Implications of Ethnic Identity for National Integration in Nigeria

by

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Abstract

This paper uses interview as the primary source of its data, and the analysis of newspaper, journal articles textbooks and other resources as secondary data. Hence, this study seeks to understand the background of ethnic identity in Nigeria, and to identify the possible implication of ethnic identity for sustainable integration in the fourth of republic Nigeria.

Keywords: elite, ethnic, federal, state, integration, Nigeria

Introduction

One of the distinguishing elements of Nigeria's recent political history is the intensification of ethnic-politics in the attainment of political desires (Genova, 2006; Osaghea, 2004). This has manifested in issues such as political power, admission to tertiary institutions of learning (College of Educations, Polytechnics', and Universities), appointment to public/political office, etc., by the various ethnic nationalities that make up the country. Ethnic-politics, to paraphrase Osaghea (2004), are the forms of political participation that are ethnical in nature, and in the opinion of Genova (2006), represent the single most difficult issue to settle in Nigeria. It is perceived as the fulcrum of various forms of nationalism, which range from assertions of language and cultural autonomy to the demand for local autonomy and self-determination, in Nigeria (Osaghea, 2004).

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 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 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.

Statement of the Problem

In the works of Akwara, Udaw, & Onimawo, (2013), Alapiki (2005), Bassey et al. (2013), Ifidon (1999), Ekanola (2006), 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 identity 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.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The study used primary and secondary data. The primary data were collected through in-depth interview. The interview was conducted with a sample of 12 academic staff selected using multi-stage sampling technique. The respondents were selected from federal universities in the former regional order that existed at the independence of Nigeria in which the Western, Northern, and Eastern were political and administrative regions, through purposive sampling technique. In each of the regions, one federal university was selected purposively. In each of the institution, four academics were purposively selected: two from the Department of Political Science and two from the Department of Sociology, Local Government Studies or African Studies. The selected academics are those working on or specializing in federalism, national integration, local government, African studies, ethnic studies and related areas. The secondary data were sourced from existing academic works, journals, newspaper reports and other relevant materials on the subject matter. Data were analyzed using descriptive and content analysis. Thus, the study adopts the theories of elitism.

Elites derive from a fundamental and universal fact of social life, namely, the absence in any large collectivity of a robust common interest (Higley, 2008). Elites may be defined as persons who, by virtue of their strategic locations in large or otherwise pivotal organizations and movements, are able to affect political outcomes regularly and substantially (Higley, 2008). Put differently, elites are persons with the organized capacity to make real political trouble without being promptly repressed.

In his work 'politics: who gets what, when and how', Harold Lasswell views man in society as belonging to either the elite or the mass. The elite are the influential who gets the most of what there is to get; the rest are the mass (cited in Ulmer, 1965). More so, C. Wright Mills defines the power elite as those who are able to realize their will even if others resist it. In practical terms the power elite for Mills consists of the political, economic and military circle which share, through overlapping cliques, control over decisions having at least national consequences (Ulmer, 1965). They consist not only of prestigious and "established" leaders – top politicians, important businessmen, high-level civil servants, senior military officers – but also, in varying degrees in different societies, relatively transitory and less individually known leaders of mass organizations such as trade unions, important voluntary associations, and politically consequential mass movements (Higley, op cit).

In the identification of the elites therefore, most identifiable elites seem to have one thing in common; the pursuit of power (Ulmer, 1965). More so, the elite are believed to have some attributes which distinguished them. In line with the above, Mosca (cited in Higley, 2008) emphasized the ways in which tiny minorities out-organize and outwit large majorities, adding that "political classes" – Mosca's term for political elites – usually have "a certain material, intellectual, or even moral superiority" over those they govern. Pareto (cited in Higley, 2008) postulated that in a society with truly unrestricted social mobility, elites would consist of the most talented and deserving individuals; but in actual societies elites are those most adept at using the two modes of political rule, force and persuasion, and who usually enjoy important advantages such as inherited wealth and family connections. Michels (cited in Higley, 2008) rooted elites ("oligarchies") in the need of large organizations for leaders and experts in order to operate efficiently; as these individuals gain control of funds, information flows, promotions, and other aspects of organizational functioning power becomes concentrated in their hands. In Nigeria, there are series of resources under the control of the elite. One of the many resources used is ethnicity. In the words of Osaghea (2004),

> Ethnicity is not a resource only for the elites and the non-elites are not the passive materials of ethnic manipulation…. However, the elites are still predominant ethnic actors largely because they are in the forefront of political and economic competition and it is they who use ethnicity to get the big things that attract attention- contracts, appointment and promotion to top position in the public and private sectors, securing electoral victories and so on.

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The integration of the inherited state (Nigeria) will depends majorly on the integration of her elite. What then are the characteristics of elite integration? Putnam (cited in Gulbrandsen, 2012) identified six "integrative factors "or" dimensions of integration" to include; social homogeneity, common recruitment patterns, personal interaction, value consensus, group solidarity and institutional context, of which, according to Putnam, value consensus is perhaps the most central (Gulbrandsen, 2012). Also, Kim and Patterson (cited in Gulbrandsen, 2012) maintained that an elite group is integrated if its members share common social origins, educational and career experiences and recruitment paths. They also added that an elite group could be integrated by sharing basic values.

National integration or disintegration will mean the integration or otherwise of the elites. This is because the idea of ethnicity will continued to be used by the elite as a political weapon in achieving and furtherance of their selfish objectives within the state to the detriment of other ethnic group member of the inherited country.

Hence, the definitional elements here include identity, ethnic identity, nation, minority, and national integration. *Identity* is a distinguishing label that objectively exists, is subjectively felt, and enables its bearers to experience individually and collectively a sense of solidarity. As a label, it can be assumed by, or imposed on bearers, culture, clan etc. Second, *Ethnic Identity* is used to denote the distinguishing feature of a group of people with share historical identity, language, geographical location which distinguish the ethnic group from the other. *Nation* means a social group which shares a common ideology, common institutions, customs and sense of homogeneity. This is used in this study to mean a group with distinct identity such as language, religion, defines territory and distinct culture. Minority is a term arbitrarily adopted to label ethnic groups which had become disadvantaged to other groups that gained political power, and last, *National integration* can be regarded as a sub-process of the wider concept of nation-building which in itself is very complex. This is used in this study to means the building of cultural heterogeneous State into cultural homogeneous State.

Ethnic Identity and National Integration

Ethnic identity, in the opinion of Dangibo[1], Olatunji[2], Adebola[3], Olaniyi[4], Ugwueze[5], is a natural occurrence because the identities we bear were not chosen by us at birth but instead we were born into specific ethnic groups. The consciousness of belonging to a group (an ethnic group) is therefore natural. In a more specific manner, Olaniyi opines that ethnic identity in Nigeria is traceable to the primordial time. Long before the country was colonized each ethnic group has its identity. When the colonialist came they brought the existing ethnic group(s) together through amalgamation.

In the opinion of Adebola, the cause of ethnic identity in Nigeria can be seen under the remote cause which is a link to the immediate causes. The remote causes can also be divided into two. Before colonialism there was nothing like Nigeria, each ethnic group and kingdoms ruled themselves separately; loyalty was attached to individual kingdom and ethnic group. When colonialist came, they discovered that Nigeria is made up of different cultures languages etc. As a result, they couldn't introduce similar system of governance in the country; indirect rule was used in the north while direct rule was used in the south.

In a similar view, Ugwueze, Issah and Amujiri argue that there are many factors responsible for ethnic identity; there is cultural factor, political factor. The cultural factors includes the language, the dressing style, the type of food etc. The major factor is the colonial experience. The colonial leader created ethnic plurality to govern the relatively large country. We came from different angle and when we came, Lord Lugard because of administrative purposes merge Nigeria together under the Northern and Southern protectorate and ever since then, we have a lot of differences among ourselves.

And in the words of Alemika (2004), ethnicity results from condition of multiplicity of ethnic groups within a territory in which ethnic differences are mobilized for political and economic interests in relation to other groups. This condition of politicized ethnicity may lead to ethnic nationalism, whereby an ethnic group may demand for a separate nation, including using violent or terrorist method to advance its realization

However, flowing from the above, it is a commonplace fact that Nigeria is a multi-ethnic State with socio-cultural differences between its component ethnic groups all of which have resulted into cultural dissimilarity (Salawu & Hassan, 2011), which have manifested in diverse forms in Nigeria. The emergence of the Nigerian State has been traced to the colonial period. The nation did not emerge from the civil society, and hence defied the conventional social contract theory of state origin as identified by the trio of Hobbes, Rousseau and Locke whose point of consensus is the emergence of the State through the basic agreement of the civil society to live under the same polity for the purpose of law and order (Kolawole cited in Ajayi, 2006).

Nonetheless, ethnic identity is not a problem and does not constitute a problem for the integration of a nation. In the opinion of Aiyede[10], the promotion of ethnic identity is supposed to promote national identification. However it depends on how it is mobilized. This is because ethnic identity is different from the politicization of ethnic identity. Ethnic identity is, knowing who you are, knowing where you come from; not just as a Nigeria but as a member of an ethno-linguistic group. More so, in a contrary view, Yagboyaju opined that the promotion of ethnic identity such as language, culture, dressing etc. has prevented the achievement of national integration. He stated that language is a factor; each ethnic group does not want rival language to be superior to her own. That is why Christians always votes for Christian, Muslim always votes for Muslim etc.

In consonance with the above, Lafenwa[11] arguing from the perspective of political culture as put forth by Gabriel Almond posited that there is an extent to which the promotion of parochial culture can help promote development. He stated that when we talk about parochial culture (the promotion of language, mode of dressing etc.) will never promote national integration. We can only bring positive development when we use diversity to promote unity.

In a similar vein, Danjibo inquired that what is national integration without a national language, or identity? Though other than English language, other languages such as Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa has been adopted in the business of the national assembly but to what extents can the languages be used in national business? There is therefore the need to have a neutral language such as Swahili in East Africa which is different from ethnic languages and has helped to integrate most of the people in that region.

In Nigeria, while there are intra-ethnic differences, there is also inter-ethnic diversity. In the words of Ekanola (2006), and the Ijesha, Egba, Itshekiri and Ijaw peoples of Nigeria may be rightly described as ethnic groups while the more general classifications of the "Igbo" "Yoruba" and "Hausa" stand for nationalities, and thus, Nigeria as a multi-ethnic state is made up of different ethnic groups and nations.

In line with the above, Ojie & Ewhrudjakpor (2009) stated that "Before the advent of colonialism, indigenous nations and ethnic groups such as the Igbo, Yoruba, Ikwere, Afizere, Angas, Ndokwa, Bini, Gusu etc. existed as separate societies. Colonialism brought these disparate 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 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 examination 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.

The objectives dimensions of ethnicity on their own pose no problem because they merely define people in terms of their cultural heritage, practices and value orientations. They merely signify differences, which may be harmless either for development or destruction. However, the subjective dimension involves the politicization and mobilization of ethnic differences within a multi-ethnic society. The subjective dimension of ethnicity involves the evaluation as the basis of relationships with member of other groups. The subjective dimension of ethnicity also tends to generate the feeling of "we" versus "they".

Ethnic identity is not a problem in itself. It is therefore the politicization of identity (that is mobilization of ethnic identity) which constitutes a major problem, preventing the achievement of national integration in the multi-ethnic Nigerian State. In line with the above, Aiyede submitted that Nigeria is a heterogeneous society and this implies that there is ethnic identity. Ethnicity (that is the politicization of identity) is as a result of the level of sophistication of the society such as the level of education, literacy, enlightenment and level of exposure to modernity etc. and also, because of the political reward attached to it (ethnic identity). In Nigeria, there are majority and minority ethnic group. If democracy is about number it is easy to mobilize ethnic identity for the purposed of political advantage because of the fact that if identity can be mobilized in major ethnic groups the chances are that mobilizing that during election to win election.

More so, Danjibo opined that nationalism in the world over is built on ethnic identity. The politicization of ethnic identity is a necessity because of the heterogeneous nature of Nigeria. He submitted accordingly that naturally for a Nigerian state with over or about 500 ethnic groups, there will be that competition for resources such as political appointment, election etc. this is where politicization of ethnic identity comes in.

In line with the above, Osaghea (2004) identified the politicization of identity as something done by the elite and non-elite alike usually to achieve some proposed goals. According to him,

> Ethnicity is not a resource only for the elites; the non-elites are not the passive materials of ethnic manipulation…. However, the elites are still predominant ethnic actors largely because they are in the forefront of political and economic competition and it is they who use ethnicity to get the big things that attract attention- contracts, appointment and promotion to top position in the public and private sectors, securing electoral victories and so on.

The British, which created and colonized the country, have often been blamed for the low level of integration in the country. In line, Ademoyega (2012) stated that;

Nigeria's political problems sprang from the carefree manner in which the British took over, administered, and abandoned the government and people of Nigeria British administrators did not make an effort to weld the country together and unite the heterogeneous groups of people….Nevertheless, there was one evil that outlived the British administration, namely, political non-advancement. When the British came, they forcibly rubber stamped the political state of the ethnic groups of Nigeria, and maintained the *status quo* until they left. Upon their departure nearly a hundred years later, the people resumed fighting for their political right.

More so, Ekeh (in Alemika, 2004) expounded that many groups that now refer to themselves as Yoruba and Igbo did not understand the ethnic tag nor refer to themselves with such labels, prior to colonial rule, until they were persuaded and mobilized by politicians to so see and regard themselves as such. The consequence of this division is the resultant effect on the various national policies and programs to the promotion of parochial consciousness at the expense of national consciousness (Osinubi & Osinubi, 2006). In the words of Ekanola (2006), previous attempts to facilitate unity in the country have been largely constitutional and structural. With the adoption of federalism, various constitutional provisions have been put in place to guarantee the federal character of the Nigerian state, with the conviction that these would promote national unity, foster national loyalty and give every citizen a sense of belonging to the nation notwithstanding the diversities of ethnic origin, culture, language or religion that may exist. These provisions have not recorded the expected level of success, as some of them tend to jeopardize national interests in the quest for ethnic balance. Besides, it is observed that much of these constitutional provisions have not been respected in the history of the country. Political elites and the same officials who are supposed to guarantee the sanctity of the constitution have consistently violated them.

Danijibo thereby affirmed that the project called Nigeria today in term of integration has a question because what are we integrating? Is it the Hausa/ Fulani identity? Is it the Ibibio identity, Kanuri identity? The platform for integration is that some group must not feel marginalize, that is when they can give their best to the country.

Obviously, ethnic identity in Nigeria over the years has manifested and it is still manifesting in diverse ways to includes nepotism, election or voting pattern (such as voting for the member of their ethnic groups), appointment to political office, employment, distribution of amenities, discouragement of inter-ethnic marriage. Accordingly, Yagboyaju expatiated that essentially, one can look at the manifestation of ethnic identity from the political angle because politics determine the direction and also the tempo of so many other aspect of life; economic, social-cultural etc. Politics to a large extent determines it. So to a large extent do ethnic factor manifest in politics in term of who is to be elected into a particular office? Who is to be appointed into a particular office?

In order to combat the manifestations or the promotion of negative ethnic cultures in Nigeria with the aim of ensuring the development of national identity, the government of Nigeria has adopted and developed series of policies and program to that effect. The policies adopted or developed in Nigeria over time (as contained in extant literatures) includes National Youth Service Corp (NYSC), creation of States and local government, the federal character principle, Unity School project etc.

However, despite the years of implementation of these policies, the level of integration achieved with the policies has generated a lot of controversy. In assessing the impact of these policies and programs, Deutsch (cited in Bassey et al., 2013) listed the following 'integration evaluator' including: mutual sympathy, loyalty, we-feelings, trust and mutual consideration, co-operative action, and mutual predictions of behaviour. In the opinion of Olakitan (2015) on the impact of State creation in Nigeria,

> there seems to be no end in sight to the demand for state creation in Nigeria. Ethnic jingoists and politicians keep agitating for state creation in order to address perceived marginalization of the people in the scheme of things. The campaign for state creation has always been present throughout the history of Nigeria and has continued to this day. Each ethnic group has continuously come to think of itself as a distinct entity with interests and demands. They want states created whether or not the states have the capacity to survive economically or not

In line with the above, Bassey et al., (2013) expatiated that;

> It was hoped that states and local government creation will foster national integration with the elimination of minorities' fear and majority dominance which the regionalization promoted. This idea is faulty on the ground that minority-majority conflict cannot be eliminated using state and local government areas creation. States creation in this sense can be seen as a vicious circle. Once there is majority and minority and there is an attempt to appease the minority by creating state for them, a new minority will emerge from the former minority. This create "majority of minority" and "minority of minority" in the new state and the circle continue to revolve. Considering this proposition it is difficult to use state creations to solve majority minority problem.

Consequently, Alapiki (2005) on the state creation exercise of 1991 submitted that;

> Despite the announced intention, each state creation exercise in Nigeria, significantly, was accompanied by attendant effects that actually exacerbated preexisting interethnic and intergroup conflicts rather than relieving them. The August 27, 1991, events are particularly interesting in this regard. First, they demonstrate clearly the low level of political integration among the various peoples and communities that make up Nigeria. Second, the exercise was greeted with violence, rampages, and public demonstrations unsurpassed in the history of state creation in Nigeria. Third, the displacement of "non-state indigenous persons" and the subsequent "asset sharing" controversies among affected state governments were unprecedented. Instructive, too, is the fact that the violence and public demonstrations took place in all the geopolitical zones of Nigeria, that is, the former Northern, Eastern, and Western regions.

More so, other integration measures such as NYSC, federal character principle, Unity school project, electoral formula, national orientation agency (NOA) etc. have achieved some level of integration. In the opinion of Aiyede, the NYSC enables people to become acquiesce with other part of the country that ordinarily they would not have known. More so, through federal character in tertiary education, through the educational disadvantage state, there is lower cut-off for those states, also through federal character principle between political parties; there is representation of various ethnic groups. More so, the electoral formula requires that a winner reach out to the people of other ethnic group because a winner must record twenty-five percent from two-third majority of the state.

In the opinion of Yagboyaju, the measures, programs, policies, etc. had positive impact because we never can tell in the absence of these policies and programs. But to a large extent one would have expected a better impact than what we are having now meaning that we have certainly not attained the best as a country or nation. We have not attained our functional best it could still be built up. And in the opinion of Dangibo, the measure evolved in Nigeria includes federal character but the question is, how many groups will be represented? It is easy in the case of two or three ethnic groups. It is helping us to recognize ethnic identity in Nigeria integration effort.

Hence, the politicization of ethnic identity in Nigeria by the African political class (the elite and non-elite) etc. in the aim of getting the desires or dreams has watered down series of policies and programs put forth by the government of Nigeria. The integration measures adopted ranging from Electoral Formula, Federal Character Principle, NYSC, State and Local government creation through development of National Language have all recognised the importance of the identity of the diverse people of Nigeria and also has promoted the identity.

Ethnic Identity and Legitimacy of Government in Nigeria

Legitimacy crisis is a necessary outcome of a multi-ethnic state especially when there is mutual suspicion among the constituting ethnic group such as Nigeria. The crisis of legitimacy of government can take diverse forms including criticizing government programs, political appointment, voting for ethnic identity instead of nationality etc.

In the opinion of Alemika (2004), for ethnic and religious identities to trigger conflicts in governance, certain conditions must exist. Such conditions according to him includes ethnic and religious pluralism; economic deprivation and injustice; youth unemployment; gross income inequalities; discrimination, ineffective government that may fuel and manipulate ethnic and religious difference and the existence of ethnic and religious entrepreneurs who seek to benefit from politicization of identities by offering ethnic interpretation to public life and public policy.

In Nigeria, there is low employment opportunity for average young graduates of tertiary institutions. This has often encouraged the practice of invoking ethnic identity in getting a job. The outbreak of crisis and violation which governments do often ignore or respond to slowly has made some area to be named and tagged 'unsecure zone' in Nigeria. A graduate of tertiary institution in Nigeria is required to serve under the Nigeria Youth Service Corps (NYSC) in other part of the country other than there are immediate localities but years of violence and abuse of rights (including Killings etc.) has made some area to be deserted by Nigeria graduates.

There is the manipulation of the youths by the political class especially during elections on ethnic grounds. The prevalence of political violence and gross instability in Nigeria therefore, is an empirical indicator of the low level of political legitimacy. Legitimacy crisis is one of the most pernicious, endemic and the most challenging problem confronting the Nigerian state and her leaders. It has manifested in different ways; ethnic and religious crisis, domestic terrorism (Niger Delta crisis), civil disobedience, political disturbances to mention just a few, resurgence of agitation for Biafra etc. (Ogundiya, 2009).

Poor leadership has led to stagnation and alienation of the citizenry, causing a low level of system affect - the sense of belonging to and identifying with the political system (Mayer cited Fagbadebo, 2007). It is important to note, however, that elite crisis cannot be equated with legitimacy crisis, albeit, elite crisis can undermine the legitimacy of the ruling elite and often times degenerate into legitimacy crisis (Ogundiya, 2009). This can occur when the disgruntled elites attract the sympathy of the majority of the governed. Therefore, elite crisis could be seen as a source, symptom and/ or a consequence of legitimacy crisis resulting from low level of integration.

In achieving national identity in Nigeria, the constitution of Nigeria has adopted a democratic system of government which features the introduction of election, multi-party system, rigid and written constitution etc. In the aim of achieving national identity in Nigeria, the constitution has made provision for the creation of agencies to further the promotion of unity and achieve the desired level of national integration through the provisions of the various sections of the constitution. The constitution has also set up various commissions to enhance national integration. In the 1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria, there is the provision for the federal character commission and also the election to some posts in Nigeria such as the president are required to have two-third from the two-third of states in Nigeria. Thereby, the whole country is to serve as the constituency of the president. The essence of the approach is to ensure legitimacy of the president.

Elite and Sustainable Integration in Nigeria

Elite may be taken to mean different things to different people. However, it is important not to think of the political class only in terms of office holding politicians (Ibodje & Allen, 2009). The political class, in the context of Nigeria, refers to elected representatives, civil servants, political appointees and so on (Genieva cited in Ibodje & Allen, 2009). Accordingly, Putnam (cited in Ibodje & Allen, 2009) has used the word political elite to mean the political class, which he defined as those with more power than others; power, in the sense of ability to influence directly or indirectly politics and state activity.

In the view of Ojo (2010) governments are put in place for the benefit of the masses. Thus, in the formation of government and the initiation and implementation of policies and programmes, the interests of the masses are paramount and sacrosanct and are consequently safeguarded and protected. He observed, however, that in the third world, particularly in Africa, governments are formed, in most cases, for reasons other than altruistic. Across Africa and particularly in Nigeria, governments are formed, first and foremost, to benefit individuals, ethnic and social groups. Since being in government is generally seen as being at the fountain-head of wealth as well as the best form of insurance against domination by other ethnic or social groups, ethnic groups (and by implication, political parties which, more often than not, are ethnically or regionally based) do everything possible to control or partly control the federal government.

Thus, those post-colonial elites who assumed political power at the central and three regions, respectively, were more interested in concentrating power, including a disproportionate share of the country's wealth in their ethnic base or regions than really working towards building a nation-state where all ethnic groups will be fairly represented at both federal and regional levels. However, the political rivalry between the three main ethnic groups, the Hausa, Yoruba and Ibo to have a piece of the cake at the national level was indeed one of the crucial factors which led to the demise of the First Republic from 1963 to 1966 Clark (cited in Ojo, 2010).

The Nigerian government has remained distant from serving the interest of its people. Politics at the federal, state, and local levels of the Nigerian federation are dominated by the powerful mandarin who built vast patronage networks during the military days and who now use political office to expand these networks and their personal fortunes. Moreover, many of these so called "godfathers" have been cultivating personal militias to secure their positions, prompting a local arm race in some regions (Kew in Fagbadebo, 2007).

The personal ambitions of nationalist leaders constitute another obstacle to the tasks of nation building and integration in Nigeria. As they competed for power, prestige and associated benefits, nationalist elites sought support from members of their own ethnic groups by accentuating ethnic differences and demonizing members of other groups (Ekanola, 2006). Elites manipulate ethnic identities in their quest for power, and they construct ethnic conflict (Horowit in Osinubi & Osinubi, 2006). He asserts that a paradox of the position was the reality that many of the proclaimed anti-ethnicist and anti-regionalist leaders were themselves using ethnicity and regionalism as weapons to exclude, to hold onto power, marginalize and repress those in the oppositions-as well as to forces perceived either as rivals or enemies (Kazah-Toure in Osinubi & Osinubi, 2006). He further said, "It is not surprising that year(s) after colonialism, these states remained lowly integrated. This low level of integration has precipitated crises in many part of the country since the achievement of political independence in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Most states of the world are multi-ethnic in composition with diverse identity and language. Ethnic identity is a natural identity which is not created by anyone at birth. It is only an identifying factor to know who come from which ethnic group. It should not be a determining factor to define citizenship or who should have access to a particular benefit. The intensification of identity in national programme may lead to break up of the country. Thus, the hitherto measures adopted in Nigeria ought to have ensured sustainable national integration in Nigeria but the mobilization of ethnic identity has weakened to an extent the accomplish of the nationhood in Nigeria not because the programs or measures are designed to fail but due to the importance attached to ethnic identity as a means of having access to 'national cake' without which they may not fit into their desired economic, political and social objectives. Thus, Nigeria still remains a geographical expression.

Recommendation

Drawing from the assessment of the issues underlying ethnic identity in the national integration of Nigeria since independence, these recommendations were made for effective management of the arising development and enhancing sustainable integration of Nigeria. Therefore, the government of Nigeria should put in place adequate public enlightenment programs (through its agencies such as National Orientation Agency (NOA) etc.).The 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). Anyone promoting ethnicity should be prosecuted by the government. The government of Nigeria should ensure adequate protection of lives and property in each community or state of the federation. The 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 appointments, merit should be given a place while there may be consideration for federal character. The government should also provide enabling environment for job and job creation.

Notes

1. Interview with Dr. Danjibo, N. Senior lecturer in the Department of Political Science, University of Ibadan, Ibadan. The researcher conducted this interview with him at the University of Ibadan Campus on 7th Sept, 2015.
2. Interview with Dr. Danjibo, N. Senior lecturer in the Department of Political Science, University of Ibadan, Ibadan. The researcher conducted this interview with him at the University of Ibadan Campus on 7th Sept, 2015.
3. Interview with Dr. Danjibo, N. Senior lecturer in the Department of Political Science, University of Ibadan, Ibadan. The researcher conducted this interview with him at the University of Ibadan Campus on 7th Sept, 2015.
4. Interview with Dr. Danjibo, N. Senior lecturer in the Department of Political Science, University of Ibadan, Ibadan. The researcher conducted this interview with him at the University of Ibadan Campus on 7th Sept, 2015.
5. Interview with Dr. Danjibo, N. Senior lecturer in the Department of Political Science, University of Ibadan, Ibadan. The researcher conducted this interview with him at the University of Ibadan Campus on 7th Sept, 2015.
6. Interview with Mr. Issah, M. a lecturer in the Department of Sociology, University of Ilorin, Ilorin. The researcher conducted this interview with him at the University of Ilorin Campus on 8th Sept, 2015.

Interview with Dr. Amujiri, B.A. a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Public administration and local government, University of Nigeria, Nsuka. The researcher conducted this interview with him at the University of Nigeria Nsuka Campus on 11th Sept. 2015.

7. Interview with Dr. Aiyede, R. a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Political Science, University of Ibadan, Ibadan. The researcher conducted this interview with him at the University of Ibadan Campus on 7th Sept, 2015.

8. Interview with Dr. Yagboyaju, D.K. a lecturer in the Department of Political Science, University of Ibadan, Ibadan. The researcher conducted this interview with him at the University of Ibadan Campus on 7th Sept, 2015.

9. Interview with Dr. Lafenwa, S., a Senior lecturer in the Department of Political Science, University of Ibadan, Ibadan. The researcher conducted this interview with him at the University of Ibadan Campus on 7th Sept, 2015.

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