

Framework for Prevention and Countering Violent Identity Based Conflicts in Kaduna State, Nigeria

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Abstract: Kaduna State, formerly the northern administrative capital of the British Colonial Administration in Nigeria, was once known to be a peaceful and attractive cosmopolitan city where people of different ethnic and religious affiliations from around the country coexisted. The State has in contemporary time become a hub for toxic identity based ideologies between these social groups whose interaction gave rise to violent confrontations with devastating consequences on lives and property. This study which is triggered by the reoccurrence of violent identity based conflicts along ethno-religious lines used a triangulation methodological approach and identified the issue of settlement segregation as the core driver of identity based violent conflicts in Kaduna State. Findings from the study led to the development of a framework called the Detachment Model (DM) with two sub-programmes; Detachment Model Unlearning Plan (DM-UP) and Detachment Model Perception Shaping Plan (DM-PSP).

Keywords: Identity; Violence; Extremism; ethnicity; religion

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I. INTRODUCTION

Identity politics has in recent time become the most topical subject of study by social scientists. The controversies around this phenomenon seem to have been heated up by the visibility of mobilized and politicized social groups whose salient identity in terms of religion, ethnicity, gender, social class, and political alignment shapes the relationships between and in some cases within individuals of these respective groups. The interaction between this identity based groups often driven by contest for power, access, control and distribution of scarce socioeconomic and political resources has pitched these social groups in one form of conflict to another with most of these conflicts morphing into violent confrontations.

The identity politics being faced in Kaduna State has largely been between varying ethno-religious groups particularly the Hausa-Fulani and other indigenous tribes in Kaduna like the Kataf, Bajju and Kaje. These warring ethnic groups have had religious identity, socio-economic and political injustice being pitch points for violent extremism. The Hausa-Fulani are predominantly Muslims while the indigenous tribes are mainly Christians whose settlement plans are homogenous along religious lines.

With these conflicts being a reoccurring feature in contemporary Kaduna State, this study set out to understand what drives the violent identity based extremist ideology in the State from an ethno-religious perspective and develop a framework to neutralize extremist ideologies in the State.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Identity Politics Theory

Proponents of the Identity Politics Theory defined Identity politics as “the politics in which people engage in when they mobilize on the basis of and when they define their experiences, their political problems, and their aims in terms of the good of identity groups” (Hayward and Watson 2010). They went further to state that “historically, identity politics grew out of the experience of identity-based oppression: The experience of inequalities in resource allocations and opportunities that people encountered as members of particular identity groups”. This could be seen from the eruption of various identity movements some of which have led to violent movements like the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) in Nigeria that took its narrative from the socio-economic inequality by the Nigerian government against members of the region and also Boko Haram the violent Islamist group seeking to establish an Islamic Caliphate in Nigeria whose widespread indiscriminate killings within Nigeria and its neighbouring countries made Nigeria rank “third (3rd) on the list of countries with the highest impact of terrorism” (Global Terrorism Index 2016).

In the same vein, the **Social Conflict Theory** is defined as a "conflict in which the parties are an aggregate of individuals, such as groups, organizations, communities, and crowds, rather than single individuals as in role conflict" (Oberschall A 1987). In another definition, social conflict is "a struggle over values or claims

to status, power and scarce resources in which the aims of the conflict groups are not only to gain the desired values, but also to neutralize, injure, or eliminate rivals" (Coser L.A 1967).

These definitions of social conflict reflect the reality of conflicts experienced in Kaduna as pitched from the ethno-religious violence that broke out in 1987 at Kafanchan LGA of the State as a result of a perceived blasphemous statement by a Christian Student of the College of Education Kaduna against Prophet Muhammad (Peace be Upon Him) which was said to have violated the values and beliefs of Muslims. This episode degenerated into widespread violence across the city of Kafanchan, the city of Kaduna and other nearby states in Kaduna as part of retaliatory or reprisal attacks aimed at eliminating opposing groups.

In relation to the social conflict theory, the Ancient Hatred Theory whose proponents respectively posit that conflicts are a result of long term grievances that stem from historical burdens and memories of past events as a result of interaction between groups. The Ancient Hatred theory argues that the best form of conflict prevention is, "secession, territorial separation and separate institutions" (Oberschall A 2010). Territorial separation seems apparent in areas that constitute urban Kaduna were communities like Gonin Gora and Rigasa whom are strictly inhabited by Christians and Muslims respectively. However, such extreme demarcation has not been adequate enough to eliminate violent confrontations in the state hence an underlying factor still persists.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Documentary evidence suggests that Kaduna state has been ravaged by ethnic and religious conflicts prior to the independence of Nigeria in 1960. Most often than not, accounts have shown a significant level of synchronization or intertwining between ethnic conflicts and religious conflicts in Kaduna State based on the demography of the actors involved. Ethnic groups like the Kaje of Zangon Kataf district have within the colonial period of 1942 "protested over perceived domination and discrimination by the Native Authority Administration" (Osaghae E. 1998). These perceived domination and discrimination has led to the persistence of "violent demonstrations in the Southern Kaduna province over certain oppressive features of the emirate system, particularly the headship of the Fulani ruling families over predominantly non-Fulani districts" (Suberu R 2001). Other Scholars in the field further validated the assertion of ethnic marginalization where they highlighted that "in the 1970s the people of Southern Kaduna mobilized over frustrations with the Emirate officials who until the 1976 local government reform also dominated the system of native administration" (Abdu and Umar 2002). Nigerian political scientist like Rotimi Suberu (2001) has attributed the causes of conflicts experienced in Southern Kaduna to "underdevelopment of the region which is marked by sparse population and their lack of viable internal sources of revenue" (Suberu, R 2001).

Not until the 1980s, violent conflicts in Kaduna State have been that between ethnicities but due to social orientations and ethnic categorizations and settlement plans, these conflicts began to mobilize based on religious sentiments. Political violence also got its footing in Kaduna State in the 1980s with the occurrence of violence in districts like Kasuwar Magani (1980), Zangon Kataf (1984), Kafanchan (1987) and the Zangon Kataf (1992). With these conflicts apparent in the Southern part since the 1980s, the 21st century has led to the city of Kaduna being one of the flashpoints for the eruption of violent conflicts in Nigeria, both in terms of ethno-religious and political conflicts. Some particular ethno-religious conflicts include:

- a. The 1977 Muslim and Christian students clash at the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria where students violently engaged one another over alcohol consumption which violates the tenets of Islamic religion.
- b. The Kafanchan crisis of March 1987 which was a result of a theological disagreement between Christian and Muslim students of the Kafanchan Teachers College" (Suberu R. 2001). It was narrated that the disagreements between the Students "rapidly degenerated into a fracas which spilled into Kafanchan town and ignited age-old tensions between the politically dominant Muslim-Fulani settlers located in the town centre on the one hand and the numerically larger and predominantly Christian and/or animist non-Hausa-Fulani natives inhabiting the towns suburbs on the other" (Suberu R. 2001).
- c. The February 1992 Zangon Kataf market riots erupted over the relocation of the Zango market from the Kafanchan city centre which had predominantly Muslim Hausa/Fulani population to the outskirts. Suberu R (2001) highlighted that "complex historical, political, cultural and economic factors were at play in this outbreak of communal rioting".
- d. The May 1992 Zangon Kataf riots erupted as a result of the lingering tension in Kafanchan town which quickly escalated and resulted into "retaliatory campaigns by Muslim Mobs against Christian and/or Southern Kaduna and Southern Nigerian groups in Kaduna city, Zaria, Ikara and other areas of Kaduna State" (Suberu, R. 2001).
- e. The Kaduna Sharia Crisis of February 21st 2000, which was described by the former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo while in power as "the worst he had seen since the Nigerian Civil war" (Ullah, H. 2004) cannot be detached from the trajectory of previous ethnic and religious conflicts in the state. This is on the premise that the primary or rather immediate cause of the conflict was a result of "the Sharia (Islamic

jurisprudence) controversy and the consequent demonstrations and counter demonstrations by both Muslims and Christians in Kaduna (Abdu, H. 2000). The conflict was in protest of imposing laws that contradicts the beliefs of Christians in Kaduna State who constitute about half the population of the state.

- f. The 2011 Post-election violence: Reports from the Human Rights Watch (HRW) had indicated that a day after the Presidential elections of 19th April 2011, by which the main opposition candidate of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) in person of General Muhammadu Buhari (rtd), a Muslim from Northern Nigeria, was defeated by the incumbent President, Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian from the oil rich Niger Delta in the South, supporters of General Muhammadu Buhari lunched series of protests which turned violent across 12 northern states including Kaduna over what they perceived to have been a rigged election. This is despite the elections being described by certain neutral international observers as “among the fairest in the country’s history” (Human Rights Watch 2011) of general elections.

All these have shown that Kaduna is a centre of identity based violent crises in Nigeria.

IV. METHODOLOGY

Study Area

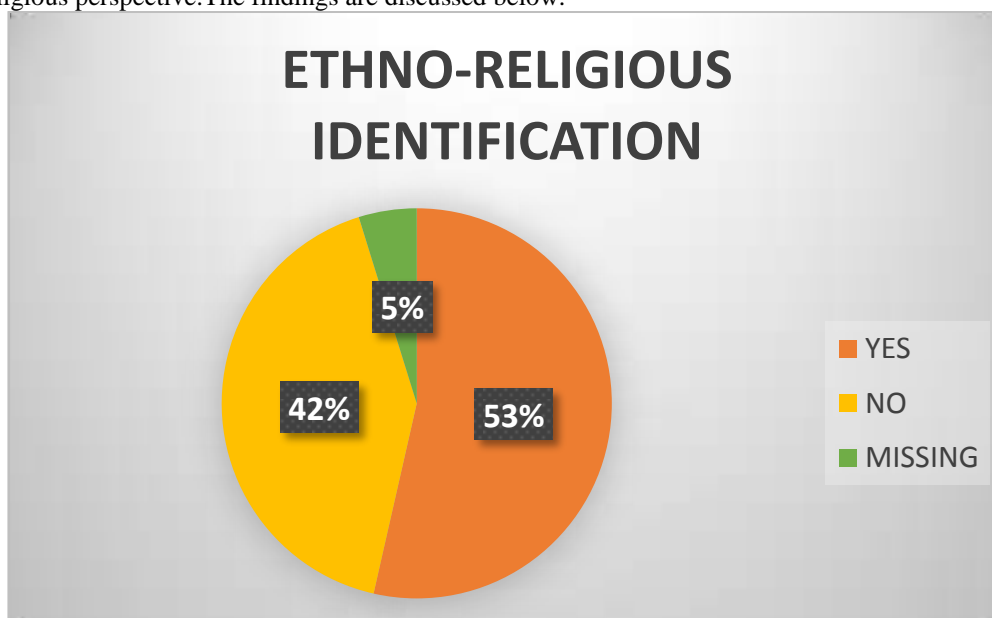
Kaduna State has a population of “6,113,503” people (NPC 2007) in the 2006 national population and housing census, on a 17, 781sq mi and twenty-three (23) Local Government Areas (LGAs). This study was carried in two (2) of the twenty-three (23) LGAs that make up Kaduna metropolis (Kaduna North and Kaduna South) which are usually the flashpoints of ethno-religious conflicts on the premise of significant population of both Muslims and Christians and varying tribes in the state. Kaduna North and Kaduna South LGAs have a population of 364,575 and 402,731 respectively in the 2006 census according to the National Population Commission.

Sample Size, Data Collection and Method of Analysis

A sample size of 2000 respondents was carefully chosen to reflect the ethno-religious diversity inherent in Kaduna State. Using a triangulation approach, structured questionnaires were distributed, in-depth interviews were conducted on some religious and traditional leaders in the state and historical documents were reviewed to gain more insights into the numerous crises in the state. The study recorded a 70.6% response rate and data retrieved was analysed using the SPSS20 software.

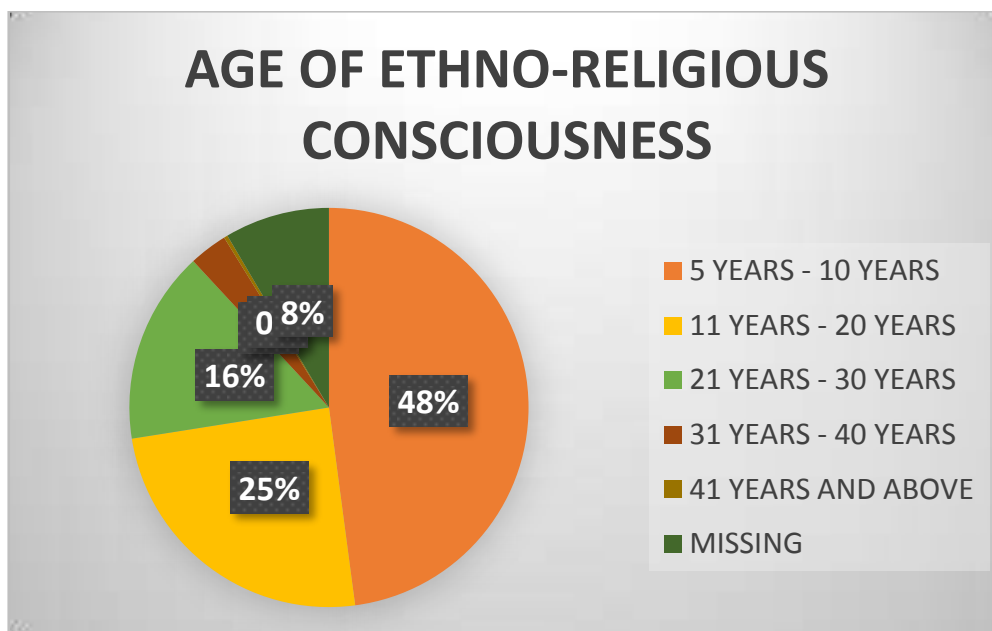
V. FINDINGS

This study was undertaken to understand what drives violent identity based conflicts in Kaduna State from an ethno-religious perspective. The findings are discussed below.



As drawn from the data, 53.5% of the sample population indicated that they identify themselves from an ethno-religious view which in turn further validates the assertion that ethnic and religious identities have historically been significant in the Nigerian socio-economic and political process under colonial rule as well as in the post-colonial era. Interestingly, despite such majority, an overwhelming number from the sample population (about 42%) indicated that they do not identify themselves from an ethno-religious identity which

leaves room for the assertion that there is in existence other forms of identity at which people hold on to in the form of social class, political, etc.



The findings also reveal that an overwhelming 48% of respondents indicated that they became conscious of their ethno-religious identity when they were between 5 – 12 years. This indicates that the formation of identity starts from childhood. Some respondents noted that they were taught and told by their parents to be friends only with other children that share their faith.

Interviews revealed that religion and ethnocentrism have been primary sources of violent conflicts in Kaduna State with examples sighted from the year 2000 Sharia conflict which was termed by the former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo as one of the deadliest since the Nigerian Civil War. A religious leader argued that the foundation of the year 2000 violent conflict in Kaduna State was due to political ambitions of the then Governor of the State Alhaji Ahmed Makarfi who tried to establish Sharia Law as the state official judicial principle against the existing English Law in practice.

This move by the Governor and his supporters in the year 2000 clearly reflects the inherent underlying problem of ethnocentrism between the predominantly Muslim Hausa-Fulani indigenes of Kaduna and the predominantly Christian indigenous tribes of the State. The Muslims saw themselves as superior in population and socio-economic and political control hence the reckless move to impose a law that was clearly not in favour of Christians who in turn protested the agenda by showcasing the demography of the Christian Identity in the State.

This study was also able to identify that what was once a peaceful cosmopolitan city has become a city segregated strictly along ethno-religious lines with an unhealthy prejudice between ethno-religious groups being a determinant for coexisting. Communities like Rigasa and Tudun Wada on one hand and Sabo and Gonin Gora on the other hand in the state reflects the segregation with Muslim and Christian homogenous populations respectively. This segregation reinforced the distrust between Muslims and Christians whose ethnic demography largely consists of the Hausa-Fulani majorly Muslim and the Christian folk whose ethnicity cut across other indigenous ethnicities in Kaduna State like Bajju, Kaje etc. This is not to say that there are no Muslims or Christians across those ethnicities or other non-indigenous tribes in those communities, this basically reflects the majority. This segregation paved way for the establishment of private identity based schools along religious lines which despite having mainstream western curriculum instil religious doctrines which could be radical in some instances in the minds of students. Worthy of note is that due to the settlement patterns, even public schools in such areas largely reflects an identity based institution which if left unchecked provides ample space for breeding intolerance and terrorist ideologies like that of Boko Haram.

Affirming the above finding, respondents from the sample population agreed that activities of religious and traditional leaders in these respective settlements through divisive preaching has further sustained negative prejudice between members of different ethno-religious groups. This was the position of 54% of the sample population as shown below.



Including the findings on what the respondents think about settlement segregation will be good.

VI. ALTERNATIVE FRAMEWORK

THE DETACHMENT MODEL (DM)

The Detachment Model (DM) is designed based on findings from field survey in Kaduna North and Kaduna South Local Government Areas where the sampled population revealed that they got to develop a negative prejudice about people from different ethnic or religious group from theirs by learning from the family unit and religious institutions they belonged to and not based on actual individual experiences. This study therefore proposes the Detachment Model as a measure to neutralize the negative preconceived notions by individuals about varying ethno-religious groups in that society.

The DM is to be implanted through two programmes namely; the Detachment Model Unlearning Plan (DM-UP) and the Detachment Model Perception Shaping Plan (DM-PSP) each aimed at tackling negative stereotypes at different levels.

THE DETACHMENT MODEL UNLEARNING PLAN (DM-UP)

The idea of the Detachment Model Unlearning Plan (DM-UP) is to have learnt negative perceptions about warring groups unlearned using social interventions like Community Exchange Programmes (CEP). The DM-UP through CEP will focus on convening adults from diverse ethno-religious groups to understand their differences and work towards exploring effective, efficient and sustainable ways of coexistence based on a higher level of positive human consciousness as perceived by each individual.

The DM-UP conveners will be tasked to collate and analyse these proposed measures by participants and commence implementation of feasible measures to neutralize existing tensions in the society. It is significant that coordinators of the DM-UP avoid setting up competing programmes where team membership will be ethno-religiously homogenous instead; competing teams should be ethno-religiously heterogeneous to reflect the diversity in the society. As causal as this sound, implementing the DM-UP through CEP will put into practice provisions of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution (as amended) which provides that:

“The Composition of the Government of a State, local government council, or any of the agencies of such Government or council, and the conduct of the affairs of the Government or council or such agencies shall be carried out in such manner as to recognise the diversity of the people within its area of authority and the need to promote a sense of belonging and loyalty among all the people of the Federation.”(LFN 1999)

“Accordingly, national integration shall be actively encouraged, whilst discrimination on the grounds of place of origin, gender, religion, status, ethnic or linguistic association or ties shall be prohibited.”(LFN 1999)

THE DETACHMENT MODEL PERCEPTION SHAPING PLAN (DM-PSP)

The Detachment Model Perception Shaping Plan (DM-PSP) is to target juveniles who are yet to accept negative prejudices without an actual experience through a well-crafted civic educational curriculum to shape

their individual perceptions about ethno-religious diversity on a path of positive human consciousness based on peace and justice.

The Unity School (Federal Government College) scheme whose slogan is “Pro Unitate” reflects a perfect perception shaping hub. Prior to the rise of violent conflicts across the country and perceived deteriorating quality in education at Unity Schools, Federal Government Colleges have been a space which convenes adolescents of varying ethnic and religious backgrounds from across the country to socially interact and make acquaintances while attaining mainstream secondary education. This scheme had overtime forged a sense of oneness in the hearts of young Nigerians. However, this sincere interactional path was adulterated by students who came from ethno-religiously segregated settlements with a negative prejudice born out of primordial ties and not real or actual individual experiences.

The DM-PSP can be an effective strategy if the government regulates settlement patterns and ensure public schools across the state deliver top-notch education factoring the well-crafted civic education to shape adolescent perceptions while mandating private schools to adopt same as part of its curriculum as this will bring about an all-inclusive outreach.

Implementing the DM as a framework for preventing and countering violent extremism in Kaduna State can neither be effective nor efficient without an effective, efficient and accountable security sector. Findings from the study revealed an almost 50% ineffective verdict in terms of security sector response to violent conflicts which has been largely attributed to the poor operational capacity of the policing unit in the state.

This framework therefore suggests that the Kaduna State Government (KDSG) strengthens the operational capacity of Operation Yaki by studying the operational modalities of the Nigeria Police Rapid Response Squad (RRS) in Lagos and adopt suitable modalities for the enhancement of the operational capacity of Operation Yaki towards neutralizing threats to security of lives and properties in Kaduna State. This recommendation stems from reports on the efficiency of the RRS in Lagos being attributed to funding of the RRS operations by acquiring required logistics and technical know-how through the Lagos State Security Trust Fund (LSSTF) which was set up in the year 2007 as a Public-Private partnership to fund the enormous investment required to support security in the state. “The Birth of RRS, as envisioned by its founding fathers is clear and it is premised on the maximum deployment of technology and other scientific approach towards tracking criminal cases as well as addressing community relations, communal clashes without compromising operational efficiency.” (Femi O 2017).

It is therefore worthy for the KDSG to explore the potential of establishing a transparent and accountable Public-Private Security funding partnership to meet up with contemporary security threats in the State.

Conclusively, the DM as a framework for preventing and countering violent extremism if properly implemented will lead to the neutralization of existing negative societal prejudice between ethno-religious groups while also grooming adolescents on the path of Unity and Justice.

VII. CONCLUSION

Conclusively, this paper has revealed that violent identity based conflicts in Kaduna State thrives due to the unchecked settlement patterns and its corresponding intricacies. Consequently, an alternative framework has been developed for prevention and countering violent identity based extremist ideology in Kaduna State as explained above.

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