

Sociological Implications of Communal and Ethno-Religious Clashes in New Democratic Nigeria

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ABSTRACT This paper examined the ethno-religious and communal clashes that have bedeviled Nigeria since the inauguration of the present democratic government in May 1999. Using Marx's conflict perspective, the paper argued that these clashes and conflicts are in-built in socio-economic and political arrangements of post - colonial Nigeria. However with the renewed attempt to democratize the polity, struggle for political and economic space has intensified between and among the various religious groups and ethnics nationalities at the community, state and national levels thereby making these clashes inevitable. The paper identified widespread poverty in the country occasioned by social and economic dislocations under the present dispensation, ethnic and religious manipulations by the political class as the forces that sustain and perpetuate these clashes. On this basis, the paper argued the main implication of these crises is that pluralism and diversities of Nigerian people, abundant human and natural resources which ordinarily would have been the major strength for uniting and strengthening the people and a foundation for stable and durable nation, have deepened suspicion, hatred and distrust among the citizenry under the current democratic dispensation. This has combined to make the country to remain underdeveloped and continue to manifest from time to time symptoms of a failed State. The paper therefore recommended that adequate distribution of positions and resources between and among various religious organizations and ethnic groups at the community, state and federal levels; promotion of equity and fair play, poverty alleviation programme, adequate public enlightenment and political inclusion will strengthen democracy while reducing incidence of suspicion, hatred and distrust between and among the various communities and ethno-religious groups in Nigeria.