Interfaith Dialogue: Preventing Extremism and Interreligious Conflict in Northern Nigeria

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Abstract: *While the root causes of extremism and interreligious conflict in Northern Nigeria have eluded manystudies,historical accounts have shown that the current pattern of ethno-religious intolerance was not always the case. There is ample evidence that the region's post-independence government provided opportunities for various ethnic, cultural and religious groups to partake and be represented in the region's socio-political and economic space. There is now an emerging consensus that the root of the current pattern of intolerant and destructive conflict in Northern Nigeria in particular, and the country in general lies with the collapse of Nigeria's post-independence structures and degeneration of the national political and economic space beginning from 1966. Invariably, an effective response to extremism and interreligious conflict requires proper diagnosis of the root causes and honest implementation of appropriate security and conflict management strategies and remedies. However, given that interreligious disconnect and disharmony is a major root cause of these conflicts, interfaith dialogue should be engaged to promote understanding and cooperation among stakeholders and to prevent the spread of extremism and interreligious conflict.*

Keywords: *Conflict management, interfaith dialogue,interreligious relations,peace building, security*

I.   INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's first post-independence democratic arrangement was a delicate balance of the ethnic, regional andreligious compositions and interests embedded in the new country. With respect to Northern Nigeria, historical accounts have indicated that the post-independence political system was broad-based and inclusive with the diverse groups and nationalities given adequate and appropriate space and representation in the region's socio-political structures and institutions. Unfortunately, that post-independence political arrangementwas short-lived, coming to an abrupt end following a military coup in 1966. The violent termination of the First Republic and its regionalconfederacy system, the ethno-religious coloration of the termination and the violent reaction that followed, laid the foundation for a different pattern of socio-political relations in Northern Nigeria and indeed the whole country after 1966.Invariably, the escalation of violence along ethnic and religious lines following the 1966 coup was identified as one of the major instigatorsof the Nigerian civil war between 1967 and 1970.

While various national reconciliatory policies and programmeswere introducedat the end of the civil war, the effortsfailed to curb therising pattern of inter-ethnic and interreligious suspicions and tensions which had become open and ingrained amongst the regional political leadership as well as the citizenry. The failure of subsequent military and civilian governments after the civil war to adequately assuage lingering political and ethno-religious concerns, and their inability to forge national cohesion were to create grounds for further interfaith and intergroup conflicts particularly in Northern Nigeriathroughoutthe 1980s and beyond [1]. This paper explores the root causes and patterns of extremism and interreligious conflict in Northern Nigeria and opines that interfaith dialogue is one of the critical strategies that must be embraced and instituted by the political, traditional, religious and community stakeholders towards ensuring effective containment and prevention of extremism and interreligious violence that is ravaging the region.

II.   EXTREMISM AND INTERRELIGIOUS CONFLICT IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

Nigeria experienced a period of post-civil war reconciliation and nation building following the end of the civil war in 1970. The successive governments of Yakubu Gowon, Murtala Mohammed and Olusegun Obasanjo, buoyed by strong national economy and bountiful foreign exchange earnings from crude oil, initiated several policies and programmes (including the establishment of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and creation of the new Federal Capital Territory in Abuja, amongst others) with the objective of promoting reconciliation, interethnic, intercultural and interreligious understanding and peace building amongst the country's many diverse constituent groups and nationalities. Conversely, the country's return to civilian

democracy as from 1979 coincided with a period of economic decline, as Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings and other economicindicators started to falter due to the collapse of global crude oil prices. By the middle of the 1980s, the country had been forced to embrace and implement various austerity measures and structural adjustment policies. The combination of economic decline, harsh macro-economic policies, and fierce competition among various interest groupsfor economic and political opportunities, had the unfortunately consequence ofreversing many of the gains of the post-civil war nation building and sharpening the divide between various social, ethnic and religious groups in the country.

Throughout the 1980s, the Nigerian political space became increasingly divisive and acrimonious and there begun a growing manifestation of intolerance and extremismamong adherents of the two dominant religions-Islam and Christianity. In most cases, intolerance manifests asminorinterpersonal or intergroup disagreement or dispute which then escalates intoethnic or religion-based violence and destruction in major cities and towns across the northern part of the country. Available records suggest that there were close to twenty (20) major conflicts that had religious and/orethnic undertones or colorations between 1980 and 1994 [2], [3], [4]:

- 1980 - Kano
- 1982 – Maiduguri and Kaduna
- 1984 – Jimeta and Yola
- 1985 – Gombe and Maiduguri
- 1987 – Kaduna, Kafanchan, Zaria, Funtua, Daura and Katsina
- 1991 - Bauchi, Kastina and Kano
- 1992 - Zango-Kataf, Katsina and Jalingo
- 1993 – Funtua
- 1994 – Kano

In the absence of effective and concerted policy response by the various levels of governmentor meaningful intervention by community and religious stakeholders; incidents of sporadic violence and widespread destruction along ethnic and religious lines became commonplace throughout the 1980s and1990s. Thus, ethnicity and religion became mutually reinforcing sources of antagonism between different groups, resulting in the hardening of interethnic and interreligious divides up until the return of democratic rule in 1999. The domestic situation was further reinforced by the polarization of much of the international community along religious lines following the September 2001 terror attack in the United States and the commencement of the global war on terror with its attendant propagandas and sentiments [5], [6]. Unfortunately, the combination of growing international religious polarization and the failure of the civilian administration to effectively manage major local policy and constitutional disputes such as the Sharia debate, exacerbated the conflict situation and increased mutual suspicion and negative sentiments between local Muslim and Christian groups. Effectively as from the early 2000s, Nigeria's conflict profile entered a new phase of religious extremism, intolerance and unprecedented violence. The following aremajor conflicts that bore apparent ethno-religious trademarks in Northern Nigeria between 2000 and 2015 [7], [8], [9]:

- 2000 – Sharia riots in Kano and Kaduna
- 2001 – Jos
- 2003 – Kaduna
- 2004 – Kano
- 2007 – Kano
- 2008 to present – Jos
- 2009 – Bauchi and Maiduguri
- 2009 to present – ongoing across Northern Nigeria.

Invariably, hampered by the socio-political undertones of these conflicts as well as inherent weaknesses of the political and traditional leadership, the dimension and intensity of ethno-religious conflicts in Northern Nigeria took turn for the worse.Since the early 2000s, many ethnic and religion-based conflicts of all shades have raged uncontrollably from Plateau to Benue, Taraba, Kaduna, Bauchi, Borno, Yobe, Adamawa etc. And, with the entrance of the Boko Haram group and its type of extreme ideologies and reckless killing of all people; women, children, rich, poor, Muslim and Christian alike, interreligious violence reached a proportion hitherto unimaginable for many Nigerians [10]. Although the Boko Haram group claims to be a religious group, its mode of operation, targets and scale of destruction creates a challenge for proper analysis and categorization of the conflict as interreligious conflict rather than an extremism conflict.Northern Nigeria and indeed all of Nigeria is now faced with a quagmire that continues to threaten the very existence of the country.

III. UNDERSTANDING THE ROOT CAUSES OF EXTREMISM AND INTERRELIGIOUS CONFLICT IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

In addition to other perspectives, a proper understanding of the problem of religious extremism in Northern Nigeria will flow from a comprehensive analysis of the concepts of evangelism and dawah and their place in the two religions of Islam and Christianity. While extremism and extremist sects can be found in various other religious doctrines and practices, evangelism and dawah play important role in explaining some of the root causes of extremism and Muslim-Christian relations in Northern Nigeria. Evangelism is an important element in Christianity; it is a process for spreading the gospel in accordance with Jesus' directive to his disciples that: "Go into the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15). On the other hand, dawah is the equivalent concept in Islam which enjoins Muslims to invite mankind to Islam: "Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best. Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowing of who is [rightly] guided" (Quran 16:125).In this regard, both religions strongly prescribe proselytization and propagation of the faith. Although the prescription is not a problem in itself; the problem appears to be in the manner in which adherents of the two religions carry out the task of evangelism and dawah. Understanding the way these two concepts are practicalized is critical in explaining growing intolerance and lack of accommodation that lead to extremist confrontation and violence prevalent across Northern Nigeria.

The problematics of evangelism and dawah can be explained on two fronts: the first is in the notion of particularity or exceptionalism that is attributed to both religions. For Islam, particularity canbe found in the verses of the Quran which states that: "Surely the only Deen (true religion and the Right Way of life) in the sight of Allah is Al-Islam…And whoever desires other than Islam as religion - never will it be accepted from him, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers." (Quran 3:19; 85). Similarly, for Christianity, particularity flows from Jesus' statement that: "I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes to the father but by me, if you have known me, you would have known my father also" (John 14:6). These two positions create the notion that only one of the two faiths can be right or acceptable to God. Articulating the conflict that arises from this notion, Ayantayo [11],opines succinctly that:

> "At the religious level, conflict arises when each of two different religious persons in the same religious space claims a monopoly of religious truth. The impression is that one of them, on the long run, is holding onto a wrong religion or a truthful religion. The two of them cannot hold the same truth at the same time, hence the occurrence of opposition, friction, incompatibility, antagonism, hostility, clash, dispute, fight, quarrel and war between them."

The second problematicwith evangelism and dawah arises from the style and focus of religious proselytization and propagation by religious leaders and groups from both sides of the divide. Over the years, we have seen increasing number of Muslim and Christian preachers and scholars riding on the prescriptions of both religions to pursue evangelism and dawah with energy and intensity that borders on overzealousness or indeed, extremism. Perhaps, spurredby a mix of honest, spiritual, altruistic, politicaland pecuniary reasons, religious preaching in Nigeriahas become a life and death matter that is done inside public transportation, market places, public offices, on the streets and everywhere else possible. More importantly, the preaching is often done without good words, good manners, peace and respect. On both sides of the religious divide, the mindset, language, style, content and focus of a large majority of religious preachers create dilemma for the concepts of freedom of speech, freedom of religion and peaceful coexistence [12], [13]. Opeloye [14] summarized the effects of this style of proselytization thus:

> "Our style of evangelism creates negative effect on our inter-religious relations. This is due to the use of offensive and provocative language which engenders discord, hatred and animosity between the Muslims and the Christians."

As can be seen across communities in Nigeria, the unfortunateconsequence ofunguarded religious messaging has been the spread of extremism and intolerant religious views and ideologies in mosques, churches, communities, and public institutions etc.Even more unfortunately, this negative local trend in religious extremism and violence readily finds support from global extremist organizations within and beyond Africa. The proliferation of different international groups with extremist ideologies and agendas has been on the rise since the beginning of the war on terror in the early 2000s, creating critical sources of negative literature, doctrinal resources, financing, training and dangerous arms and weapons for local extremist religious zealots and groups.

Based on the foregoing, and given that extremism and hate preaching have been identified as two of the instigators of many cases of interreligious conflicts in Northern Nigeria, it is safe to make the case that building better understanding of evangelism and dawah and establishing some form of regulatory mechanisms around religious proselytization will contribute towards preventing extremismand addressing some of the root causes of interreligious conflicts in Northern Nigeria. Essentially, the process of building better understanding and practice of evangelism and dawah will involve the development of general and case-specific strategies and programmes targeting key stakeholders from various religious groups and communities. However, while the development of such programmes is beyond the scope of this paper, the following are recommendations for religious preachers, adherents and groups that would contribute towards curbing extremist proselytization and practices:

- Understanding that the essence of religious proselytization is to call people to God, and this must be done using exemplary words and conducts and by applying wisdom.
- Conducting evangelism and dawah based on the principle of freedom of choice as enunciated by both the Christian and Islamic scriptures.
- Making transmission of knowledge rather than indoctrination the object and focus of preaching.
- Prohibiting provocative, insulting or inciting messaging or sensitization of own or other religions, and avoidingthe use of the platform of religion or the notion of freedom of speech to spread hate messages or commit blasphemy.
- Encouraging self-regulation amongst scholars and preachers of the same religion as well as supporting interfaith collaboration and cooperation for the sake of promoting textual and practical knowledge of the two religions.

In addition to extremism, what other factors or forces are at the root ofthe escalating pattern of interreligious conflict in Northern Nigeria?Generally, practitioners and scholars agree that conflict is a natural phenomenon that is inevitable in social interactions. The potential for conflict exists in any interactions between individuals and groups with different interests, believes and viewpoints. Thus, it is virtually impossible to eliminate conflict, rather what is possible is to prevent, resolve and positively manage the tendencies and drivers of destructive conflicts. Specifically, interreligious conflict is that type of conflict that is defined as:

> "…a state of disagreement between two religious persons (or groups) regarding who is, or who is not holding absolute religious truth. It occurs when members of different religions are engaged in in argument which often goes with bickering, controversy, demonstration, debate, or squabble over religious beliefs and practices."[15]

Going by this definition, it becomes obvious that the ability to prevent, resolve and manage interreligious conflict depends on proper analysis and understanding of its nature and root causes. This will enable one to determine the true extent of the religiousness of the conflict in question, since other types of conflict are often camouflaged as interreligious conflict. It is generally agreed that the task of unraveling the root causes could be daunting owing to the complex nature of interreligious conflict in Northern Nigeria. Among severalscholars and observers who have been puzzled by the complexity, Opeloye [16] observed that:

> "It must be admitted that many of the crises have always had religious as well as political undertones notwithstanding the trivial nature of their immediate causes in some cases. The reports of Commissions of Inquiry including those of Justice Bola Babalakin, Justice Codjoe and Justice Donli set up at different times by the Federal Government to look into Zango Kataf and Bauchi disturbances of the nineties reveal that the tension which erupted from these crises merely ignited the bomb of ethno-political rivalry between the major and minor ethnic groups.The eruption of violence in each case was the manifestation of the collective anger of minorities that has been incubating for years. It must also be stated that even when some of these disturbances started as ethnic conflicts, they spread to other towns in the wake of rumors of their religious connotation."

Although ethnic andreligion-based conflicts are common in multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies; there are many countries with more complex racial, ethnic, religious and cultural diversity than Nigeria. The current pattern of escalation and intensity of interreligious violence in Northern Nigeria present unique and complex challenges that require deeper reflection and examination rather than superficial stereotyping. In this regard, several research and advocacy works by practitioners, experts and community-based organizations have revealed that in order to understand and tackle interreligious conflicts in Northern Nigeria, one must go beyond the obvious religious explanations and seek to investigate and identifythe root causes of theseapparently religious conflicts [17].Too often conflicts that acquire religious labelling have their roots in dispute, contention or struggle that begun at individual or group levels over non-religious, personal, economic, political and even sometimes mundane issues. Unless one is able to rollback and dig deep to the root causes, the prevention and/or resolution of such a conflict becomes daunting once it escalates and acquires religious labelling.

Furthermore, while every conflict has its own peculiar characteristics, an examination of the pattern of ongoing conflicts allows for some degree of generalisation of the major factors that sustain the recurrence and escalation of religious and ethnic conflict in this part of Nigeria. This type of generalisation was considered at a recent training workshop on conflict prevention and peace building organized by the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Abuja Office for leaders and representatives of religious groups and community-based organizations in Northern Nigeria.The following were identified asthe root causes behind most of the conflicts that are usually termed interreligious conflict in Northern Nigeria[18]:

- Contention over religious rights and freedoms – right of evangelism, quest for sharia law, use of hijab etc.
- Contention over national religious identity - freedom of religion versus secularity, relationship with international religious bodies.
- Domestic reaction to perceived global policies and propagandas targeted at a particular religion.
- Support for and domestication of international extremist movements and ideologies.
- Rise of local sectarian fundamentalism and extremist ideologies.
- Reaction to international and local abuse and/or desecration of religious symbols.
- Use of religion as solidarity and rallying platform for other interests and agendas.
- Social discontent – over corruption, poverty, unemployment etc.
- Fear or perception of dominance or marginalization – political-economic dominance of one group by another.
- Political power struggle – amongst the elite, traditional and religious leaders and their followers.
- Perceived electoral manipulation and election disputes between ethnic or communal groups.
- Contention over land ownership, boundary and access between different social or economic groups.
- Farmers-pastoralist disputes over right of access and ownership of agricultural land.
- Indigene-settler disputes over social, political and economic rights within or between communities.
- Competition for resources and economic opportunities by social, ethnic or religious groups.
- Competition for access to government services and benefits by social, ethnic or religious groups. Competition over government policies and appointments – implementation of federal character and other sharing formulas.

This list of root causes includes religion-based issues as well as many non-religious, interest-based bones of contention arising from competition for social, economic, political and communal space or interests. Unfortunately, any of these non-religion-based issues could escalate into conflict that acquires religious garment once the combatants, interested groups, bystanders or the media give it that coloration. Thus, it is only through careful and thorough interrogation and peeling-back of the various layers of causes that one might be able to arrive at the true root causes of a so-called interreligious conflict.

IV.   INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

There is no gain saying that the status quo of interreligious relations in Northern Nigeria and to some extent, the rest of the country is not sustainable. The menace and horrific destruction that have been perpetrated by "Boko Haram" in all its forms and manifestations is a clear indication of the danger in the status quo. Although, the numbers vary according to the sources, available records suggest that the Boko Haram group has been responsible for close to 20,000 deaths; several thousand injuries; several hundred abductions; and destruction of hundreds of schools, businesses, religious centres and communitiesbetween 2009 and 2015[19], [20],[21], [22].In addition, the group's activities have had grave consequences on interreligious relations amongst groups within and outside Northern Nigeria, as intergroup relations have become checkered with mutual suspicion, distrust, prejudice, sentimentalism and ethno-religious polarization. The current negative atmosphere has impeded peaceful coexistence and religious harmony and also hampered national consensus and sense of direction on critical security issues.Unfortunately, despite the enormity of the ongoing Boko Haram's rampage particularly in the northeast zone of the country, there continues to be other sporadic and destructive conflicts between different ethnic and religious groups in various parts of Northern Nigeria – from Kaduna to Plateau to Benue [23], [24], [25].

In response to the dire multidimensional conflict situation, the Nigerian government and other regional governments, including Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger,have deployed various security, counter-insurgencyand conflict management measures. There havealso been other peace building efforts by some religious stakeholders, community groups, non-government organizations,international organizations and peace practitioners to compliment the government's efforts towards tackling the root causes of these conflicts. In that regard, there is a growing recognition by stakeholders that one of the keys to understanding and addressing interreligious conflicts is through building intergroup and interfaith dialogue across religious, ethnic and

communal divides. This is dialogue and ongoing engagement between people and groups from different faiths with the aim of promoting religious understanding, tolerance and cooperation. It is different from dialogue with combatants like Boko Haram that is aimed at the cessation of hostilities. Research and practical examples have shown that such interfaith dialogue initiatives are effective tools that should be embraced by all stakeholders including governments, traditional leaders, religious groups and socio-cultural groups in order to prevent interreligious polarization and extremism and to combat the dangerous ideologies and menace of groups such as the Boko Haram. Essentially, interfaith or interreligious dialogue is:

> "…aboutpeople of different faiths coming to a mutual understanding and respectthat allows them to live and cooperate with each other in spite of theirdifferences. The term refers to cooperative and positive interaction betweenpeople of different religious traditions, (i.e. "faiths") at both the individualand institutional level. Each party remains true to their own beliefs whilerespecting the right of the other to practise their faith freely." [26]

Flowing from this and similar definitions, a cursory analysis of Christian and Muslim religious scriptures will reveal that the principles and technical processes behind interfaith dialogue are supported by the fundamental principles and precepts of both Islam and Christianity which emphasize the importance of peaceful relations amongst all peoples and creatures. Indeed, both the Quran and the Bible have peace as their core pillar and value:for instance the word"Islam" in itself literally means peace. In spiritual as well as practical terms, peace and peaceful coexistence are critical to humanity in many ways: humans require peace in order to meet their primary spiritual obligation of worship to God;peace is also required in order to meet humanbiological, psychological and sociological needs, including food, shelter and socialization with other people. Accordingly, both the Bible and the Quran place great emphasis on peaceful relations and cooperation with other people within and outside the religious folds. In this regard, the bible is replete with many prescriptions and admonitions emphasizing the importance of peace:

> "Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is One. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your strength… You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (MK 12:28-34).
> "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9)
> "For whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it" (1 Peter 3:10-11).
> "Try your best to live in peace with everyone. Try to be holy. Without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).

Similarly, the Quran and the Hadiths edify peace and admonish Muslims to live in peace:

> "…And cooperate (with all) in (doing) what is good and piety and do not cooperate in (doing) what is sinful and aggression.And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is severe in penalty" (Quran 5:2)
> "And good and evil deeds are not alike. Repel evil with good. And he who is your enemy will become your dearest friend." (Quran 41:34)
> On the Authority of Ummu Kulthum (R.A.), who said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) saying: "He who lies to establish and build peace between people is not a liar." (Hadith: Bukhaari, 2495)

Essentially, being religious implies being Godly, and that means living according to the spiritual and moral dictates of the religion, which includes eschewing discord, harm and violence to self and to others. All human societies need peace in order to make social, political and economic advancements, including building their human and material potentials and achieving intergenerational development. Similarly, societies need peace and understanding in order to interact and cooperate with other societies for the common interest of humanity. Therefore the notion of intergroup and interfaith dialogue towards building mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence could be said to be universally implied and inherent in many religious, ethnic and cultural ethos. Its implementation and development can only compliment other strategies and measures for preventing extremism and interreligious conflict is Northern Nigeria as anywhere else. In this direction, interfaith dialogue amongst religious, traditional and community stakeholders has been the focus of ongoing collaboration between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Abuja office and the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR). Since 2013, these two organizations have brought religious, traditional and community stakeholders together periodically to discuss modalities for initiating and promoting interfaith dialogue among diverse ethnic, religious and communal groups, especially in conflict areas such as the middle belt, north central zone and north east zone. The initiative has also included providing knowledge, skills and technical resources to empower stakeholders to undertake and promote various interfaith dialogue and cooperation programmes.

V. CONCLUSION

This study and many others on the subject of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria have revealed the deep rooted and complex nature of the problem of extremism and interreligious conflict. While past responses by successive governments have produced largely minimal success in containing and resolving these conflicts, there now seems to be a renewed and focused initiative to combat and prevent the spread of extremism and destructive conflict in Nigeria and indeed the West African sub-region. However, these efforts must not be limited to the deployment of military and other security measures only. It must include other conflict management mechanisms that will engage critical combatants and stakeholders. The process must also necessarily include all the various elements of conflict resolution such as demobilisation, de-radicalisation, reorientation, reintegration and reconciliation.

This study submits that the long process of reconciliation,reorientation and reintegration will require governments, community leaders, religious leaders and other stakeholders to devote considerable efforts towards instituting and promoting interfaith dialogue. It also argues that interfaith dialogue will contribute towards building the atmosphere for intergroup understanding and peaceful coexistence which will ultimately stem the tide of extremism, intoleranceand interreligious conflict. To this end, the study recommends the following measuresas the way forward:

- Promote interfaith and intergroup education - lack of true and objective knowledge of "the other religion" creates basis for false, offensive or malicious statements or actions, while deliberate and positive interfaith dialogue and education promotes understanding and accommodation, and reduces negative statements and overtures.
- Support and institutionalise interreligious and intra-religious dialogue - build intergroup trust and social integration.
- Embark on reorientation and regulation of religious evangelism and messaging - support and encourage acquisition of adequate religious knowledge as the basisfor religious preaching and teaching.
- Discourage deliberate and inadvertent misinterpretation and distortion of religious positions and prescriptions.
- Institute pragmatic and enduring resolution of the question of Nigeria's national religious identity through an all-inclusive national dialogue and engagement.
- Establish institutional transparency by ensuring impartial implementation of government programmes, including credible, free and fair electoral process.
- Ensure clarification and settlement of constitutional gray areas including religious questions
- Promote the rule of law and ensure effective dispensation of justice in all matters including religious and communal disputes and conflicts.
- Address socio-economic issues and discontents such as marginalisation, poverty and unemployment.

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