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Ethnic Politics and National Integration in Nigeria: An Impact Analysis

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Keywords: *ethnic politics, national integration, ethnicity, ethnic nationalities ethnic polarization.*

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Ethnic Politics and National Integration in Nigeria: An Impact Analysis

Dr. Harrison Otuekong Ataide [α] & Dr. Martins Tom Enebong [σ]

Abstract- Since Nigeria's independence in 1960, Nigerian politics has been bedeviled by ethnic politics as a result of ethnic polarization and sentimental coloration of all national issues. This problem has been one of the major factors inhibiting national integration and national development in Nigeria. Nigerian politics is tainted with ethnic sentiments and politically induced disharmony. Ethnic politics has been one of the factors responsible for low productivity and the general poor socio - economic development in Nigeria. The major focus of this study is to examine the challenges of ethnic politics in Nigeria as it relates to national integration with a view to critically evaluating the impact. Secondary data was used to gather relevant information for this study. One finding of the study is that ethnic politics was deliberately introduced and propagated in the Nigerian political system by the British colonial government through its divisive 'divide and rule' policy to actualize colonial and imperialist economic and political objectives. The situation has not abated in spite of several attempts to redress it through state creation and the Federal character principle. The study recommends that the legal provisions for Federal Character principle enshrined in the Nigerian Constitution be reviewed to ensure transparent and genuine application of the principle without sacrificing merit on the altar of mediocrity and that the focus of the constitutional review should be on creating a homogeneous territorial political community with progressive reduction or total elimination of religious, cultural, ethnic or regional tensions, conflicts and socio – political imbalances among the ethnic or regional groupings within the country.

Keywords: ethnic politics, national integration, ethnicity, ethnic nationalities ethnic polarization.

I. Introduction

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural heterogeneous society with a multiplicity of languages and dialects which uniquely identify the numerous ethnic nationalities within the country. There are about 250 ethnic groups in Nigeria. The diverse nature of ethnic composition of the Nigerian state is responsible for the disunity and lack of peaceful coexistence and national integration among the different ethnic groups, lack of sustainable national development and the general progress of the country at large. These ethnic groups even though they occupy the same geopolitical territory called Nigeria, which is an amalgam of many nations in one, do not have the same socio economic, socio political and socio - cultural interests, needs, objectives and aspirations. They are distinct from each other though under one umbrella called Nigeria, hence the common popular but very deceptive slogan "unity in diversity" often heard in the country.

Shrewd (2019) has noticed that the recent event such as globalization have not significantly diminished these differences. This static situation has been due to a number of reasons: (1) The indigenous languages, which help to identify the various ethnic groups, are still spoken by almost the entire population of Nigeria. (2) The style of life has not, for the majority people, changed to such a degree as to produce appreciably greater uniformity.

Nigeria carried forward the spirit of ethnicity and ethnic politics into post-colonial Nigeria and the present-day Nigeria. This is the bane of political, administrative, economic, social development in Nigeria. National integration, as a condition sinaquanon to national development, is technically contingent upon overcoming the challenges of ethnicity, ethnic politics, political power imbalance among ethnic nationalities, incongruent political structure of the different ethnic nationalities and oblique political leadership based on ethnic sentiments. There ought to be equal and fair treatment and political equilibrium among the different ethnic nationalities to eliminate or at least minimize the age long ethnic rivalry, inter - tribal animosity, cross-regional acrimony and absence of socio–political or socio-economic national bonding or national integration as a result of the diverse ethnic, cultural, religious, sectional and sentimental interests of the different peoples of the country.

This colonial vice which has turned out to become a national plaque and cankerworm which has eaten so deep into almost all the fabrics of the Nigerian political and social life is accountable for the poor national integration among the numerous ethnic nationalities in Nigeria, which in turn impedes and stagnate national development.

One of the indelible facts about Nigeria's political history is the manifestation and intensification of ethnic-politics in the attainment of selfish regional or sectional political goals achieved through clandestine, primordial and clannish sentiments. For instance, this has resulted in abuse of political power by incumbent

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political office holders who stage manage appointments to public/political offices, in favour of their ethnic or sectional interest to the disadvantage or detriment of the other ethnic groupings in the country, etc. This is one of the most difficult issues begging for resolution in Nigeria. The public outcry for marginalization, oppression, injustice, and a feeling of rejection especially by the minority ethnic groups in Nigeria is heard everywhere in the country. This, in the recent times in the country has evoked a national outcry for the restructuring of the political super and sub-structures of the country. This is perceived as the fulcrum of true federalism that is the panacea for national integration albeit national development. The demand, it can be argued is a form of nationalism, which ranges from assertions of distinct language and cultural autonomy to the demand for local autonomy and self-determination in Nigeria (Osaghea, 2004).

Other ethnic based groupings such as IPOP, OPC, and the Niger Delta Avengers are fighting hard and crying for secession. (Rufus, 2017: 34). There is no gainsaying that in Nigeria today the feeling of discontent among the minority ethnic groups particularly in terms of control of political powers and the fact that the bulk of the resources that has kept the country going is found in the minority's region.

The scenario is not new in the political history of Nigeria. It can be argued that these same set of factors led to the disastrous national disintegration in 1966 that resulted in the Nigerian civil war. (Etekpe, 2004:67). More than 6 decades after the war, national integration still eludes the Nigerian nation as the country is still locked down by the problem of ethnic differentiation which continuously bedevil and chastise her national affinity and integration.

Ethnicity therefore has become a strong factor in the political life of Nigeria. Most often ethnic sentiments are used to replace merit and skills, such that round pegs are no longer found in round holes. This affects the efficiency and productivity in Nigerian socio-economic development.

Singh & Arya (2006) observed that the new nations such as multi-ethnic Nigerian states, which attained statehood as a result of their independence after prolonged struggles for liberation launched by them against imperialism, had to face after their independence, the challenge of integrating the various ethnic groups into single nations. In line with the above, multi-ethnic countries, such as Nigeria, faced a major problem of managing diversity; of turning pluralism into a positive instrument instead of an obstacle against the attainment of national integration and security (Guobadia, 2004). As observed by Bassey, Omono, Bisong & Bassey (2013), the problems of integrating the diverse cultural diversity of Nigeria are very practical, and maintaining the existing level of integration is also a cumbersome task. It is a popular opinion in literature that the task of national integration became all the more difficult in Nigeria due to the large number of religious, social, cultural, linguistic and ethnic groups and disparate ethno-geographical location and population. In Nigeria, every citizen is a bearer of multiple identities, ranging from ethnicity, religion, class, profession, education, political association, age grade, status and title etc. (Alemika, 2004).

Thus, the country continues to face a myriad of problems related to integration. Specifically, acrimonious existence among the different groups that make up the country, fear of domination of one group or section of the country by another and incessant disagreement over the distribution of "national cake" among the constituent units precipitate mutual distrust and affect the process of nation building (Adeosun, 2011).

Each group, in the state, organizes in opposition to other groups at a similar level until the entire group organizes at highest level against a similarly organized enemy. Each person is a member of overlapping subgroups and has, therefore, many overlapping identities. Each identity is called into play only in the appropriate circumstance. These identities are kept in a series of boxes and encased one in the other (Salamone, 1997). The identities are politically neutral but as the situation warrants, actors can widen or narrow down to the boundaries of ethnic identity in the pursuance of their desires to the detriment of other groups or national identity in Nigeria (Salamone, 1997). Any particular identity invoked is the result of a process akin to play in which the actor assembles bits and pieces from the masks of other identities, taking these "shreds and patches" and weaving them into a mask of identity used to confront other similar masks (Salamone, 1997).

Nigeria's efforts at ensuring sustainable national integration have probably remained unrealized. This is probably because of the aggregated character of the states that was produced by colonialism in Nigeria in which the identity symbols are usually considered relevant. The identity symbols usually emphasized are the kinship, language, culture and spatial location, conveniently referred to as ethnic identity (Ifidon, 1999). In particular, communal, ethnic, and ethno-religious politicization and mobilization have increased since democratization opened up political space in May 1999 (Ikelegbe, 2005). Also, the most cursory glance at the history of Nigeria reveals that from about 1951, ethnicity became the hallmark of Nigerian politics (Ojo, 2010).

The foregoing realities explain the factors preventing the emergence of nationally acknowledged policies of government, political leaders, national identity, etc. Consequentially, the integration crisis facing Nigeria is manifested in the citizenship question (indigene and non-indigene/settler dichotomy), minority question, religious conflicts, ethnic politics, resource

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control, youth restiveness and the call for a sovereign national conference (Ekanola, 2006; Ifeanacho & Nwagwu, 2009; Ojie & Ewhrudjakpor, 2009; Adesoji & Alao, 2009; Fawole & Bello, 2011) or division of the country along religion, ethnic or geographical composition.

In the works of Adesoji & Alao (2009), it is revealed that Nigeria is an artificially created State, created by the British without the general consent of the 'ethno-geographical' citizen of the country. The colonialist created a State of hitherto internally disparate people. The problem confronting the country has been how to integrate the people into one nation from the amalgamated 'ethno-geographical' territory of the diverse ethnic groups known as Nigeria.

Evidence in extant literature has shown that works in the area of ethnic politics and national integration have dwelt more on the divisive tendencies of multi-ethnic nature of the Nigerian state with little attempts at evaluating how the differences in ethnic orientations can be channeled towards integrative tendencies of the inherited multi-ethnic Nigerian state.

Against these diverse backgrounds, many ethnic problems abound in Nigeria, which arise principally from the hostility that derives from competition between ethnically different peoples for wealth and power.

II. Conceptual/Theoretical Framework

a) *Ethnic Group*

To fully understand this, some related concepts like 'ethnic group' and 'ethnicity' need to be defined. Ethnic group is an informal interest group whose members are distinct from the members of other ethnic groups within the larger society because they share kinship, religious and linguistics ties (Cohen, 1974). This means that ethnic groups are social formations, which are distinguished by the communal character of their boundaries (Nnoli, 1978). In an explanation of the idea above, Nnoli emphasized that the most important or crucial variable in ethnic identity is language. This then means that an ethnic group consists of those who are themselves alike by virtue of their common ancestry, language and culture, and who are so regarded by others. Ethnicity is another related word, which needs to be conceptualized in this paper. By definition it means the interactions among members of many diverse groups (Nnoli, 1978). On the other hand, the term ethnicism denotes ethnic loyalty. This is a feeling of attachment to one's ethnic group (Pepple, 1985). The concept of loyalty in the above definition carries with it the willingness to support and act on behalf of the ethnic group. Thus, ethnic loyalty or ethnicism usually involves a degree of obligation and is often accompanied by a receptive attitude towards those regarded as outsiders (that is, members of another ethnic group).

Similarly, according to Thomson (2000:60) a basic definition of ethnicity is: "… a community of people who have the conviction that they have a common identity and common fate based on issues of origin, kinship, ties, traditions, cultural uniqueness, a shared history and possibly a shared language". In this sense, an ethnic group is much like the imagined community of the nation. Ethnicity, however, focuses more on sentiments of origin and descent, rather than the geographical considerations of a nation. In concord to the foregoing, Omu (1996:170) says that:

…ethnicity applies to the consciousness of belonging to, identifying with, and being loyal to a social group distinguished by shared cultural traditions, a common language, in-group sentiment and self-identity.

From the operationalization of these two related concepts above, it can be seen that ethnicity is a phenomenon, which involves interaction among various ethnic groups and which by itself does not pose any serious threat to either development or democracy. On the contrary, it is the phenomenon of negative ethnicism (a hangover of ethnicity), which is the rejective attitude towards those regarded as outsiders that threatens development process. It is important to note that it was the phenomenon of ethnicity that was found among Nigerians before the coming of the Europeans, while the second phenomenon (ethnicism) is a product of competition for both economic and political resources.

b) *National Integration*

Terms used for national integration have included national cohesion, national unity, nation building or national integration (Bandyopadhyay & Green, 2009; Ojo, 2009). According to Duverger in Ojo (2009), national integration is "the process of unifying a society which tends to make it a harmonious city, based upon an order its members regard as equitably harmonious." Jacob & Tenue in Ojo (2009) describe it as "a relationship of community among people within the same political entity… a state of mind or disposition to be cohesive, to act together, and to be committed to mutual programmes". Defining national integration as a process, Morrison et al. argue that it is "A process by which members of a social system (citizens for our purpose) develop linkages and location so that the boundaries of the system persist over time and the boundaries of sub-systems become less consequential in affecting behaviour. In this process members of the social system develop an escalating sequence of contact, cooperation, consensus and community" (Ojo, 2009). Etzioni (1965) has argued that a community can only be considered cohesive when it meets the following touchstones:

- It has effective control over the use of the means of violence;

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- It has a centre of decision making capable of effecting the allocation of resources and rewards; and
- It is a dominant focus of political identification for a large majority of politically aware citizens.

Ojo (2009) rightly observed that these viewpoints have not answered the questions such as how would one recognise an integrated polity? How much cohesion and which commonly accepted norms denote an integrated political or social unit? How would an observer identify integration or is it dependent on some other manifestations (such as conflict) to demonstrate a lack of integration? And what institutional form will an integrated unit take? Will it be democratic or authoritarian? Would it be a centralised organisational entity with full sovereignty or would it be a loosely federal unit? Or are institutional forms irrelevant to integration? These are fundamental questions which may not be easily resolved in this study as doing so may mean a sharp digression from the focus.

Without going into the convolutions of what makes an ideal definition of this concept, it is pertinent to draw insights from two notable definitions of the concept. Firstly, Ernest Haas (1987:81) defines national integration as "a process whereby political actors in distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities towards a new centre, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing nation state". Also, Coleman and Rosberg (1987:80) define territorial integration as "the progressive reduction of cultural and regional tensions and discontinuities in the process of creating a homogeneous territorial political community". In this study, national integration is seen as a process that produces an omnibus of initiatives put in place by a state, its representatives or institutions guided by respect for the unique traditions and cultural backgrounds of ethnicities sharing the same polity with the goal of harmonising all interests through a form of dialogue and representation and addressing differences that may be divisive and conflictual using the instruments of fairness, justice and equity in the sharing of resources, benefits, opportunities and responsibilities in order to guarantee stability, longevity and prosperity of the polity as long as the inhabitants decide to remain within the polity.

Based on the conceptual framework above, it could be opined that national integration is made possible when ethnicities within a political entity achieve integration by consensus, in term of socio-political structures and functions in such political society that brings about social harmony and political order. This position is supported by the theory of social functionalism. As a rule, this theory also referred to as theory of functionalism tries to explain how the relationships among the parts of society are created and how these parts are functional (meaning having beneficial consequences to the individual and the society) and sometimes dysfunctional (meaning having negative consequences). It focuses on consensus, social order, social structure and social functioning in society. Structural functionalism as the theory is sometime referred, sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability; it states that social lives are guided by social structures, which are relatively stable patterns of social behaviour (Macionis, 1997). Social structure is understood in terms of social functions which are consequences for the operations of society. All social structure contributes to the operation of society (Imhonopi & Urim, 2012). Terms developed in this theory include: order, structure, function (manifest or direct functions and latent or hidden, indirect functions), and equilibrium. Structural functionalists ask pertinent questions such as: what holds society together? and what keeps it steady? Similarly, the structural functionalist theory pays considerable attention to the persistence of shared ideas in society. The functional aspect in the structural-functionalist theory stresses the role played by each component part in the social system, whereas the structural perspective suggests an image of society wherein individuals are constrained by social forces, social backgrounds and by group memberships.

One of the challenges to Nigeria's national integration is the lack of consensus. And there can be no consensus without dialogue. While some measure of social order or subdued violence has been reached in Nigeria, the ethnicities that make up the modern Nigerian state must come to the table of negotiations to discuss the future and destiny of the country, how they want to be governed, how resources need to be shared, what system of government needs to bind and guide constituent units, how power is to be shared and the redefinition of citizenship, settler and indigeneship status, and many more. Nigerians should not be under an illusion that:

Nigeria is one because the presence of unity as Babawale (1991) postulated is artificial. Events unfolding remind a careful observer of the prescient conclusion by Awolowo (1947), one of the progressive founders of the nation, that Nigeria is not a nation but a mere geographical expression. Any attempt to disagree with this prognosis without addressing the fundamental flaws weakening the nation-state may soon assume cataclysmic consequence.

c) Ethnic Issues in the Nigeria's Socio-Political History: A Review

Nigeria is undoubtedly a plural society with different ethnic groups, religions, languages, cultures and institutional arrangements. As a heterogeneous society, ethnic groups have been identified each

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interacting with one another in competition for power and wealth.

This has resulted into ethnic conflict. A major contributor to ethnic conflict in Nigeria is what some observers have described as constitutional factor. The focus of this line of argument is that constitutional developments in Nigeria, particularly the colonial constitutions, tended to engender ethnicism and hinder national integration of particular interest is Arthur Richard Constitution of 1946. This constitution established the first regional governments in Nigeria. Although the constitution achieved the integration of North and South in a common legislative council, it actually brought to force the concept of regionalism. Many political observers and commentators have observed that the 1946 constitution formed the beginning of the process of fragmentation along ethnic line in Nigeria. The Nigerian constitutional changes all along the colonial rule encouraged factionalism, which later resulted into ethnic nationalism. By definition, ethnic nationalism is seen in this paper as the tendency to see one's self as a member of an ethnic group rather than as a member of a nation. This tendency is shown in the allegiance individuals in this country pay to their ethnic groups. Consequently, many still prefer to identify primarily with their ethnic groups rather than with the state. This manifestation of strong allegiance to ethnic group encourages primordial sentiments among Nigerian people. Thus, the individuals are concerned with socio-economic and political development of their own group and not the nation as a whole.

It is important to note here that ethnic politics has manifested itself in many ways in Nigeria. Particularly interesting is the one that is related to party formation.

The whole process of party formation began in the capital of Lagos with the formation of the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) in 1923. The first two parties, namely: Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) and the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) might be understood for not being national in structure. This was because the elective principle introduced by the Clifford Constitution in 1922 was a limited one that restricted elective representation to only Lagos and Calabar. The NNDP, which was basically a Lagos affair, was founded by Herbert Macaulay in response to the introduction of the elective principle. The constitution gave Lagos three elective unofficial seats in the legislative council. The NYM came later in 1934 only as a challenge to NNDP domination of Lagos politics. The first political party that began with a national outlook was the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroon (later renamed National Convention of Nigeria Citizens – NCNC). Although the NCNC started with a national orientation and nationalist commitment, an ethnic perception of it emerged mainly as a result of what Crawford, (1993) called the flamboyant and controversial personality of the NCNC leader, Nnamdi Azikwe. In response to the perceived threat of Ibo domination, the Yoruba group founded a political party named the Action Group. Although it was originally conceived to be a national party, it could not escape from its 'Yoruba genesis'. The Action Group soon disclosed its ethnic identity because of the close association between its birth and establishment of a pan-Yoruba cultural association, the Egbe Omo Oduduwa.

For the same fear of ethnic domination, the Hausa-Fulani emirates of the North floated the Northern People's Congress (NPC). According to Crawford (1993), the NPC was built upon a triple cultural support, which includes: the fear shared by all classes of Southern (and especially Ibo) dominations, the linked role of religious notables and emirs as defenders of faith, and the social discipline enforceable through the authoritative hierarchy of the emirates. Consequently, the fear shown by all the three ethnic groups produced the three parties, which were mainly ethnic in their origin, composition and the interest they served.

Another interesting manifestation of ethnic politics in Nigeria is the administrative division of the country into three regions. Each of these regions was dominated by one of the three ethnic groupings thereby reinforcing the popular philosophy of three-player of ethnic game. Many things have been affected by this tri-polar pattern.

Particularly interesting was the move for self-government, which if attained would usher in a democratic government in Nigeria. The north was unwilling to see a self-rule at the centre. The position taken by the north on this issue was indeed another expression of fear of domination. The north then felt that the enlightened south could use their advantaged position to marginalize its people. The fear continues till today, almost six decades after independence.

III. Search for National Integration in Nigeria

In 1939, the colonial Governor then divided Southern Nigeria into East and West with a constitutional backing in the Richard's constitution of 1947 thus initiating the East-West disparity and political conflict situation in addition to the already existing North-South supremacy disparity and conflict situation of the colonial Nigeria. According to Ayoade (1998:103), the strategy of the conflict of the three parts of Nigeria determined the conditions of victory in any election. For the West with approximately a quarter of the population of Nigeria which included Benin and Delta provinces and the core Yoruba area, it can only be victorious with assistance from the East and North. Similarly, the East and the restive minorities in the southern and eastern extremities but with aa cohesive Ibo core area must will an

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appreciable support in the North and the West to savour victory. Of all the three contestants, it is the North that can win victories by keeping to itself and warding off political trespassers. It is thus obvious that it was the colonial administration that bequeathed Nigerian ethnic groups with an enduring legacy of mutual conflict and lack of national integration, suspicion and contempt (Afigbo,1986).

The Nigerian political history is replete with these sorts of different phases and modes of disparities between the North and the South on one hand and the North, West and East on the other hand even with the introduction of state creation in Nigeria. General Gowon created 12 states in 1967, General Murtala Mohammed raised it to 19 states in 1976 and General Babangida first raised it to21 states in 1989 and subsequently to30 in 1991. General Abacha later raised it to the present 36 states in 1996. By all calculations in the States distribution between the North and the South and the west and the East, the North was given greater liberty to solely determine the political fate of all Nigerians (Ayoade, 1998:106).

The problem of representational equity in Nigeria started with this problem of unequal North-South duality and then regional disparities in state creation. Federal character principle was promulgated to ensure fair and equitable treatment of all the component states and ethnic groups in the country. The argument was that if the component states and all ethnic groups were accorded fair and equitable treatment then a combination of a few states could not dominate the government to the exclusion of others. The principle was to promote national unity. The Constitution Drafting Committee, (CDC) in the Report of the Constitution Drafting Committee (1976), argued that it was a desire of Nigerians to nourish and harness "the diversities of ethnic origin, culture, language or religion" for the enrichment of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

It could therefore be argued that national integration was not the intention of the proponents of the federal character principle. It became a means to further strengthen the already strong and detriment North. According to Ayoade (1948:110) "The regime of federal character in Nigeria negates various definition of national or territorial integration. For example, Ernest Haas (1987:81) defines national integration as "a process whereby political actors in distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities towards a new centre, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing nation-state". Also, Coleman and Rosenberg (1987:80) define territorial integration as "the progressive reduction of cultural and regional tensions and discontinuities in the process of creating a homogeneous territorial community". These definitions place emphasis on the development of homogeneous community whereas the Nigerian federal principle encourages valorisation of ethnic individuality rather than dissolution of ethnic personality.

It can be recalled that the collapse of the 1st Republic in Nigeria was largely due to the ethnic styled politics played by the 1st Republic politicians since the entire 1st Republic political parties that stood for elections, had ethnic affiliations. The northern People's Congress (NPC) was affiliated to the North, the Action Group (AG) was affiliated to the West and the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroun (NCNC) was affiliated to the East. As a result, it became impossible for national integration to thrive in the country. The sentimental, parochial, ethnic and tribal politics played was inimical to national integration. This led to the Western Region crisis that culminated in the bloody coup of 1966 which ended the 1st Republic. The young military officers that carried out the coup cited ethnic politics, corruption, election rigging etc. as factors that motivated their actions (Chubah Eze, 2019).

It is sad that the same factors that were cited for the collapse of the 1st Republic that also led to the collapse of 2nd Republic in Nigeria. The 3rd Republic was aborted by the Military. The present 4th Republic since 1999 is still saddled with the earlier mentioned factors that militated against Nigerian national integration coupled with the current public outcry for wanton abuse of power, ethnic domination and exploitation, stollen mandates, monumental corruption in high places, and out of control insecurity of lives and property perpetrated by insurgent and ethnic based militias and religious fanatics.

a) Causes of Ethnicity Problems in Nigeria

Nigeria at the age of 60 years is still searching for a new political order. The full realisation of this objective has been made impossible because of the dominance of the factor of ethnicism, a factor which has affected the survival of democratic rule in Nigeria. One of the main causes of ethnic problem is ethnic nationalism. By definition, this means a tendency to see one's self, first and foremost as a member of an ethnic group rather than as a member of a nation. This tendency has been shown in some ways and particularly in the allegiance people pay to their ethnic group. In Nigerian society today, many prefer identification with their ethnic group rather than with the nation or even state. The above shows that Nigerians still exhibit a strong allegiance to ethnic group which has consequently encouraged primordial sentiments among Nigerian people.

The origin of ethnicism in Nigeria is traceable to the nation's colonial experience, particularly the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates of Nigeria in 1914. According to Osadolor (1998), the act of amalgamation was not a federal idea.

Lugard did not conceive of a federal state for Nigeria. In the statement of the colonial office when

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Lugard submitted his proposals on 9 May, 1913, it was stated that 'Sir Lugard's proposals contemplate a state which is impossible to classify' (Osadolor, 1998). Lugard had neither a unitary nor a federal or confederal agenda for the country. Rather, the two regions were brought together for administrative convenience and reduction in administrative cost. This explains why the successive constitutions developed for governing the country between 1914 and 1951 can hardly be categorised either as unitary, federal or confederal. It was the turbulent political climate, which brought the 1951 Macpherson constitution to a premature end, which led to the production of the first federal-like constitution for Nigeria in 1954. The colonial Secretary, Oliver Lyttleton, convened a constitutional conference in London from July 30 to August 22 1953 to revise the 1951 constitution, which was originally expected to last for five years. At the conference, a federal constitution was accepted by the leaders of the main political parties. The solution was not reached easily, but it was the only feasible answer to the problem of national integration (Osadolor, 1998). The political restructuring produced the 1954 constitution that established a federal framework for Nigeria. The federal framework notwithstanding, the seed of mutual suspicion and fear of domination has geminated and was fast growing among the major ethnic groups in the country such that the workings of the new constitution became difficult. The point being made here is that federalism in Nigeria was not a deliberate design of the founding fathers but an accidental adoption, having found themselves in a tight situation with no better alternative available. The implication of this was that Nigerian federalism lacked the requisite foundation for a formidable federal system, the resultant effect of which is loyalty to ethnic groups rather than loyalty to the nation.

In a circumstance of mutual suspicion and fear of domination, competition for power among ethnic groups becomes unavoidable. And it is on the basis of this fear of domination that formation of political parties in Nigeria always reflects a strong dose of ethnicism.

Colonialism left behind for Nigeria a non-hegemonic state that further aggravated the crisis of ethnicism in the country. This is succinctly captured by Osaghae (2001) when he writes that:

...the pervasiveness of ethnic politics in the country is taken to be symptomatic of aggravated crisis of legitimacy that has engulfed the state, and is explained in terms of the proven efficacy of the ethnic strategy, the weakness of alternative identities and political units, the prevailing milieu of lawlessness that has enveloped the country's political landscape, and the inability of the state to act as an effective agency of distributive justice.

In a similar work, Aluko (2003) identifies the Legacy of Colonialism and monopoly of power by the major ethnic groups and their consequent marginalisation of the minority groups as major factors promoting ethnic nationalism in Nigeria. Other causes of ethnicism identified include poverty of leadership in terms of forging national integration among the multiple ethnic nationalities in the country (Babangida, 2002). Babangida argues further that mass poverty and unemployment creates alienation and insecurity, which in turn encourage Nigerians to experience and prefer accommodation within the social insurance system of ethnic nationalities.

Further identified causes of ethnic problems in Nigeria have to do with competition for employment and political exploitation. The former has been caused by the ever-increasing number of school leavers who now troop to the urban centre in search of jobs, which many a time are not found. And where such jobs are found they are given according to ethnic affiliation. The later has to do with politicians who manipulate ethnic loyalties in order to increase their winning chance at the polls. This aspect of ethnicism in the Nigerian situation has set one ethnic group against another with immeasurable consequences.

IV. Strategies for Ensuring National Integration

Various integrative mechanisms have been adopted in Nigeria since 1914, and they include:

i. The Amalgamation
ii. Nigerianization Policy
iii. National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Scheme
iv. Unity Schools
v. National Language Policy
vi. Federalism, Party Politics
vii. New Federal Capital Territory
viii. States and Local Governments Creation (Ojo, 2009: chs. 4-8)

There are also other integrative mechanisms that have been adopted such as National Festivals of Arts and Culture, National Sports Festival, National Football League, as well as other sports competitions, policy of Federal Character (cf. Osaghae, 1994; Yakubu, 2003), which was to ensure that public appointments and positions are spread across members of all the geo-political zones, states, local governments, wards and communities such that all ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups are represented in government institutions and agencies as much as possible.

Partly owing to the resilience of ethnic groups, Otite (2000:197) strongly suggested that: " … one major step for solving ethnic problems is to recognize the fact of ethnic pluralism and ethnicity, irrespective of the politico-economic system of the plural society concerned. Ethnicity can then be properly viewed as a major force and as a part of social change. This may

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assume a dialectic form of a continuous synthesization of interacting and conflicting opposites".

However, Nzongola-Ntalaja (2001:17) is of the opinion that "ethnicity alone cannot constitute an insurmountable obstacle to a process of nation-building in which priority is given to eradicating poverty and providing all citizens with social and economic opportunities in a fair and equitable manner". This aspect of fair socio-economic opportunities as a strategic tool for fostering national integration is similarly given vent in extenso by Onwudiwe (2001:319) who explains that:

For the individual, ethnic and national interests are always at odds, and have always been so in many other countries, as well. Yet, one key to the unity of Nigeria may lie in the perception with which its leadership confronts this burdensome dilemma. One way to lure the individual away from the safety of his ethnic fixture to national political loyalty is through substantive policies that promote confidence and pride in the Nigerian nation and a sense of belonging to it by the individual Nigerian.

The inability of the national government to meet the basic needs of the individual causes the decline of confidence in the country. Among these basic needs, the economic ones are the primary. Indeed, the need for government arose in the first instance because of the need by individuals to regulate increasingly more complex economic relationships in a more orderly fashion. Few will disagree that the most important political problems in Nigeria in recent years from 'June 12' to the demand for the actualization of Biafra ultimately turned on economic interests. The successful abrogation of Abiola's mandate by Abacha is not unrelated to the fear of marrying the so called southern economic domination with political power.

Thus, the effective and democratic management of ethnic groups has, as well, been strongly canvassed in Nigeria in terms of respect, justice and fairness, equal benefits of "the valued things of society," even development, state actors and state policies being purged of all forms of ethnic group bias, and encouraging or developing cross-cutting cleavages instead of "cumulative cleavages with exclusive orientations." Socio-cultural groups should also be treated by the state just as socio-cultural groups for the purpose of cultural identity only and not as political groups for representation of the people. Socio-cultural groups are not to be politicized (Onyeoziri, 2002:38-41). He went further and articulated that:

The existence of multiple nationalities within the same nation-state tends to create problems for the stability of the state. The problem derives from two main sources. One, the national attraction which nationalities have for citizens who share their cultural identities tempts the citizens to develop more attachment or loyalty to their nationality groups than they would have for their nation-state. This near-automatic attraction for the nationalities can be weakened or strengthened by the attitude of the state authorities to these nationality groups. Where the state treats these nationality groups with respect, justice and fairness, it stands a good chance of attracting their support and loyalty. But where the state marginalizes the nationalities and disrespects them by seeking to coerce their loyalty, the groups are more likely to feel estranged from the state, and therefore become a threat to the stability of the state.

Moreover, he also argued that there is need to democratize the relationship between the nationalities and the state. He adds that this democratization project requires that the integrity of each nationality group be recognized, respected and defended. To him, this policy of mutual respect should remove from the system the fear of domination, oppression and discrimination from both the minority and the dominant group alike. The idea here is to create a multinational state in which there is a healthy respect for all nationality groups. Similarly, national integration in Nigeria "requires that opportunities be provided within the system for individuals and groups to find some meaningful place and role relevant to the survival of their locality and the nation" (Otite, 1986:17).

These integrative strategies of recognition, respect and provision of opportunities for all nationality groups has apparently led to Onyoziri's postulation that:

Perhaps a new political theory of the state should not only seek to cure traditional theory of its suspicion of nationalities as potential threat to the stability of the state but should also free the state to see that its future stability requires it to treat its nationalities as partners in progress with fairness, equity and equal respect. The new political theory should go beyond to finally resolve the national question by making the intervention of nationalities unnecessary for every citizen of the state to enjoy all the benefits of membership without any form of discrimination, conscious or unconscious (Onyeoziri, 2001:45).

Consequently, there is need for "a strong state to be able to both win citizen loyalty and attachment to it, and prevail on the otherwise warring nationalities from tearing one another apart and ultimately the state. In this sense then the national question is this: "how do we achieve a harmonious relationship between the different nationalities within a state frame that is strong enough to win loyalty and commitment from all its citizens and nationalities" (Onyeoziri, 2001:47).

Apart from the above suggestions, Ojo (2005:17) in turn harps on the need to recognize that: … managing a federal system is a delicate balancing act requiring flexibility and rigidity, particularly rigidity on matters in which the operating principles are unambiguous. Therefore, the distribution of power, privileges and liabilities must follow commonly agreed principles both in form and in content. Indeed, no

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federal system can survive on an ad hoc basis neither can one function effectively where the spirit of its operating principles is constantly abused.

Crucially, too, "Nigeria needs to find a solution to the crisis of unity in fiscal federalism, political re-structuring (see Enahoro, (2002), derivative revenue sharing and the extensive decentralization of the present warped union where there is too much power and resources concentrated in the centre (Osuntokun, 2000:25). In essence, Nigeria needs an entirely different government approach based on a different philosophy that guarantee groups' rights by recognizing the heterogeneity of the polity" (Ojo, 2005: 61-62) rather than denying it, which is what is actually "dangerous for civil peace" as Professor Jean-Pierre Derriennic has declared (cited in Ojo, 2005:62).

As it has likewise been stressed by Olufemi (2005:69), "for a federal system to be acceptable it must guarantee the minimum conditions of self-determination or ethno-regional autonomy, resource ownership or fiscal federalism as well as equitable access to resources and opportunities for growth, development and actualization". True federalism is a kind of "power-sharing arrangement that promotes unity in diversity" and which "requires tinkering with the essentially centrist arrangement which is reflected in the 1999 Constitution through a measure of decentralisation that increases the powers of the federating units in terms of political and development responsibilities, and provides a guarantee of appropriate fiscal autonomy to carry out these responsibilities. But federalism is ultimately about bargain, dialogue, trade-off and compromise, all of which are at the heart of the federal culture and the domain of the political elite" (Egwu, 2005:112). Sam Egwu also thoughtfully stated extensively that:

While a national consensus needs to be built on the way forward, there are a number of issues that require urgent and immediate attention in shaping the future of Nigeria. These include issues of democratic consolidation, governance, and constitutional reform. With respect to the last issue, for example, there is need, to provide and entrench independent commissions around issues of minority rights and how to protect and advance such rights. The most important of these would be the rights of ethnic and religious minorities in whatever context they might exist. It remains a daunting challenge to state actors and the civil society to build a legitimate constitution by taking on board the popular interests and demands of the Nigerian people, because there is high political value in building ownership of the constitution. Above all, there is need to consider the reform of the state in the direction of bringing the state back-in to the arena of development (Egwu, 2005: 112-113).

The pertinent and urgent issues of democratic consolidation, good governance and legitimate constitution and development are critically important to the question of how ordinary Nigerians can enjoy the same feeling of Nigerianness on the basis of which our political leaders demand their political loyalty. According to Ebere Onwudiwe, this question assumes a nationalized citizenship which presently only exists in theory for millions of ordinary Nigerians. To him, the reality is that ordinary Nigerians have two citizenships, the citizenship of their states which they share in common with only fellow natives of their states, and the larger, more nebulous Nigerian citizenship, which they share with every other Nigerian. As Onwudiwe (2001:322) contends:

"Until there is in practice one Nigerian citizenship for all Nigerians, and until the individual Nigerian feels this citizenship relatively equally with other Nigerians from other states, through for example, the enjoyment of standardized civil liberties and equal opportunities in any part of Nigeria irrespective of state of origin, prospects for a united Nigerian state will remain hollow…States and local governments still discriminate against Nigerians who do not hail from within their boundaries. This government sponsored discrimination is a clear statement against national unity even as it represents an official case of government sanctioned human rights abuse". In the North of Nigeria, Southerners are only employed in the civil service only on non-pensionable basis. This is clear discrimination on citizenship criteria. Also, no southerner can become Principal or Headmaster in any state government secondary or primary school. What then is national integration?. The situation may not be too different in the south of Nigeria.

At the time of writing, Abia State, in South-East of Nigeria, sacked non-Abia state citizens (including Ibos from Anambra, Enugu and Imo States) and people from other states of the federation such as Edo State allegedly because of financial constraints. Discriminatory school fees are also charged in many states of the federation. However, Governor Adams Oshiomhole, a one-time Governor of Edo State in the south-south of the country abolished discriminatory fees in the state institutions of higher learning including the state-owned Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma. Nevertheless, discrimination is the general practice in Nigeria despite the few exceptions to the rule as we just mentioned in the case of Edo State under Governor Oshiomhole.

This unending problem of discrimination is no doubt fallout of the equally lingering fear of ethnic domination and scarcity of resources as well as poor governance. There is no doubt that the problem of ethnic suspicion still exists in Nigeria. The fear of the minority ethnic groups may even be worse because of the fear of being swallowed up by the majority ethnic groups and even other powerful minority ethnic groups in the country.

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Because of all these concerns and fears, states should be asked to specify the requirements and conditions for citizenship which non-indigenes from other states would be expected to meet. These different requirements and conditions could be harmonized at a national round-table where a common minimum set of conditions and requirements could be arrived at and generally agreed upon. The present omnibus provision of the 1999 Constitution for attaining citizenship has obviously not worked and the implementation in practical terms cannot just be by fiat. In other words, the implementation is problematic. Any feeling that all is well, that there are no ethnic suspicions or fears of ethnic domination, or that these suspicions and fears are not real or have no basis to exist, would be pretentious. Nigerians should no longer live in pretense. These fears and suspicions should be commonly discussed and addressed. With sincerity, openness and understanding, Nigerians should be able to accommodate and help themselves. With proper handling of things, mutual accommodation and understanding could be worked out and nurtured.

Indeed, the factors which promote socio-political disharmony should always be done away with and avoided. Policies such as those which promote one culture over others, disrespect, inequality, domination in any guise, uneven development, majoritarian democracy (instead of something even more than consociational democracy and proportional representation), discrimination, and others alike should be discouraged and avoided (Onyeozri, 2001). Somewhat along these lines, Larry Diamond (1990) has opined that there are four principal mechanisms for managing ethnicity, politically within a democratic framework: federalism, proportionality in the distribution of resources and power, minority rights to cultural integrity and non-discrimination, and sharing and rotation of power particularly through coalition arrangements at the centre. In a similar classification, Crawford Young (1994) outlines 'four major policy spheres' for the management of ethnic diversity. These are:

i. Constitutional formulas, particularly federal decentralized alternatives to the centralized unitary state;
ii. Cultural policies, especially in the fields of education and language;
iii. Remedies for marginalized population categories (indigenous peoples, immigrants, peripheral minorities); and
iv. Resources distribution issues (including "affirmative action questions"), both cited in Ojo, 2009:26).

Another plural accommodation and management strategy that is applicable to plural societies is that of Rupesinghe (1987). He summarises the broad-spectrum principles in his assertion that: democracy, devolution, and power sharing are important for accommodation and management of segmented societies. Within this spectrum are the instrumentalities of human rights, including minority and groups' rights, local political autonomy, affirmative action or quota system and other elements of consociationalism, secularism, and so on. They also include the five types of devolutionary arrangements identified by Gurr such as confederalism, federalism, regional autonomy, regional administrative decentralization and community autonomy (cited in Ojo, 2009:24-25).

One of the common themes of the above broad-spectrum principles for fostering national unity are that of avoiding exclusion of any group in a heterogeneous society. Emeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu seeks to unequivocally support this position when he strongly and colorfully advised that:

We should, as a people, beware of any policy founded upon exclusion: the exclusion of person, and of an area. Policies founded on exclusion look very much like AIDS. They invariably begin with self-indulgence, certain distortion and self-abuse. Once the disease has set in, there is no cure (Odumegwu-Ojukwu, 1989:200).

In summary, several methods of ensuring national integration have been adopted in Nigeria in the past as well as suggested. They include the amalgamation, the Nigerianization policy, NYSC scheme, unity schools, national language policy, federalism, new federal capital territory, states and local government's creation, national festivals, national sports competitions, and federal character principle. Others are recognition of ethnic pluralism and ethnicity, poverty eradication, provision of socio-economic opportunities, fair and equitable treatment, providing basic human needs and a sense of belonging, effective and democratic management of ethnic groups in terms of respect, justice, even development, unbiased policies, developing cross-cutting cleavages, citizen enjoyment of benefits without discrimination, and establishing a strong state. Yet others are adopting fiscal federalism, carrying out political restructuring, derivative revenue sharing, extensive decentralization, guaranteeing group rights, ethno-regional autonomy, building national consensus, legitimate constitution, commonly agreed citizenship requirements, democracy, devolution, inclusion, et cetera.

It is a fact that Angas, Ndokwa, Bini, Gusu etc. existed as separate societies and that Colonialism brought these separate geo-political entitles together in a new nation for political, administrative and economic purposes.

In the opinion of Nwosu (cited in Osinubi & Osinubi, 2006), the colonization of Africa and several other third world states ensured that peoples of diverse culture were brought together under one country. The

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same was the fate of Nigeria; Nigeria is undoubtedly a plural society with different ethnic groups, religions, languages, cultures and institutional arrangements (Ojie & Ewhrudjakpor, 2009). More so, because the mission of colonialism, which was majorly economic in nature, most of these peoples were not well integrated into the new states (Osinubi & Osinubi, 2006). Instead, some of the imperial powers cashed in on the cultural divergence of these countries to ensure the realisation of their objectives (Osinubi & Osinubi, 2006).

The disparate ethnic groups had been interacting before the advent of colonialism. The interaction between ethnic groups is regarded as ethnicity. Ethnicity in the opinion of Salawu & Hassan (2011) is a phenomenon, which involves interaction among various ethnic groups and which by itself does not pose any serious threat to unity of the State and by definition it means the interactions among members of many diverse groups (Nnoli, in Salawu & Hassan, 2011). In the words of Alemika (2004), ethnicity as a social phenomenon has objective and subjective, rational and non-rational dimensions.

a) *The Effects of Ethnic Politics on National Integration in Nigeria*

One of the factors that have seriously dampened the image and glory of Nigerian party politics is ethnicity. The first open display of ethnic chauvinism in Nigerian party politics was the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) episode in 1941 when the party broke-down due to ethnic feelings expressed in party politics. In 1941, the then President of NYM Dr. K.A. Abayomi was elected into the Legislative Council as a result, the post of the NYM President became vacant. Two foundational members of NYM, Ernest Ikoli (Ijaw by tribe) and Samuel Akinsanya (Ijebu Yoruba by tribe) strongly contested. Awolowo supported Ikoli while Azikiwe supported Akinsanya. At the end of the contest Ikoli won (Akuva, 2010:86). This episode generated tension between the Ijaw and Ijebu ethnic groups and their supporters. Coleman (1986:227) says that:

The selection of Ikoli as the candidate of the Movement was interpreted by Akinsanya and Ijebu Yoruba and Azikiwe and the Ibos who supported Akinsaya as a manifestation of tribal prejudice against the Ijebus and the Ibos. The result was that Azikiwe and most Ibos, as well as Akinsanya and some Ijebus, left the Movement… which after 1941 was composed mainly of Yorubas. This was the political spirit that was used to form the political parties that contested elections between 1959 to 1965.

According to Salawu1and Hassan (2011) the constant military incursions have made the development of democratic political culture a difficult task in Nigeria. A survey of the political scenario in Nigeria since independence will show the extent to which ethnic loyalty has affected the nation's dream to have democratic governance. The discussion here starts with an assessment of the political scenario in the First Republic. When Nigeria attained independence in 1960, she had a federal structure that was made up of three regions namely: the North, East and the West. Soon after Nigeria became an independent nation, the differences among the three regions became clear and amplified by the emergence of three regionally-based and tribally/ethnically sustained political parties. They were the Northern People's Congress (NPC, the National Convention of Nigeria Citizens (NCNC) and the Action Group (AG) led by late Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna of Sokoto from the North, Dr. Azikwe from the East and Chief Obafemi Awolowo from the West respectively.

The post-independence party politics activities in Nigeria took off on ethnic prejudice, Iroanusi (2000) argues that: the major factors responsible for the post-independence economic and political turbulence in Nigeria: …were the shaky tripartite federal structure with strong regionalism, disparity in the sizes and populations of the three regions; three regionally based and tribally sustained political parties and a weak political class driven by ethnic ideologies.

Obviously, ethnicity affected the foundation stone laying of party politics in Nigeria since independence in 1960. For instance, during the First Republic, three major political parties contested in the 1959 General Elections: Action Group (AG), Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) and National Council for Nigerian Citizen (NCNC). The AG which was launched by Awolowo in 1951 as a political party emerged from the Pan-Yoruba Organisation, Egbe Omo Oduduwa (Society of the Descendants of Oduduwa) organized by Chief Awolowo in 1948. The AG was purely a Yoruba based party… In March 1951, the AG was declared as a Western Region Political Organization (Ajene, 1996:196).

Furthermore, the effect of ethnic politics on party formation was experienced in the Second Republic. Out of the five political parties that contested elections in 1979, three of them were highly northern in orientation and outlook. These parties were National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) and Great Nigerian Peoples Party (GNPP), besides all the leaders of these three political parties Shehu Shagari-NPN, Aminu Kanu - PRP and Waziri Ibrahim-GNPP were of the Hausa/Fulani ethnic group. Closely related Dr. Azikiwe headed the Eastern Regional party in the Second Republic (Nigeria Peoples Party –NPP). The same thing applied to the Western Region, its major political party in the Second Republic was the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) headed by the Western Region Chieftain Obafemi Awolowo.

This ethnic background of political parties went on up to the Third Republic whereby the Social Democratic Party (SDP) was deemed more tilted to the Southern Regional states while the National Republican

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Convention (NRC) was more inclined to the northern states. In the beginning of the Fourth Republic, the leading party the People's Democratic Party (PDP), started having some internal crises; the northern ethnic group felt they had been robbed of the position of the presidency. Despite the fact that Yar'adua, the Nigerian former president came from the north and Jonathan was his Deputy, the north was not comfortable that Jonathan was made the president after Yar'adua. He was not seen in the light of being a Nigerian citizen but as an outsider of the northern enclave. This is the damage ethnicity has caused Nigeria. Ethnic consideration in Nigeria today is more important than the quality of an individual and what he can deliver in the political space.

The demand and desperation for the creation of states and local government councils in Nigeria over the years has been provoked by ethnic marginalization. In Benue state for instance, the Tiv ethnic group is the most dominant group in the state, it has been producing the civilian executive governors since the creation of the state. In the first republic the chief executive was Aper Aku, Third Republic it was Moses Orshio Adasu, in the Fourth Republic it was George Akume, after which was Gabriel Suswan and today is Samuel Ortom. The Idoma who are a minority tribe have been crying foul over the political marginalization in the state. They feel the way out is the creation of 'Apa State' a project they have been upon for a long period now. This is just one case out of several calls by minority ethnic groups for state creation in the country. National Assembly had over 30 demands from different ethnic groups in the country demanding for states of their own at the last count.

Ethnicity also affected the allocation of federal resources in the first republic, because the Hausa/Fulani was in charge of the administration in the First Republic. They used the opportunity to allocate most of the federal funds to the Northern Region than they did to other regions.

From 1961 to 1966 the Hausa/Fulani NPC Northern leadership allocated more funds to the Northern Region than the West and the Eastern Regions. This financial injustice pained NCNC who was in coalition with NPC at the federal level but could not do otherwise. Ethnicity has also been seen as a major factor behind most of the civil unrest in the democratic journey of Nigeria. According to Imobighe (2003:14) and Alebo (2006):

Ethnic and inter-communal conflicts have become so pervasive that there is hardly any part of the country that has not been affected. It is now generally understood that Nigeria is grappling with a rising wave of ethnic bloodshed in which well over 2000 people have died since military rule ended in 1999.

Another effect of ethnicity on the Nigerian polity is that it has heightened political competition in electoral contest. Most ethnic group insisted on winning elections by duress especially in their regions. No wonder, in the First Republic, Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) had to return some candidates unopposed even before the elections were begun. This kind of political behavior created tension in the polity, according to Hembe (2003:110):

The contestants sought power by projecting themselves as champions of this or that ethnic group, thereby splitting the country into hostile ethnic blocks. The struggles were spearheaded by regional governments and the leaders chose to rationalize them in ethnic rather than intra-class terms (Nnoli, 1978). Furthermore, Hembe (2003:110) citing Onobu (1975) says that:

Each party sponsored and supported ethnic minorities in order to destabilize the areas dominated by others, thereby promoting the proliferation of ethnic sentiments and the growth of ethnic tension throughout the country. It was essentially these inter-ethnic struggles that led to the emergence of multi political parties in the country today.

Ethnic nationalism has had a lot of negative consequences for the nation's movement towards integration and democratisation to the extent that it remains an enduring threat to institutionalisation of democracy in Nigeria. Among its resultant negative consequences as observed by Babangida (2002), 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 uprising of ethnic militias across the country; the Odua People's Congress of the southwest, Arewa People's Congress in the north and Egbesu in the east among others.

It is quite obvious therefore that ethnicity has affected every aspect of the governing process in Nigeria. It will be highly deceptive for anybody to think that ethnicity is not harmful to Nigeria and its quest for development.

b) Major Challenges towards National Integration in Nigeria

While it is easy and very tempting to blame the colonialists for all of Nigeria's woes, history and recent events in the country have revealed the covert selfishness, hunger for power and primitive accumulation of wealth exhibited by the political elites. Much worse than this, many political leaders exploit ethnicity for personal advantages.

Consequently, the first hurdle in the path of national integration in Nigeria has been a regenerative breed of selfish and greedy political gladiators who

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seize power through the barrel of the gun or through stolen electoral mandates. As they competed for power, prestige and associated benefits, the political elites in a bid to secure the support of members of their own ethnic groups accentuate ethnic differences and demonize members of other ethnic groups. The brutal killings of youth corps members in the North following the declaration of the results of the presidential elections in 2011 speaks volumes of the naked thirst for power and political position which brings out the beast in political leaders.

Secondly, corruption has so permeated the entire fabric of state that the issues that cause disaffection among ethnic nationalities in the country such as poverty, hunger, illiteracy and its attendant limited opportunities, unemployment, marginalization, infrastructural decay, homelessness and lack of access to quality health care products of corruption. Rather than look to the West to find solutions for corruption, Nigeria should begin to look to the East (Asia) where capital or severe punishment is meted out on corrupt state officials.

Skewed federal system as it is being practiced in Nigeria today is another challenge for national integration. In their very thorough study on the failure of the federal system to address the question of unity, local rule and development in the country, Imhonopi & Urim (2012) argue that federalism as it is presently practiced in Nigeria suffers because of lack of fiscal federalism, over-centralisation of power at the centre, laidback or non-viable states, absence of state police, among others. More importantly, federalism in Nigeria has failed to guarantee national integration on one hand and yet fails to guarantee local rule on the other hand. According to them, although Nigeria does not have a better option for democracy, it cannot continue to administer the polity based on the existing federal arrangement.

The fear of losing control by the ruling class is another issue standing in the path of national integration in Nigeria. For many years now, the people of Nigeria have continuously canvassed for an opportunity to hold a national conversation to address the present political configuration called Nigeria all to no avail. Building on the scholarly work of Nnoli (1979), Ifeanacho & Nwagwu (2009) have contended that the ruling class in Nigeria inherited a state structure and has left it without any form of modification or moderation up until now. According to them, instead, the ruling class is preoccupied with the use of state paraphernalia for accumulating surplus without producing this surplus. The resultant contradiction is an institutionalized myopic and visionless ethnic-centered leadership with separatist and particularistic political outlook (Nnoli, 1979). Fifthly, lack of political will to do the right thing by the political leadership has remained one reason the country has continued to flounder in the sea of confusion and tottering the precipice of ethnic division.

Another hurdle to realizing national integration in Nigeria is the existence of weak institutions of the state. It seems these institutions are kept weak to feather the political and economic fortunes of the ruling class. In Nigeria, it is criminal to be honest and honest to be criminal. Such weak, embryonic, sterile, insensitive and amoral characteristics of state institutions have further tilted Nigeria to the precipice. Lastly, lack of fairness, justice and equity in the country with regard to resource allocation and distribution, power sharing, enjoyment of fundamental human rights and punishment of criminals who hide under political umbrellas or bunkers created by the ruling class takes the country backwards with regard to national cohesion.

c) Prospects for National Integration

As optimists this paper believes that national integration in Nigeria has bright prospects with the observations of certain normative standards such as:

i. The establishment of a norm which would guarantee access to all the citadels of political offices in the state. For instance, when there is an arrangement to ensure that each integrated group would have their turn to produce the President, Governor, Chairman of the Local Government and councilors respectively, this would certainly reinforce the interest of the integrating units towards national integration in Nigeria. This is indeed the answer to majoritarian tyranny.
ii. A genuine commitment to anti-corruption war and the 'due process principles', would be a confidence-building measure towards integration. This would curb tax evasion which denies the government of enormous resources. This is because there are many individuals and corporate organizations which under-value and in extreme cases refuse to pay taxes. Their complaints being that the funds would never be utilized for socio democratic developments, hence, there is no reason to pay taxes.
iii. Leadership has always been a problem in Nigeria, hence Professor Chinua Achebe's epic novel, 'The trouble with Nigeria'. There is an urgent need for a leadership which understands the dynamics of integration and which incorporates it into its budget and judiciously implement same. This would go a long way to build the confidence needed among the people for integration.
iv. The fiscal imbalance in Nigerian federalism, could be addressed using the Pigou thesis, which posits that the costs imposed on one section of the community by another should be the basis of a tax on the beneficiary, which could be re-distributed to compensate those suffering the costs (Pigou, cited in Adedeji, 1966). The problematic issue of the

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current situation is that those enjoying the resources do not produce enough, therefore making it difficult to impose taxation to achieve this purpose.

V. Conclusion and Recommendation

a) Conclusion

From the foregoing, the quest for national integration is an important, serious and demanding task. In order to achieve national integration therefore, not only must the government reel out realistic and feasible developmental policies and programmes that are applicable throughout the whole country and which are implemented evenly across the county. The exclusive list in the Constitution must be reviewed to give more powers to the states. It is believed that if the centre is made less attractive, development in all ramifications, (including political development of the country), will go down to the grassroots. Once the component groups in the country have a sense of belonging in terms of balanced and equitable distribution of the resources of the nation and equal opportunity in the political life of the country, there is bound to be national integration. It must begin to build enduring institutions bigger and more powerful than the leadership. The leadership must become more accountable to the people and those members of the ruling class who fan the embers of hatred, exploitation, ethnicity, marginalization and underdevelopment must be made to face the full wrath of the law. Corruption which has become endemic must be fought until it is either eradicated or forcibly punished so that those who engage in it do so at their own risk. Mass mobilization of the hoi polloi is necessary to reorient them with the right values consistent with a modern and emerging economy. Nigeria's diversity is not the problem, the managers of the state are. Nigerians must arise from the ashes of fear, wrongly inspired awe for political leaders and timidity and begin to make demands on the political leadership on what they want.

b) Recommendations

Drawing from the assessment of the issues underlying the challenges of ethnic politics on national integration of Nigeria and the resultant impact, these recommendations were made for effective management ethnicity in Nigerian politics for enhancing sustainable development of national integration of Nigeria. In the first place, government of Nigeria should put in place adequate public enlightenment programs (through its agencies such as National Orientation Agency (NOA) etc.).Government should include subjects, topics etc. that will enlighten younger generation on the effect of ethnic nationalism and the ways to avoid promoting ethnic sentiments in issues of national concern or consciousness through the Ministries of Education (both at State and Federal level). Government of Nigeria should ensure adequate protection of lives and property in each community or state of the federation. Government can commission the linguists to develop a national language for the country over time (just as the case of Swahili in East Africa). In case of appointment to offices and positions, merit should be given a place while implementing a fair federal character principle upon an acceptable constitutional review of the principle. This paper strongly recommends that the legal provisions for Federal Character principle enshrined in the Nigerian Constitution be reviewed to ensure transparent and genuine application of the principle without sacrificing merit on the altar of mediocrity and that the focus of the constitutional review should be on creating a homogeneous territorial political community with progressive reduction or total elimination of religious, cultural, ethnic or regional tensions, conflicts and socio–political imbalances among the ethnic or regional groupings within the country.

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