AN ANALYSIS OF CONFLICT ZONES IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA: A TAPESTRY OF TENSIONS

EMMANUEL ZINGFA DANNAP
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, KWARARAFA UNIVERSITY, WUKARI, TARABA STATE, sarahzingfa12@gmail.com

SAMUEL ALEGWU OMANCHI
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, HISTORY AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, ADMIRALTY UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, IBUSA, DELLTA STATE, salegwu4all@yahoo.com

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ABSTRACT
Nigeria, a nation brimming with potential, grapples with a complex tapestry of conflicts woven across its vast territory. This analysis delves into the multifaceted web of contention, dissecting the primary zones of discord that impede the nation's progress. From the insurgency fueled by Boko Haram in the North-East to the farmer-herder clashes in the North-Central, resource conflicts in the Niger Delta, and separatist agitations echoing in the South-East, we examine the actors, causes, and impacts of these conflicts. For the purpose of this paper, a qualitative method of data collection has been adopted; materials were derived from secondary sources of data. Recognizing the interconnectedness of these issues and their root causes in poverty, inequality, and governance shortcomings, we advocate for a multi-pronged approach to peacebuilding, encompassing security measures, dialogue, grievance redress, development initiatives, and social cohesion efforts. By understanding the threads binding these conflicts, we can begin to untangle the tapestry and pave the way for a more peaceful and prosperous Nigeria.

Introduction

All human culture inevitably has conflicts at some point. Since society is made up of individuals with varying interests and ideals, conflicts arise everywhere in the world. The majority of cultures have conflicts when individuals in a sovereign state perceive opposing viewpoints or think their objectives cannot be met at the same time. Discontent, dissent, and controversy are therefore to be expected in situations where there is disparity in access to political power and natural resource control, for example. Nigeria, the most populous nation in Africa, is a land overflowing with vibrant culture, diverse communities, and immense potential. Yet, this potential remains tragically unrealized due to a complex tapestry of conflicts that mar the nation's landscape. From the insurgency's grip in the North-East to the resource struggles in the South, these conflicts cast a long shadow, impeding development, disrupting lives, and exacting a heavy toll on the Nigerian people. This analysis aims to untangle the threads of this complex tapestry, examining the primary zones of conflict that grip contemporary Nigeria. We will delve

into the actors, causes, and impacts of these conflicts, recognizing their interconnectedness and root causes in poverty, inequality, and deficiencies in governance. By understanding the nature of these conflicts, we can begin to envision pathways towards a more peaceful and prosperous future for Nigeria.

This analysis acknowledges the vastness and complexity of the issue, focusing on the most prominent conflict zones. It is important to recognize that numerous other localized conflicts and tensions exist, each with their unique dynamics and contexts. This paper examines conflict zones in contemporary Nigeria: a tapestry of tensions. This work is divided into six sections. First, the paper starts with an introduction which is ongoing. Second, it is on conceptual underpinning. Third, it examines the various conflict zones in contemporary Nigeria, focusing on Boko Haram/ISWAP in the North-East, herders-farmers clashes in the North-Central, simmering pro-Biafra sentiments in the South-East, and militancy and resource control in the South-South zones of Nigeria. Fourth is the examination of the cross-cutting themes. Fifth, the paper examines the solutions and the road ahead. Sixth, focus on the way forward, summary, and conclusion.

Conceptualizing Conflict Zones

Conflict zone refers to war or political instability that disrupts essential services such as housing, transportation, communication, sanitation, water, and health care, which requires the response of people outside of the community affected.[31] This connotes that conflict zones are areas where armed conflict is actively occurring or is likely to occur. These zones can be war zones, civil unrest areas, or tense border regions. These areas are often dangerous and volatile, with high risks of violence, injury, and death. Essential services like healthcare, food, and water may be disrupted or unavailable.

Conflict zones are characterized by the presence of armed groups, such as government militaries, rebel groups, or militias. Violence is a high risk, including gunfire and bombings. The political and social situation is often unstable, leading to further violence. Essential services, such as healthcare, food, and water, may be disrupted or unavailable.[32] Conflict zones often lead to humanitarian crises, where people are displaced and lack basic necessities. Rape is more common in conflict zones. This is linked to the greater use of violence during wartime, the absence of a consistent criminal justice infrastructure, the disruption of informal protections from households and the community, the greater gender imbalance in decision-making in militarized zones, and the specific use of rape as a weapon of war.[33]

Conflict Zones in Contemporary Nigeria

Nigeria is a vast country with different peoples and cultures. Regrettably, Nigeria is confronted with numerous intricate and diverse conflict zones that have a substantial influence on its progress and steadiness. Nigeria has seen an increase in violent conflicts, particularly since the conclusion of the Cold War. Numerous violent disputes between individuals, groups, companies, and communities have broken out, causing great stress to the environment and causing suffering to the populace. The paper focuses on Boko Haram/ISWAP in the North-East, herders-farmers clashes in the North-Central, simmering pro-Biafra sentiments in the South-East, and militancy and resource control in the South-South Zones of Nigeria. Each of these four conflicts or geopolitical zones has a unique history and context of conflict:

1. Northeast: The Shadow of Insurgency: North East Nigeria, comprising six states:

[31] Prasad, A. N. & Prasad, P. L. Children in Conflict Zones, https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27408226; Women in Conflict Zones: War, Genocide, Occupation, and Militarization, https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com

[32] Bharat H. D. & Balraj K. S. Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones: A Challenge for International Law? In Economic and Political Weekly, vol. 52, no. 7, February 18, 2017, pp. 15-18, https://www.jstor.org/stable/44166760; Conflict zones, https://www.icao.int/Security/SFP/Pages/Conflict-Zones.aspx; Women in Conflict Zones: War, Genocide, …

[33] Bharat H. D. & Balraj K. S. Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones: …; Women in Conflict Zones: War, Genocide, …

Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, and Yobe, has been severely affected by conflict over the last decade. The conflict is primarily attributable to Boko Haram, a terrorist group responsible for human rights abuses across Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, and Niger. Since 2009, Boko Haram has radicalized its members and triggered military operations, affecting nearly fifteen million people. Boko Haram and its splinter group, ISWAP, have been causing immense suffering and insecurity in Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin region for over a decade. The root causes of their conflict include poverty, lack of opportunity, governance deficiencies, religious extremism, resource scarcity, and historical grievances. Both groups have experienced internal divisions, shifting alliances, and evolving strategies.[34]

The conflict transcends borders, impacting neighboring countries like Chad, Cameroon, and Niger, necessitating regional cooperation for solutions. Media manipulation and propaganda are used by both groups to spread fear and recruit members. The humanitarian crisis is exacerbated by the ongoing conflict, causing millions to be displaced, face food insecurity, and suffer from limited access to healthcare. Challenges include countering violent extremism, strengthening governance with transparency, accountability, and inclusion; promoting interfaith dialogue; regional cooperation; and sustained humanitarian aid.[35]

Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) are two extremist groups in Nigeria, driven by religious extremism, socioeconomic grievances, and historical tensions. Their actions fuel existing divides and exacerbate existing tensions, as they reject Western education. However, most Muslims condemn their actions, and extremism doesn't represent the religion as a whole. Internal divisions between Boko Haram and ISWAP are complex and constantly evolving, shaped by differing ideologies, strategies, and power struggles. The initial split occurred in 2016 when Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau pledged allegiance to ISIS, leading to ISWAP. Both groups face internal power struggles and leadership challenges, intensifying conflict in northeastern Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin, causing civilians to suffer from violence, displacement, and limited access to resources.[36] To effectively counter Boko Haram and ISWAP, a multi-pronged approach is needed, including addressing the root causes of conflict, promoting good governance, fostering dialogue and inclusion, and ensuring sustained humanitarian assistance. Regional cooperation and information sharing are also crucial for countering their activities. By addressing these challenges, we can work towards a more sustainable and inclusive future for Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin region.

2. North Central: Herders-Farmers Clashes: North Central Nigeria consists of the states of Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, and Plateau, as well as the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria, primarily in the North-Central region, have spread across the country, causing widespread loss of lives and property. The conflict is rooted in political, cultural, and ethno-religious beliefs, leading to aggressive encroachment and reprisal aggression between sedentary farmers and nomadic pastoralists. This has resulted in mutual hostility and reverse-violent attacks, highlighting the need for a more accurate understanding of the conflict.[37] The conflict involves farmers, herders, government authorities, violent groups, and criminal elements. Causes include competition for resources, historical grievances,

[34] Abul A., Emily C., & Heidi K. Poverty And Equity Global Practice: Conflict and Violence in Nigeria Results from the North East, North Central, and South South zones Preliminary Draft Report, 2018, https://documents1.worldbank.org; Kopelen, P. A. Nigeria: A Study into the Causes of Internal Conflict and Instability: A Monograph, 2013, https://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org

[35] Abul A., Emily C., & Heidi K. Poverty And Equity Global Practice:…; Kopelen, P. A. Nigeria: A Study into the Causes of Internal Conflict …

[36] Osabiya, B. J. Conflict Management and Resolution in Nigeria Public Sector, in Review of Public Administration and Management Vol. 4, No. 8, December 2015, https://www.arabianjbmr.com; Kopelen, P. A. Nigeria: A Study into the Causes of Internal Conflict …; Olumba, E. E. The Politics of Eco-Violence: Why Is Conflict Escalating in Nigeria's Middle Belt? Terrorism and Political Violence, 36(2), 2022, 180–197. https://doi.org

[37] SPARC Causes of farmer–herder conflicts in Africa, 2023, https://sparc-knowledge.org; Abul A., Emily C., & Heidi K. Poverty and Equity Global Practice: …; Olumba, E. E. The Politics of Eco-Violence: …

poor governance, climate change, economic disparity, and political manipulation. The impact of these conflicts includes loss of life, displacement, food insecurity, economic losses, and psychological trauma. Thousands of civilians have been killed in clashes, with women and children disproportionately affected. Millions have been displaced due to violence, creating a humanitarian crisis. Food insecurity worsens due to disruptions to agricultural activities and markets. Economic losses result from the destruction of crops, livestock, and infrastructure[38].

The current status of the conflict is persistent, with increased military presence and ongoing efforts to engage communities in dialogue and find peaceful solutions. Humanitarian assistance and development initiatives aim to address root causes like poverty and resource scarcity.[39] To address the conflict, a multi-pronged approach is needed, including strengthening governance, promoting dialogue and reconciliation, investing in development, combating climate change, and collaborating between communities, governments, and civil society organizations. A sustainable peace requires collaboration between communities, governments, and civil society organizations. In conclusion, the ongoing conflict in Nigeria requires a multi-pronged approach that includes strengthening governance, promoting dialogue and reconciliation, investing in development, and combating climate change.

3. Niger Delta: Militancy and Resource Control: South-South Nigeria is made up of Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and Rivers states. Militant groups in the oil-rich Delta region demand greater control over resources and environmental justice, resorting to sabotage and attacks on oil infrastructure. The Niger Delta, rich in oil reserves but deeply marred by poverty and environmental degradation, has been a hotbed of militancy and agitation for decades. The Niger Delta region in southern Nigeria is primarily affected by various groups, including militant groups, oil companies, the Nigerian government, local communities, and civil society organizations. These groups face various challenges such as unequal distribution of oil wealth, environmental degradation, lack of development, historical grievances, weak governance, violence and insecurity, environmental damage, health problems, economic disruption, and social and psychological stress. The current status of the region is marked by reduced militancy, but sporadic attacks and tensions persist.[40] Government initiatives have been implemented with mixed results, but addressing root causes like poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation remains a long-term challenge. Local and international organizations continue to advocate for peaceful solutions, environmental protection, and community development.[41] To achieve sustainable peace and prosperity in the Niger Delta, equitable resource sharing agreements are needed, environmental remediation should be implemented, sustainable development should address poverty, unemployment, and infrastructure gaps, transparent and accountable resource management and conflict resolution mechanisms should be strengthened and continuous dialogue and engagement between stakeholders should be maintained. In conclusion, the Niger Delta region faces numerous challenges, including unequal distribution of oil wealth, environmental degradation, lack of development, historical grievances, weak governance, violence and insecurity, and ongoing challenges. Addressing these issues requires equitable resource sharing, environmental remediation, sustainable development, transparent and accountable governance, and inclusive dialogue between stakeholders.

4. Southeast: Simmering Pro-Biafra Sentiments: Southeast Nigeria comprises five states: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo. Pro-Biafra agitation is driven by historical legacies of the civil war and marginalization, with

[38] Abul A., Emily C., & Heidi K. Poverty And Equity Global Practice:…; Kopelen, P. A. Nigeria: A Study into the Causes of Internal Conflict …; SPARC Causes of farmer–herder …

[39] Abul A., Emily C., & Heidi K. Poverty And Equity Global Practice:…; SPARC Causes of farmer–herder …

[40] Osabiya, B. J. Conflict Management and Resolution in Nigeria …; Eghosa E. O. & Rotimi T. S. A History of Identities, Violence, and Stability in Nigeria, CRISE Working Paper No. 6 January 2005, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk

[41] Osabiya, B. J. Conflict Management and Resolution in Nigeria …; Kopelen, P. A. Nigeria: A Study into the Causes of Internal Conflict…; Eghosa E. O. & Rotimi T. S. A History of Identities, Violence, and …

roots in economic inequality, perceived injustices, and regional autonomy. The Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) marked the secession attempt of Biafra, leaving deep scars of loss, marginalization, and unresolved grievances. Southeast communities feel underrepresented in politics and economics, fueling resentment towards the federal government. A strong sense of Igbo identity and cultural distinctiveness contribute to separatist aspirations. The war was fought between the Nigerian government and the secessionist state of Biafra, which was declared by the Igbo people of southeastern Nigeria. The war was a brutal affair, and it is estimated that up to 2 million people died, mostly from starvation and disease.[42]

After the war, the Igbo people were marginalized and discriminated against by the Nigerian government. This led to a resurgence of pro-Biafra sentiment in the region. In recent years, there have been a number of protests and demonstrations in support of Biafra. In 2015, the leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Nnamdi Kanu, was arrested by the Nigerian government. Kanu is a controversial figure, and his arrest led to protests and violence in southeastern Nigeria. The Nigerian government has taken a hard line against pro-Biafra groups, and it has accused IPOB of being a terrorist organization. However, the group's supporters maintain that it is a peaceful movement that is fighting for the rights of the Igbo people.[43]

The root causes of the conflict include economic disparity, political exclusion, historical injustice, and youth unemployment. The movement's dynamics include non-violent protests and advocacy efforts that are used to raise awareness and demand greater autonomy or independence. Secessionist rhetoric often uses inflammatory language, and government repression can escalate tensions. Media narratives can polarize communities and exacerbate divisions. External influences, particularly among the diaspora, can contribute to the longevity of the movement. Challenges include addressing historical grievances, promoting inclusive governance, tackling economic disparity, fostering dialogue and understanding, and countering radicalization. Acknowledging and finding solutions to past injustices is crucial for healing and reconciliation. Investing in infrastructure, job creation, and development initiatives is key to alleviating economic frustrations. Open and inclusive dialogue between pro-Biafra groups, the government, and civil society is essential for finding peaceful solutions.[44] Sustainable peace and stability in the Southeast require a nuanced understanding of the historical context, addressing legitimate grievances, and fostering inclusive dialogue. Balancing national unity with respect for cultural identity and aspirations is crucial for a peaceful and prosperous future for the region and Nigeria as a whole.

Beyond the Zones: Cross-cutting Themes:

1. Poverty and Inequality: Rampant poverty fuels grievances and vulnerability to exploitation, fostering conditions for conflict across the nation. Poverty in Nigeria is a significant issue, with widespread discontent and limited opportunities fueling extremist narratives. Boko Haram exploits this vulnerability, attracting recruits from marginalized youth. Resource competition, exacerbated by climate change, leads to conflict and grievances, which Boko Haram manipulates to gain support. Inequality is another factor, with perceived unfairness in wealth distribution, political representation, and access to opportunities breeding resentment and

[42] Mwangi, K. et al, The Impact of Conflict and Political Instability on Agricultural Investments in Mali and Nigeria, Africa Growth Initiative Working Paper 17 July 2014, https://www.researchgate.net; Kopelen, P. A. Nigeria: A Study into the Causes of Internal Conflict …; Eghosa E. O. & Rotimi T. S. A History of Identities, Violence, and …

[43] Osabiya, B. J. Conflict Management and Resolution in Nigeria …; Nwabuiro I. The Root Cause of Violence in Nigeria: The Niger Delta Crisis, A Reference Point, OGIRISI: a New Journal of African Studies, Vol. 5, 2008, https://www.ajol.info/index.php; Afegbua I. A., Conflicts and Political Instability in Nigeria: Causes, Consequences and Prospects in Politics: Contemporary Political Issues and Updates, Wednesday, 3 December 2014, https://chrisdonasco.blogspot.com

[44] Mwangi, K. et al, The Impact of Conflict and Political Instability on Agricultural Investments …; Nwabuiro I. The Root Cause of Violence in Nigeria: The Niger Delta Crisis …; Afegbua I. A., Conflicts and Political Instability in Nigeria: …

exclusion.[45] Unequal treatment by authorities and elites erodes trust in institutions, creating a fertile ground for extremist ideologies. Social marginalization further deepens poverty. Poverty and inequality are interconnected, as they limit access to education, perpetuate inequalities in job opportunities and income, and further deepen poverty. Complexities exist, as historical grievances, ethnic tensions, and weak governance also play a role. The impact of poverty and inequality varies across different communities and individuals within Nigeria.[46] To address these challenges, a multifaceted approach is needed. Investing in education and skills development can empower individuals, promote inclusive economic growth, and strengthen governance and institutions. A long-term commitment from the Nigerian government, the international community, and civil society organizations is necessary to address the root causes of poverty and inequality alongside other contributing factors, ensuring effective conflict resolution and long-term peace.[47]

2. Weak Governance and Corruption: Ineffective institutions, lack of accountability, and corruption erode trust and hinder sustainable conflict resolution. Weak governance, characterized by a lack of legitimacy and trust, can lead to unrest and resentment among citizens. It can also result in an unequal distribution of resources and opportunities, exacerbating existing social and economic divisions. The lack of accountability and transparency in governance can breed cynicism and disenfranchisement, further eroding trust in institutions and potentially causing violence.[48] Corruption, on the other hand, can lead to the misallocation of resources, exacerbated poverty and inequality, and a power vacuum that armed groups or other actors may exploit. Corrupt officials may also overlook illegal activities, such as arms trafficking and drug smuggling, further destabilizing societies and fueling conflict.[49] The relationship between weak governance, corruption, and conflict is complex and multifaceted, with other factors like poverty, resource scarcity, and historical grievances also playing a role. The impact of these factors can vary depending on the specific context, and a sudden economic downturn in a country with weak governance and high levels of corruption could potentially trigger conflict.

3. Environmental Degradation: Resource scarcity, climate change, and environmental exploitation exacerbate tensions and displacement, contributing to conflict dynamics. Environmental degradation in northern Nigeria has led to land degradation, water scarcity, and oil pollution, causing conflicts and displacement among farmers and herders. This has resulted in reduced agricultural productivity, causing poverty, unemployment, and competition for resources. The loss of fertile land and livelihoods can also force people to migrate, putting pressure on resources and potentially causing conflicts with existing communities.[50] Environmental injustice can exacerbate existing social and economic inequalities, as communities near extractive industries often bear the brunt of pollution and environmental damage while reaping few benefits. This breeds resentment and fuels conflicts. Lack of government intervention can further erode trust and fuel grievances, potentially leading to protests and violence.[51]

[45] Osabiya, B. J. Conflict Management and Resolution in Nigeria …; Nwabuiro I. The Root Cause of Violence in Nigeria: The Niger Delta Crisis …

[46] Nwabuiro I. The Root Cause of Violence in Nigeria: The Niger Delta Crisis …; Osabiya, B. J. Conflict Management and Resolution in Nigeria …; Afegbua I. A., Conflicts and Political Instability in Nigeria: …; Olawale, O. A. Conflicts in Nigeria, https://www.researchgate.net

[47] Mwangi, K. et al, The Impact of Conflict and Political Instability on Agricultural Investments …; Nwabuiro I. The Root Cause of Violence in Nigeria: The Niger Delta Crisis …

[48] Mwangi, K. et al, The Impact of Conflict and Political Instability on Agricultural Investments …; Nnamchi, K. C. An Overview of Ethnicity as a Leading Cause of Conflict in Nigeria, IDOSR Journal of Current Issues In Arts and Humanities, 7(1):167-171, 2021, https://www.idosr.org.; Olawale, O. A. Conflicts in Nigeria …

[49] Osabiya, B. J. Conflict Management and Resolution in Nigeria …; Nnamchi, K. C. An Overview of Ethnicity as a Leading Cause …; Afegbua, I. A., Conflicts and Political Instability in Nigeria: …

[50] Mwangi, K. et al, The Impact of Conflict and Political Instability on Agricultural Investments …; Nnamchi, K. C. An Overview of Ethnicity as a Leading Cause …

[51] Osabiya, B. J. Conflict Management and Resolution in Nigeria …; Nnamchi, K. C. An Overview of

Examples include the Boko Haram insurgency in Northeast Nigeria, where environmental degradation in the Lake Chad basin has exacerbated poverty and resource scarcity, creating grievances exploited by extremist groups. Herder-farmer clashes also result from competition for shrinking land and water resources.[52] Environmental degradation does not directly cause conflict, but it acts as a stress multiplier, amplifying existing social, economic, and political tensions. Addressing environmental challenges requires integrated solutions that combine sustainable resource management, equitable access to resources, and addressing underlying grievances.

4. Role of Religion and Ethnicity: While sources of strength, these aspects can also be manipulated to fuel tensions and identity-based conflicts. Conflicts often stem from political, economic, and social inequalities, rather than religious or ethnic differences. Politicians and leaders can manipulate religious or ethnic divisions to gain power, mobilize support, or scapegoat specific groups. Conflict rarely has a single cause, as religion and ethnicity often interact with other factors like resource scarcity, historical grievances, and weak governance.[53] Religion can promote intolerance and promote social divisions, while ethnicity can promote belonging but also foster prejudice and discrimination. Competition for resources can increase conflict when access to limited resources is divided along ethnic lines or when certain groups feel excluded. Historical grievances can create mistrust and resentment, fueling further violence.

Examples of conflicts involving ethnic or religious groups include the Rwandan genocide, religious conflicts in Northern Ireland, and the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, religion and ethnicity can also be powerful tools for peace building, as religious leaders can promote reconciliation, and a shared sense of ethnic identity can foster unity.[54] Not all conflicts involving ethnic or religious groups are due to these factors, as material struggles and power dynamics often play a role in the violence.

Solutions and the Road Ahead

1. Promoting Dialogue and Reconciliation: Addressing historical grievances, fostering intercultural understanding, and seeking inclusive solutions are crucial steps towards lasting peace. Dialogue is a powerful tool for breaking down barriers, building trust, identifying shared interests, and humanizing the 'other'. It allows for open communication between conflicting parties, dispelling harmful stereotypes and reducing hostility. It also fosters empathy and reduces dehumanization by allowing individuals to see each other as human beings with complex stories and experiences.[55] Reconciliation mechanisms include truth-telling processes, restoration justice, intergroup contact initiatives, and cultural and educational initiatives. These initiatives promote cross-cultural understanding, challenge historical narratives, and embrace diversity. However, dialogue and reconciliation are complex processes that require time and effort, and there are no guarantees of success.[56]

Security and justice may be necessary for effective dialogue, and accountability for atrocities may be a precondition for genuine reconciliation. Inclusivity is crucial, as it represents all affected groups, including marginalized voices. Grassroots and leadership involvement is essential for fostering broad societal support for reconciliation.[57] Examples of successful dialogue include the

Ethnicity as a Leading Cause …; Olawale, O. A. Conflicts in Nigeria …

[52] Afegbua I. A., Conflicts and Political Instability in Nigeria: …; Mwangi, K. et al, The Impact of Conflict and Political Instability on Agricultural Investments …

[53] Mwangi, K. et al, The Impact of Conflict and Political Instability on Agricultural Investments …

[54] Nwabuiro I. The Root Cause of Violence in Nigeria: The Niger Delta Crisis …; Osabiya, B. J. Conflict Management and Resolution in Nigeria …

[55] Nwabuiro I. The Root Cause of Violence in Nigeria: The Niger Delta Crisis …; Mwangi, K. et al, The Impact of Conflict and Political Instability on Agricultural Investments …

[56] Afegbua I. A., Conflicts and Political Instability in Nigeria: ....; Mwangi, K. et al, The Impact of Conflict and Political Instability on Agricultural Investments …

[57] Nnamchi K. C. An Overview of Ethnicity as a Leading Cause …; Osabiya, B. J. Conflict Management and Resolution in Nigeria …; Nwabuiro I. The Root Cause of Violence in Nigeria: The Niger Delta Crisis …

Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, peace and reconciliation dialogues in Northern Ireland, and community-level dialogue initiatives in conflict zones. These initiatives have played a significant role in addressing the legacy of apartheid, contributed to a decrease in violence, and facilitated local-level reconciliation and peacebuilding efforts.[58]

2. Investing in Human Development: Equitable access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities fosters social mobility and reduces the appeal of violence. Nigeria's conflicts stem from root causes such as poverty, inequality, lack of education, unemployment, and marginalization. Investing in human development directly addresses these root causes by increasing economic empowerment, promoting social cohesion, offering opportunities and hope, and enhancing good governance.[59] Examples of human development initiatives include education programs, skills training and vocational programs, healthcare initiatives, and social inclusion programs. Education programs improve access and quality of education, especially in conflict-prone areas. Skills training and vocational programs provide individuals with marketable skills for sustainable livelihoods. Healthcare initiatives improve access to basic healthcare services, especially for vulnerable populations and marginalized areas.[60]

Promoting social inclusion involves creating programs that foster dialogue, understanding, and respect between different groups. However, sustainability and addressing corruption are crucial for long-term impact. Programs must reach all segments of society, particularly marginalized groups, to avoid exacerbating existing tensions.[61] In conclusion, investing in human development is a vital long-term strategy for Nigeria's complex conflicts. By empowering individuals, fostering social cohesion, and reducing violence drivers, human development can significantly contribute to lasting peace and stability.

3. Strengthening Institutions: Building trust in government, law enforcement, and the judiciary through effective reforms and fair practices is vital for sustainable peace. Weak institutions fuel conflict by failing to hold perpetrators accountable, fostering inequality, lacking trust, and allowing extremist groups to gain influence. Strong institutions address conflict through the rule of law, accountability, inclusivity, service delivery, and conflict resolution mechanisms.[62] Structuring institutions involves a judicial system, security forces, government agencies, and civil society organizations. An independent judiciary ensures fair trials and proper administration of justice. While government organizations offer necessary services and promote trust, security forces are skilled and competent. Civil society groups support peaceful cooperation and fight for rights.[63]

Important considerations for strengthening institutions include context matters, a holistic approach, and time and commitment. Strengthening institutions must be combined with other peacebuilding efforts, such as addressing economic inequality and promoting social cohesion. Building strong institutions requires time, sustained effort, and political will.[64] In conclusion, strengthening institutions is an essential pillar in creating conditions for lasting peace. By establishing the rule of law, accountability, inclusivity, and effective service delivery, strong institutions offer a framework

[58] Mwangi, K. et al, The Impact of Conflict and Political Instability on Agricultural Investments …

[59] Mwangi, K. et al, The Impact of Conflict and Political Instability on Agricultural Investments …; Nwabuiro I. The Root Cause of Violence in Nigeria: The Niger Delta Crisis …

[60] Osabiya, B. J. Conflict Management and Resolution in Nigeria …

[61] Afegbua I. A., Conflicts and Political Instability in Nigeria: …; El-Bushra, J. et al, From Design to Implementation: Addressing the Causes of Violent Conflict in Nigeria. Stability: International Journal of Security & Development, 3(1): 1, 2013, pp. 1-18, DOI: http://dx.doi. org/10.5334/sta.cy; Mwangi, K. et al, The Impact of Conflict and Political Instability on Agricultural Investments …; Nwabuiro I. The Root Cause of Violence in Nigeria: The Niger Delta Crisis …

[62] Osabiya, B. J. Conflict Management and Resolution in Nigeria …; Nwabuiro I. The Root Cause of Violence in Nigeria: The Niger Delta Crisis …; Afegbua I. A., Conflicts and Political Instability in Nigeria:…

[63] Mwangi, K. et al, The Impact of Conflict and Political Instability on Agricultural Investments …

[64] Osabiya, B. J. Conflict Management and Resolution in Nigeria …; El-Bushra, J. et al, From Design to Implementation: Addressing the Causes of Violent Conflict in Nigeria …

for peaceful conflict resolution and the prevention of future violence.

4. Empowering Local Communities: Supporting community-based conflict resolution initiatives and ensuring local participation in decision-making processes promotes ownership and stability. Local empowerment is a crucial aspect of sustainable peacebuilding in Nigeria. It involves understanding the root causes of conflict, empowering communities to identify and address these causes directly. Empowerment also fosters ownership of solutions, fostering trust and investment in the process. Traditional knowledge from local communities can be leveraged for effective, culturally appropriate solutions. Locally-led initiatives can identify early signs of escalating tensions, allowing for swift intervention and preventing larger-scale violence. Empowered communities are better equipped to manage future challenges and prevent recurring conflicts, creating long-term stability.[65] Forms of empowerment include economic support for local businesses, political inclusion and representation, social cohesion, and capacity building. Successful initiatives include peace committees, early warning systems, and community-led development projects. However, inclusion, sustainability, and external support are essential considerations.[66]

Inclusivity is crucial, as empowerment initiatives must include all stakeholders, particularly marginalized groups, to avoid exacerbating tensions. Support must be sustained to ensure long-term impact, and local initiatives often require support from national and international organizations for resource provision, technical expertise, and advocacy.[67] In conclusion, local empowerment is not a standalone solution to Nigeria's complex conflicts, but it is a crucial component of sustainable peacebuilding. By providing communities with the tools, resources, and agency to address their own challenges, a solid foundation is laid for lasting peace and stability.

Conclusion

The paper provides a framework for addressing the interconnected issues and factors fueling conflicts in Nigeria. It emphasizes the importance of understanding the main conflicts, identifying recurring root causes, and calling for action. It also highlights the need for policy suggestions, reconciliation, and dialogue between conflicting groups. Accountability is also emphasized, as is the need to hold those responsible for violence and human rights violations accountable. It concludes that Nigeria faces a cycle of violence and instability due to competition over scarce resources, unresolved historical grievances, political marginalization, and erosion of trust in state institutions. It calls for a multi-pronged approach, prioritizing resource management, addressing widespread inequality, inclusive governance structures, and meaningful reconciliation processes. Failure to act decisively risks plunging into a cycle of violence, causing devastating consequences for the people and regional stability. It also emphasizes the importance of sensitivity, aligning the conclusion with the primary argument of the analysis, and highlighting the complex challenges involved. It suggests that this can be tailored to suit the specific analysis and the central conflicts covered.

[65] Mwangi, K. et al, The Impact of Conflict and Political Instability on Agricultural Investments …; Nwabuiro I. The Root Cause of Violence in Nigeria: The Niger Delta Crisis …; Afegbua I. A., Conflicts and Political Instability in Nigeria:…

[66] Mwangi, K. et al, The Impact of Conflict and Political Instability on Agricultural Investments …; Nnamchi K. C. An Overview of Ethnicity as a Leading Cause …; Afegbua I. A., Conflicts and Political Instability in Nigeria:…

[67] Osabiya, B. J. Conflict Management and Resolution in Nigeria …; El-Bushra, J. et al, From Design to Implementation: Addressing the Causes of Violent Conflict in Nigeria …