



**THE THREAT OF ETHNICITY AND CULTURAL IDENTITY TO
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA.**

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Abstract

This paper investigates impact of ethnic sentiment and cultural difference in the cause of ensuring good governance and sustainable development especially in a case of Nigeria where such act has been bastardized and has now become a normal social life. Ethnic sentiment does not arise in its self but is assumed to be precipitated by various factors. It is a common social phenomenon common in every hitherto existing society. And by this have had lots of negative effects in many developed and developing nations. So this by implication means it is a social ill that blows or bring about disappointing atmosphere that is not conducive for social development. The main objective of this paper is to examine the impact ethnic sentiment/cultural differences has on governance; sustainable development and how the people of Nigeria are and can deal with it. The study adapted the conflict theory by attempting to explain the significance and uniqueness of it as functional in the varying culture and how if properly harnessed would help foster development in Nigeria. The position of this paper is that people are ignorant, fundamental and lost focus of African philosophy of respect to another value. The study therefore recommends that greater attention from policy makers should be

channeled towards orientation and sensitization, and also has respect for the rule of law that governs the land Nigeria, such that any offender must be brought to face the law, no matter his social status in Nigeria.

Keywords: Ethnic sentiments, Cultural identity and Sustainable Development

Introduction

There is no nation in the world that has purely a homogenous population. It consists of people who are associating with one another on the basis of understanding or compromise. The reason is simply because there are a number of bio- social factor that differentiated people. In some cases this distinguishing factor is found in the language, complexion, or physical attribute. These differences in social attribute of people when summed up together produced people of like minds and same characteristics to form a group to consolidate their hegemony in a society. The strength behind social interaction and association of a particular ethnic group could instigate sentiment and envy in the society. To this end ethnic sentiment is a social phenomenon that is found to exist in all society but in different variance. It has gradually become a universal phenomenon that affects even the developed countries, although in some instances it appears as racism between whites and blacks, xenophobia cultural identity, and extremism when religion is involved.

Ethnicity has become a social problem that is not peculiar to developing nations alone as is the case of Nigeria and developing state. And a clear evidence of these is found to constitute a threat to the international community following the trend of what is happening in the middle east where the so called ISIS are carrying out terror on humanity in the name of tribe and religion identification. These and many others are by extension what can be termed to trigger ethno-religious conflict in any society of the world.

African society before its scramble and partition in the 1880s by the European countries recorded various ethnic groups living distinctively and autonomously under the authority of their heads of community. The African socio-economic and political structures as at then were quite and well-organised as it was based on their social comprehension geared toward stability and security at all time. Historically and by oral tradition it was gathered that cases of disagreement existed especially when it has to do with one ethnic supremacy and territory expansion. Ethnic sentiment and differences in most case are common in every hitherto existing society. However, it is not impossible to contend that disagreement is inevitable and common in human relationships. This is why rules are made through its governance to ensure cordial relationship in the societies. The argument that in the absence of good governance, people can become worst than lower class animal, is seen manifesting in the revolt and disagreement that has led to series of conflict that if given fair attention wouldn't have generated to serious crisis. The African continent for instance is assumed to be unique based on its peculiar features which rates it as the most populated black race, multi linguist and cultural environment.

Nigeria is one of such country that has been bedeviled with the issue of ethnic sentiment in its quest of trying to achieve sustainable governance and development. The country has been assumed to play prominent role in African Affairs and an important participant in global matters. The assumption by some speculators that fondly calls it "the giant of Africa" is not completely accepted by many Nigerians, all though the speculation is assumed to be based on it as the most populous and potentially well-endowed nations.

The 2006 Population and Housing Census report, state that its population is put at over 134 million (NPC, 2006) while Central Intelligence Agency (CIA world Fact book, 2013) put it at 170 million (July 2012). It is one of the world's most

ethnically diverse nations. It comprises multi-ethnic nationalities put between 250 and 450 (Idahosa 1997; Aghemelo and Osumah 2009). Some of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria are larger than many independent states in Africa. At the early 1960s, of the estimated 3,000 ethnic groups in the world about 1000 were represented in Africa and about 445 in Nigeria (Alkali 1997).

The ethnic sentiment in Nigeria affected social relationship and sustainable development in all spheres of its existence. The system of governance was worst hit right from the time it gained independence and this jeopardized the little social integration that was keeping them together. The Nigerian military eventually came into the fray as a stabilizing force to contain and conscript all autochthonous manifestations of ethno-nationalism. Unfortunately the Nigeria military were not immune from the ethno-nationalist syndrome that had crept into every other aspect of life in Nigeria. As there were clear signs of ethnic sentiment when there was need to allocate resources or sensitive position to foster sustainable development. There administration ended up becoming one of sacrificing the nation's development on the altar of ethnicity through decrees.

However, since the return to civil democratic rule in 1999, Nigeria has witnessed extensive worse ethnic sentiment in its developmental programmes. The transition from military to civilian rule in Nigeria was greeted with popular enthusiasm. It was a welcomed development not only because it was seen as the down of a new era of great optimism and the realization of participatory democracy (Mijah, 2007, Elaigwu, 2005). In the same vein, it is important to note that democratic governance, turn out to be a mixed bad, as old grievances and hated, suppressed during military rules, resurfaced and seek to be resolved. The present dispensation of active and inactive of the state made no avenue for their resolution, and in certain cases even complicated these grievances.

The challenge of managing Nigeria's political and ethnic plurality has not been an easy task. The ethnic problem has posed a number of threats to the legitimacy of the national government and its ability to offer leadership appropriate to the demand of nation-building. The mobilization of ethnic sentiments and solidarity seeking to gain or retain relevance has fuelled anxiety, suspicion, fear of domination and outright conflicts (Osumah and Okor 2009). Ethnic sentiments are part of the most recurring issues in Nigeria's body of governance. The issue which has penetrated deeply into Nigeria landscape could be traced to the colonial period and till present moment. There seem to be no solution within reach to the accompanying of ethnic sentiment under this democratic governance. The dominating and minority ethnic group treat each other with suspicion and the different religious groups clash at slightest provocation (Ayobami, 2011).

The incessant struggle for power among these diverse ethnic groups is having far reaching impact on the nations sustainable development and corporate existence, *vis a vis* the attendant uprisings and insecurity which is daily shaking the feet of the nation. It is against this background that the study examines the complex nature of Nigeria in the area of ethnicity and ethnic politics/gang-up and effects of this type of politics on the development of the nation.

Statement of the Problem

Good governance has for many years remained elusive in Nigeria's political terrains because of the fact that this worthy aspect of culture, tradition and norms, political vestiges has been abandoned. Rather, despotic and corrupt leaders mostly in uniform have always found their ways into the polity as leaders (Joseph, 1987).

Nigeria is a plural, highly complex, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-religions polity, with a diversity of ethnic groups. (Danfulani, 2009: Smyth and Robinson, 2001). This identity is played out in the way the country is

bifurcated along the lines of religion, language, culture, ethnicity and regional identity, Osaghae and Suberu (2005:4). of the population of over 150 million people, the country is almost half Christians and half Muslims, aside other religions (Paden, 2008; Schwartz, 2010). And the development and escalation of conflicts are thus expected. Conflict arises from pursuit of divergent interest, goals and aspiration by individuals and groups in Nigerian defined social and physical environment (Otite, 2004). The changes in the social environment, such as contestable access to new political positions in Otite (2004) words is a fertile grounds for those who are interested in using these new resources to achieve their goals.

It is pathetic to state that since the return to democratic rule in Nigeria, the lives and properties of ordinary Nigerians have been terrorized by different armed groups and the worst became very paramount in the fourth republic. These groups which range from ethnic militias to state sponsored terrorists include MOSOP, MASSOB/ IPOB, Bakassi Boys, Egbesu Boys, OPC, MEND, Arewa Consultative Forum, Boko Haram sect and Niger delta avengers. The origin and escalation of the activities of these groups are not dissociated from the government's penchant to exclude, marginalize and discriminate against the generality of the citizenry or some parts of it. Accordingly, Nnoli (2006:9) holds that: political exclusion, economic marginalization, and social discrimination threaten the security of citizens to such an extent that they regard the state as the primary threat to their survival. In desperation, the victimized citizens take the laws into their own hands as a means of safeguarding their fundamental values from the threat of unacceptable government policies. People who believe that the government no longer represents their best interests seek, by all means, to overthrow it or otherwise establish an alternative state. The decline of the state as the guarantor of protection and human security is serious; but its role as the creator of insecurity is more serious.

Therefore, based on the understanding attached to the bond of ethnicity and given the impoverishment of Nigerians by the incessant ethnic, ethno-political crises that characterize the Nigerian nation, especially in development, it is questionable as to what extent these bias sentiment can lead to justified democratic governance and better the lives of people. Does the gloss of ethnic bias and sentiment over the nation's political process engender or endanger its national integration. These are some of the problems that need to be addressed

OBJECTIVES of the study

The general objective of this study is to investigate the challenges bordering on good governance, integration, sustainable development and ethnic sentiment in Nigeria. Specifically, the study intends to:

1. Find out the better interpretation of ethnicity.
2. Understand the level of patriotism in the country irrespective of ethnic affiliation.
3. Assess the nature and trend of ethnic sentiments in Nigeria.
4. Assess the impact of ethnic sentiment in Nigeria's sustainable development, integration and governance system.
5. Identify and suggest factors that can curb the persistent ethnic sentiments in Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual review of Ethnicity

The concept of ethnicity has been variously defined by scholars; Cohen (1974) for instance avers that an ethnic group is a collection of people who share some patterns of normative behaviour and form a part of a larger population, interacting with people from other ethnic groups within the framework of a social system. For Cohen, one of the characteristics of a people so addressed as an ethnic group is the

“sharing of normative behaviour”. This normative behaviour is a distinct behaviour which distinguished one group of people from others and it include; kingship, marriage, friendship, festival, rituals and other similar ceremonial activities. Normative behaviour can also be coupled to the continuous interactions with other distinguished group especially within the same Nation-State. Therefore ethnicity can be seen as interaction between culturally distinct groups operating within a common social context.

For McLean (1991) ethnic group is the strongest sense of group feeling. From this simple definition, it can be deduced that there are many groups to which men could belong. These groups include- social, political, religious and professional groups - of which the ethnic group stimulates the greatest feelings especially among those who are biologically related. To this extent, Primordialists have argued that ethnic groups are the outcome of biological processes (Fearon and Laitin, 2000a). Thus, blood is a unifying factor in cementing the relationship among the ethnic group as membership is not by choice but rather by descent. Lending credence to the unifying “power of blood relationships” Udo (1980) highlights the power of blood in cementing relations among ethnic groups even after the political partitioning and demarcation of nations. It is evident that, the political demarcation which followed the eventual partitioning of African territories by the colonial powers is not a barrier to ethnic ties and relation.

According to Udo (1980:10 cited in Salami, 2004) the cultural tie between the Hausa of Nigeria and Niger may be greater than contacts between Hausa of Nigeria and Jukun of Nigeria. To Gordon (1964) ethnic group is any group which is defined or set apart by race, religion or a defined origin or combination of some of these categories. For instance, an ethnic group like the Yoruba is said to be descendants of Oduduwa with its ancestral home at Ile-Ife. Rose (1965) avers that

an ethnic group comprises people who share a unique social and cultural heritage which is passed from one generation to the other. Ethnic group is identified by distinctive patterns of family life language, recreation, religion and other customs which differentiate them from others. Therefore, ethnicity is a continuum as its characteristics remains from generation to generation. Ethnic group according to Sanda (1976) consists of interacting members who belong to a named or labelled social group with whose interest they identify, and which manifests certain aspects of a unique culture while constituting a part of a wider society. The recent happenings in Nigeria have brought this definition to the fore as ethnicity has become a veritable tool and basis for canvassing for political as well as economic power.

In Anugwom's (2000) view, ethnicity should be seen as arising in any situation in which a group of people, no matter their size, with different cultural and linguistic attributes from those of its neighbours uses this as the basis of group solidarity and interaction with others. In so doing, the group sees itself not only as distinct, but as a "group in itself and for itself". Thus, group consciousness is the most crucial factor in the definition of an ethnic group and ethnicity involves one group seeing other groups as relatively inferior to its self as well as being rivals. This feeling consequently brings about attitudes which distort reality and breed subjectivity in the evaluation and perception of events. Ethnicity, Anugwom further states, often contains an obscured class component. In this sense, it becomes a tool for the elite members of society to hold on to their privileges. Therefore, in Africa, ethnicity implies a situation whereby ethnic movements are created and instigated into action by the elite in a bid to further their own interests (Sklar, 1967).

Azeez (2004) sees ethnicity as a sense of fellow feeling that has its foundation in the combined remembrance of past experience and a common hope and desire for

the future. Ethnicity has to do with origin of a people. Thus, it is the existence of the group that makes ethnicity possible as ethnicity does not exist outside the unit or group that embodies it. Ethnicity could also be seen as the employment or mobilisation of ethnic identity and difference to gain advantage in situations of competition, conflict or cooperation (Osaghae, 1995). Thus, for Osaghae, ethnicity is a readymade weapon for actualising group desires within a Nation-State and a careful and deliberate attempt by social actors to outsmart other competing groups in the struggle to control the scarce economic resources of the State. Therefore, ethnicity is not necessarily due to “biological attachment” but the result of the interaction within the external environment (Brubaker, Loveman, and Stamatov, 2004).

Democratic governance:

According to Aluko (2011) democratic governance refers to a system of government controlled by representatives who are elected by the people of a country. It is synonymous with good governance which involves among other thing the enthrone of due process, constitutionalism, and rule of law, transparency and accountability in the conduct of public affairs. Similarly, UNDP (2009) presents democratic governance as the capacity of a society to define and establish policies and resolve conflicts peacefully within the existing legal order. This is a necessary condition for the rule of law along with the separation of powers and a legal system that ensures the enjoyment of individual freedom and rights-civil, social, political and cultural. This requires institutions based on the principle of equity, freedom, participation in decision making, accountability and promoting the inclusion of the most vulnerable sector of the society (Fayeye, 2011).

Sustainable development

Sustainable development in human society is not a one sided process rather multi-sided issues; individuals perceive development as increase in the skill and ability, it is viewed as maximum freedom, the ability to create responsibility. Seer (1977), states that sustainable development involves capital accumulation and economic growth only but the condition in which people in a country have adequate food, job and income inequality among them is greatly reduced. It is the process of bringing fundamental and sustainable changes in the society. It encompasses growth and embraces the quality of life as social justice, equality of opportunity for all citizens, equitable distribution of income and the democratization of development processes. It is the capacity of members of the society to actualize them by participating actively in the social engineering of their destiny. It entails the ability of individuals to influence and manipulate the forces of nature for their enhancement and that of humanity. Economic, political or social development implies more changes in the technical and institutional arrangement by which it is produced. In spite of various concepts, sustainable development is a multi-dimensional and is basically about the process of changes around the spheres of societal life.

ETHNICITY AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

There is no universally acceptable definition of ethnicity: sociologically, ethnic group is defined as a collectively of people who share the same primordial characteristics such as common ancestry language and culture. Ethnicity then refers to the behaviour and feeling (about oneself and others) that supposedly emanates from membership of an ethnic group (Assefa, 1996; Egwu, 1999). Thus an ethnic group is not a mere aggregate of people but a self conscious collection of people united, or closely related by shared experiences and a common history. Ethnic conflict has therefore come to mean cleavages between groups based on differentiations in ethnic identities. In this sense, few states (such as Somalia) are ethnically homogenous and many are poly-ethnic in composition.

It is however wrong to assume that those who share a common ancestry, language, culture, and religion should have a relationship of solidarity and harmony with each other but one of cleavage and conflict with those who do not share their ethnic identity. Ethnic similarity in Somalia has not assured social harmony nor avoided the outbreaks of large scale conflict. In Somalia there is great deal of evidence that an ethnic group divided into lower-level identities and fought each other with as much zeal as they might fight other ethnic groups. Alternatively, there are also societies in the region where ethnic diversity has not been a prescription for violent conflict (Assefa, 1996:32-5).

Complexities and Nature of Nigeria Ethnic Group

Nigeria comprised of about 166 million people as at 2012 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2012 cited in Trading Economics, 2014), with over 300 ethnic groups, has over 1000 dialects (Okotoni, 2006), practice several religions, and different histories and cultures. These perhaps are some of the reasons for the adoption of federal system of government. Nigeria's ethnic groups could be broadly divided into ethnic 'majorities' and ethnic 'minorities'. The majority ethnic groups are the Hausa-Fulani of the North, the Yoruba of the Southwest, and the Igbo of the Southeast of which their numerical and hegemonic strength within the nation gave Nigeria its tripodal ethnic structure. Each of these three major ethnic groups, thus, constitutes a pole in the struggle for political and economic resources of the nation (Mustapha, 2007). There are also ethnic minorities in the nation who at-times with intention of wrestling to have their share of national cake form alliances to have a formidable force and enough respite against the three dominant ethnicities. These always generate conflict as the three hegemonic groups also fortify themselves to ensure its dominance in governmental activities.

Concerning the level of complexities of Nigeria nation, Mustapha (2007) identified eight major cleavages in which Nigeria could be classified. According to him the interplay between this tripodal ethnic structure on the one hand, and administrative divisions and communal identities on the other, has led to eight major cleavages in Nigerian political life..., the most important of which are: the cleavages between the three majority groups; between the three majority ethnic groups on the one hand and the 350-odd minority ethnic groups on the other; between the north and south; between the 36 states of the federation and the six zones-three in the north and three in the south-into which they are grouped; and finally, between different religious affiliations. Some of these cleavages overlap: for example, the southeast zone overlaps with Igbo ethnicity and Christian religious affiliation, while the north-central overlaps with northern ethnic minorities. The ethnic, regional, and religious cleavages in Nigerian society are made more problematic by systematic and overlapping patterns of inequalities that correspond to the cleavages (Mustapha, 2007:3-4). These eight cleavages grouping could be seen as seed of discord sown, which had germinated into hydra headed monster tormenting and straining the nation's socio-economic activities which has also constituted a nuisance to the political developments of the nation. For instance most of the conflicts in Nigeria were so much attributable to religious, economic and ethnic factors. The deepest problem Nigeria is facing is internal conflict within the same ethnic group. Among the Yoruba for instance, there are Ijebus, Ijeshas, Aworis, Ekitis, Oyos, Egbas to mention but few who constantly contest among themselves for position and power in political as well in the economic wealth of the nation. As it is among the Yoruba so it is among the Hausa/Fulani and the Igbos.

Recently, 'some ethnic groups' among the Hausa/Fulanis have expressed their dissatisfaction toward the way they are being marginalised and sidelined in Northern part of the nation. These groups claimed that, the powerful elite in the

region had marginalised them and they have been robbed off of their rights of participation in governance (Owete, 2014).

MODERN PROCEDURE FOR RESOLVING CONFLICTS

In Western and modern Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism, we have elements such as:

Grass-root community based activities: This include village festivals like the new yam festival among the Igbos, initiation rites and puberty festival for young people, marriage ceremonies, the sharing of village community land. When unity/solidarity is lost to violent conflict, as was the case in the conflict between Ife and Modakeke communities of Osun State, the Chamber/Jukun and Kuteb of Taraba State, and the Umuleri/Aguleri of Anambra State all in Nigeria for instance, the importance of such community virtue cannot be over-emphasized (Suberu 2006; Suberu 2008).

Good Governance: This may be defined as the running of the affairs of government in positive and progressive manner beneficial to the governed and which delivers the public goods. Its attributes include: due process, transparency, responsiveness on the part of government, power sharing, rule of law, competence, separation and devolution of powers, a free press and a free virile civil society. There are several dictatorial democracies in Africa. Such regimes do not promote and practice good governance. These are the conflict generators of the African continent.

Communication: This is the process of sharing and exchanging information between individual, groups and potential parties in a conflict situation. It is also the process of interacting and relating with others, meaning that parties to a conflict situation still talk.

Collaboration: The collaboration process is one in which parties work together on their own to resolve problems through constructive dialogue or other activities like joint projects, sharing of community schools and health centres, markets, bridges and culverts, as well as other utilities (Aghedo and Osumah, 2009).

Negotiation: This is the process whereby the parties within the conflict seek to settle or resolve their conflicts. Also negotiation is a direct process of dialogue and discussions taking place between at least two parties who are faced with a conflict situation or a dispute. The benefits of compromised solution, it is believed, outweigh the losses arising from refusal to negotiate. The goal of negotiation is to reach agreement through joint decisions between parties. Negotiation is a key approach to peaceful resolution of dispute and conflicts that may arise among parties. It is also within the reach and control of parties.

Conciliation: Conciliation is close to mediation. It is a third party activity, which covers intermediary efforts aimed at persuading the parties to a conflict to work towards a peaceful solution. Conciliation involves facilitation.

Mediation: Mediation has been presented by the United Nations University for Peace as the Voluntary, informal, non-binding process undertaken by an external party that fosters the settlement of differences or demands between directly invested parties.

Arbitration: This is another type of third party intervention that is a step higher than mediation in the conflict management spectrum or process. The parties to a conflict, who select to use arbitration, even though they choose a non-violent

method of settling their disputes, lose more control over their situation than those who select mediation and other lower levels of intervention.

Adjudication: Adjudication is another non-violent method of conflict management. This involves the use of the courts and litigation processes. Parties to a dispute may choose not to use any of the methods we have so far discussed. They may opt instead to take their case to a court of law, before a judge of competent jurisdiction. Legal counsel may represent them.

Crisis Management: This is an extreme situation of conflict, which has reached a turning point, where critical decisions have to be taken or else the conflict may escalate to a point of extreme violence. Sometimes, a crisis is a degenerated state of conflict, where threats to human security, intense violence characterized by fighting, death, injury, large-scale displacement of populations occur. Once a crisis occurs, it is the responsibility of the government of a state to de-escalate the situation and bring a cessation to violence. This may be done through various means, including the use of the coercive state apparatus, where necessary. (Fred-Mensah, 2000).

Nature of Nigeria politics and democratic Governance

The disarticulated nature of Nigeria's present politics and democracy is best understood within the historical context. This context unravels the evolution of Nigeria's politics from the pre-colonial era to the post-independence epoch. It is a holistic approach which shows the interconnection and influences of British political diplomacy and the locally or regionally unguided exploitation.

Before the colonial era, the entity now known as Nigeria was made up of independent nations that included the Hausa-Fulani in the North, the Yoruba in the

southwest, and Ibo in the south-east. Other principal ethnic groups are the Edo (Bini), Efiki, Urhobo, Ijaw, Tiv and Kanure. Except in a few cases such as the Itshekiri, which is an ethnic group with one language/dialect, there exist the Ibo of Onitsha, Oguta, etc., the Yoruba of Ekiti, Ijesha, Oyo, Ijebu and so on, the Urhobo of Okpe, Agbon, Ughelli, etc (Ola and Tonwe, 2005). In fact, Nigeria is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world, with over 250 ethno-linguistic groups, some of which are bigger than many independent states of the contemporary Africa (Suberu, 2000). These autonomous territories and tribes had established kingdoms and chiefdoms with unique, and in some cases complex systems of government. These include the Oyo Empire, Fulani Empire, the Benin Kingdom, the Ife Kingdom, the Great Kanem Borno, and the politically decentralized Ibo autonomous communities. These respective empires had established political systems, economic organizations and defense systems which operated effectively. The need to rationalize and regulate the economic relationship of these respective empires led to the imposition of colonial administration in the late 19th century (Turner, 1980:202).

The British government's imposition, attributed to Lord Lugard, was meant to discourage other European competitors from engaging with the new Nigeria. Through its coercive apparatus, the colonial administrator defined Nigeria territorially, and forcefully integrated the various political forms and pre-capitalist modes at different stages of development into the global economic system that would satisfy the demand of British and global capital for the raw materials, primary exports, and a local market for imported finished products. Initially, Lugard pursued different administrative styles towards northern and southern Nigeria which were kept separate until the amalgamation of 1914 (Post and Vickers, 1973). The amalgamation was thought necessary to pool resources so as

to enable the relatively rich territories of the south to assist their poorer neighbors the north, under the overall British control (Mamser, 1987:27).

However, while the amalgamation brought together in one polity different nationalities at different stages of political and economic development, no efforts were made by the British to give the amalgamated units a common political orientation (Mamser, 1987:27). As such, it exacerbated an atmosphere of disunity, conflict and instability through vertical channels of extraction, accumulation and transfer. In short, it created cleavages, distrust and rivalry. Following the formal acquisition of political independence in 1960, Akinboye and Anifowose (1999:244) noted that Nigeria “inherited a weak socio-political structure, a defective and unbalanced federation, an intensification of ethnic consciousness and rivalries, a subverted indigenous ethos of government and culture, and above all, an inexperienced leadership.” The British simply conceded power to a moderate faction of indigenous bourgeoisie with a weak economic base who relied on the state for capital accumulation and appropriation.

Nigeria’s first republic (1960-1966) was a Westminster-style parliamentary democracy. Following experiments with parliamentary forms of government, the second republic (1979-1983) and the third republic (1993) were presidential systems of democracy by military fiat. Although a few Nigerians had in 1993 canvassed for a French style presidential parliamentary system for the country, the decision to experiment with the presidential was unilaterally imposed by the Head of State, General Sani Abacha (Namdi, 2009:122). The fourth republic (1999 till date) and subsequent forms of democracy represent elements of liberal democracy, now included in the Nigerian constitution. For instance, section 14 sub-section 1 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria states that “the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be a state based on the principle of democracy and social

justice.” At sub-section 2(a), it defines the type of democracy as one where “sovereignty belongs to the people of Nigeria from whom government through this constitution derives all its powers and authority.” With these declarations, we are not left in any doubt that liberal democracy with representative governance is the central theme in Nigeria’s type of democracy. So how democratic is Nigeria’s democracy?

Ethnicity, Politics and Nation-Building

Ethnicity as a relational product is quintessentially adversarial. Two reasons are responsible. The first, as observed by Matteo Fumagalli (2007), though in different context but very applicable to African social systems by its peculiar nature of state-formation, is that millions of citizens found themselves, almost overnight, in the new condition being labelled or viewed as minority. However, the tag ‘*minority*’ denotes the presence of some sorts of critical competitions in which the former is delicately pitched against a majority other with a leverage of number among other factors. Multi-ethnic states are consequently in a flux of nagging competitions. This is quite particular to African states where there is heavy dependance on public resources for virtually every form of sustenance, more so that the private sector is less developed.

A major blunder committed by early post-independence leaders in their state-building effort is that the state is paternalistically conceived. The state became an omniprovider of an overwhelming plethora of services, many of which could have been efficiently provided by the private sector. Access to the state’s (finite) resource base is thus crucial to the competing groups. This explains why the attempt to privatize certain public utilities, infrastructures and services have met with stiff public resistance, whereas most African states are already overwhelmed and incapable of further services. As Teshome has observed, ethnicity could be the basis for the unequal treatment of people and it may be the cause of ethnocentrism

and prejudices against members of other ethnic groups. The second, which derives from the first, is a function of several factors. The fact that the (African) state is in a constant scenario of political competitions is an indication of the economic fact that the resources available for allocation is also never surplus. It is indeed the scarcity of resources that inevitably necessitates, if not aggravates, the politics of (its) allocation.

The stakes of politics are too high. Politics extends beyond mere governmental organisation and operation of the state and its institutions. Politics is critical and determinative of people's fate or fortune in life. Without an iota of doubt, it's a functional determination of *who prospers or perishes, who lives or dies, who is favoured or marginalized and who is famed or defamed*. Politics could be used to engender development and underdevelopment, depending on who is at the winning end of power play. The politics of allocation essentially is about competing to get some scarce benefits from government. Such include health, wealth, scholarships and education, public utilities, infrastructural facilities, loans and grants, livelihoods, fame, respect, land, resource control, security, contracts, import license, influence, skills, and e.t.c. How much that one could get is a critical function of where one belongs in the endgame of politics. Two classical definitions of politics are succinct here. Politics for Harold Lasswell, though bitterly and in the ordinariness, is about *who gets what, when and how*. A technical interpretation of that is David Easton's definition that politics is *the authoritative allocation of value*. Thus, a synergetic fusion of the two, that politics is the *authoritative determination of who gets what, when and how*, brings forth a crucial case of fate determination.

The critical reason why people or groups struggle for governmental power is because it is essentially at the decision end of politics *of allocation*. Therefore,

intergroup competitions for the authoritative allocation of value in multiethnic states are inevitable and vicious. They are usually the root cause of inter-ethnic civil uprisings. Nnoli has thus rightly argued that it is not inter-ethnic contact between groups that breeds conflicts; rather it is the extent of competing claims that are associated with the economic and political problems of modern nation states (Nnoli, 1978). However and notwithstanding the status of resource availability in terms of scarcity or surplusage, the *politics of allocation* may become the vulturous *politics of enrichment* to the group(s) with the upper hand in the interplay of power politics, whereby greater opportunities of amassing wealth are effectively, deliberately and greedily cornered by the dominant group(s). The history and politics of revenue allocation in Nigeria clearly depicted this scenario. At Independence when Nigeria's economy relied solely on agricultural exports, the revenue sharing formula based on the *principle of derivation* was adopted. By this principle, federal revenues were distributed to the federating units based on the total or some proportion of certain taxes assumed to have been paid by the citizens of the units. Two of Nigeria's three units then, the Western and Northern Regions (also with two dominant ethnic stocks – Yoruba and Hausa-Fulani) tremendously got enriched under this principle through their exportation of cocoa and groundnuts (then in very high demand in the international market) and other cash crops. The Eastern Region was then less endowed and thus profited less comparatively.

Shortly after, oil was discovered in stupendous commercial quantity in the Eastern Region. The in-streaming petrodollars soon and far outstripped total revenues from agroexports prompting thereby the successful agitation by the same two chagrined regions for Nigeria to adopt a new revenue sharing formula that is either based on the *principle of need* or the *principle of even development/national interest*. Revenue allocation here is either based on the size of the population in an area, or on the basis of public expenditure deemed to be in the best interest of the nation as

a whole. The two former regions still profited significantly in this new arrangement as they contained major population centers of the country. And that is in addition to the fact that the political and bureaucratic elites from these regions are also some of the most influential in the authoritative allocation of values and the determination of deeming issues of national interest. The politics of allocation is jealously ridiculous in Nigeria that even a non-oil state would temptingly agitate for similar federal oil-related compensations to oil-producing states, for instance, to cater for environmental oil spillages, or at least would create spurious excuses to partake of similar federal largesse. Geo-political zones that are unable to benefit from certain largesse may agitate to discourage its allocation to the needy zones.

It is also not unnatural that people play the unfair *politics of domination* in their authoritative determination of who gets what, when and how. Put differently, the *politics of allocation* may also transform into *politics of deprivation*, or at terrible times the *politics of marginalization*. Occasionally at moments, with reckless abandon, it could transform into *politics of (organised) oppression or extermination*. All of these dimensions of politics, for instance, were remarkably and progressively the experience of Jews, regrettably at the hands of the Nazis. The Tutsis of Rwanda similarly and recently shared these political experiences. In Bosnia-Herzegovina in the early 1990s, the actual and the perceived desire to dominate or resist domination led the three major ethnic groups - the Serbs, the Bosniaks (Muslims Slavs) and the Croats, to fight a vicious war that resulted in one of Europe's worst post-Cold War humanitarian tragedies, during which thousands got hoarded into concentration camps, displaced, tortured, raped or utterly massacred. It is thus not far-fetched why ethnic groupings and group politics are fundamental and diehard in many states, particularly in multi-ethnic and post-colonial situations. The stakes of politics are better obtained by belonging to an ethnic group than as an individual or as a member of some other ethnic group. By

essence thus, ethnic relations cannot but be innately adversarial in group contentions for scarce resources, and even for crucial subsistence.

Quite remarkably, there is the scholastic consensus that ethnicity and ethnic nationalism is critical to state-making as both generate solidarity and garner popular participation of people in politics, yet, ethnicity, by its adversarial nature, is contraindicated to the concept of nation-building. The aim of this paper again is not to get involved in the debate on the theories and conceptualizations of nation-building as it is also a normative issue. Rather and as earlier posited, this work would adopt preferably the idea that nation-building refers to the efforts of post-colonial states towards nurturing the former colonial territories into viable and coherent modern national entities. Essentially thus, nation-building critically aims at the forging or framing of a national identity and the unification of peoples within the state in order to attain significant forms of stability and endurance, which will in turn ensure its prosperous viability.

Nation-building, includes the deliberate creation of national paraphernalia and symbols of unity such as national flag, national anthem, national day and national investments/holdings, etc. At a deeper level, national identity needed to be deliberately constructed by molding different groups into a nation, especially since colonialism had used divide and rule tactics to maintain its domination (Wikipedia, 2013). Nation-building involves the intricate inclusion of all groups, towards fostering social cohesion and harmony as against the exclusivity and rancorous nature of ethnicity. The opening phrase of the first Nigerian national anthem, *'Nigeria, we hail thee, our own dear native land, though tribes and tongues may differ, in brotherhood we stand'*, is a pointer to this. The initial effort at nation-building in Nigeria thus aimed at forging a brotherhood, vis-à-vis, a nationhood of the diverse ethnies, organised in unity for a common purpose within the state. In

other words, social harmony is a critical ingredient of nation-building. However, the attainment of social harmony may of essence be antithetical to the adversarial nature of inter-ethnic politics in post-colonial states where every ethnic group is most tendentially hostile to nonmembers. The pertinent question is how do multi-ethnic states achieve social harmony in the very face of ethnic politics, rivalries and adversities involved in the competition for scarce resources and the high stakes of politics? Undoubtedly, nation-building is an uphill struggle in multiethnic states, and it is only within these contexts that the political history and the crises of ethnicity in Nigeria can be understood and dissected. It is equally significant to understanding the political situation and future of the Nigerian state.

Ethnic Politics and its Implication on the Nigeria's Development

Politics of ethnicity has made it difficult for Nigeria to have the right leaders in its political sojourn over fifty four years of independence, except for a very few of her leaders who have demonstrated total commitment to the nation's development. Ethnic politics has been a clog in the wheel of political advancement of the nation such that, there has never been a leader with national outlook that has emerged in Nigeria. The election of candidates so far, has been based on 'where the candidates came from rather than on the right candidates for the election' (Umezina, 2012).

The consequence of which 'political dealers' instead 'leaders' have been emerging in the nation's political activities. These so called leaders are without the interest of the nation at heart. They emerge to political limelight through ethnic sentiments, but end up in disappointing their so call ethnic group; this is evident in almost all parts of the nation where none of the ethnic nation is developed. One would have expected that owing to the way many of these politicians came to power via ethnic sympathy, they would satisfy the ethnic group that supported them to power, but as soon as they emerge, they neglect their people. Many of them who are at Abuja the Federal Capital Territory refused to go back to see their people at home again.

The issue of the federal character is another political arrangement that is troubling the political advancement of the nation. Although the motive behind the enshrinement of the principle is to enhance equality and fairness among the component ethnic groups in Nigeria, with a view to bringing sense of belonging into different citizens of Nigeria as well as to prevent or resist fears of domination of one region or ethnic group over the others. The plausibility of the principle notwithstanding, it brings about the reigning of mediocrity into the governmental activities in the name of equity and fairness among the component states. Given the fact that merit has been overruled as a criterion for serving the nation, it is not surprising that all manners of people have been appointed to hold public offices in which they neither had the training nor the experience. Thus, in a situation like this, there is no way any progress could be achieved in the nation building and advancement (Umezinwa, 2012). Umezinwa further states that ethnic politics and rivalry also leads to the emergence of incompetent president. For instance, Nigeria adopted the rotational presidency among the six geopolitical zones order to defuse ethnic tension, the consequent of which the president is not elected based on merit but rather on the basis of where the aspirant comes from.

Similarly, ethnic politics has also created an avenue whereby corrupt leaders are being supported by their ethnic groups. Instead of the citizens to vehemently reject corrupt leaders and condemn their activities, they do support them due to ethnicity and ethnic politics, thereby, make these leaders continue in the corruptive manner with impunity. Corruption without mincing words has been undermining Nigeria's political development. It has permeated all levels of government in Nigeria while ethnic group of the corrupt politician are always defending them.

The consequence of corruption on Nigerians is devastating. For instance, despite the enormous oil and gas deposit in Nigeria, the nation remains poor with over 90 million Nigerians living in abject poverty. Since the discovery of oil in large quantity in Nigeria, the nation has earned over \$300 Billion from oil exports (Ribadu, 2004, cited in Arowosaiye and Kulliyah, 2009) but there was nothing considerably to show for it. Corruption has cost Nigerians her whooping sum of £ 20 Billion Pounds (about \$500 Billion) which has been stolen since independence to date by past leaders of the country. The money stolen could have made Nigeria six times better than Western Europe where many Nigerians are now running to (Ribadu 2006 cited in Arowosaiye and Kulliyah, 2009).

Ethnic politics no doubt has had a lot of negative consequences for the nation's movement towards democratic advancement. The resultant effect of ethnic politics as pointed out by Babangida (2002) cited in Salawu and Hassan (2011), are wastage of enormous human and material resources in ethnically inspired violence, encounters, clashes and even battles, heightening of fragility of the economy and political process, threat to security of life and property and disinvestments of local and foreign components with continuous capital flight and loss of confidence in the economy; and increasing gaps in social relations among ethnic nationalities including structural suspicions and hate for one another. Ethnic nationalism is equally responsible for upspring of ethnic militias across the country; the Oodua Peoples Congress of the southwest, Arewa Peoples Congress in the north and Egbesu in the east among others (Babangida, 2002 cited in Salawu and Hassan, 2011:32)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The fundamental argument underlying this explication is the fact that disagreement is inevitable in every healthy human society, although it depends on the nature, intensity, dimension and goals involved. We may therefore explore some

theoretical bases on which scholars have focused their discourse while explicating conflict in the society. There are various approaches to the theoretical explanation in the society. We may be considering only a few of them in order to lay a good foundation for our discourse.

Scholars of structural functionalist looked at conflict as a function of the structural constituents of the society. Thus, poverty, unemployment, crime, social inequality, marginalization, relative deprivation, corruption, injustice, oppression and exploitation are regarded as sources of conflict. The general thought therefore, is that conflict exists in the society as a result of struggle for scarce resources (Ake, 1981, Nnoli, 1978, Chinwizu, 1975; Lenin, 1972; Engels, 1970; Marx, 1948).

The psycho-cultural conflict approach is premised on the fact that conflict emerged from socio-culturally provoked stereotype that are innate in people's perception of each other. Thus, identity based conflicts, such as ethnic or religious conflicts are psycho-cultural in nature and dimension which explains why conflicts are difficult sometimes to manage. The fear of extinction or dominion of one group over another is a great problem in managing conflict in societies especially in Nigeria. This identity issue also forms the basis for ethnicity which has heightened Nigeria's struggle for nationhood.

The concern of system theorists is that a change in people's social structure will result to conflict in the society. As a result, environmental pollution, scarcity of resources, uncontrolled population growth, breakdown of family institution and traditional values will greatly influence the nature of social structure thereby leading to conflict in the society. Thus, according to Ademola (2006:53), "sources of conflict are found in every aspect of life and affect large numbers of people even though their influence on the emergence and intensity of conflict are not always so visible to people". The experiences of Nigeria in the Niger Delta and the struggle

of the Ogoni and Ijaw people over environmental pollution and the destruction of their water resources and land degradation by multinational corporations in the zone is a source of constant conflict in that zone.

Research Methodology

The paper adopts the documentary analysis of current literature which enhances critical and contextual analysis of issues. Generally, the historical-descriptive method of inquiry was adopted in the study. In this regard, we made reference to foreign and local (Nigerian) sources. At the same time, we paid critical attention to the diverse views provided by the broad spectrum of the Nigerian society.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Every person living on earth obviously belongs to a tribe and he or she became a family of that tribe by birth or association. The tribal affiliation is important because it has serious impact on societal development.

The paper further concludes that with the upsurge of ethnic sentiment as the most significant factor impeding constitutional democracy not only in Nigeria but in Africa generally is a source of serious concern. And if the consequence of ethnicity is not effectively utilized the outcome is negative and disastrous.

The paper thus recommend without any iota of bias a sincere form of Good governance is therefore recommended as a means to an end. There is need for democratic governance to strive with underlying emphases in the activation of the citizenry to realize the common good to be taken root in the popular consciousness of Nigerians. It is beyond doubt that democracy and good governance is the desire of any country that cherishes fundamental values that deal with freedom, happiness, peace and order in the society. Therefore, there is need for good governance to assure the possibility of good planning both at private and public levels.

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