

social contract and minimise inequality. In the same manner, British government promotes a healthy social security to build trust in government thus deepening the political bond with the people. While these measures do not totally eradicate social conflicts, they go a long way to reduce radicalisation as well as channel social grievances through peaceful mechanisms of conflict resolution.

From her Independence in 1960, Nigeria has made unsuccessful in instituting a secular and cohesive state. Political and religious elites have promoted divisive religious enclaves between Muslims and Christians on the one hand, and ethnic enclaves between Northerners and Southerners on the other. Paradoxically, Northern elite have occupied the headship of the state more than members of other ethno-religious blocs. Yet, the region has remained worse off as reflected by poor human development indicators. Most parts of northern Nigeria consists of unemployed (and, in most cases, unemployable) youth and Almajirai who make a profession of alms solicitation (Imobighe, 2012). To this army of disadvantaged persons, trust in government has been eroded and social cohesion has lost its meaning (Jega, 2007).

Islamic religion has largely been effective in filling the vacuum created by insensitive governments. The Islamic practice of Zakat provides succour to many hopeless persons in northern Nigeria. Following these incentives, the religion has become attractive to most people neglected by the state. Puzzlingly, a large number of uneducated and unemployed persons have fallen into the hands of religious fanatics and conflict entrepreneurs who have socialised and brainwashed them into violence (Osumah, 2013). In Mubi, for example, street kids neglected by the state were recruited by Boko Haram members who gave them between ₦5,000 and ₦10,000 to join the insurgency (Hansen, 2016:88). Testimony by some of the arrested Boko Haram fighters indicate that they received as little as [₦5,000 to set schools ablaze and spy on government troops](#).

Rebuilding trust between the people and the state is a prerequisite for sustainable reconstruction and redevelopment of the region. Nextier SPD proposes the following ideas as effective start points in that effort:

1. There is need for a re-affirmation of the social contract between the people and the state. The power elite in the region need to reconnect with the people by utilising their common patrimony to promote public rather than self-interest. Social investment programmes should be designed to engender human capital development and poverty alleviation rather than avenues for political relevancy.
2. There is need for a concerted promotion of secular ideology. All progressive elements of the society such as professionals, intellectuals and traditional rulers should prevail on the governing elite to disengage from the politicisation of identity. They should be made to imbibe and promote the secular ideology of the Nigerian state to foster national integration.
3. Opportunistic behaviours should be criminalised and publicly condemned. The re-orientation of government officials and promotion of public interest will undoubtedly result in transparency and accountability which will drastically reduce the level of corruption. For example, all high-profile corruption cases involving elected and appointed public officials, should be given national coverage to demonstrate the willingness of the state to take charge.
4. There is need for a genuine commitment to poverty alleviation. The promotion of public interest will ensure effective utilisation of common patrimony and a promotion of egalitarian society. Poverty alleviation programmes or social investment programmes should be planned to meet the needs of the targeted local population. Therefore, conceptualisation of such programmes require contributions from direct beneficiaries.

A re-affirmation of a viable social contract in northern Nigeria will not only promote post-conflict healing, it will also instil civility, tolerance, selflessness and peaceful resolution of disputes. This is not an easy process but it is an essential one. It can be achieved through a re-affirmation of the social contract, commitment to secular state, criminalisation of opportunistic behaviours that lead to corruption and worsening of socio-economic outcomes for the region.

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