



**Ethno-Religious Conflict in Nigeria: Analysis and Resolution**

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### Abstract

Since the 1914 amalgamation of the northern and southern regions of Nigeria by the British colonial government, Nigerians have continued to debate the issues of peaceful coexistence among their various ethnic groups on the one hand, and between Christians and Muslims on the other. The question about living together in peace emerged in the Nigerian national debate as a result of the violent confrontation that has been occurring among “ethnic groups in conflict” (Horowitz, 2000), including the 1967-1970 civil war – a three-year bloody war that was fought primarily by the Igbo people from the southeast, representing the Christian population, and the Hausa–Fulani people from the north, representing the Muslim population -, the post-civil war ethno-religious massacres, and the recent Boko Haram terrorism which has resulted in the death of thousands of people including Muslims and Christians and led to the destruction of property, valuable infrastructure and developmental projects. Above all, Boko Haram poses a serious threat to national security, causes humanitarian disaster, psychological trauma, disruption of school activities, unemployment, and an increase in poverty, resulting in a weak economy. The Boko Haram terrorist attacks have indeed reignited the old debate on what it means for Muslims and Christians, Igbos, Hausa-Fulanis, Yorubas and the ethnic minorities to coexist and live together in peace and harmony. Drawing on postcolonial criticism (Tyson, 2015) and other relevant social conflict theories from the field of conflict resolution, this paper seeks to analyze, through the *medico-diagnostic method of inquiry*, the drivers, dynamics and sources of ethno- religious conflict in Nigeria. The paper lays out various ways by which this type of conflict could be resolved.

**Keywords:** ethnic conflict, religious conflict, ethno-religious conflict, conflict analysis, conflict resolution, Nigeria

## Introduction

Since the 1914 amalgamation of the two Nigerian regions - the northern region with Islam as its main religion and the southern region with Christianity being its dominant religion - by the British colonial government (Michael Crowther, 1968), Nigerians have continued to debate and discuss the issues bordering on the peaceful coexistence of their various ethnic groups on the one hand, and between Christians and Muslims on the other. The question about living together in peace emerged early in the Nigerian national debate as a result of the numerous violent confrontations between, among and within some ethnic groups in the north and some in the south, and between some Muslims and some Christians.

From 1967 to 1970, Nigeria was completely ravaged by a bloody civil war that occurred mainly between the Muslim north (commonly identified as the Hausa–Fulani people) and the Christian southeast (known as the Igbo people), causing the death of more than one million people including children and women (Ugorji, 2012). The subsequent violent clashes that occurred in the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s between these ethno-religious groups both in the north and south of the country, and the recent surge of the Boko Haram terrorist attacks have continued to reignite the old debate on what it means for Muslims and Christians, Igbos, Hausa- Fulanis, Yorubas and the ethnic minorities in the different regions to coexist and live together in peace and harmony.

The 498 delegates to the Nigeria National Conference - a National Dialogue convened and inaugurated on March 17, 2014 by a former president of Nigeria, President Goodluck Jonathan - mandated to deliberate on all matters that militate against Nigerian's national unity and progress (Final Draft of Nigeria National Conference Report, 2014) discussed and acknowledged the incessant hostility and violent confrontations that currently exist between, among and within ethnic and religious groups in Nigeria. The delegates unanimously agreed that the new wave of religious violence and terrorism pose a serious threat to the "secular character of the state, and the idea of one nation bound in freedom, peace and unity" (Final Draft of Nigeria National Conference Report, 2014, p. 47). Connected to this hostility and religious terrorism are the questions related to religious freedom, a sense of collective identity – both in religious or ethnic affiliation and national belonging - and the need to prevent further violence, strengthen north-south and Muslim-Christian relationships, and construct a better way to live together in peace and harmony.

Like the delegates to the Nigeria National Conference, many academics – theorists, scholars, researchers – and policy makers have been engaged in serious reflective, hermeneutic inquiry on the probable causes and exploration of possible solutions to the conflict. There is a growing number of scholars who are passionately conducting research and studying the question of religious freedom, identity and national belonging, and also exploring the effect the institutionalization of Sharia law in northern Nigeria has on north-south, Muslim-Christian relationships (Kenny, 1996; Casey, 2008; Adamolekun, 2013; Sampson, 2014; Bolaji, 2013). A reasonable volume of literature is also available on ethno-religious violence prevention and the promotion of Muslim-Christian relationship through interfaith dialogue (Salawu, 2010). Recently, many scholars have narrowed their research on the terrorist activities of Boko Haram, its implication for national security, and sectarian group relations within the Islamic religion (Agbibo, 2013; Adesoji, 2010).

This paper offers a different perspective to the existing body of literature by analyzing the drivers, dynamics and sources of ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria. Drawing on postcolonial criticism (Tyson,

2015) and other relevant social conflict theories, the paper seeks to analyze ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria through the *medico-diagnostic method of inquiry*. To achieve this goal, the proposed analysis will be guided by Sandole's (as cited in Cheldelin et al., 2008) stages of conflict manifestation, namely: "pre-manifest conflict processes (pre- MCPs), manifest conflict processes (MCPs), and aggressive manifest conflict processes (AMCPs)" (p. 43). These three stages of conflict manifestation will be helpful in revealing the developmental stages of ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria, starting from the amalgamation period of 1914, through the era of decolonization and independence, to the challenging years of military rule and the advent of democracy.

Since Nigeria was colonized by the British and given that the amalgamation of the north and south, including the different indigenous ethnic nationalities, was orchestrated and engineered by the British colonial administration, this paper proposes to analyze the drivers, dynamics and sources of ethno-religious conflict in each of these three stages of conflict manifestation using the postcolonial criticism (Tyson, 2015). As an important critical theory that emerged as a result of "colonial subjugation of indigenous populations" (Tyson, 2015, p. 405), postcolonial criticism is very relevant to this study since it is based on a theoretical framework that seeks to analyze "the ideological forces that, on the one hand, pressed the colonized to internalize the colonizers' values and, on the other hand, promoted the resistance of colonized peoples against their oppressors, a resistance that is as old as colonialism itself" (p. 399). As it will be discussed in the subsequent sections, the constant struggle between these two ideologies

– the British (colonialist) ideology and the ideologies of the indigenous peoples of Nigeria –especially during the amalgamation period, the era of decolonization and independence, and the challenging years of military rule and the advent of democracy, is at the core of the numerous ethno-religious conflicts this paper seeks to analyze.

Due to the complex nature of the conflict issues this paper addresses, and in order to reveal how the events that took place during the formative years of the new nation called Nigeria prepared the ground for the numerous ethno-religious conflicts that have tormented Nigeria, the paper seeks to focus on five main objectives: First, to analyze the drivers, dynamics and sources of ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria; Second, to examine the amalgamation period which is termed in this paper as the *pre-manifest conflict processes (pre-MCPs)* period in Nigeria (1914 - 1945); Third, to analyze the *manifest conflict processes (MCPs)* in Nigeria (1945 – 1966), an era of decolonization, agitation for independence and the early years of independence; Fourth, to critically reflect on the post-independence period, beginning from 1966 to 2016 which I refer to as the period of *aggressive manifest conflict processes (AMCPs)*; Fifth, to explore the various ways by which ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria could be resolved.

### **Analysis of the Drivers, Dynamics and Sources of Ethno-Religious Conflict in Nigeria**

To avoid one of the commonly committed fallacies of the century – that is, jumping to a conclusion or making a hasty decision -, this paper adopts an analytical approach. It seeks to follow the medico-diagnostic method of inquiry. When a patient feels a symptom of an illness in his or her body system, the first and best thing to do is to visit a doctor's office. Before drugs are prescribed and administered, doctors are usually bound by medical ethics to first diagnose the patient by examining the symptom either through tests or other medical procedures in order to identify the nature of the illness and the patient's

medical condition and history. It is only after the results of the test or diagnosis are released that the doctors provide drug prescriptions to the patient(s). A doctor cannot prescribe a drug to a patient without knowing the nature and history of the illness, the particular area the illness is located in the body system, and the level of danger it poses to the life of the patient. These elements and many others are revealed through the diagnostic process. In a similar manner, “efforts to ameliorate” ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria “must be preceded by an understanding” of the drivers, dynamics and sources of that conflict. “Altogether too many policy prescriptions for ethnic harmony have been dispensed without benefit of careful diagnosis” (Horowitz, 2000).

The analysis of ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria that this paper proposes is guided by a general distinction made by Sandole (as cited in Cheldelin et al., 2008) about the progressive manifestation of conflict. Conflict, according to Sandole is “a process characterized by stages of initiation, escalation, controlled maintenance, de-escalation and some kind of termination (e.g., settlement, resolution)” (p. 42–43). The transition from the stage of initiation to escalation and then to controlled maintenance is explained through the following processes: “latent conflicts or pre-manifest conflict processes (pre-MCPs), manifest conflict processes (MCPs), and finally aggressive manifest conflict processes (AMCPs)” (Cheldelin et al., 2008, p. 43). From this lens, and based on the historical and political perspectives, ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria could be analyzed and categorized into three phases. Each phase corresponds to one of Sandole’s stages of conflict manifestation. The first phase is from 1914 to 1945 commonly known as the period of “amalgamation and the problem of nationhood” (Final Draft of Nigeria National Conference Report, 2014, p. 4). The second phase took place between 1945 and 1966, a period marked by the struggle for “decolonization, the agitation for constitutional reform, and the early years of independence” (Final Draft of Nigeria National Conference Report, 2014, p. 4). Finally, the third phase started from “the collapse of the First Republic following a bloody military coup that ushered in the first military regime and sparked up a movement for democratization” (Final Draft of Nigeria National Conference Report, 2014, p. 4) and continues until the current democratic era (from 1966 to 2016).

By categorizing the manifestations of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria into three politico-historical phases, this paper does not claim that some forms of conflicts discussed in phase one did not occur in phase two and phase three; or that phase three conflict types did not occur in phase two and one, and so on. The three categories are established to facilitate a conceptual analysis of the levels of intensity of ethno-religious conflicts within a historical and political entity called Nigeria. As our analysis will reveal, phase one corresponds to the *pre-manifest conflict processes (pre-MCPs)*; phase two could be classified as a time of *manifest conflict processes (MCPs)*; and phase three meets the characteristics of *aggressive manifest conflict processes (AMCPs)* (Cheldelin et al., 2008, p. 43).

In each of the conflict phases, an attempt will be made to identify the elements, causes (sources or drivers) or conditions that encourage ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria, the dynamics or patterns of the conflict and the intervention mechanisms or de-escalation techniques previously employed to resolve these kinds of conflict. Let us now examine the amalgamation period which is termed in this paper as the *pre-manifest conflict processes (pre-MCPs)* period in Nigeria (1914 - 1945).

### ***Pre-Manifest Conflict Processes (pre-MCPs) in Nigeria (1914 - 1945)***

To fully understand the continuous animosity and overt conflict that exist between the north and

south, or between Muslims and Christians, and to propose proactive and holistic solutions, it is advisable that researchers return to the formative years of Nigeria, between 1914 and 1945, a historic period commonly known as the amalgamation period characterized by the “problem of nationhood” (Final Draft of Nigeria National Conference Report, 2014, p. 4). Amalgamation in this context could be understood from different perspectives, including political, geographical, sociological, historical, anthropological, religious, psychological, and so on. These perspectives also constitute the primary preoccupation of postcolonial critics. For these theorists, postcolonial criticism provides us the lens through which we can see connections “among all the domains of our experience - the psychological, ideological, social, political, intellectual, and aesthetic” (Tyson, 2015, p. 398). Postcolonial criticism also helps us learn how “cultural difference: the ways in which race, [...], religion, cultural beliefs, and customs combine to form individual identity” (Tyson, 2015, p. 398). Analyzing the amalgamation of the different ethnicities into two regions – the north and south - on the one hand, and the amalgamation of the north and south into one nation called Nigeria on the other hand, is important to understand the “dynamic psychological and social interplay between what ex-colonial populations consider their native, indigenous, precolonial cultures and the British culture that was imposed on them” (Tyson, 2015, p. 400).

In each of these perspectives (perspectives that I intend to explore and deeply reflect upon in another research project) therefore, and in the context of this paper’s inquiry, the term amalgamation could be understood as a uniting or combining action by somebody or an agency on two or more separate, dissimilar entities or groups. In other words, it is the action, process, or result of merging, combining or uniting two or more separate, autonomous groups, entities, ethnicities, regions, or nations into one “Nation” (with the uppercase “N”). Amalgamation could occur in two forms: *consented amalgamation* and *forced amalgamation*.

By *consented amalgamation*, it means that the amalgamated groups, regions or nations were given an opportunity to decide whether or not they would like to merge with other(s) in a united nation. This form of amalgamation places emphasis on the ethical principle of respect for persons or groups and treats these groups as autonomous entities with certain inalienable rights, for example, the rights to self-determination, territorial autonomy and integrity, and preservation of cultural identity and heritage (Kymlicka, 1995). Respect for these group rights presupposes that before an amalgamation is executed and implemented, the groups ought to have clarity and full understanding of the terms, expectations, implications, risks and opportunities that are associated with amalgamation. The groups’ consent to be a part of a new nation should be a well-informed decision based on complete availability of needed “information,” their full understanding or “comprehension” of the information provided, and a condition or situation that encourages free “voluntariness” and discourages coercion or influence of power (The Belmont Report, 1979).

By *forced amalgamation*, however, I refer to a situation where the different groups, entities, regions, ethnicities or nationalities are coerced or compelled to unite as one nation without prior information, contact with each other, and against their will. The question that comes to mind is: was “the 1914 amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates that created the Nigerian nation” (Final Draft of Nigeria National Conference Report, 2014, p. 4) a *consented amalgamation* or a *forced amalgamation*? Did the British colonial administrators who initiated, engineered and orchestrated the amalgamation provide an opportunity for the representatives of the different groups to choose whether or not to form one nation? Or did they by use of force impose it on the groups against their will? The historical narratives of

the 1914 amalgamation in Nigeria and the agitation that followed it as well as available literature confirm that the amalgamation of the north and south was not by choice but by force (See Final Draft of Nigeria National Conference Report, 2014, p. 4). The idea of “force” or “coercion” here means that the different ethnicities or groups were not consulted before the British colonial administrators decided to merge the two separate entities together. The use of force by the colonialists eliminated the possibility of choice, and institutionalized a denial of freedom, of autonomy, of self-determination, and of territorial integrity.

The effects of colonization, especially its destructive strategy – *forced amalgamation* –, constitute the main preoccupation of Aime Cesaire’s (1955, as cited in Lemert, 2013) *Between Colonizer and Colonized*, a selection from his famous *Discourse on Colonialism* representing “the early thinking of social theorists in the late-colonial world ... with a distinctive view of the colonial subject in the colonialist’s language” (p. 261). For Cesaire (as cited in Lemert, 2013), colonization destroyed “the wonderful Indian civilizations” (p. 262). Some civilizations were “condemned to perish at a future date” by the colonization process that introduced “a principle of ruin” in some countries, an example of which is Nigeria where the British-led and -orchestrated 1914 amalgamation of the north and south was executed by force without the consent of the indigenous peoples. Against the argument that colonization introduced “progress” in the colonized societies, and that it improved health conditions and “standards of living,” Cesaire (as cited in Lemert, 2013) strongly believes that “societies were drained of their essence, cultures trampled underfoot, institutions undermined, lands confiscated, religions smashed, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, extraordinary possibilities wiped out” (p. 262). All these negative effects of colonization occurred mainly because the indigenous peoples and their lands were uprooted, divided and coerced to unite without their consent. Cesaire (as cited in Lemert, 2013) clearly describes the impact of *forced amalgamation* when he talks about “millions of men in whom fear has been cunningly instilled, who have been taught to have an inferiority complex, to tremble, kneel, despair, and behave like flunkys” (p. 262), as well as indigenous peoples “torn from their gods, their land, their habits, their life – from life, from the dance, from wisdom” (p. 262). The existent indigenous cultural values and religious practices appeared valueless to the European colonizers and missionaries as well as to their newly indoctrinated local elites.

As it will be explained later in this paper, both the negative effects of colonization and the impact of *forced amalgamation* stem from the colonialist ideology against which the postcolonial critics are combating “by understanding the ways in which it operates to form the identity – the psychology – of both the colonizer and the colonized” (Tyson, 2015, p. 428). The colonialist ideology is based on a practice of judging known as “othering” which “divides the world between “us” (the “civilized”) and “them” (the “others,” the “savages”)” (Tyson, 2015, p. 401). With such a divisive ideology that labels a group of people as superior, civilized, of high culture, and the people of God, and another group as inferior, backward, of primitive culture, heathen or primitive “other” too close to nature, the British introduced a perpetual division, competition and bigotry between the Muslim dominated north and the Christian dominated south of Nigeria – two protectorates that were coercively amalgamated in 1914.

These reasons and many others like them have been articulated and presented by many scholars to serve as evidence and justification for the blame that has generally been attributed to the British colonial rule for the manifestations of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria, especially those that occurred between some ethnic groups from the north and some from the south, and between Muslims and Christians (Adamolekun, 2013). The preoccupation of this paper is not to join others in laying out a litany of blame

against colonialism and the colonialists, but to understand how and why latent hostility and conflict developed during the time of amalgamation between the north and south of Nigeria. Sandole (as cited in Cheldelin et al., 2008) defines latent conflicts as “conflicts that are developing but have not yet expressed themselves in an observable manner, even for the parties themselves” (p. 43). But the question that needs to be answered is: what causes and drives these dormant conflicts? In other words, what are their sources?

From a general perspective, the latent conflicts that occurred in Nigeria between 1914 and 1945 were caused by a number of factors which are highlighted by the Final Draft of Nigeria National Conference Report (2014):

First, in spite of the amalgamation, colonial administration recognized the two areas as autonomous parts and administered the territories separately. Second, the educated elites were excluded from colonial administration. Early Nigerian nationalists began to advocate for a national dialogue to discuss the future political development of the amalgamated territories as a single and unified Nigerian nation. They also demanded for participation in the management of their own affairs. (p. 4-5)

The conquering tactic – divide and rule – by which the British colonial rulers ruled Nigeria during this period awakened and reinforced in-group self-consciousness (or self-awareness) and bonding, and out-group hostility and competition, especially since the ethno-religious groups that make up the two regions had no prior formal contact with each other as a result of their geographical locations, differences in language, culture, religion, values, and other belief systems and factors.

From a theoretical perspective, the correlation between in-group self-consciousness and bonding and out-group hostility and competition could be explained through the “Robbers Cave Experiment” (Pruitt & Kim, 2004, p. 27–28). This experiment, conducted by Muzafer Sherif and his colleagues in the summer of 1954 at the state park in the Sans Bois mountains of Oklahoma, is regarded as “the best-known field studies on intergroup conflict” (as cited in Pruitt & Kim, 2004, p. 28). *Intergroup conflict* here suggests that there are two groups involved in the conflict, and because of its dynamics, intergroup conflict is generally categorized as a social conflict.

What then is social conflict? How is a group defined from a social conflict perspective? In the preface of his book, *The Functions of Social Conflict*, Coser (1956) sets forth his research agenda: “An effort to clarify the concept of social conflict, and in so doing to examine the use of this concept in empirical sociological research” (p. 7). Coser (1956) defines social conflict as “a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals” (p. 8). And a group according to Pruitt & Kim (2004) “can be defined as two or more people who have a common identity and a capacity for coordinated action” (p. 27). With this background knowledge, Muzafer Sherif and the other researchers of the “Robbers Cave Experiment” (Pruitt & Kim, 2004):

carefully selected twelve-year-old boys who were similar in virtually all ways. They were divided into two groups of twelve each and brought separately to the campsite, so that for several days they were unaware of the presence of another group. The boys did typical summer camp activities – canoeing, swimming, making meals, setting up tents, playing baseball at a nearby baseball field, and the like. As expected, group bonding – “we” feelings – emerged quickly. Both groups adopted

a group name: the “Rattlers” and the “Eagles.” After several days, the groups discovered one another’s presence and were eager to compete with each other in team sports. Even before actual contact took place, competitive, often hostile emotions erupted. And both groups were confident that they would crush the other in competition. (p. 27–28)

The remaining part of this experiment will be narrated later to explain how *manifest conflict processes (MCPs)* in Nigeria (1945 – 1966) created a vacuum for *aggressive manifest conflict processes (AMCPs)* (1966 - 2016). But for the purpose of this paper, it is of great importance to know the relevance of the early stage of *Robbers Cave Experiment* to the understanding of the latent conflicts that occurred in the early years of Nigeria – the amalgamation period characterized by the “problem of nationhood” - between 1914 and 1945.

Like in the *Robbers Cave Experiment*, the latent conflict perceived in the early years of the Nigerian experiment has many elements. The elements of conflict are the distinguishing characteristics of any particular conflict (Cheldelin et al., 2008). This means that to have a deeper understanding of a conflict, one has to decipher what its elements are. To this end, Sandole (as cited in Cheldelin et al., 2008) identifies six elements of conflict, namely:

parties (the very actors or agents in conflict), issues (the reasons parties claim they are waging conflict with each other), objectives (the status-quo-changing and status-quo- maintaining options), means (the method used by parties to achieve their objectives, including violent and non-violent forms of conflict), conflict-handling orientations (different approaches used by parties to a conflict), and the conflict environments within which conflicts occur (the conflict setting which includes, endogenous and exogenous environments. (p. 44-50)

For a deeper understanding of the latent conflicts that occurred during the amalgamation period, it is instructive to quickly identify the parties involved and the issues in conflict while making reference to the other elements of conflict outlined above.

### Parties Involved

The various parties involved in the amalgamation problem and the question of nationhood are: 1) the British colonial government; 2) the northern region including its dominant ethnic group – the Hausa-Fulani who are mainly Muslims – and its minority ethnic groups as well as the old Middle Belt populations; and 3) the southern region which was later divided into two: the southwest where the Yoruba ethnic group is located having a high Christian population and a small Muslim population, and the southeast occupied by the Igbo ethnic group and other minority ethnic and tribal groups who are mainly Christians. These three parties and their representatives or spokespersons are the very actors or agents in the latent conflict that accompanied the amalgamation and formation of Nigeria. What makes the amalgamation period very important in understanding the gradual manifestation and escalation of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria is not just because of the fact that these three groups have different identities and ideologies. As it will be briefly explained below and thoroughly analyzed in the stages of manifest and aggressive manifest conflicts in Nigeria, what is remarkable during this period is that the representatives of each of these groups had an unyielding mandate to execute based on their group ideological beliefs. And for this

reason, they were not fighting for themselves, but for the entire group.

In his proposition twelve, “ideology and conflict,” Coser (1956) explains how group ideologies could contribute to the intractability of existing conflicts between or among different groups while revealing the complex nature of the relationship between ideology and conflict.

According to Coser (1956), it is highly important to understand that:

The parties’ consciousness of being mere representatives of supra-individual claims, of fighting not for themselves but only for a cause, can give the conflict a radicalism and mercilessness which find their analogy in the general behavior of certain very selfless and very idealistically inclined persons. [...] Such a conflict which is fought out with the strength of the whole personality while the victory benefits the cause alone, has a noble character [...] Here any yielding [...] any peace prior to the wholly decisive victory would be treason against that objectivity for the sake of which the personal character has been eliminated from the fight. (p. 111)

Coser’s (1956) argument explains why the British (colonialist) administrators were so adamant in the execution of the colonialist agenda which is rooted in the ideological premises of “othering” (Tyson, 2015, p. 401) and “eurocentrism,” involving “the use of European culture as the standard to which all other cultures are negatively contrasted” (Tyson, 2015, p. 401), and with which the colonizers divided the indigenous peoples of Nigeria, who were not only fighting to reject the “colonialist ideology, which defined them as inferior” (Tyson, 2015, p. 403), but were themselves in perpetual struggle over national power and control of economic resources and opportunities.

### **Issues in Conflict**

For the purpose of this paper, seven concealed, hidden, underlying or pre-manifest conflict issues during the period of amalgamation have been carefully selected and presented as follows: exclusion from the decision-making processes; autonomy of the various ethnic nationalities within the two regions as well as autonomy of the regions; self-determination; territorial integrity; the British colonial tactic of divide and rule; economic opportunities; and lastly, political representation.

#### *1) Exclusion from the decision-making processes.*

As stated earlier in this paper, and as the Final Draft of Nigeria National Conference Report (2014) reveals:

the 1914 amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates that created the Nigerian nation was a British colonial initiative. This provoked bitter controversy at the time, arousing the resentment of educated elite and of some British administrators [...] Educated elites were excluded from colonial administration [...] they advocated for an appointment and deposition of chiefs by their own people and greater participation in government. (p. 4)

The exclusion of the educated elite within the indigenous populations of Nigeria by the British colonial administrators was an ongoing discriminatory practice based on the notions of racism, racialism, and white privilege, concepts used by the African American critical theorists to describe the domination and

racial discrimination of the European (self-named white) people against the Africans (named blacks by the European self-named white supremacists) (See Tyson, 2015, pp. 343 – 397).

While white privilege, according to Delgado & Stefancic (2001, as cited in Tyson, 2015) could be defined as “the myriad of social advantages, benefits, and courtesies that come with being a member of the dominant race” (p. 361), racism is defined as “the unequal power relations that grow from the sociopolitical domination of one race by another and that result in systematic discriminatory practices (for example, segregation, domination, and persecution)” (Tyson, 2015, p. 344). Racialism is “the belief in racial superiority, inferiority, and purity based on the conviction that moral and intellectual characteristics, just like physical characteristics, are biological properties that differentiate the races” (Tyson, 2015, p. 344). A racialist is therefore anyone who holds such beliefs in racial superiority, inferiority, and purity. And a racist is anyone who is in “a position of power as a member of the politically dominant group” who indulges in systematic discriminatory practices, “for example, denying qualified persons of color employment, housing, education, or anything else to which they’re entitled” (Tyson, 2015, p. 344). From these conceptual definitions, it follows that if the educated elites within the indigenous populations of Nigeria were excluded from colonial administration and discriminated against in their own country by the British colonial administrators in favor of their own kind, it then means that the British colonial administrators were overt, staunch and proud racists.

## 2) *Autonomy of the various ethnic nationalities within the two regions as well as autonomy of the regions.*

Going back to the distinction between *consented amalgamation* and *forced amalgamation*, it becomes evident and easy to understand how *forced amalgamation* can serve as a catalyst for an autonomy-based conflict. The fact that the various ethnic groups within each region were coerced to unite - first within one broader region, and second to form a united, one nation - against their will and without informed consent is by itself a violation of the autonomy of the indigenous peoples of Nigeria, and by implication a violation of their basic human rights.

## 3) *Self-determination.*

Connected to autonomy is the issue of self-determination. Self-determination here means a process by which a group or an ethnic nationality freely controls or determines to the full extent possible its own affairs and future without any external influences. With the sudden advent of the British initiated and engineered amalgamation, however, the pre-1914 ethnic nationalities in Nigeria lost their right to self-determination. In order to explain how they sought to regain this right, an appeal is made to the works of Franz Fanon, the author of *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) of which *Decolonizing, National Culture, and the Negro Intellectual* is a chapter.

Fanon’s (1961, as cited in Lemert, 2013) preoccupation in this chapter is to address the issue of decolonization - “a violent event” according to the author – whose aim is “the substitution of one species of mankind by another” (p. 273). Decolonization is a change longed for by the colonized but detested by the colonialist. This is because “The colonist derives his validity, i.e., his wealth, from the colonial system” (Lemert, 2013, p. 274). And so, to be able to achieve total freedom, Fanon (1961, as cited in Lemert, 2013) believes that decolonization “can only succeed by resorting to every means, including of course, violence” (p. 274). Fanon (1961, as cited in Lemert, 2013) draws an important analogy between the blacks in North, Central, Latin America and the colonized Africans in Africa. For the author:

The problems the blacks who lived in the United States, Central, and Latin America, were faced with was not basically any different from that of the Africans. The whites in America had not behaved any differently to them than the white colonizers had to the Africans. (p. 274 – 275)

Both “the blacks from Chicago and the Nigerians,” Fanon (1961, as cited in Lemert, 2013) believes, “defined themselves in relation to the whites” (p. 275). In my analysis of the manifest conflict processes in Nigeria, the colonizer-colonized relationship during the time of decolonization, agitation for independence and self-determination will be examined.

#### 4) *Territorial integrity.*

Integrity in this context does not mean an action of being honest or upholding everyday moral principles. By territorial integrity, it means wholeness and undivided. Each of the pre-amalgamation ethnic groups was whole and undivided, and to some extent, enjoyed territorial autonomy with limited contact with other ethnic nationalities in the other regions. However, colonization in West Africa - and its premier outcome, amalgamation - *devirginized* the purity, integrity and sovereignty of the ethno-national territories. Aime Cesaire (as cited in Lemert, 2013) clearly describes this situation by saying that:

Every day that passes, every denial of justice, every beating by the police, every demand of the workers that is drowned in blood, every scandal that is hushed up, every punitive expedition, every police van, every gendarme and every militiamen, brings home to us the value of our old societies. They were communal societies, never societies of the many for the few. They were societies that were not only ante-capitalist, as has been said, but also anti-capitalist. They were democratic societies, always. They were cooperative societies, fraternal societies. I make a systematic defense of the societies destroyed by imperialism. (p. 262)

Some of the indigenous peoples’ lands were forcefully taken away from them and their borders modified without their consent. As a result, these changes divided a people who were initially bound together by tradition, culture, language, religious liturgy and practices, and so on, into two or more territories where they joined outsiders to form what is considered today as a nation-state. Two examples will suffice. The Yoruba people are divided across different countries in West Africa: Nigeria, Republic of Benin, Togo and even Ghana. The ancient kingdom of Biafra included some parts of the present-day Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, and Gabon (Government of IPOB, 2014). The two questions that need to be answered are: is the “imposition by force of a border change” considered in international law as “an act of aggression” (El Ouali, 2012)? If yes, will the colonialists, for example, the British government, who forcibly modified the borders of the indigenous peoples and violated their right to territorial integrity be held accountable for their crime? The scope of this paper will not allow a probe into the various international laws about this subject. These questions will be left for future research by experts or students of international law on territorial integrity and sovereignty. Our goal here is to highlight territorial integrity as a latent conflict issue during the amalgamation period in Nigeria.

#### 5) *The British colonial tactic of divide and rule.*

As the term “divide and rule” suggests, the British colonial masters used a cunning tactic called indirect rule to govern the peoples of Nigeria to their own detriment and to the advantage of the British

power. By indirect rule, the British further deepened the existing division in the country and ruled through the existing traditional and customary structures in order to maintain their hegemony and power influence on the people. What this means is that the traditional and customary leaders through whom the British governed the ethnic groups and peoples, and the regions, were working for the colonial government. They were merely instruments - a means to an end and were never an end in themselves. Simply put it this way: they were exploited and used to suppress, oppress and subdue their own people, especially those within and outside, who were against the colonial throne. As the human factor issues could come to play, especially within the northern region, the minority ethnic groups, and most visibly the Christian population, were separated and discriminated against which in turn sharpened the existing differences and made the fracture more visibly felt.

6) *Economic opportunities.*

Among the most important underlying conflict issues during the period of amalgamation are questions related to economic opportunities both in the new nation and within the regions and ethnic territories. The *mélange* of the peoples of Nigeria provoked some forms of hostile behaviors and competition between in-group and out-group members, as well as between the indigenous peoples and the foreign expatriates. Within the northern region that was administered through the indirect rule system, the minorities were greatly discriminated against in the civil service, and the same occurred in the other regions. The British administrators also discriminated against the indigenous peoples in high paying jobs as the latter were reserved for the white expatriate masters. This is the reason why the pro-nationalist movement in Nigeria at this time advocated for the “abolition of racial discrimination in the civil service” (Final Draft of Nigeria National Conference Report, 2014, p. 5).

7) *Political representation.*

Linked to economic opportunities is the issue of political representation in the new Nigerian nation. For the amalgamation of the north and south to withstand the test of the time, there were cogent reasons for pushing for a representative government through the legislative council that will consider the needs and interests of the various ethnic nationalities and their regions. But at first, the British colonial administrators were reluctant to form a representative government; rather they were more interested in an exploitative indirect rule tactic.

The bubbles of this latent conflict were first released in a demand made by the pro-nationalist movement advocates. They demanded that a “Legislative Council” be established, “half of whose members should be elected Africans” (Final Draft of Nigeria National Conference Report, 2014, p. 5). But the colonial authority did not listen to the demands of the indigenous peoples because of an inherent fear “that their aspiration to greater participation in government had the ultimate aim of displacing the British administration” (Final Draft of Nigeria National Conference Report, 2014, p. 5). Unfortunately, the bubbles of this latent conflict exploded during the struggle for decolonization and early years of independence between 1945 and 1966.

### **Phase Two: *Manifest Conflict Processes* (MCPs) in Nigeria (1945 – 1966)**

What then led to the manifestation of conflicts between 1945 and 1966, a period in the history of

Nigeria characterized by the struggle for “decolonization, the agitation for constitutional reform, and the early years of independence” (p. 4)? Having presented in a detailed manner the issues in conflict in the preceding phase, our analysis of the manifest conflict processes in Nigeria will be condensed into four key issues: self-government, constitution, independence, and recognition of the minorities. These will be analyzed and discussed later in details. To aid our understanding of these issues, an explanation of manifest conflict processes is presented below.

Sandole (as cited in Cheldelin et al., 2008) defines manifest conflict processes (MCPs) as “conflicts that have developed to the extent that they are observable, but have not been expressed in a violent manner” (p. 43). As our analysis will show, some of the latent issues during the amalgamation period later developed as manifest conflicts, and as such, are going to be discussed in this phase. Similarly, the intergroup conflict that occurred during the “Robbers Cave Experiment” (Pruitt & Kim, 2004, pp. 27–28) by which this paper explained the correlation between in-group self-consciousness and bonding, and out-group hostility and competition at the beginning of the last phase also shifted to a manifest conflict. By way of analogy, the second part of the *Robbers Cave Experiment* will help us understand the second phase of conflict in Nigeria – the manifestation of conflicts between 1945 and 1966. The *Robbers Cave Experiment* (Pruitt & Kim, 2004) story says that:

When the first day of the competitions arrived, the researchers displayed the tournament prizes in the cafeteria – a shiny trophy, splendid-looking medals, and four - bladed knives – prizes that would be given only to the winning team. As expected, these prizes heightened competitive and hostile feelings even further. As soon as the competitions began, so did the name-calling. Although both groups initially tried hard to be good sports, this soon ceased and insults became the norm. (p. 28)

This story reveals seven elements that are worth acknowledging and similar to the underlying issues in the manifest conflict that occurred during the struggle for decolonization and independence in Nigeria. These seven elements are: tournament (competition), prizes (shiny trophy, splendid-looking medals, and knives), judgment, winning team and losing team, heightened hostility, name-calling, and lastly, insults. Among all these elements, three could be seen as the main drivers of the conflict. What heightened the “competitive and hostile feelings” was not just simply the fact that “the researchers displayed the tournament prizes to the view of all the players” (Pruitt & Kim, 2004, p. 28); but what caused the hostile feelings as well as the name-calling and insults that followed is the fact that there was a judge who was observing the two teams and, on the basis of this observation and judgment, was going to decide which team emerged as the winner and which as the loser. In addition, the fact that the winner will ceremoniously receive the tournament prize – “a shiny trophy, splendid-looking medals, and four-bladed knives” (Pruitt & Kim, 2004, p. 28) also contributed to the obvious manifestation of the conflict.

The same elements, except an external judge who decided the winning team, were completely present in Nigeria from 1945 to 1966 during the struggle for “decolonization, the agitation for constitutional reform, and the early years of independence.” While the British colonial administrators served both as an external judge and a mediator - judging and mediating between the various ethnic groups in Nigeria -, such an external third party possessing the constitutional power, military might, and mediation skills, as well as economic influence was absent after the independence of Nigeria on October 1, 1960. From 1960

to 1966, Nigeria was able to manage and prevent its manifest conflict processes from escalating to the aggressive manifest conflict processes because the warmth and influence of the powerful external arbiter and mediator, and the mastermind of the amalgamation architectural experiment – the British colonial administrators - were still felt. But this did not last long. What happened from 1966 until the year, 2016, is an indication that a house built on a weak foundation cannot stand. No matter how much the builders try to prevent it from falling, it will surely collapse.

Before we begin to analyze the last phase (phase three: aggressive manifest conflict processes (AMCPs) in Nigeria (1966 - 2016), there is a need to understand how the following four issues: self-government, constitution, independence, and recognition of the minorities, contributed to the emergence of manifest conflicts in Nigeria from 1945 to 1966.

### 1) *Self-government.*

The period prior to the Nigerian independence, from 1945 to 1960, was characterized by the struggle for self-government. The indigenous peoples of Nigeria wanted to take over governance from the colonial masters. They wanted the new Nigerian nation to be ruled and governed by indigenous Nigerian peoples. But the problem is not found in the common consensus and desire for self-government. What led to the manifest conflicts among the different ethno-national regions was the hidden interest and goal of each region regarding the question about which ethnic group will emerge as the new national leader with power, influence and control over the wealth of the new nation. To buttress this point, “Sir Arthur Richards who was the Governor of Nigeria, on the 6th of December 1944, had in a dispatch to London, stated clearly that the problem of Nigeria was how to create a political system that would advance political development in line with the interests being pursued by various Nigerian groups” (Final Draft of Nigeria National Conference Report, 2014, p. 6). By various “Nigerian groups,” Mr. Richards was referring to the various ethno-national regions – the north (Hausa-Fulanis), southwest (Yorubas), and southeast (Igbos) – including the minority ethnic groups within these regions.

Each of these groups, although and at last united with a common aspiration to self- government, was pursuing their private, political, economic and religious interests. Before achieving their group related goals, they needed to be united in their overt agitation for self- government against the British colonial power. And for that reason, the manifest conflicts that occurred between 1945 and 1960 were mostly between the indigenous peoples of Nigeria and the British colonial power. These conflicts were expressed either through “a storm of criticism in the nationalist press over the demand for self-government” (Final Draft of Nigeria National Conference Report, 2014, p. 7) or by “questioning, in action and as well as in words, the constitutional, administrative and economic assumptions of the British authority” (Final Draft of Nigeria National Conference Report, 2014, p. 7) as well as by boycotting official Legislative Council meetings.

One example of these manifest conflicts suffices here: “In 1947, the three elected representatives in the Legislative Council from Lagos boycotted the first session of the Council, and when they resumed sitting in 1948, they began to demand for quicker constitutional changes” (Final Draft of Nigeria National Conference Report, 2014, p. 7) that will recognize the governance of Nigeria by the Nigerian people. To achieve their self-government objective, therefore, the British government needed to agree to a constitutional amendment.

## 2) *Constitution.*

Another issue that led to the manifest conflict processes is the constitution. As it was explained in the first phase of this analysis - the pre-manifest conflict phase in the history of Nigeria (from 1914 to 1945) -, the Nigerian elites were excluded from the decision making processes, including in the drafting of the constitution used to rule Nigeria. And so, the first part of the manifest conflict period (1945–1960) witnessed the evaporation of the hidden, suppressed, bottled animosities over the exclusionary measures of the British. The Richards Constitution serves as an example of these exclusionary measures. “Sir Arthur Richards made the mistake of not consulting the opinion of Nigerians over his constitutional proposals and found himself faced with a spate of bitter criticism from the nationalists” (Final Draft of Nigeria National Conference Report, 2014, p. 7). Even the 1951 Macpherson Constitution that “offered a measure of responsible government” failed to accord the self-government status to the Nigerian peoples, and as a result, it led to an increase in the precipitation of the indignation of the Nigerian nationalists.

The refusal of the demand for self-government by the British colonial power caused some confusion between the various ethno-national regions in Nigeria. Some leaders began to think that perhaps, the demand for a constitutional amendment that would grant self-government to the indigenous peoples of Nigeria should be dropped. Championing this idea were the northern legislators who were not opposed to the demand for self-government; but felt that the demand was too early (Final Draft of Nigeria National Conference Report, 2014, p. 8). This change of view by the northern leaders on the issue of self-government led to a change in the conflict dynamics, which caused an increase in its intensity both against the British colonial power and among the different ethno-national regions. The outward signs of this disagreement include heated debates, walk out from the parliament sessions, resignation from ministerial positions, “constitutional crisis and the threats of disintegration of the country” (Final Draft of Nigeria National Conference Report, 2014, p. 8).

## 3) *Independence.*

Nigeria was not alone in the struggle for self-government, constitutional amendment and independence. The outcome of the pursuit of similar goals within other West African countries had a great influence on Nigeria. The Ghanaian independence on March 6, 1957 reenergized the indigenous peoples of Nigeria and reignited the struggle for, and a bolder, heroic fight for independence. Although this struggle was not violent, to some degree it was more or less a constitutional and ideological fight which, of course, led to visible confrontations and outward manifestations of animosities. The struggle for independence was the last phase of conflict manifestation that involved the British colonial power as a direct party to the conflict. And the fact that a nearby country like Ghana had started to reap the fruit of independence, prepared the ground for all the ethno-national regions in Nigeria to unite once again. “Nigerian leaders were at last united on an issue which for six years had not only plagued all internal relationships but had also threatened the very existence of Nigeria as an emergent national entity” (Final Draft of Nigeria National Conference Report, 2014, p. 9). The idea of an independent national entity was finally realized during the Nigerian Constitutional Conference that took place in London from September 29 to October 27, 1958. At this conference, internal self-government that started in 1959, Independence Constitution of 1960, and full independence starting from October 1, 1960 were granted and ratified.

The question that comes to mind at this point is: did the granting of independence bring an end to the manifest conflict processes in Nigeria? The answer is no. The attainment of independence was

an end (an end in the sense of a goal) that led to a new beginning of, and serves as a precursor for, new forms of conflict with different layers and levels of intensity, issues, and parties. Some months after the October 1, 1960 independence, “Nigeria moved from one crisis to another” (Final Draft of Nigeria National Conference Report, 2014, p. 11) resulting, at some point, in the “declaration of an emergency in the Region by the Federal Government and the consequent takeover of the Government of the region” (Final Draft of Nigeria National Conference Report, 2014).

In the next phase of this politico-historical analysis of ethnic conflict in Nigeria, the transition from the manifest conflict processes to aggressive manifest conflict processes will be examined. In the meantime, it is important to realize the goal we set at the beginning of our analysis of the manifest conflict phase by concluding with an examination of the agitation of the minority ethnic groups in Nigeria.

#### 4) *Recognition of the minorities.*

The independence constitution of 1960 did not take into consideration the agitations and fears of the minority ethnic groups in Nigeria. And so, the attainment of independence opened a new wave of manifest conflict both within the regions and at the federal center. Within the regions, the minority ethnic groups feared the domination of the three dominant ethnic groups, the Hausa-Fulani in the northern region, the Yoruba in the southwestern region, and the Igbo in the southeastern region. The reason is because each of these regions was granted “extensive powers” by the 1960 Constitution, “making them effectively autonomous entities with [...] revenue arrangements which ensured that the regions had the resources to carry out the immense responsibilities” (Final Draft of Nigeria National Conference Report, 2014, p. 11). And so, to be able to have equal participation in the new government and access to the economic and political opportunities it brings, the minority ethnic groups within the three regions demanded for the creation of new states, states that will convert their status within the region to a majority. Unfortunately, the federal government did not honor their demand for the creation of states at this time, but instead, “on August 9, 1963, the Mid-West Region was created by constitutional means through a referendum and this led to a stronger agitation for minority rights” (Final Draft of Nigeria National Conference Report, 2014, p. 11).

In the next phase, we shall briefly and schematically reflect on how the latent conflict issues during the amalgamation period and the manifest conflicts that occurred during the struggle for decolonization, self-government and independence escalated into the aggressive manifest conflict processes of the post-independence era, from 1966 to 2016.

### **Phase Three: *Aggressive Manifest Conflict Processes (AMCPs) in Nigeria (1966 - 2016)***

The historical era that this essay seeks to reflect on under phase three of this analysis is the post-independence period that begins from 1966 to 2016. This period is characterized by series of deadly violence - violence that manifested in various forms including coup d'état, military dictatorship and autocratic rule, civil war, ethno-religious massacre, interreligious and interethnic violent attacks, and religious extremism that finally gave birth to the notorious Boko Haram terrorist movement. The nature of these forms of violence, their intensity, and the destructive impact they have on the entire country stand as a justification for categorizing the post-independence era as a period of “aggressive manifest conflict processes” (Cheldelin et al., 2008).

What then is aggressive manifest conflict? Sandole (1993, 1999b, as cited in Cheldelin et al., 2008) defines aggressive manifest conflict processes as “conflicts that have escalated from manifest conflict processes to a violent level of expression: they are not merely capable of being noticed and experienced, but are also destructive to parties, resources, and others as well” (p. 43). This definition points to three important elements that constitute the central message that this part of our analysis seeks to reveal. They are escalation from, violence, and destruction (or impact).

To illustrate how a manifest conflict can escalate to an aggressive manifest conflict within the confines of intergroup relationships, it is useful to return to the last part of the “Robbers Cave Experiment” (Pruitt & Kim, 2004). As the two groups of boys in this experiment continued their tournament, Pruitt & Kim (2004) note:

Hostile actions rapidly escalated. Both groups engaged in tit-for-tat attacks and counterattacks. They tore down each other’s flags, trashed one another’s cabins, and so on. Also, they secretly amassed weapons – bats, sticks, socks filled with rocks. By the end of the tournament period, the groups were sworn enemies. (p. 28)

Interestingly, the three important elements - escalation from, violence, and destruction – that are recognizable from Sandole’s (1993, 1999b, as cited in Cheldelin et al., 2008) definition of aggressive manifest conflict processes are also discernible from the last part of the “Robbers Cave Experiment” (Pruitt & Kim, 2004) that is stated above. The experiment reveals the step by step processes of aggressive manifest conflicts that occurred and continue to occur in the post-independent Nigeria, especially from 1966 to 2016. Both the experiment and Sandole’s definition begin with the escalation of hostile behaviors or actions.

The term escalation presupposes the existence of an issue or action “A” that has in itself the potentiality of exploding and taking another, more visible form “B”. Escalation in this sense does not happen in a vacuum; it takes place in a continuum with a starting point and ending point. Within the starting point “A” is found the source or cause of that which escalates. And within the ending point “B” is found the visible outcome or effect of the escalation. In-between the two points lies escalation itself. The mistake that is commonly made by many analysts of violent conflict is to look for the cause of escalation somewhere in-between the two points. This paper posits that that which is found in-between the two points of escalation - point “A” and point “B” - is nothing but escalation itself with its chain of drivers. The original source of the escalated conflict is found within point “A”; and in the context of this paper, point “A” relates to the conflict issues highlighted during the amalgamation period, which in turn were driven into the post-independence era by the issues that were discussed in the second phase - the period of decolonization, self-government and independence. The question that comes to mind is: how can a conflict issue escalate from point “A” to point “B”? What are the drivers? Or, what or who is the mover? What objectives do the movers seek to achieve? And by what means do they achieve these objectives? While the questions about objectives and means will be answered later with a presentation on specific instances of violent ethno-religious conflicts in the post-independence Nigeria, the question about the mover(s) is to be explained using Rubenstein’s analogy of Cain and Abel (as cited in Cheldelin et al., 2008, p. 59).

Rubenstein (as cited in Cheldelin et al., 2008) believes that conflict occurs when “individuals or

groups pursue incompatible goals” (p. 58). Conflict could either be “beneficial or destructive” - beneficial because conflict will help to improve human conditions, and destructive because its effects could be very harmful or detrimental to our existence (See Cheldelin et al., 2008, p. 58). Therefore, it is important for conflict analysis and resolution scholars to identify the sources of destructive conflict for a timely intervention and impact reduction. For this reason, Rubenstein (as cited in Cheldelin et al., 2008) narrows his inquiry to identifying and distinguishing two general sources of destructive conflict: human nature (personal factors) and social situations or structures (situational factors).

To illustrate and expatiate on the two sources of conflict, Rubenstein (as cited in Cheldelin et al., 2008) makes reference to the narrative of Cain and Abel and explains how a destructive conflict can manifest when “aggressive feelings are turned into aggressive action” (Cheldelin et al., 2008, p. 59). This illustration is related to the distance between “potency and act” as instructed by Aristotle in his philosophy of nature. To bring something from a state of potency to actuality requires a mover who, through the free exercise of freedom, sets that which is in potency in motion in order to attain the state of actuality. For example, and from a positive, non-conflict perspective, an undergraduate student studying early childhood education has the potency of becoming a teacher (its actuality). This student could be referred to as a potential teacher. But in reality, the student is not yet a teacher. What will make the student a teacher is the ability and diligent effort to study well, successfully pass exams, and get hired. The process by which the student teacher (potency) finally becomes a real teacher (actuality) is determined by both personal and external factors. By personal factor, it means the student’s personal decision or determination to study hard, follow the rules, pass exams and apply for teaching jobs. By external factor, it means the impact or influence of teachers, parents, friends, and employees on the student. This illustration adds more flavor to the biblical tale of Cain. It shows that for a destructive conflict to manifest there must be an agent who will freely choose to “move” or “bring” a potential violence to actual violence.

I believe that every “AMCP” (aggressive manifest conflict process as noted by Sandole (Cheldelin et al., 2008, p. 43) was once an “MCP” (manifest conflict process); and for an “MCP” to become an “AMCP,” it requires personal freedom and will on the one hand, and external factors on the other. My idea of personal freedom and will aligns with Rubenstein’s (as cited in Cheldelin et al., 2008) notion of “human nature” or “personal factors” as the first source of conflict. And my notion of external factors refers to Rubenstein’s (as cited in Cheldelin et al., 2008) concept of “social situations or structures,” or “situational factors” as the second source of conflict. Taking this further to its logical conclusion, Rubenstein (as cited in Cheldelin et al., 2008) believes that “the most destructive social conflicts seem to occur when multiple sources are in play, especially when there are oppressive class relationships, threatened group identities, and clashing worldviews” (p. 66).

The various violent and destructive conflicts that manifested in post-independence Nigeria were caused by a mixture of what could be referred to as personal freedom or will (similar to Rubenstein’s idea of “human nature”) and external factors (designating Rubenstein’s concept of “social situations or structures,” or “situational factors”). Personal freedom or will here means that the various parties (the groups and their representatives) by their free exercise of choice and will decided to play the role of a “mover,” turning potential violence (or aggressive feelings) (Cheldelin et al., 2008, p. 59) to actual violence (or aggressive action). But their choice of action was greatly influenced by the chains of undercurrent of triggering, prevalent issues that this paper discussed in the first and second phases of conflict manifestation in Nigeria. In the first phase, seven concealed, hidden, underlying or pre-manifest conflict issues during the period of amalgamation were carefully presented including exclusion from the

decision-making processes, autonomy of the various ethnic nationalities within the two regions as well as autonomy of the regions, self-determination, territorial integrity, the British colonial tactic of divide and rule, economic opportunities, and lastly, political representation. And in the second phase, we saw how these four issues: self-government, constitution, independence, and recognition of the minorities, contributed to the emergence of manifest conflicts in Nigeria from 1945 to 1966.

But the question that could be asked at this point is: are personal will and situational factors enough reasons to resort to the use of violence and cause devastating destruction of life and property? This essay contends that in addition to human nature or personal will and situational factors, parties to a conflict do have well defined and articulated objectives and strategies or thought out means through which these objectives could be accomplished. A quick summary of a few instances of the post-independence violent conflicts will help us understand the interplay between the four elements: personal will, situational factors, objectives and means. These elements will not be discussed separately but will be referred to in the context of the specific examples of destructive, violent conflicts that follow.

It is believed that the post-independence Nigeria (as cited in the Final Draft of Nigeria National Conference Report, 2014):

has over 350 ethno-cultural groupings. This multi-ethnicity has been compounded by pronounced religious differences, exploited usually for political considerations by avid political classes in contexts of extreme poverty and very low educational development among the mass of the populace. Whereas Nigeria is supposed to be a secular state, “one nation bound in freedom, peace and unity,” the prevalence of religiosity and its related nepotism at all levels, has effectively undermined the objectivity which secularity would have ordinarily imbued in national politics. (p. 47)

The post-independence era is characterized by many milestones of which the two that will be mentioned in this essay are the military dictatorship era and democratic era. For the military dictatorship era, we refer to the ethno-religious violent conflicts that occurred from 1966 to 1999, although there were pockets of civilian rule experiments within this period. For the democratic era, we refer to the instances of ethno-religious violent conflicts and terrorism that occurred from 1999 to 2016. To achieve the goal of this paper, only four examples of violent, aggressive conflict are selected, two from the military dictatorship era and two from the democratic era.

### **Examples of Aggressive Conflict during the Military Dictatorship Era**

#### *The Nigeria – Biafra Civil War.*

The Civil War in Nigeria, also known as the Nigeria-Biafra war, lasted almost three years, from 1967 to 1970. It was a bloody conflict with a very high number of deaths of more than one million people. Seven years after Nigeria’s independence from Great Britain, the war began because of the attempted secession of the southeastern Nigeria on May 30, 1967, when it declared itself the independent Republic of Biafra. The battles that followed and which largely revealed human suffering aroused the indignation and the intervention of the international community. (Ugorji, 2012, p. 97)

The main parties to this war were mainly the northerners (Hausa-Fulani, majority of whom are

Muslims) together with some south-westerners that led the Nigerian government troops on the one hand, and the southeastern (the Igbo alongside some minority ethnic groups/Christian/Biafran) troops. Shortly before this war, there were instances of ethnic violence in Nigeria. Prominent among these are the first military coup d'état in Nigeria (after this, there were many other coups d'état) and the ethno-religious massacres in the north and the retaliatory killings that followed in the south.

Military intervention following the bloody coup of January 15, 1966 led by Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu and a group of Majors, overthrew the government of the Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and ushered in the military regime of General Johnson Thomas Umunnakwe Aguiyi-Ironsi. In July of the same year, a counter-coup ushered in the military regime of Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon. (Final Draft of Nigeria National Conference Report, 2014, p. 12)

These events were the first set of events in a series of what was going to become an era of human suffering.

#### *The Crusade of Evangelist Reinhard Bonnke and the Massacres in Kano.*

Prior to the institutionalization of Sharia law in some northern states from 1999, many religious violent conflicts occurred. Among these is the violence that erupted in 1991 over a Christian led convention in Kano. A Christian community invited a German evangelist, Reinhard Bonnke and his colleagues, to Nigeria to be a guest speaker at the convention. Being that the majority of Kano residents are Muslims, they protested against the convention and the coming of the German Pastor. Also, against the refusal of the Nigerian government to give visa to a Muslim preacher from South Africa who the Muslims had previously invited to Nigeria for a program, the Muslims were angry and argued that it "is injustice to allow a German Christian evangelist" (Ugorji, 2012) to preach in Kano. For the Muslims, it was not just seen as a provocation, but an attempt to Christianize the Islamic city or present it to the outside world as a Christian city. This conflict led to the death of hundreds of people, internally displaced persons, and destruction of property.

### **Examples of Aggressive Conflict during the Democratic Era**

#### *Kaduna – Enugu Riots.*

The civil war did not bring an end to ethno-religious violent attacks. In 1999 and 2000, at the dawn of the democratic era, there was violent manifestation of conflict in Zamfara state and Kaduna state as a result of the institutionalization of Sharia law to which Christians were obliged to obey. The protests that followed and the refusal to comply with the Sharia law led to the escalation of violence which resulted in thousands of deaths. In retaliation against the massacre of Christians, some Muslims in the south of the country were attacked.

#### *The Fight against Western Education by the Boko Haram Movement.*

The last example that this paper intends to give is the notorious violence and terrorist attacks of the Boko Haram movement in the northeastern region of Nigeria. While the activities of this group have drawn both national and international condemnation, nobody knows with certainty how and when terrorist attacks will stop. Founded in 2002 in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State, by Ustaz Mohammed

Yusuf, Boko Haram emerged with an ideology that rejects modernity and Western education, and an objective of establishing Sharia law in all the Nigerian states (Ugorji, 2012). Although nobody within the international community knew Boko Haram prior to 2009, the group was carrying out its small-scale activities in Borno state. The first pronounced violent attack orchestrated by Boko Haram was in 2009 when it launched “a simultaneous attack in four northern states of Nigeria, known as Bauchi, Borno, Yobe and Kano. These combats were between government troops and members of Boko Haram movement” (Ugorji, 2012). From 2009 to 2016, thousands of people were killed; property worth millions of dollars destroyed, trauma and pain inflicted, and tens of thousands of people have been internally and externally displaced. The victims of Boko Haram terrorism are both Christians and Muslims which, to a certain extent, characterize this conflict as both an intra-religious and inter-religious conflict.

But the question that is being asked is how this conflict could be resolved and prevented from reoccurring. The section that follows will provide insights on possible solutions to the Boko Haram conflict as well as to the other ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria.

### **Resolving Ethno-Religious Conflict in Nigeria**

Until now, the analysis made in this paper has been guided by the medico-diagnostic method of inquiry, an analytical approach that seeks to avoid one of the commonly committed fallacies of the century - jumping to a conclusion or making a hasty decision. This approach was adopted because of the belief that “efforts to ameliorate” ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria “must be preceded by an understanding” of the drivers, dynamics and sources of that conflict. “Altogether too many policy prescriptions for ethnic harmony have been dispensed without benefit of careful diagnosis” (Horowitz, 2000). In the first phase of our diagnosis which focuses on the amalgamation period (from 1914 to 1945), seven concealed, hidden, underlying or pre-manifest conflict issues were discovered and they include exclusion from the decision making processes, autonomy of the various ethnic nationalities within the two regions as well as autonomy of the regions, self-determination, territorial integrity, the British colonial tactic of divide and rule, economic opportunities, and lastly, political representation. And in the second phase, four issues were diagnosed and analyzed: self-government, constitution, independence, and recognition of the minorities. These contributed to the emergence of manifest conflicts in Nigeria from 1945 to 1966. The third phase conflict issues (that occurred between 1966 and 2016) are a spillover from the conflict issues of the first and the second phases, for which an example is the separatist, self-government claims of the Boko Haram movement through the establishment of an Islamic caliphate in the north of Nigeria that should be governed not by the constitution but by the Sharia Law.

To resolve these conflict issues, many scholars, researchers and policy makers have put forward different kinds of proposals. These resolution proposals are summarized as follows: constitutional review; devolution of powers; fiscal federalism with revenue sharing; resource control and sharing formula; reforms of the public service; inclusive and participatory democracy; accountability and transparency; political parties and electoral systems reforms; coercive measures in the form of peacekeeping operations; the use of the judicial system in the prosecution and sentencing of perpetrators of violence; political will to fight terrorism and rehabilitate the victims of terrorist attacks; and finally, the creation of the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) (See Final Draft of Nigeria National Conference Report, 2014, pp. 47-59; Ugorji, 2012).

The understanding of the rate of success or failure of these conflict resolution strategies is very crucial to realizing the goal of this research. If the success rate is high, then the outcome of this paper will be a litany of suggestions on how these policies could be strengthened, just as many writers have enumerated. However, statistical evidence and the reality on the ground tend to show that government policies to ameliorate interethnic and interreligious relations in Nigeria have had little or no results. Based on this fact, this paper proposes a paradigm shift in the development of policies that are aimed at managing, resolving and preventing conflicts with ethno-religious issues and components. This paradigm shift could be explained from two perspectives: first, from retributive policy to restorative justice, and second, from coercive policy to mediation and dialogue. I hold that:

ethnic and religious identities now blamed for much of the unrest in Nigeria can actually be tapped as valuable assets in support of stabilization and peaceful coexistence. Those who are responsible for such bloodshed and those suffering at their hands, including all the members of the society, need a safe space within which to hear one another's stories and to learn, with guidance, to see each other as human once again. (Ugorji, 2014)

A unique form of this "safe space" was provided in 2014 in Nigeria during the Nigeria National Conference - a National Dialogue that brought together 498 delegates representing the different ethno-national, religious and tribal groups in Nigeria, who, in order "to encourage inclusiveness and the need to build a fully integrated nation, drafted and recommended, among other proposals, the adoption of *The Nigerian Charter for National Reconciliation and Integration*" (Final Draft of Nigeria National Conference Report, 2014, pp. 288-294). Drafting and adopting a charter for national reconciliation and integration is necessary but not sufficient for the restoration of peace in Nigeria.

There is a need for systematic, engaging, sustainable and result-oriented set of models. If multiple groups are fighting and killing each other, there are preliminary things that should be done before asking them to forgive one another and reconcile for future collaborative engagement. First, the fighters need to be separated by stronger interveners. Second, the immediate issues, that is, the reason why they are fighting, will be addressed and solutions proposed to the parties or the parties offer solutions to their problem. Third, additional ongoing opportunities will be provided to the parties to help rebuild and improve their relationship.

Fourth, and with time, they will let go and forgive one another in order to move on. Based on these conflict resolution conditions and the results of the conflict diagnosis presented above, three models of conflict resolution with practical applications are prescribed to help cure the ethno-religious maladies in Nigeria as well as heal the wounds they have inflicted on their victims. These are responsible peacekeeping, peacemaking, and lastly continuous peacebuilding.

#### *Responsible peacekeeping.*

The current conflict climate in the northeastern part of Nigeria, especially the Boko Haram terrorism, requires a higher, concerted and more coordinated intervention mechanisms led by responsible peacekeeping operations teams. According to Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall (2011), "peacekeeping is appropriate at three points on the escalation scale: to contain violence and prevent it from escalating to war; to limit the intensity, geographical spread and duration of war once it has broken out; and to

consolidate a ceasefire and create space for reconstruction after the end of a war” (p. 147). In order to create space for the other forms of conflict resolution – mediation and dialogue for example-, there is a need to contain, reduce or minimize the intensity and impact of violence on the ground through responsible peacekeeping and humanitarian operations.

The peacekeepers’ role should be to separate the fighters, contain its intensity and protect the civilians. In addition to this role, this paper lays emphasis on ethical responsibility. By this, it is expected that the peacekeepers should be well trained and guided by ethical deontological codes so as to neither do harm to the population they are expected to protect nor become a part of the problem they have been sent to manage.

### *Peacemaking.*

Many forms of peacemaking initiatives – negotiation, mediation, settlement, and tracks of diplomacy (Cheldelin et al., 2008, p. 43; Ramsbotham et al., 2011, p. 171; Pruitt & Kim, 2004, p. 178) have emerged over the years and have been used to resolve different kinds of conflict. For ethno-religious violent conflict in Nigeria, this paper proposes two levels of peacemaking processes. The first level is a conflict settlement between the Nigerian government and the Boko Haram movement using a combination of track 1 and track two diplomacy, or multi-track diplomacy. The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) provides a summary of these forms of peacemaking initiatives.

Track 1 diplomacy designates official discussions typically involving high-level political and military leaders and focusing on cease-fires, peace talks, and treaties and other agreements. Track 2 diplomacy has to do with unofficial dialogue and problem- solving activities aimed at building relationships and encouraging new thinking that can inform the official process. Track 2 activities typically involve influential academic, religious, and NGO leaders and other civil society actors who can interact more freely than high-ranking officials. Some analysts use the term track 1.5 to denote a situation in which official and non-official actors work together to resolve conflicts. Multitrack diplomacy is a term for operating on several tracks simultaneously, including official and unofficial conflict resolution efforts, citizen and scientific exchanges, international business negotiations, international cultural and athletic activities, and other cooperative efforts. These efforts could be led by governments, professional organizations, businesses, churches, media, private citizens, training and educational institutes, activists, and funders. (The Endowment of the United States Institute of Peace, 2011)

The second level of peacemaking processes that this paper proposes is multi-group or intergroup mediation programs organized for specific individuals, communities, businesses, organizations, ethnic or tribal group associations, religious groups (represented by religious leaders) who are involved in, connected to, or have fallen victim of, ethno-religious conflicts in the northeastern region of Nigeria and in the other regions of the country. These mediation programs should be facilitated by a reputable civil society organization (CSO) with expertise in ethno-religious conflict resolution in general and multi-group mediation in particular.

### *Continuous peacebuilding.*

The underlying assumption of this paper is that using military might and the judicial system alone

to resolve conflicts with ethnic and religious components, especially in Nigeria, will rather lead to further escalation of the conflict. The reason is because military intervention and the retributive justice that follows neither have within themselves the tools to uncover the hidden animosities that fuel the conflict nor the skills, know-how and patience required to transform the “deep-rooted conflict by eliminating structural violence and other underlying causes and conditions of deep-rooted conflict” (Mitchell & Banks, 1996; Lederach, 1997, as cited in Cheldelin et al., 2008, p. 53). For this reason, a paradigm shift from retributive policy to restorative justice and from coercive policy to mediation and dialogue is needed. To accomplish this, more resources should be invested in peacebuilding initiatives, and they should be led by civil society organizations at the grassroots levels. A variant of these kinds of initiatives could be Track 3 diplomacy which has to do with:

people-to-people diplomacy undertaken by individuals and private groups to encourage interaction and understanding between hostile communities and involving awareness-raising and empowerment within these communities. Normally focused at the grassroots level, this type of diplomacy often involves organizing meetings and conferences, generating media exposure, and political and legal advocacy for marginalized people and communities. (The Endowment of the United States Institute of Peace, 2011)

The Track 3 diplomacy as described here is not practical. The urgency and need for peacebuilding initiatives in Nigeria require more practical methods than theoretical descriptions. For this reason, this paper hereby recommends the following four projects that the author developed at the International Center for Ethno-Religious Mediation (ICERM), a New York based nonprofit organization in Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and founded by Basil Ugorji (the author of this paper). As an emerging center of excellence for ethnic and religious conflict resolution and peacebuilding, ICERM identifies ethnic and religious conflict prevention and resolution needs, and brings together a wealth of resources, including mediation and dialogue programs to support sustainable peace in countries around the world (see [www.icermediation.org](http://www.icermediation.org) for more information about ICERM). The four projects are: living together movement, pray for peace initiative, peace journalism, and national elders forum.

#### *Living Together Movement:*

At the beginning of phase one analysis, this paper distinguished and defined two kinds of amalgamation: *consented amalgamation* (ethno-religious groups formed a union based on free choice and will) and *forced amalgamation* (ethno-religious groups were coerced or compelled to unite as one nation). Since the union of the north and south as well as the union of all the ethnic and religious groups into one united nation was based on *forced amalgamation*, it is important that any prescriptions to heal this wound and cure the very first symptomatic malady that is engraved in the heart of all the conflict issues in Nigeria should recognize the people’s freedom, validate their autonomy and create spaces that will encourage and promote inclusion in the decision making processes, and respect their diverse cultures, group related rights, including the rights of the minorities and freedom of religion.

To achieve this long-term goal, this paper proposes the establishment of the Living Together Movement in schools, communities, government and private institutions, and so on. Not only will

the Living Together Movement help “prevent and resolve ethnic and religious conflicts and engender harmony through dialogue, open-hearted discussions, compassionate & empathic listening, and diversity celebration” (ICERM, 2014); through mutual discussions on common heritage and shared values which are evident in the “country’s history, founding fathers, constitution and national symbols,” the project will promote patriotic attitudes - “a shared sense of belonging to the same country or fatherland, feeling that reinforces its unity on the basis of shared common values” (Ugorji, 2014). In schools, the project could be established as clubs and in the communities and other institutions as a civic association with a centralized body at the national capital and chapters in all the states and at the local, grassroots levels.

#### *Pray for Peace Initiative:*

In order to strengthen, coordinate and give structure to the interfaith dialogue initiatives in the country, this paper recommends the establishment of a multi-faith, multi-ethnic and global peace prayer called *Pray for Peace*. The resolution of an inter-religious conflict should make use of common, shared religious values in order to be successful and sustainable. Two of the shared, common values in both Islam and Christianity are prayer and peace. Prayer and peace are fundamental values that are inscribed in the Quran and Bible, and unanimously accepted by both Muslims and Christians. In Nigeria, they are used daily in greeting exchanges. And so, Muslims and Christians coming together once a week or month to pray for peace will be a symbolic way to celebrate the two shared values, help bridge tribal, ethnic, religious, sectarian, cultural, ideological, philosophical and political divides, and foster a culture of peace in Nigeria.

#### *Peace Journalism:*

The media has an ethical duty and a moral responsibility to promote peace through journalistic activities. Unfortunately, many media outlets create the conditions that lead to violence instead of peace. In the spirit of a comprehensive peacebuilding effort, this paper recommends that the Nigerian journalists be trained in peace journalism so as to promote positive interaction among people of different tribes, ethnicities and religious persuasions, help to increase tolerance and acceptance, and support sustainable peace in the most vulnerable and conflict regions of the country “through programming that informs, educates, engages, mediates, and heals” (ICERM, 2014).

#### *National Elders Forum:*

Peacebuilding in Nigeria will not be complete without a project uniquely designed for the traditional rulers or leaders of indigenous groups. The reason is because “elite attitudes toward ethnic and religious differences are the major factors in interethnic and interreligious accommodation and moderation. If leaders are more temperate than those they lead, they will seek ways of putting a break on ethnic and religious conflicts” (Horowitz, 2000). Too often, temperateness or moderation is a virtue that is gradually developed and improved over a long period of time. To help acquire this important virtue, especially as it relates to ethnic and religious conflict resolution, this essay proposes that a *National Elders Forum* be established.

Members of the *National Elders Forum* will be traditional rulers or leaders of indigenous groups from all the ethnic groups in the country. These traditional rulers or leaders will be involved in peace initiatives periodically, including conflict resolution training that will include the most productive way to

use customary laws and traditions in peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and mediation, dialogue, and other nonviolent methods of conflict resolution. This training will help each of them promote a culture of peace in their respective communities and at the grassroots levels.

### Conclusion

At the beginning of this paper, we set out to analyze the drivers, dynamics and sources of ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria as well as lay out various ways by which this conflict could be resolved. Anybody who is familiar with Nigeria will know that this is not an easy task. It requires much time and strenuous scrutiny to be able to achieve the expected results. For this reason, this paper, through the lens of postcolonial criticism (Tyson, 2015) and other relevant social conflict theories, analyzed this conflict using a medico-diagnostic method of inquiry which was useful in avoiding rushing to the conclusion or making hasty prescriptions as many people have done in the past.

Ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria are diagnosed in this paper following Sandole's (as cited in Cheldelin et al., 2008) three stages of conflict manifestation, namely, "latent conflicts or pre-manifest conflict processes (pre-MCPs), manifest conflict processes (MCPs), and finally aggressive manifest conflict processes (AMCPs)" (p. 43). From this lens, and based on the historical and political perspectives, we set out to analyze and categorize ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria into three phases, each phase corresponding to one of Sandole's stages of conflict manifestation. The first phase is from 1914 to 1945 commonly known as the period of "amalgamation and the problem of nationhood" (Final Draft of Nigeria National Conference Report, 2014, p. 4). The second phase took place between 1945 and 1966, a period marked by the struggle for "decolonization, the agitation for constitutional reform, and the early years of independence" (p. 4). And finally, the third phase started from "the collapse of the First Republic following a bloody military coup that ushered in the first military regime and sparked up a movement for democratization" (p. 4) and continues until the current democratic era (from 1966 to 2016).

The paper analyzed the amalgamation period (from 1914 to 1945) and identified seven concealed, hidden, underlying or pre-manifest conflict issues that characterize this era - exclusion from the decision making processes; autonomy of the various ethnic nationalities within the two regions as well as autonomy of the regions; self-determination; territorial integrity; the British colonial tactic of divide and rule; economic opportunities; and lastly, political representation. In the second phase, four issues were diagnosed and analyzed, and they are self-government, constitution, independence, and recognition of the minorities. These contributed to the emergence of manifest conflicts in Nigeria from 1945 to 1966. Since the amalgamation of the north and south of Nigeria was based on a fragile foundation, the bubbles of the latent conflicts of the amalgamation era exploded during the struggle for decolonization and early years of independence between 1945 and 1966. The third phase conflict issues (that occurred between 1966 and 2016), however, are a spillover from the conflict issues of the first and second phases, for which an example is the separatist, self-government claims of the Boko Haram movement through the establishment of an Islamic caliphate in the north of Nigeria that should be governed not by the constitution but by the Sharia law.

This paper argues that if ethno-religious violence in Nigeria has transitioned into one of its most dangerous forms – terrorism or genocide – then it means that the existing conflict management, settlement and resolution strategies are weak and ineffective. Based on this fact, a paradigm shift in the development

of policies that are aimed at managing, resolving and preventing conflicts with ethno-religious issues and components is proposed. This paradigm shift is explained from two perspectives: first, from retributive policy to restorative justice, and second, from coercive policy to mediation and dialogue.

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