IDENTITY POLITICS AND DIALECTICS OF INTER-GROUP RELATIONS IN NASARAWA STATE

*Okoli, Al Chukwuma & **Iortyer, Philip

*Department of Political Science, **Department of History,
Federal University Lafia

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the nexus between identity politics and crisis of inter-group relations in Nasarawa State. This is against the backdrop of high incidence of inter-communal conflicts in the State over the years. By way of exploratory approach, predicated on qualitative synthesis of primary and secondary sources, the paper posits that the primordial heterogeneity of Nasarawa State has made it a veritable context for identity politics. The paper submits that politicization of identity in the State has engendered dialectical dynamics of inter-group relations that threaten sustainable peace and stability. This has variously manifested in the form of indigene/settler, Christian/Muslim, farmer/herder, majority/minority politicking, and inter-ethnic conflicts. The paper recommends an inclusive citizenship modality that recognizes, accommodates, promotes, and moderates inter-group stakes and interests as the way forward.

Keywords: Identity/identity politics; inter-group relations; primordialism; heterogeneity; dialectics.

1. INTRODUCTION

The subject of identity has been a topical issue in contemporary social discourse. It has been at the centre of most debates and narratives on civil movement and conflict across the world. The
currency of the concept of identity in recent social science scholarship has been underscored thus:

In recent years, scholars working in a remarkable array of social and humanities disciplines have taken an intense interest in questions concerning identity. Within political science, for example, we find the concept of “identity” at the center of lively debates in every major subfield. Students of American politics have devoted much new research to the identity politics of race, gender and sexuality. In comparative politics, “identity” plays a central role in work on nationalism and ethnic conflict (Fearon, 1999:1).

The notion of ‘identify politics’ depicts the current interest on the subject of identity within the frontiers of political science. It deals with the issues and perspectives pertaining to how people’s politics may be conditioned by aspects of their identity through loosely correlated social formations and constructions, such as race, class, religion, gender, ethnicity, nationality, ideology, sexuality, culture, etc. Identity politics provides veritable platform for parochial political mobilization, advocacy and activism (Okoye, 1996).

In Nigeria, identity politics has been a prominent aspect of the national political life (Ayokhai, 2013). More often than not, it has provided the pretext for divisive and primordial politicking that pitches one group against the other. In this sense, identity politics has been the bane of cordial inter-group relations in Nigeria. It is in the light of this that this paper seeks to examine the nexus between identity politics and crises of inter-group relations in Nasarawa State.

The paper is significant in viewing of the rising incidence and prevalence of inter-group conflicts and contestations in Nasarawa State over the years. So far, there has not been any systematic effort to investigate the crises from the standpoint of the identity politics schema. Extant works have mostly emphasized isolated but cognate aspects of the subject matter such as indigene/settler conflicts (Alubo, 2008), farmer/herder conflicts (Okoli and Atelhe, 2014). The present study will add to these existing works by presenting a more comprehensive analysis of the crises within the purview of identity politics concept.

The remainder of the paper is thematically organized as follows: methodology; conceptual issues; theoretical framework; perspectives on identity politics; identity politics in Nasarawa State, impacts and implications of identify politics in Nasarawa State, conclusion and recommendation.

2. METHODOLOGY

This paper was inspired by two cognate studies on Nasarawa State, namely; (i) political ecology of farmer/herder conflicts in Nasarawa State (Okoli and Atelhe, 2014), and (ii) pastoral transhumance and dynamics of social conflict in North-Central Nigeria (Okoli and Bagu,
forthcoming). The paper seeks to examine the correlation between identity politics and inter-group crises in the State.

The paper is exploratory and qualitative in approach. It derived its data from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data included information elicited through Key Informant Interview (KII) while secondary data were generated from documented, library and online sources. The method of data analysis is descriptive and thematic. In this regard, salient issues arising from the research objectives are schematically considered under a number of themes and sub-themes that form the thrust of the paper. These issues are presented herewith in the subsequent sections.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAME OF REFERENCE

Two broad concepts constitute our frame of reference in this discourse. The concepts are identity/identity politics and group/inter-group relations. For the purpose of shared understanding and operationalization, the contextual meaning of these concepts is considered in this section.

3.1 Identity/identity politics:

Identity refers to the consciousness of an individual or collectivity of persons regarding their individual or collective self-concept (Hogg and William, 2000). There are two types identity, namely; personal and social identity. Personal identity is defined by more idiosyncratic, individualistic qualities while social identity is defined by group membership as well as the general attributes that define and distinguish social groups (Hogg and Williams, 2000). More elaborately Fearon (1999:2) states:

I argue that “identity” is presently used in two linked senses, which may be termed “social” and “personal”. In the former sense, an “identify” refers simply to a social category, a set of persons marked by a label and distinguished by rules deciding membership and (alleged) characteristic features or attributes. In the second sense of personal identity, an identity is some distinguishing characteristic (or characteristics) that a person takes a special pride in or views as socially consequential but more or less unchangeable.

Personal identity is more or less biologically determined but social identity is essentially socially constructed. As a socially constructed phenomenon, therefore, social identity is subject to formation and re-formation. Categories that determine social identity abound (see Table 1 below).
Table 1: Important Categories of Social Identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Instance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>Being a communist/socialist, liberalist, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Being a capitalist, proletariat, peasant, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Being a capitalist, black, coloured, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td>Being a Nigerian, Ghanaian, Jamaican, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Being a Christian, Muslim, Hinduist, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Being an Igbo, Hausa, Asante, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Being a male or female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partisan orientation</td>
<td>Being a democrat, republican, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual orientation</td>
<td>Being a homosexual, lesbian, transgender, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation/Profession</td>
<td>Being an Artisan, farmer, civil servant, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physio-medical condition</td>
<td>Being a disabled; being an albino, etc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author

Identity political obtains in the context of social identities. It refers to a process whereby social identities are used as platforms for political consciousness-raising, advocacy, activism or mobilization. In this regard, people’s politics is in effect conditioned by aspects of their social identity through loosely correlated social formations and constructions, such as race, class, religion, ideology, nationality, profession, etc. Identity politics has its essence in efforts geared towards defining, articulating, championing, and defending the interest of the oppressed, the marginalized, or the disadvantaged through a conscious effort at group mobilization (see Kauffman, 1990).

Properly conceived, identity politics refers to activities of an identity group in articulating and championing its claims and contestations in the context of inter-group relations. It is an essential element of politics in polities that are characterized by social diversity whereby the centrifugal and centripetal forces of heterogeneity negotiate each other in determining national consociation. More light would be shed on the nature and character of identity politics elsewhere in subsequent parts of this paper. Suffice it to not at this juncture that identity politics has been variously narrowly studied in contemporary political science as ethnic politics, gender politics, labour politics, students' politics, religious politics, minority politics, class politics, race politics, and the likes of these.

3.2 Group/Inter-Group relations:
A social group is an aggregate of individuals with a sense of commonality and identity. Inter-group relations refer to the relationship between one social group and another. Inter-group relations can be cordial or conflictive. Cordial inter-group relationship is characterized by
cooperation, amity and mild competitive behaviors (Hogg and Williams, 2000). On the contrary
conflictive inter-group relations are marked by mutual animosity, hostility and confrontations.

Identity formation is a group phenomenon (Crane, 2000). In the same vein, identity politics takes on its real essence within the context of inter-group relations. It is in this peculiar sense that the problematique of identity politics in Nigeria vis-à-vis inter-group crises can be best appreciated. The thrust of our analysis in this paper squarely centres on this issue.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

This paper adopted social identity theory as it is theoretical framework. Social identity is understood in this context to mean the consciousness of individual of their group membership, as well the general characteristics that define the group and differentiate it from others (Hogg and Williams, 2000).

Social identity theory holds that inter-group conflict starts with a process whereby individuals in one group (in group) compare and contrast-relate themselves to members of another group, (out group) (Turner, 1975). This comparison is usually biased and subjective. It is characterized by judgments and evaluations that tend to pride the in-group over the out-groups. In the course of such comparisons, an individual tends to:
(i) favour the in-group over the out-group;
(ii) exaggerate and over generalize the differences between the in-group and the out-group; thereby emphasizing group destructiveness,
(iii) minimize the perception of differences between in-group members, thereby promoting inter-group cohesion and feeling of oneness;
(iv) remember more detailed and positive information about the in-group, and more negative information (stereotypes, prejudice) about the out-group (Gaertner et al, 2000).

As individuals begin to manifest favoritism towards their own group (in-group) and negative reactions to the out-group, conflict of varying dimensions naturally occurs. The conflict can manifest either in “soft” dimension (prejudice, stereotypes, discrimination) or in “hard” dimension (active hostility and violence). The Dimension assumed by the conflict depends to a large extent on the nature and stakes of political, ecological, economic and socio-cultural competitions or struggles between the groups (Gyuse and Ajene, 2006).

In the case of Nasarawa State, the conflict has been accentuated and complicated by the nature of the social composition of the State. In effect, the forces that drive inter-group conflagrations in Nasarawa State are resident in her social configuration and dialectics. An important facet of this is the peculiarity of inter-group dynamics in the State. Intergroup dynamics refers to a system of behaviours and psychological processes occurring between social groups which may engender cooperation or conflict in the course of social interaction among groups (Hogg and Williams, 2000; Gaertner, et al, 2000),
Nasarawa State is home to a multiplicity of ethnic, communal, religious, and linguistic groups. In effect, the state has been described as a microcosm of Nigeria in terms of social diversity and heterogeneity (Okoli and Atelhe, 2014). The various identity groups in the state cooperate and dis-cooperate at different levels of their social interaction. The contradictions of this interaction present a veritable pretext for identity politics. The exploitation of these contradictions by the political elites in their quest for power has often complicated the volatile relations among the groups, leading to violence and militancy.

Social identity theory has been criticized as being rather essentialist than constructivist. It tends to assume or imply that identity modes are fixed or biologically determine. It therefore fails to emphasize the fact that social identities are social constructed and that one social identity can have several, qualitatively distinct parts (Deaux et al, 1995).

5. PERSPECTIVES ON THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF IDENTITY POLITICS

Identity politics has been a subject of academic discourse in both Humanities and social sciences. In history, it has been studied as an aspect of inter-group relations (Ayokhai, 2013) while in political science it has been variously studied in comparative politics, international relations and political theory (Fearon, 1999). Generally, identity politics focuses on political contestations that bear on the interests and perspectives of groups with which people identify in society.

According to Ayokhai (2013:34) identity politics could be referred to as “Political activities within the state in which considerations of ethnicity, cultural and religions (concerns), among others, predominate relations among groups and, or between group(s) and the state” this conception presupposed, among other things that identity politics takes on its substance in the context of inter-group relations. This is consistent with the position of this paper.

Identity politics is motivated by the need to define and defend group cause. In this respect, Parker (n.d:53) opines that “it is motivated by our imagination of what is or ought to be mine or ours or yours”. As a group phenomenon, therefore, identity politics is socially constructed and or activated. As aptly observed by Parker:

It is not only about self-government, nor does it always involve much in the way of public debate. What structures it, often beneath the surface, is the always unfinished enterprise of self-construction and-presentation (n.d:53).

There are two important types of identity politics, namely, formal and informal (Iwara 2004 in Ayokhai, 2013:34). Formal identity politics obtains in the context where “an ethnic or tribal grouping is formally recognized and identified as a state or a local, government area within a federal framework” while informal identity politics obtains “when a group of people, either on the basis of ethnicity or religion, or some other identifiable identity takes politics action outside the official framework of economic and political power within the state” (Iwara 2004 in Ayokai,
The aforementioned types of identity politics are obtainable in Nigeria. However, it is the informal dimension of identity politics that defines its essence as a social *problematique* in the country.

Identity politics can be either positive or negative in essence. It is positive when it promotes public-regarding political culture; but it is negative when it leads to the promotion of self-regarding political culture (Parker, n.d:54). Negative identity politics is associated with sundry pathologies as highlighted below:

i. It is self-regarding
ii. It leads to stereotyping
iii. It promotes intergroup difference and grievance,

Positive identity politics, on the other hand, is held to be useful to democracy. In this regard, it helps in animating “the openness of democratic conflict” (Parker, n.d:55), which is a desideratum for the qualitative transformation of governance in a polity. Positive identity politics is characterized by healthy competition, constructive engagement, and objective relations among the various groups within a polity.

It is to be pointed out that identity politics in Nigeria has been more or less pathological and negatively inclined. Its contradictions have been at the roots of most inter-group conflagrations in the country over the years. It is in this sense that we conceive of identity politics in the present discourse. Generally identity politics can assume a variety of forms and dimensions depending on the modality and platform for its expression. Table 2 below highlight the various patterns of identity politics in Nigeria and beyond.

**Table 2: Patterns of Identity Politics in Nigeria**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Form</th>
<th>Instance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-determination front</td>
<td>Movement for the actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MOSSOB), Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil advocacy group</td>
<td>‘Bring back our girls’ group in Nigeria, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geopolitical/Sectionalist movement</td>
<td>South-South solidarity forum in Nigeria, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminist Movement</td>
<td>Various women rights advocacy groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority right movement</td>
<td>The Albino foundation, Nigeria etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic platform</td>
<td>The Ohaneze, the Afenifere etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students Union</td>
<td>NANS, SUG activism, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour Union</td>
<td>NLC, TUC industrial activism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious movement</td>
<td>Jihadist, politico-religious groups, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural movement</td>
<td>Various politico-cultural groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Source: Author

6. IDENTITY POLITICS AND CRISSES OF INTER-GROUP RELATIONS IN NASARAWA STATE

Nasarawa State was created on October 1st 1996 from the old plateau state. It is inhabited by an amalgam of native tribes and settlers communities with mutual claims of indigeneity. The socio-demographical mix of Nasarawa State highlights a widespread diversity and heterogeneity. The State is home to a multiplicity of ethnic and linguistic groups such as the Tivs, Eggons, Milglis, Kanuris, Hausas, Fulanis, Alagos, Wambas, Basas, Egburas, to mention but a few (Ayih, 2006). The State is also populated by a fair balance of Christians Muslims, as well as traditional worshipers of diverse genre. By social composition and complexion, Nasarawa State is, therefore, very diverse and heterogeneous. By this characteristic, the State mirrors the multifarious diversity that obtained in the wider Nigerian context (Ngare, 2012).

In spite of their apparent differences, the various people of Nasarawa State had co-existed together, with minimal frictions and skirmishes, in the past. There was, hitherto, a deep sense of inter-dependence and inter-community ties amongst these people, which provided the basis for effective co-existence and inter-group relations. Nowadays, however, the social bond of amity and unity that once characterized the relationship between these peoples has been eroded principally through the machinations of the political elites and their local surrogates, who politicize extant social cleavages to advance their partisan interests.

The elites exploit the primordial heterogeneity of the State by creating false social divides (based on ethnicity, religion, sectionalism and other modes of identity) in their desperate quest for power. Consequently, socio-cultural platforms such as the Miyetti Allah, Eggon Cultural Movement (ECM), the Ombatse cult, and a host of other ethnic and religious associations have been turned into politico-partisan movements. For instance, the Ombatse cult, which had hitherto operated as a trado-spiritual organisation has since transmuted into an ethno-political movement (Okoli and Uhembe, 2014). Similarly, faith-based organizations, such as the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) has been in the fore-front of a political movement dedicated to galvanizing efforts for the emergence of a Christian governor in the State in the 2015 general elections. As it is to be expected, similar efforts are being made by the Muslim faithful in the State to maintain the status quo in perpetration of their Governor Al-Makura’s reign. This creates an atmosphere of divisions among the people and promotes inter-group tensions and contestations (Okoli and Uhembe, 2014). The necessary outcome of this scenario has been the spate of inter-communal conflict and violence in the State over the years. The patterns and dimensions of the crises are hereunder considered in turn.
6.1 **Indigene/Settler (Host/Stranger) conflict**: Even though most of the ethnic communities in Nasarawa State have their respective stories of migration and settlement, some of them claim to be more indigenous than others to the state. The claims and counter-claims of indigeneity have been orchestrated by members of the political elite who resort to such label to preserve and perpetuate their hold to power and state resources. In the early 2000, Nasarawa State witnessed a massive anti-Tiv violence whereby most of the other native tribes in the State ganged up against the Tivs over indigenship question (Alubo, 2008). This conflict led to the killing and displacement exodus of most Tivs from Nasarawa to Benue State in prospect for re-settlement. Today, the Tivs have literally become a sort of endangered “tribe” in the scheme of public affairs in the State. They tend to be marginalized in the state public service and government apparently based on indigene-ship consideration.

6.2 **Farmer/herder conflict**: Nasarawa State is largely agrarian. The two dominant groups in the agriculture sector in the state are the crop growers (farmers) and livestock breeders (herders). The relationship between these two entities has been largely antagonistic over the years. There has been a deep-seated, internecine conflict of interest between the farming and herding communities regarding land resource use and livelihood security (Okoli and Atelle, 2014). The farmers often accuse the herders of encroaching into their farmlands while the herders accused the farmers of blocking their grazing field and passage (Okoli and Bagu, forthcoming). This has given rise to violent conflicts characterized by intensive arms bearing and militancy in most parts of the hinterlands of the State, leading to dire humanitarian consequences. In its current manifestation, the conflicts have assumed a horrific dimension whereby armed mercenaries are enlisted to enable a group get the better of the other. This situation has degenerated into a wave of inter-communal violence in various parts of the State wherein politicians have sometimes been fingered as either interested parties or sponsors.

6.3 **Inter-ethnic conflict**: There has been a high incidence and prevalence of inter-ethnic violence in Nasarawa State in recent times. Prominent cases in point include the Eggon/Alago conflict, the Tiv/Fulani conflict, and the Fulani/Eggon conflict. The conflicts have been so militarized in its contemporary state by the involvement of ethnic militias and foreign mercenaries. Consequently, the conflict situation has metamorphosed from localized rudimentary arms-bearing into an organized militancy, characterized by the use of sophisticated weaponry (Okoli and Bagu, forthcoming).

The militant groups that have been involved in the conflicts include the Ombatse cult (for the Eggons), the Sojan Patari (for the Tivs) and the Fulani mercenaries (for the Fulani). The wave of violence associated with the activities of these groups has led to the desolation of a number of villages in the Assakio, Tudun Agabu, Barkin Adamu District, and some parts of Obi Local Government Area. Some prominent politicians have been alleged to be masterminding
these violent incidents (Okoli and Uhembe, 2014). Many lives and property have been lost in the course of these incidents. Other humanitarian consequences of the crises include population displacement and rural destitution.

6.4 Christian/Muslim schism: Religion plays significant roles in the socio-political life of Nasarawa State. It has been a veritable instrument for political mobilization and manipulation in the State. Just like ethnicity, religion has been politicized by the political elites in their bid to consolidate their hold to power. This has often pitched Christians against Muslims and vice versa, leading to conflicts. In most cases, religion interacts with the factor of ethnicity in fueling conflicts or determining their trajectories. For instance, there was a fusion of religion and ethnicity (or politicization of both) in the past Tiv/Fulani and Fulani/Eggon conflicts, leading in some cases, to burning down of churches in the rural villages. This ethno-religious dimension of the crises holds critical implications for the future in terms of the direction and remediation of the conflict situation.

6.5 Majority/Minority politicking: There is also a manifestation of minority versus majority politicking in Nasarawa State. For instance, the Eggon ethnic nationality claims to be the most dominant ethnic group in the State. Although they have not been privileged to produce the governor of the State, it is held that they are quite significantly dominant in the State’s civil service. Over the years, the apparent drive by the Eggons to assert dominance in the arena of politics and public service in the State has been resented by other ethnic ‘minorities’, which claim to have been marginalized in that context. What is at issue this regard is the unresolved question of equitable and inclusive representation in the political and bureaucratic processes. Contestations around this issue have often engendered inter-group tensions.

7. OVER-VIEWING THE ANALYSIS: IMPLICATIONS FOR HUMAN/NATIONAL SECURITY

Nigeria is typically a heterogeneous polity. It is characterized by a multiplicity of ethnic, religious, linguistic and sectional diversities (Ngare, 2012). The country is composed of over two hundred and fifty ethnic nationalities. These ethnic groups are not monolithic in themselves. In effect, each of the ethnic nationality is as well characterized by marked divergences in terms of religion, language, and other aspects of culture (Okoli, 2003).

In addition to its heterogeneous socio-demographical mix, Nigeria is also characterized by deep-seated primordial political culture (Okoye, 1996). The various identity groups in the country tend to be inward-looking and antagonistic to each other at the level of national political relations. They often tend to relate with one another with mutual mistrust and suspicion. The unhealthy relations among these groups are often complicated by the machinations of the
political elites who promote false divide among the groups in their desperate quest for state power (Okoli and Orinya, 2014).

The exploitation of identity platforms to advance political cause has therefore become an important attribute of national politics in Nigeria. This phenomenon, otherwise referred to as identity politics, has led to the politicization of identity groups in the country. More importantly, it has, over the years, engendered dialectics of inter-group relations with dire consequences as we have seen in the case of Nasarawa State.

Identity politics, just like any other pattern of politics, is essentially a struggle for competitive interests. In this context, the struggle is waged on the platforms of identity formations and the interests are varied, ranging from ecological and economic resources to cultural and political values. Contestations regarding the appropriation of these values in a deeply segmented primordial society engender social strife, which may lead to violent conflicts. The situation is often complicated by the machinations of desperate political elites who capitalize of the extant inter-group differences to serve their selfish partisan interest. This has pertinently been the scenario in Nasarawa State.

The impact of identity politics on intergroup relations in Nasarawa State has engendered outcomes that negate sustainable peace, stability and development. Over the years, Nasarawa State has hosted a plethora of crises with debilitating consequences. At the humanitarian level, the situation has resulted in loss of lives, human injuries, population displacements, family and social dislocations, as well as community desolations.

Socio-economically, the crises have led to dire livelihood situation exemplified in acute rural destitution, poverty, and associated health vulnerabilities. The displaced populations have been subjected to refugee-like conditions, which complicate their socio-economic standing. The rural violence that has attended the crises has jeopardized agricultural productivity by dislodging rural farmers from their agrarian bases. This development holds significant implications for food security, household income and sustainable livelihood among the populace in the State.

The prevailing social ambience of instability in Nasarawa State over years is detrimental to peaceful co-existence and sustainable development. This is more so the case given the extent of vindictiveness and mutual antagonisms that have characterized the crises. Under these circumstances, the social solidity and inter-dependence that sustain amiable inter-group relations are eroded in such a manner that plunges the society into a vicious cycle of violence. The implications of this trend for sustainable human/national security cannot be over-emphasized. Table 3 below highlights the spate of ethno-communal and other violent conflicts in Nasarawa State since the year 2000.
Table 3: Diary of Violent Conflicts in Nasarawa State (2000 to 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Crisis Situation</th>
<th>Nature of Crisis</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>Fulani (hersmen)/farmer clashes on the borderlines of Doma and Keana LGAs (Akparaja, Rukubi, Doka, Kadorko, Kwara)</td>
<td>Ecological</td>
<td>Loss of life and property, population displacement, strained inter-group relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April, 2012</td>
<td>Fulani (herdsmen)/farmer clashes in Gidinye, Kyakale, Duduguru, Baba and Yelwa areas</td>
<td>Ecological</td>
<td>Loss of life and property, population displacement, strained inter-group relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May, 2012</td>
<td>The Ombatse attacks against the Alagos in Assakio</td>
<td>Ethno-communal</td>
<td>Loss of life and property, population displacement, strained inter-group relations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| November, 2012 | i.The Ombatse attacks against the Mliglis in Agyaragu  
|              | ii.The ombatse uprising leading to the the blockade of the Lafia-Akwanga Federal Highway | (i)Ethno-communal  
|              |                                  | (ii) Ethno-political  
|              |                                  | (i) Destruction of life and property; population displacement  
<p>|              |                                  | (ii) Youth brigandage |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January, 2013</td>
<td>Ombatse attacks</td>
<td>Ethno-communal</td>
<td>Destruction of life and property; population displacement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>against Iggah</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(in Nasarawa Eggon LGA); Burun-Burun (in Doma LGA); Yelwa-Bassa (in Kokona LGA); and Kwandere (in Lafia LGA)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May, 2013</td>
<td>Ombatse mayhem at Alakyo, leading to the massacre of security personnel</td>
<td>Ethno-political</td>
<td>Killing of more than sixty (60) state security personnel; destruction and/or confiscation of public security valuables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September, 2013</td>
<td>Ombatse attacks against Odobu and obi (in Obi LGA) and Assakio (in Lafia LGA)</td>
<td>Ethno-communal</td>
<td>Loss of life and property, population displacement, strained inter-group relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2013 –  May, 2014</td>
<td>Fulani (herdsmen)/farmer skirmishes in parts of Awe, Obi, Keana, and Doma LGAs</td>
<td>Ecological and communal</td>
<td>Loss of life and property, population displacement, strained inter-group relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September, 2014 – Date (November, 2014)</td>
<td>Fulani/Kambari-Ombatse counter militancy</td>
<td>Politico-Communal</td>
<td>Loss of life and property, population displacement, strained inter-group relations, desolation of communities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Author: Fieldwork, November-December, 2014.

**8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**
Identity political is an important mode of political mobilization in Nigeria. It derives impetus and vitality from the country heterogeneous nature, characterized by multi-dimensional ethnic cum religious cleavages. These cleavages are primordial and are often exploited by the political elites in their desperate bid to gain competitive political advantage. This politicization of identity formations reinforces and complicates inter-group differences in such a manner that promotes conflicts.

As we have seen in the case of Nasarawa State, identity politics has engendered dialectical dynamics of inter-group relations that threaten sustainable peace and stability. This is exemplified in the prevalence of inter-group crises such as minority/majority dichotomy, indigene/settler divide, Christian/Muslim schism, farmer/herder conflict, and inter-ethnic communal tensions. The solution to these crises requires an inclusive citizenship modality that recognizes, accommodates, promotes and moderates inter-group stakes and interests in such a manner that basically fulfils the demand for justice, equity and goodwill. This necessitates a policy remediation that earnestly identifies and addresses all sources of inter-group grievances, as well as provides dis-incentive for inter-group conflicts.

REFERENCES


Fearon, J.D (1999). What is identity (As we now use the word)? Draft paper, Department of Political Science, Stanford University, United Kingdom, November.


