized efforts aimed at stopping violence, protecting civilians, promoting dialogue, and restoring stability after conflicts. It can be used as a tool used by international organizations (most notably the United Nations) to help countries torn by conflict create the conditions for lasting peace. It deploys neutral military, police, and civilian personnel to monitor ceasefires, protect civilians, and build stability.

Historical Foundations of Ethno-Religious Relations in Nigeria

The historical foundations of ethno-religious relations in Nigeria can be traced to the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial experiences that shaped interactions among the diverse ethnic and religious groups within the country. Before the advent of British colonialism, the

various ethnic nationalities that presently constitute Nigeria existed as independent political entities with distinct cultures, languages, religions, and systems of governance. The Hausa-Fulani in the North operated centralized emirate systems strongly influenced by Islam, the Yoruba in the West maintained sophisticated kingdoms such as Oyo and Ife, while the Igbo in the East largely practiced decentralized political systems (Afigbo, 1989). Despite occasional trade and migration, relations among these groups were relatively autonomous and localized. Nigeria is deeply divided along the fault lines of ethnicity and religion. In the political arena, ethnic and religious groups are mobilized by political elites as powerful instruments to achieve certain goals, which could be for their interests, cronies, ethnic and/or religious groups (Hakeem, 2015). Young (2016) puts it aptly that in Nigeria ethnic identities or differences are mobilized in the events of competition, conflict, and cooperation. The same situation applies in the case of religious mobilization. Often, scarcity of resources and the closing in of competitive social, economic and political spaces, group marginality and grievances based on ethnic and religious identities, greed and competition for resources, as well as inherent primordial sentiments or hatred, mutually and exclusively reinforces negative mobilization of ethnic and religious identities in Nigeria.

The advent of colonial rule significantly altered intergroup relations in Nigeria. The amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1914 by the British colonial administration brought together culturally diverse groups under a single political structure without adequate consultation or integration mechanisms (Coleman, 1958). The colonial administration adopted indirect rule, which strengthened ethnic identities and widened regional divisions. In Northern Nigeria, the British preserved the emirate system and Islamic institutions, while Western education and Christian missionary activities were more dominant in the South. This uneven socio-economic and educational development created disparities that later contributed to intergroup suspicion and political competition (Crowder, 1978).

Colonial policies also institutionalized ethnic consciousness through regionalism and identity-based administration. The division of Nigeria into Northern, Western, and Eastern regions encouraged ethnic loyalty over national identity. Political parties that emerged during the nationalist struggle largely reflected ethnic and regional interests. For instance, the Northern People's Congress (NPC) was dominated by Hausa-Fulani interests, the Action Group (AG) was largely Yoruba-oriented, while the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) had strong Igbo support (Sklar, 1963). Consequently, political competition in the late colonial and early post-independence periods became deeply intertwined with ethnicity and religion.

The struggle for political power after independence further deepened intergroup tensions in Nigeria. Electoral crises, census controversies, allegations of marginalization, and competition for federal resources intensified mistrust among ethnic groups. The political instability of the First Republic eventually culminated in the military coups of 1966 and the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-1970. The war, fought primarily between the Federal Government and the secessionist Eastern Region of Biafra, remains one of the most devastating episodes in Nigeria's history and significantly affected intergroup relations, particularly between the Igbo and other ethnic

groups (Falola, 1998). The memories of the war and perceptions of exclusion have continued to influence contemporary political discourse and separatist agitations in parts of the country. Religious dynamics also became increasingly important in shaping intergroup relations in Nigeria. Islam and Christianity emerged as the two dominant religions, often intersecting with ethnic and regional identities. Religious tensions became more pronounced from the 1980s onward with the rise of religious fundamentalism, debates over the implementation of Sharia law in Northern Nigeria, and violent clashes between Christian and Muslim communities in cities such as Kaduna and Jos (Kukah, 1993). These conflicts have reinforced divisions and contributed to the politicization of religion in national affairs.

Furthermore, the issue of indigene-settler relations has remained a major source of intergroup conflict in Nigeria. Many communities distinguish between "indigenes," who are regarded as original inhabitants, and "settlers," who are considered migrants regardless of how long they have lived in a particular area. This distinction often affects access to land, political participation, employment opportunities, and social privileges (Suberu, 2001). In several states, such tensions have resulted in violent communal clashes and the displacement of populations.

Despite these historical challenges, intergroup relations in Nigeria have also witnessed periods of cooperation, coexistence, and integration. Inter-ethnic trade, intermarriage, urbanization, and national institutions such as the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) have contributed to fostering interactions among different groups. However, the persistence of ethnic nationalism, religious intolerance, and political exclusion demonstrates that the historical foundations of intergroup relations in Nigeria continue to shape contemporary socio-political realities. Understanding these historical dynamics is therefore essential for addressing the root causes of conflict and promoting sustainable national cohesion in Nigeria.

Drivers of Intergroup Conflict and Social Tensions in Contemporary Nigeria

Intergroup conflict and social tensions in contemporary Nigeria are driven by a combination of political, economic, social, religious, and historical factors. Despite numerous efforts toward national integration, the Nigerian state continues to experience recurring ethnic, religious, and communal conflicts that threaten national stability and development. These tensions are often rooted in structural inequalities, competition over resources, political manipulation, and weak governance systems. The persistence of these challenges has continued to undermine peaceful coexistence among the country's diverse ethnic and religious groups.

One of the major drivers of intergroup conflict in Nigeria is political competition and the struggle for power among ethnic groups. Since independence, political power has often been perceived through ethnic and regional lenses, leading to intense rivalry among groups seeking access to state resources and political influence. Political elites frequently exploit ethnic and religious sentiments to mobilize support during elections and political contests (Nnoli, 1978). This manipulation of identity politics has deepened divisions and generated mistrust among communities. Electoral violence in different parts of Nigeria has demonstrated how political competition can escalate into broader ethnic and religious confrontations.

Closely related to political rivalry is the issue of perceived marginalization and exclusion. Several ethnic groups in Nigeria believe they have been sidelined in political schemes, appointments, infrastructural development, and resource allocation. Feelings of exclusion have fueled agitations for greater autonomy, restructuring, and even separatist movements in some regions of the country. The activities of groups such as the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the South-East and various militant groups in the Niger Delta reflect widespread dissatisfaction with the perceived inequities within the Nigerian federation (Suberu, 2001). Such grievances often intensify intergroup hostility and weaken national unity.

A major cause of what we now see as ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria has to do with the accusations and counter allegations of neglect, oppression, domination, exploitation, victimization, discrimination, marginalization nepotism and religious intolerance (Salawu, 2010). In every nation (including Nigeria), there is no complete and unanimous agreement on how wealth, power and status are to be shared among individuals and ethnic groups. There is no agreement also, on how to effect necessary changes and reforms. This is because, there are diverse interests associated with the different groups and individuals and in which case, some groups will have their aims met, while others will not. What this means is that conflicts (ethno-religious ones inclusive) usually occur when deprived groups and individuals attempt to increase their share of power and wealth or to modify the dominant values, norms, beliefs or ideology.

Thus, in Nigeria and going by the various examples of ethno-religious conflicts cited earlier in this paper, there seems to be a divisive interplay of politics, ethnicity and religions, which has consequently led to the rising jingoism and militancy of various ethnic and religious movements. It is interesting to note that the overall consequence of this is the escalation of various ethno-religious conflicts that are witnessed all over the country today which are meant to correct any perceived form of marginalization, oppression or domination.

Economic hardship and competition over scarce resources also constitute major causes of social tensions in Nigeria. High levels of poverty, unemployment, inflation, and underdevelopment have heightened frustrations among citizens. In many communities, competition over land, water, grazing routes, and employment opportunities has resulted in violent conflicts. The farmer-herder clashes witnessed in states such as Benue, Plateau, Kaduna, and Nasarawa are closely linked to struggles over land and environmental resources (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014). Climate change, desertification, and population growth have further intensified these conflicts by increasing pressure on available resources.

Religious intolerance and extremism have equally contributed to intergroup conflict in Nigeria. Religion plays a significant role in the social and political lives of Nigerians, and tensions between Christians and Muslims have periodically resulted in violent confrontations. The emergence of extremist groups such as Boko Haram has worsened religious tensions, particularly in Northern Nigeria. Boko Haram's insurgency has caused thousands of deaths, displacement of populations, and destruction of communities (Onuoha, 2012). Beyond insurgency, disputes over religious practices, Sharia implementation, and provocative religious preaching have frequently triggered communal violence in different parts of the country.

Another significant factor driving intergroup tensions is the indigene-settler dichotomy. In many Nigerian states, access to political rights, employment, education, and land ownership is often determined by whether an individual is regarded as an "indigene" or a "settler." This discriminatory practice has created social exclusion and recurring conflicts, especially in areas with mixed ethnic populations such as Plateau State (Best, 2007). The indigene-settler issue undermines citizenship rights and fosters resentment among groups that feel politically and economically disadvantaged.

Weak state institutions and poor governance have also exacerbated intergroup conflicts in Nigeria. Corruption, lack of accountability, poor security management, and ineffective judicial systems have reduced public confidence in government institutions. In many cases, the inability of the state to promptly address grievances or punish perpetrators of violence encourages cycles of revenge and impunity. Security agencies are sometimes accused of bias or selective justice, thereby deepening distrust among communities (Ake, 1996). The absence of effective conflict resolution mechanisms has therefore contributed to the persistence of communal and ethno-religious violence.

Furthermore, social media and misinformation have emerged as contemporary drivers of intergroup tensions in Nigeria. The rapid spread of unverified information, hate speech, and inflammatory content through digital platforms often escalates conflicts and fuels hostility among ethnic and religious groups. False narratives and manipulated images shared online have contributed to mob violence, communal panic, and retaliatory attacks in several instances. This demonstrates how technological advancements, while beneficial in many respects, can also intensify social divisions when poorly regulated.

The cumulative effects of these drivers of conflict are enormous. Intergroup violence has resulted in loss of lives, destruction of property, displacement of communities, economic decline, and weakening of national integration. It has also discouraged foreign investment, disrupted educational activities, and increased humanitarian crises across different regions of the country. Consequently, addressing the root causes of intergroup conflict remains essential for achieving sustainable peace, political stability, and socio-economic development in Nigeria.

Peacebuilding, Dialogue, and Strategies for Sustainable National Cohesion

Peacebuilding and national cohesion remain critical issues in Nigeria due to the country's persistent experiences with ethnic, religious, political, and communal conflicts. As a plural society characterized by diverse identities and competing interests, Nigeria requires effective mechanisms that can foster peaceful coexistence, mutual understanding, and inclusive governance. Sustainable peace cannot be achieved merely through military responses or temporary political settlements; rather, it requires deliberate efforts aimed at addressing the structural causes of conflict, promoting social justice, and strengthening institutions of national integration. Consequently, peacebuilding and dialogue have become indispensable tools for maintaining stability and unity in contemporary Nigeria.

The Nigerian governments (past and present) have been responding to the challenges posed by the various ethno-religious conflicts in the country. However, the various governments

responses these ethno-religious conflicts have been ad-hoc and were not organized. According to Omorogbe and Omohan (2005) for instance, only two major strategies of conflict management are often employed by governments in Nigeria to tackle the problem of ethno-religious conflicts each time they occur. The two strategies as mentioned by them are the coercive and the judicial methods.

The coercive method as the name suggests has to do with the deployment of troops to the areas of conflict with the objective of controlling the crises. In Nigeria, this method of managing the ethno-religious conflicts has taken many forms depending on the magnitude of the crises in question. In a light ethno-religious crisis for instance, the conventional policemen are the first to be drafted to the crisis point and to be assisted by the mobile police-men in case the conventional corps cannot cope. But in a very serious ethno-religious conflict, government may be forced to make use of combined military force made up of the army, navy and the air-force. Because of the military nature of this kind of intervention however, the coercive method is usually associated with many vises such as rape, beating and in some cases shooting of innocent citizens (Omorogbe and Omohan, 2005; 556). Consequently, this method of intervention in ethno-religious conflicts has not been successful as a mechanism. While commenting on the problem with the deployment of security forces (troops) to conflict areas to quell the crisis, Oromareghake and Akpator (2005) have this to say:

> the problem with the deployment of security forces that are not backed by intensive mediation effort is that it unnecessarily prolongs the stay of such security or armies frequently deployed to quell disturbances in Nigeria have neither the mandate nor the training to act as conflict resolution facilitator (p. 601).

One of the major strategies for sustainable national cohesion in Nigeria is inclusive governance and equitable representation. The perception of marginalization among various ethnic and regional groups has contributed significantly to social tensions and separatist agitations across the country. To address this challenge, the Nigerian state introduced the Federal Character Principle, which seeks to ensure fair representation of different ethnic groups in public institutions and political appointments (Mustapha, 2007). Although the implementation of this policy has faced criticism, it remains an important mechanism for reducing feelings of exclusion and fostering a sense of belonging among Nigeria's diverse populations. Inclusive governance promotes trust in state institutions and reduces the likelihood of intergroup resentment.

Dialogue and conflict resolution mechanisms also play essential roles in peacebuilding efforts. Interfaith dialogue initiatives involving Christian and Muslim leaders have been utilized in several parts of Nigeria to reduce religious tensions and encourage peaceful coexistence. Religious leaders possess considerable influence within their communities and can therefore contribute significantly to promoting tolerance, reconciliation, and non-violence. Traditional rulers and community leaders have equally served as mediators in communal disputes by employing indigenous conflict resolution methods rooted in local customs and values (Best, 2007). These local peacebuilding approaches are often effective because they enjoy legitimacy and acceptance among the people.

Another important strategy for promoting national cohesion is civic education and the cultivation of national identity. Ethnic and religious loyalties often overshadow national consciousness in Nigeria, thereby weakening unity and patriotism. Educational institutions, media organizations, and civil society groups can contribute to peacebuilding by promoting values such as tolerance, citizenship, unity, and respect for diversity. National programs such as the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) were specifically designed to encourage interethnic interaction and integration among Nigerian youths by deploying graduates to regions outside their ethnic origins. Such initiatives provide opportunities for cultural exchange and help reduce stereotypes and prejudices among different groups (Suberu, 2001). Economic development and social justice are equally vital for sustainable peace in Nigeria. Widespread poverty, unemployment, and socio-economic inequality have contributed significantly to violence and insecurity in many communities. Youth unemployment, in particular, has made many young people vulnerable to recruitment by extremist groups, political thugs, and criminal networks. Therefore, policies aimed at job creation, poverty reduction, rural development, and equitable distribution of resources are essential for reducing social tensions and preventing conflict. Communities that enjoy economic opportunities and social inclusion are more likely to embrace peaceful coexistence and national stability.

Security sector reforms also constitute an important component of peacebuilding in Nigeria. Public confidence in security agencies has often been undermined by allegations of corruption, human rights abuses, and ethnic bias. Strengthening the professionalism, neutrality, and accountability of security institutions is necessary for effective conflict management and the protection of citizens. In addition, the judiciary must remain independent and efficient in addressing grievances and prosecuting perpetrators of violence. The rule of law is fundamental to preventing impunity and ensuring justice in conflict situations (Ake, 1996). Without credible institutions, peacebuilding efforts are unlikely to produce lasting results.

The role of civil society organizations and the media in peacebuilding cannot also be overlooked. Civil society groups have been actively involved in advocacy, mediation, humanitarian assistance, and peace education across conflict-prone areas in Nigeria. Through workshops, campaigns, and community engagement programs, these organizations encourage dialogue and reconciliation among conflicting groups. Similarly, the media has the responsibility of promoting balanced reporting and avoiding inflammatory content capable of escalating tensions. Responsible journalism and ethical communication are essential in a multicultural society like Nigeria where misinformation can easily provoke violence.

Furthermore, constitutional and political reforms remain necessary for strengthening national cohesion in Nigeria. Debates surrounding restructuring, true federalism, resource control, and state policing reflect the need to reassess the existing political framework in order to accommodate the country's diversity more effectively. Many scholars argue that decentralization and greater autonomy for federating units may reduce ethnic competition for central power and encourage local development (Elaigwu, 2011). While such reforms remain controversial, they are important aspects of ongoing discussions on how to build a more inclusive and stable Nigerian federation.

Eventually, sustainable national cohesion in Nigeria depends on the collective commitment of government, civil society, religious institutions, traditional authorities, and citizens toward peace and unity. Peacebuilding should not merely focus on ending violence but also on addressing the underlying causes of conflict such as inequality, injustice, corruption, and political exclusion. A united Nigeria can only emerge through tolerance, fairness, dialogue, and inclusive development. Therefore, strengthening peacebuilding mechanisms and fostering intergroup cooperation remain essential for securing the future stability and progress of the Nigerian state.

Conclusion

Intergroup relations in Nigeria remain one of the most critical issues confronting the country's political stability, national unity, and socio-economic development. As this study has demonstrated, the historical foundations of ethnic and religious relations in Nigeria were shaped by colonial policies, regional divisions, political competition, and socio-economic inequalities that have continued to influence contemporary realities. The amalgamation of diverse ethnic nationalities without adequate integration mechanisms created structural tensions that successive governments have struggled to manage effectively. Consequently, intergroup mistrust, political rivalry, and identity-based conflicts have remained recurring features of the Nigerian state.

The article further revealed that the drivers of intergroup conflict in contemporary Nigeria are multidimensional and deeply interconnected. Political exclusion, economic hardship, resource competition, religious extremism, indigene-settler disputes, and weak governance structures have all contributed to recurring violence and social instability. These conflicts have produced devastating consequences, including loss of lives, destruction of property, displacement of populations, economic stagnation, and weakening of national cohesion. More importantly, the persistent manipulation of ethnic and religious identities by political actors has continued to undermine efforts toward building a truly united and inclusive nation.

Nevertheless, the study equally established that sustainable peace and national cohesion in Nigeria are achievable through deliberate peacebuilding initiatives, inclusive governance, dialogue, and institutional reforms. Mechanisms such as interfaith dialogue, civic education, equitable representation, youth integration programs, and community-based conflict resolution strategies can significantly reduce tensions and promote peaceful coexistence. The article also emphasized that good governance, social justice, economic inclusion, and the rule of law are indispensable foundations for sustainable peace in a plural society like Nigeria.

One major lesson this study serves for Nigeria is that diversity in itself is not the problem; rather, the inability to manage diversity fairly and inclusively constitutes the real challenge. Countries with multiple ethnic and religious identities can thrive when there is justice, equality, mutual respect, and strong institutions that protect the interests of all citizens. Nigeria must therefore move beyond divisive politics and embrace policies that promote national integration over ethnic or religious supremacy. The country must recognize that no group can achieve lasting security or prosperity in isolation from others. National unity can only flourish when citizens perceive fairness, inclusion, and equal opportunities within the federation.

Another important lesson is the need for visionary and responsible leadership. Political leaders must desist from exploiting ethnic and religious sentiments for personal or electoral gains. Instead, leadership in Nigeria should focus on nation-building, accountability, and the promotion of collective national interests. Religious leaders, traditional rulers, civil society organizations, educational institutions, and the media also have critical roles to play in fostering tolerance, dialogue, and peaceful coexistence among Nigerians.

Furthermore, Nigeria must invest more seriously in the youth population, as young people often constitute both the victims and instruments of violent conflicts. Addressing unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, and social exclusion among the youth will significantly reduce the appeal of extremism, political violence, and communal unrest. Economic empowerment and quality education are therefore essential components of long-term peacebuilding and national development.

Overall, Nigeria's future stability and progress depend largely on its ability to build bridges across ethnic, religious, and regional divides. Peacebuilding should not merely be reactive but proactive, focusing on addressing the root causes of conflict before they escalate into violence. A united, peaceful, and prosperous Nigeria is possible if justice, inclusion, dialogue, and responsible governance are genuinely prioritized. Ultimately, the survival and advancement of the Nigerian state require a collective commitment by all stakeholders to promote national cohesion, mutual understanding, and peaceful intergroup relations for present and future generations.

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