



ETHNICITY, ETHNIC CRISIS AND NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA

IMPLICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES



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SUMMARY

According to the 2020 Fragile States Index, Nigeria is the 14th most fragile state out of 178 countries featured in the ranking. This ranking placed Nigeria above countries such as Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, DR Congo, Sudan, Afghanistan, and below those, and below those such as Iraq, Libya, etc. Several factors are used to ascertain the status of a country in this ranking under the categories of social, economic, and political. Unpacking the factors further, under the social category are insecurity, political instability, and conflicts.

To have Nigeria shoulder to shoulder with the aforementioned countries, countries that have been in perpetual conflicts for years, suggest how cataclysmic 'Nigeria's security situation has become recent. And while there are several contributors to Nigeria's national security crisis, ethnicity, and its crisis has become of the most dominant and triggers of political instability in the country. For instance, the Biafran agitation has been reignited through the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) campaign under its leader Nnamdi Kanu in the South-Eastern part of the country. The Niger Delta agitation and militancy are still much alive, with pockets of violence in the South-South region of Nigeria. Most recently, following the wave of worsening insecurity in the country, the Oduduwa Republic promoted through a secessionist agitation was flagged off in the Southwestern part of the country by Sunday Igboho. Also, the herder-farmer conflict has worsened over the years in the North Central part of the country, amongst other pockets of ethnic violence in the country.

A causal analysis of the factors responsible for 'Nigeria's ethnic crisis, as well as the recent ethnic-oriented threats, outbursts, and violence, showcases a range of issues, according to experts. They are colonial distortion; economic factors; the quest for power; lack of government presence in several areas & communities; centralization of

governance; campaigns for self-determination by ethnic groups; political favouritism & bias for particular ethnic groups and seclusion of others. Others are, political injustice & marginalization; identity politics; poor leadership & weak state institutions; poor judicial system which has triggered reprisals & grievances; poverty & inequality; and governance failure amongst others.

The implications and consequences of this downcast phenomenon include state failure & collapse - following the Fragile States Index analysis - *Getting to Somalia*; gross human rights abuses; and economic crisis because of the worsening political instability, which will precipitate more instability. Considering the latter, Nigeria is living on the edge of macro-economically instability, following decades of commodity dependence. The country has recently had two (2) economic recessions within 5 years, while poverty, unemployment and inequality are metastasizing. As such, the implosion of the country or sustenance of the worsening insecurity dynamics would occasion another recession and possibly a full-blown economic depression.

A comprehensive, coherent and multi-dimensional strategy to address Nigeria's ethnic crisis according to experts encompass Promoting Political Inclusion; Macro-Economic Overhaul for Economic Restructuring, Poverty Redressal and Job Creation; Expunging Federal Character and State/Local Government of Origin from the Constitution; Strengthening Weak Institutions; Political and Economic Restructuring; State Policing; National Dialogue on Managing Diversity; Leverage Non-Kinetic Approaches of Securitization; Leverage Education System, Entertainment Industry and National Orientation Agency (NOA) to Promote Tolerance; Early Warnings Adherence; and Developing a National Strategy on Co-existence.



INTRODUCTION

Like in many developing countries that are highly fractionalized, ethnic crisis ranks amongst many security challenges bedeviling Nigeria, making Nigeria loosely a country at war with itself. This situation magnifies Nigeria's political instability and the efforts of security agencies to address the range of insecurity issues which beyond fractionalization crisis encircle terrorism, banditry, ritual killings, armed robbery and kidnapping. Currently, the Nigerian military is deployed in 34 out of the 36 states plus the Federal Capital Territory in the country for one to understand the bandwidth of the national security challenges. Furthermore, at present, there are three (3) different self-determination movements in the southern part of the country: The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)ⁱ, which has a vigilante security arm named, Eastern Security Network (ESN); Oduduwa Republic separatist agitationⁱⁱ; and most recently, the Biafran Customary Government (BCG)ⁱⁱⁱ. While this is the case, the herder-farmer conflict has continued to worsen over time and has expanded beyond the North Central part of the country into all regions in the country. The conflict has manifested through attacks and counter-attacks between herders mainly from Fulani ethnic group and farmers from different ethnic groups (rural farming communities). These clashes have ultimately resulted in hundreds of deaths.

Since independence in 1960, Nigeria opted for

a federal system in a bid to promote diversity and nation-building in the country. The country was subdivided into three (and later) four regions, then further into states, whose number has kept expanding until the states got to 36. In addition, series of policies have been made to promote national integration and discourage ethnic fractionalization. These include the Federal Character Principles, the National Youth Service Scheme (NYSC), etc. They were formed to promote national unity; for instance, political parties are not to be formed based on ethnicity, religion or geography. There is an insistence (backed by law) that parties themselves must reflect federal character. However, the latter has not prevented citizens from voting most times through ethnic lenses. The country has had post-election ethnic clashes - which have all further worsened the ethnic crises & conflicts. Moving on, following several ethnic crisis and agitations that have ensued since independence and the actuality that these national integration measures have not effectively promoted state and nation-building, there has been an increased demand for "true federalism" which in itself has different meanings.^{iv}

In recent times, in a way to address these emerging separatist agitations, the Nigerian government has used more of a kinetic approach which has resulted in several clashes between the military and the members of

the separatist groups.^{v vi vii} Dozens have died in these clashes. Experts allude that such a kinetic approach to addressing the range of agitations and self-determination quests has instead continued to exacerbate the situation suggesting that non-kinetic mechanisms such as dialogues and negotiations should be brought on board.

Against this background, on 31 March 2021, in Abuja, Nigeria, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) and the Civil Society Advocacy Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC), with support from the European Union convened a forum to examine the topic, *Ethnicity, Ethnic Crisis and National Security: Implications and Management Strategies*, under the banner,

Multi-Stakeholder Consultative Forum on Peace and Security. The forum consisted of a multi-sectoral team of 50 peace & security experts, academics, policymakers, security personnel, civil society and non-governmental consultants. The experts were tasked with anatomizing the ethnic crisis in the country, its current trends, interrogating its causal elements and their implications on national security in a bid to develop actionable and holistic policy recommendations to address this disheartening ethnic trend. This policy brief is an outcome of this multi-stakeholder brainstorming, expert presentations, panel discussions, cross-pollination of ideas and various debates.



ETHNICITY, ETHNIC CRISIS AND NATIONAL SECURITY

History of Ethnic Crises in Nigeria and Emergence of Ethnic Strongholds/Frontiers of Violence

With over 400 ethnic and linguistic groups, Nigeria is arguably one of the world's most ethnically fractionalized countries in the world, with the most dominant ethnic groups being Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. As such, Nigeria is a collection of many ethnic nations in one. Added to this is the diversity of religion as there are three major religions in the country: Christianity, Islam and Traditional. These religions have millions of adherents across the country. To compound this further, these religions are not homogenous in themselves, rather, each has a multitude of sects that do not agree on several issues. A further addition to this scenario is the geospatial placing and strong claims to territoriality mostly defined by land and fishing waters, with some groups as owners (indigenes) of the land while others settle (settlers) on it. Finally, what emerges is a mesh of thousands of cells, each with uniqueness in its self-identity.^{viii}

The task of nation-building, therefore, is to bring together these mini nations into one mega nation, which is a backbreaking task and one the Nigerian government has battled with since independence. While the merger of these 400 groups has been done through a mere announcement - the British amalgamation of Nigeria's northern and southern protectorates, in practice, such co-existence is not that simple.

However, if it had been properly managed, the gains of this rich cultural, ethnic and religious

diversity are enormous. On the other side of the coin, the mismanagement of these are high bandwidth ethnic crises and conflicts - which is presently the case - with bloodshed, murders, destruction of property and the dislocation of social activities with heavy toll on the political stability and development of the country. The flip has culminated into the Nigerian civil war of 1967 - 1970 which was a war between the government of Nigeria and the secessionist state of Biafra -an aspiration to have an independent country by the former Eastern region consisting of today's Southeast and South-South geo-political zone (except Edo state). Beyond this have been pockets of ethnic attacks and counter-attacks such as the Jukuns and Tivs in Taraba state as well as ethnically driven post-election violence since 1960. There have also been conflicts between settlers and indigenes as in Plateau State for many years.

Surprisingly, some of the longest conflicts are intra-ethnic conflicts often referred to as communal crisis such as the Ife-Modakeke, Aguleri-Umuleri, and many other intra-ethnic conflicts.

In Nigeria's Southeast, 1999 saw the resurgence of the Biafran self-determination quest through the launch of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) under the leadership of Ralph Uwazuruike.^{ix} In 2012, MASSOB was overrun by IPOB, another Biafra separatist agitation and movement.^x

In South-South Nigeria, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND),

was launched in 2004 and has become one of the largest militant groups in the Niger Delta region.^{xi} The group has knocked down oil production in the region and claims that its mandate is to expose exploitation and oppression of the people of the Niger Delta, as well as the devastation of the natural environment as a result of oil production in the region. The group is composed of mostly the Ijaw ethnic group who accuse the Nigerian government and foreign oil firms of promoting massive economic inequalities, environmental degradation, and fraud in the region. MEND's methods encompass kidnap-for-ransom of oil workers, pipeline destruction, staging armed assaults on production sites, and draining off of oil and selling it to the black market.^{xii} MEND's other goals include localizing control of Nigeria's oil and securing reparations from the federal government for pollution caused by the oil industry. In an interview with one of the group's leaders, who used the alias Major-General Godswill Tamuno, the BBC reported that MEND was fighting for "total control" of the Niger-Delta's oil wealth, saying local people had not gained from the riches under the ground and the region's creeks and swamps.^{xiii}

In South-West Nigeria, the Oodua" Peoples' Congress (OPC) was formed in the 1990s to actualize the annulled mandate of Chief MKO Abiola, a Yoruba, who was on his way to winning the presidential election of 12 June 1993, which was subsequently annulled by the military government before vote tallying was complete.^{xiv} Most recently, Chief Sunday Adeyemo popularly known as Sunday Igboho, a Yoruba activist, flagged off the Oduduwa Republic and secessionist agitation. Earlier on, as a response to the OPC, the Arewa People's Congress (APC) was created in Northern Nigeria to protect the interests of the Muslim Hausa and Fulani of the area. The APC has been described as a militant wing of the Arewa Consultative Forum – a political and cultural association of leaders in Northern Nigeria.^{xv} The APC was formerly launched in 1999. The group had had verbal clashes with the OPC when it stated that it would begin full self-defence training for northern residents in the South-West region in reaction to any attacks on Hausas by the OPC.

TOPICAL TRENDS AND CAUSAL ANALYSIS

Nigeria has watched ethnic relations become antagonistic, resulting in violent clashes, which have become an ethnic crisis. And because this crisis was not comprehensively addressed, it has continued to expand, becoming more exacerbated by expanding conflict areas and bringing in more actors and more issues under contention. The problem has been that many ethnic conflicts have remained unsolved in the country, either because they are poorly understood, or simply, they have been ignored by the authorities. However, such conflicts have found spaces to expand, grow and transform qualitatively into something else.

Examining the declaration of Oduduwa Republic by Sunday Igboho, this has ties with the herder-farmer crisis, which has metastasized in the country, has become a huge security challenge. In contrast, the present administration has not figured ways to address the issue comprehensively. During his declaration, Igboho said that Yorubas were being killed and their land was taken over: "If the police attack us for that, we are ready for them. We do not want Nigeria again but the Yoruba nation. There is no essence for one Nigeria when the major resources in the country are in the hands of the northerners. Enough is enough. There is no going back... We are not scared of anybody. These killer herders are taking over our land, and they are killing our people," Igboho said in a viral video.^{xvi} This was following attacks by herders on farmers across the Southwest.

The herder-farmer crisis can also be linked to the formation of the ESN of IPOB. According to IPOB leader, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, the ESN was formed to act as a regional security force to protect the Igbo people against Fulani raiders. Clashes between the ESN and security forces culminated into the Orlu Crisis in January and February 2021 - a military confrontation that lasted for many days.^{xvii xviii} The Orlu crisis has had several spill overs. First, IPOB gave all the governors of South East, Nigeria 14 days to

ban open grazing and threatened to deploy the ESN to enforce such ban if the authorities did not do so.^{xxix} Before the 14 days elapsed, the ESN raided a Fulani camp in Isuikwuato, Abia State, killing their livestock and burning down their houses^{xxx}, which made some of the governors ban open grazing.^{xxxi} Second, in response to the Nigerian military operation in and around Orlu, the Biafra Nations League (BNL) - a movement based in Cross River State threatened to attack all oil installations near Bakassi.^{xxxii} In Anambra State, Aguata specifically, suspected Biafran separatists killed four policemen at a checkpoint and made away with their weapons on 24 February.^{xxxiii} There are several other attacks on police stations in the Niger Delta and South-Eastern regions of the country. In early March 2021, IPOB threatened to deploy the ESN to Benue State to protect Igbos against herdsmen, which came after the killings of IPOB activists by armed herders.^{xxxiv} Compounding the issue, the founder of NDPVF, Asari-Dokubo, declared the formation of the BCG - as a first step to establishing a de facto government for an independent State of Biafra. IPOB and MASSOB have all endorsed BCG.^{xxxv}

The brief analysis shows how the herder-farmer crisis has fermented and triggered further conflicts and self-determination quests by a few ethnic groups. The herder-farmer conflicts have mainly involved disputes over land resources between mostly Fulani herders and farmers across Nigeria. The conflicts have been more devastating in the Middle Belt (North Central, Nigeria) since the return of democracy in 1999 and have spread to the country's southern parts. The conflicts assumed a new dimension when killer herdsmen began to move to settlements occupied by sedentary farmers. Over 19,000 have died since the conflict started while hundreds of thousands have been displaced.^{xxxvi} The conflicts have seen attacks by herders on farming communities and counter-attacks on herders in retaliation by the attacked communities.^{xxxvii xxxviii} The crisis could be linked to the expansion of agriculturist population and cultivated land at the expense of pasturelands; desertification and soil degradation;^{xxxix} deteriorating environmental conditions; population growth;^{xxx} breakdown in traditional conflict resolution mechanisms of water & land disputes; and small arms proliferation & crime in rural areas.^{xxxi} As a result, communities have created self-defence forces

and ethnic and tribal militias mechanisms against the insecurity and violence that have ensued, further fuelling the violence.

The crisis has also exacerbated ethno-religious hostilities in the country.^{xxxii} Since 2012, as a result, there have been initiatives and projects to create transhumance corridors through the Middle Belt. However, being supported mainly by Northern lawmakers, their Southern counterparts have opposed this.^{xxxiii} In 2019, President Muhammadu Buhari made a proposal towards the creation of Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) settlements - this was met with fierce criticism.^{xxxiv}

Beyond the foregoing, experts alluded to the fact that identity politics is also one of the major causes of ethnic crisis in the country. This is because they are the bane for socio-political mobilization especially when the state is as not neutral. Groups and individuals would always find one identity or the other for mobilization, and in a country where citizenship rights are grounded in ethnic claims, ethnicity becomes the dominant identity for mobilization. Such identity politics have bread political exclusion and has become a violent trigger - through post-election violence - in the context of a plural society undergoing severe economic decline. As such, resource allocation and access to political power are based on ethnic mobilization. During elections, politicians mobilize ethnic sentiments to win elections and therefore raises unjustified expectations that others as ethnic groups have a group entitlement, different from others. Instances also have it that when people are elected to represent a geographical space, they are also seen as elected to represent their ethnic groups, which creates another tension.

Similarly, the allocation of political offices, although done according to geography, has actually taken an ethnic shape. In this sense, ethnic groups with larger populations stand a better chance of being politically represented than those with smaller populations. And finally, resource allocation is glaringly dependent on population sizes which though not directly related to ethnic weight, in reality, it nearly approximates such that those ethnic groups with smaller populations are likely to get less resource compared to those with large populations.

In furtherance, experts also mentioned economic marginalization as one of the triggers of ethnic conflicts and militia formations in the country, such as the cases of the Niger Delta MEND. Poverty, inequality, and unemployment have also contributed to ethnic violence, crisis and conflicts in the country. Nigeria is currently the 'world's poverty capital'^{xxxv}, and in the last quarter of 2020, the unemployment rate reached 33.3%.^{xxxvi} This signifies that the youth are minimally engaged productively which means that they can easily be mobilized to join insurgent groups and used as tools to advance several ethnic interests in the country.

Political marginalization is also another factor that has led to ethnic crisis in the country especially when political appointments are lopsided or have a nepotistic undertone despite the federal character principle. This is among the several other political ways through which a particular ethnic group perceive that they are being politically excluded in the country. Additionally, experts also mentioned colonial distortion; the quest for power; poor leadership & weak institutions; absence of governance presence in several areas & communities; centralization of governance; poor judicial system & judicial bias, which has triggered reprisals & grievances; and government failure amongst others. More disheartening is the actuality that it is not only that government has been unable to address these conflicts and bring them to closure, but the fact that in many instances, both the state and its instrument of force such as the police and army have often become too involved as partisans in a number of ethnic conflicts in the country.^{xxxvii} These all could be linked to the campaigns for self-determination by ethnic groups and the fashion of fractionalization crisis the country is witnessing.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES OF ETHNIC CRISIS ON NATIONAL SECURITY

The experts also discussed the consequences and implications of generalized conflicts resulting from unresolved ethnic crises in the country. Accordingly, first, they raise the temperature of insecurity in the country which implies that Nigerians have become subjected to a climate of fear. The fear, as a result, has occasioned the disruption of socio-economic activities in parts of the country.^{xxxviii} The greater level of insecurity in the country has already led to the establishment of Western Nigeria Security Network (WNSN) codenamed Operation Amotekun - a security outfit based in all the six states of the Southwestern, Nigeria. The mandate of the operation, founded in January 2020, as 'Nigeria's first regional security outfit is to curb insecurity in the region.'^{xxxix xl} Second, this sort of framework prepares a country for the next level, a generalized collapse in society. Such a collapse will lead to state failure, and the inauguration of anarchy - *Getting to Somalia* - just like the Fragile States Index has placed Nigeria shoulder to shoulder (in terms of insecurity), with failed states such as Syria, Libya and Iraq.

What is common to all of these is that the state as an institution loses its singular distinct feature of the monopoly of the use of force and power. There becomes an absence of a widely recognized central authority. Institutions of the state such as the court, parliament, etc., do not exist while social services such as healthcare, education etc. are disrupted and there is no one you can demand accountability. Democracy becomes a distant past and a future whose coming you cannot imagine. But state collapse is not the only possible option. Another trajectory is civil war and secessionist activities in which parts of the country fight each other in a vicious war.^{xlii} Another path is ethnic cleansing and gross human rights abuses. Rwanda is only recovering from this horrific experience. Much less known is the ethnic cleansing in Katanga region of Congo (then Zaire). Approximately one million of Kasaians were expelled from cities and towns in which some families had lived since the beginning of mineral exploitation in Katanga during the decade of the 20th century.

Another dimension is macroeconomic failure because of political instability, violence and

conflicts, which will occasion more instability. Nigeria is currently living on the edge, following decades of oil rents dependence. The country has recently had two (2) economic recessions within a 5-year period between 2015 and 2020; while poverty, unemployment and inequality

are metastasizing. As such, the implosion of the country or sustenance of the worsening insecurity dynamics would occasion another recession and possibly a full-blown economic depression.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The search for solutions to 'Nigeria's ethnic crisis is not going to be easy, but it is undoubtedly easier than living in anarchy. What is required on the part of all those who desire peace is an open mind, objectivity, a commitment to humanity as the central core of 'one's purpose on earth and a willingness to engage in open-ended dialogues. For Nigeria to have the right mechanisms and methodologies to respond to the 'country's ethnic crisis, the complexities of the problems, the implications of various approaches to addressing such problems and the security approaches that should be deployed need to be fully understood. Also significant is the political & institutional will to tackle this problem; downright decentralization of governance in the country; and a macroeconomic overhaul to address poverty, unemployment, inequality, growth & incomes. Nigeria is not the only country that is heterogeneous; India, the United States, Indonesia, and Brazil, amongst others, are also exceedingly diverse but have found ways to live in peace and harmony. This, Nigeria can and must do.

To mitigate and manage ethnic crises in Nigeria, the experts made the following comprehensive, coherent, and multi-dimensional policy recommendations.

Promote Political Inclusion: Much of the ethnic conflicts and violence are due to either the action or inaction of government. When people feel excluded in social and political processes, they nurse a grievance and often deploy their frustration upon their neighbours, who they see as the reason behind their inability to access these socio-political processes. When the government becomes selective in who to

punish for criminal breaches, people begin to celebrate their ethnic kinsmen as victims, even when it is evident, they commit the infraction.

Therefore, this means that the government must be impartial, neutral, and focused on promoting the welfare of all citizens, irrespective of whatever ethnic group they belong to. This means that the project of expanding inclusivity within the context of a just society at all levels and in all aspects of society is the project of the moment. The government must creatively and innovatively design platforms and mechanisms for inclusion. Such inclusion would improve social cohesion and harmony.

Macro-Economic Overhaul for Economic Restructuring, Poverty Redressal and Job Creation: Poverty and youth unemployment are drivers of conflicts. They provide the conditions for the recruitment of people into violent conflicts. Government failure to diversify the economy, reduce dependence on oil rents and industrialize the country have precipitated increasing poverty, inequality, and unemployment. In line with this, Nigeria is behind schedule regarding structural transformation and should, as a matter of urgency, structurally transform, industrialize and diversify her economy. This is one of the most important ways to effectively address poverty on in a long term by ensuring sustained economic growth, creating well-paying jobs, and raising per capita income. And doing this is not preposterous - the country must not have to wait until it has *weberianized* its bureaucracy, eradicated corruption or built countrywide infrastructure to do so.

Nigeria can structurally transform even with constraints that currently exist. This is by selecting priority industries to pilot its manufacturing and diversification drive through the lenses of its comparative advantage, coordinating investments in hard & soft infrastructure and addressing market failures. The flying geese thesis to attract firms running out of competitiveness in East Asia; , and building special economic zones to circumvent traditional firm binding constraints.^{xliii} To achieve this goal, the country must mount a multi-year, legislated industrial agenda that should have clear targets in employment projections, industrial outputs, foreign investment and export growth targets, and insulated from political drama and power transfers.

Expunge Federal Character and State/Local Government of Origin from the Constitution: The federal character principle is meant to promote a sense of inclusion - in reality, the identity that is privileged in the application of the principle is geographical, so that all parts of the country are treated equally. This territorial privilege of the principle is compounded by the fact that invariably, there is the presence of "settlers" in the geography of other ethnic groups as many of the states are composed of people belonging to different ethnic groups with different numerical strength. When a "settler" represents a geographical space, the indigenous community of the "host" to the "settler" rejects him or her.

Similarly, where a minority from a state is made its representative, the major ethnic groups feel cheated. In addition, over the years, the federal character principle has sharpened the ethnic division in the country instead of promoting a sense of oneness. The principle has outlived its cause and should be expunged from the constitution. Similar to this, experts suggested that state of origin and local government of origin should all be removed from the constitution because they have come to become ethnicity triggers - rather, we should adopt the concept of universal citizenship. Furthermore, indigeneship and quota systems have not made our institutional system in Nigeria merit-based but rather biased.

Strengthen Weak Institutions: Ethnic crises also persist to a certain degree due to the public

lack of trust in some public institutions and security agencies. There are several instances, especially whereby public institutions and security agencies have narrow ethnic interests, poised to promote some strategic ethnic interests or clearly show their political partisanship & discrimination in addressing national security issues. One of the speakers in the forum highlighted the bias around the different nomenclature of the Nigerian army as regards their operations across the country: while it is about "peacekeeping" in Northeast, Nigeria - in the South East, it's about "python dance" and in the South West about "crocodile smile" Such trust deficit should be addressed, and institutions, especially security and judicial ones should be strengthened and remain neutral in addressing national issues.

Political and Economic Restructuring: Because Nigeria does not practice federalism as it should, it has resulted in ethnic squabbles and agitations all to get access to the centre - all attention is on the centre as such. Economically, because Nigeria is a rentier state, states all dependent on the 'feeding bottle federalism system' of oil rents dispense is common practice. Governments at the subnational level have not been innovative and creative as regards creating wealth, generating revenues and working towards macroeconomic sustenance, since every month, they expect something from the centre. Politically, the situation is the same, attention is on the centre and different groups, rather than demanding accountability from subnational governments that are closer to them and political office holders of similar identity, they tend to all focus at the centre. Restructuring Nigeria is a means to address this and have power closer to people; as well as have each region manage its resources and develop at any pace they wish. To sustainably address ethnic crisis, Nigeria must decentralize power to reduce the concentration at the centre, and rather promote political & economic competition, benchmarking, and best practices.

To this end, a new constitution that defines the rights and privileges of citizens in terms of residency rather than nativism, ancestry, and religion need to be crafted. This new constitution should be the vehicle for power devolution from an all-powerful central government to local constituencies. This will

also ensure economic justice and equity. Restructuring will also make central political power less attractive, less corrupt and contests over national political offices less contentious. The use of religious and ethnic appeals as tools of political mobilization will become less attractive and find a diminished reception in a climate of justice, equitable resource distribution, and equal opportunities for all.

State Policing as a Solution: Similar to the power devolution analysis above, state policing is the way forward for Nigeria to tackle several insecurities that it is battling with. The centralization of the police force has already failed if the country has its military in over 34 of its states. The centralized police force lacks the wherewithal to address the country's ethnic crisis as well as other security challenges. As such, having states run their police forces will guarantee better national security as states (groups and communities) are in a better position to secure themselves. State governments must be empowered to form local police forces and provide cutting-edge training and equipment for these forces. State policing is inevitable, and as Abuja keeps running away from the discourse, Nigeria will have a situation whereby regions and states would start creating their security setups - a replication of Amotekun all over.

National Dialogue on Managing Diversity: It is time that Nigeria leverage this as a vehicle to address its ethnic crisis. Such dialogue is long overdue. An honest conversation about the country that features representatives from the ethnic groups, whose outcome could propel the development of a national strategy on co-existence.

Leverage Non-Kinetic Approaches of Securitisation: Abuja's method of using kinetic

military action, ethnic conflicts and agitations as the first response is a shortcut to addressing these issues and the underlying rationale for the different ethnic crisis the country is battling with. As such, it is important that non-kinetic security approaches such as dialogues, negotiations etc. are also leveraged and deployed.

Leverage Education System, Entertainment Industry and National Orientation Agency (NOA) to Promote Tolerance: Messaging, educative and media-driven campaigns on promoting ethnic tolerance and deconstructing ethnic bias is essential to addressing Nigeria's ethnic crisis. NOA and Nigeria's educational system could be leveraged to build programmes that build the fabrics of our social cohesion. Finally, Nigeria can also maximize the efforts of Nollywood and entertainment industry in a bid to change these silent but pronounced cultures of *indigeneship* and ethnic limitations through movie and music productions. It's true that wrong narratives drive ethnic tensions and hate speeches, and which could be seen across the country with the current rise in conflicts.

Early Warnings Adherence: Early Warning Mechanisms exist within affected local communities, and within the civil society networks that should complement federal and state security intelligence gathering. However, because of the existing trust gap, these structures and vital information are often ignored. The Early Warning Mechanism matrix should be enhanced by security agencies with entrenched communication linkages that bind the centre with the federating units and communities. Crisis such as the herder-farmers could be mitigated through Early Warnings.

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