National Identity, Integration and Question: Implications for National Security and Stable Democratic Governance in Nigeria.

[1]Akwara, Azalahu F; [2]Udaw, Joseph E.; & [3]Onimawo, Jane

[1]*Akwara, Azalahu F. Departmemt of Political Science, Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria. E-mail: (aakwara@yahoo.com) (**Corresponding author**)*
[2]*Udaw, Joseph E. Departmemt of Political Science, Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria. E-mail: ettete2001@yahoo.com*
[3]*Onimawo, Jane. Department of Vocational and Technical Education, Ambrose Alli University Ekpoma, Edo State, Nigeria.*

Abstract

Most African countries are said to be unintergrated and that their main problem to stable democratic governance, and economic development is the intergration of their peoples and good governance. They are un-integrated because of the internal colonization of some ethnic nationalities by some others during the indigenous state formation process; and their external colonization by the Arabs and Europeans. As the colonization processes did not respect ethnic differences in Africa but super-imposing some ethnic nationalities over others, most African countries became multi-ethnic on independence. The need for the dividends of democracy (good governance, political stability and economic development) within the various ethnic nationalities in the same country has further complicated the problems posed by the multiplicity of ethnic groups, absence of intergration and super-imposition of some ethnic nationalities over others, thereby giving rise to a search for local and natural identity ("national identity" and "autonomy") by the various ethnic nationalities that feel dominated, humiliated and marginalised by the colonization processes. The search for "national identity" and "autonomy" now challenges the legitimacies of the governments and the very existence of the states as these searches are in the forms of armed struggles, formation of ethnic armies or militias, religious and ethnic conflicts, and terrorism. These contradictions can only be resolved through a discussion of the "national question" in the various countries. This paper therefore examines the issues of national intergration, national identity; and the national question in Nigeria and the problems they posed to national security and stable democratic governance in the country.

Key Words: National Identity; National Intergration; National Question; Colonization; National Security, Democratic Governance.

Introduction

Almost every African state has witnessed one form of political, religious or ethnic crisis or the other. In East and Central Africa, these problems manifest as ethnic violence and civil wars and terrorism as in Uganda, Kenya, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo and Tanzania. In the West African sub-region, they are in the forms of civil wars; ethnic conflicts and religious conflicts and terrorism as in Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Ivory Coast. In North Africa, they have manifested in the Arab revolts aimed at the over throw of insensitive and non-Islamic regimes, and regimes tending towards monarchies as the cases with Sudan, Egypt, Algeria and Libya.

In countries where they occur, these crises arose first, as a result of the internal contradictions within the states which started with the state formation processes and internal colonization of some ethnic groups by the others within the continent for local commodities of trade especially slaves and other products to be sold in external markets; and the acquisition of the raided nationalities and areas as new territories; and secondly, by the external colonization of the African regions by the Europeans and the Arabs.

The two phases of colonization of the African continent first by traditional indigenous African states; and later by the Arabs and the Europeans, did not respect the natural ethnic boundaries of the various ethnic nationalities they met. Rather the colonialists conquered and lumped together (amalgamated) and administered the diverse ethnic nationalities they met; and introduced diverse colonial administrative policies that were dubiously, and forcefully enforced on the colonies until the nations became independent. For instance, while the British used the direct and indirect rule policies, the French used the assimilation and association policies in the West African sub region (Ofoegbu, 1976).

Though some of the ethnic nationalities were able to work out a peaceful method of disintegration or state formation solutions during their independence as shown by the peaceful disintegration of the Rhodesia-Nyasaland Federation, others African states could not. But these solutions have not guaranteed peace in the continent as the continent still witnesses civil wars, ethnic and religious conflicts and terrorism despite being independent for more than half a century. These conflicts are based on the facts that the dividends of democratic governance as good education, health care, electricity, water, food and good roads; peace and security, and good governance have eluded the various ethnic nationalities despite the huge human and natural resources available in the ethnic nationalities. The proceeds from these resources are either misappropriated by the ruling classes through acts of corruption, or by foreign nationals operating in the countries through capital flight, or both as has been the case with Nigeria.

These problems were made more acute because the members of some ethnic groups exclusively control the economic and political processes in the countries, and usurped the democratic dividends that accrued to other ethnic groups thereby causing anger, frustration and violence between them and members of the other ethnic groups. In Nigeria for instance, the middle belt region was considered politically, religiously and economically by the core north and the British as part of Bauchi and the British took advantage of this to take over the Jos tin mines through a treaty signed by the Royal Niger Company with the Emir of Bauchi (Abubakar, 2007; Ayuba, 2012). As the jihads did not actually unite the north (Undiyaundeya, 2012), this led to a loss of identity and resources by the natural indigenes of the middle belt region, and antagonism between them and the Hausa/Fulani in their midst (Akwara and Ojoma, 2013).

With the growth of democracy, democratic institutions and education, some of the of members of the dominated or "internally colonised" ethnic nationalities begin to question their memberships to the larger political community (national identity); they question why they should cooperate with the other ethnic nationalities in the country and or, see themselves as one (national integration) when their slots of national resources are being taken by "non-indigenes" in their midst, and why the other ethnic regions are developing at their own expense by harnessing the natural resources found in another

ethnic regions [1] (Sobowale, 2013), and therefore see the need for a discussion of how to end this internal exploitation of one ethnic region by the other (national question)(Torulagha, 2013).

They question why their indigenes are not found within the corridors of power in their own natural ethnic regions and at the national level; and why they should continue to support the governments at all levels; and therefore employ all possible means to bring the governments to be responsible and accountable. This has led to the proliferation of ethnic militias that terrorize the citizens across the country; and the adoption of different legal frameworks that challenge national laws in some parts of the country [2]. Unless these issues are addressed by the governments, Nigeria would most likely find it difficult to be united, develop economically and to have stable democratic governance in the country.

Statement of the Problem

The internal and external colonization of Nigeria created the absence of national identity and integration in the country. These problems still linger as the various ethnic nationalities that constitute the country never met to discuss the basis upon which the ethnic nationalities would continue to exist as a united and indivisible country before or after her independence from the British. This paper examines the consequences of the colonization processes (problems of national identity and integration, and the clamour for a discussion of the national question) on the unity, security and democratic governance in the Nigerian state.

Methodology

Data generation technique for this study is through the content analysis of secondary data as text books, journals, newspapers, magazines, publications on the web. The study is purely historical and the analysis descriptive.

Theoretical Orientation

Social scientists have always devised theories in their attempts to understand and explain the nature, causes, and effects of events, issues and episodes in their societies. Each of the theories takes a specific perspective that differentiates it from the other, depending on the school of thought the theorist belongs. Thus, conflicts in societies have had their liberal and Marxist explanations. The search for identity by an ethnic nationality in a polity signifies the presence of a conflict between the group and some other groups in the society, so also is the lack of integration in a polity, and the quest for a discussion of the "national question" in a polity by some ethnic nationalities within the polity.

The theoretical orientation of this study will therefore take the psycho-cultural perspective (Agara and Adekunle, 2012). From this theoretical perspective, whenever a polity is inhabited by many ethnic nationalities, there is bound to be conflicts which arise from the domination and exploitation of one ethnic nationality by another or the fear of exploitation and domination. The domination and exploitation or their fear is located in ethnic and cultural differences among the groups; and ethnic and cultural differences provide the basis for group identity, solidarity and interaction within and amongst the groups. The conflicts are further fuelled by histories of discrimination, deprivation and

marginalization (denial of access to power, economic resources and privileges) based on ethnic identity in the polity.

The search for ethnic identity therefore is conditioned by the state of mind of the affected ethnic nationalities. The call for resource control, fiscal federalism; a discussion of the national question; formation of ethnic militias by ethnic nationalities; introduction of sharia law in the northern states of the country signify the absence of national integration in Nigeria. The Niger-Delta crises that pitched the ethnic militias in the Niger-Delta against the national government and the current Boko-Haram insurgency in Nigeria question the legitimacy of the Federal Government of Nigeria. All signify that the various ethnic nationalities in the country are not integrated, and that the country is gradually moving towards disintegration. These points to the need for the various ethnic nationalities to sit down and talk in a sovereign national conference, the basis upon which the country would continue to be one in a sovereign national conference.

National Integration

Intergration following Parson's (1956) analysis involves the creation of society to solidarity and institutionalization of patterns of social interaction; ensuring that rules and regulations that define the patterns of interaction; and that the means of achieving desired goals are accorded their legitimacy within the social system.There are certain implications that characterise societal intergration. Firstly, the question of societal solidarity and the existence of normative framework which presupposes in turn the existence of shared cognitive orientation in the process of social interaction. Put in other words, in every society, for effective societal intergration to be achieved, people must be aware of, or share knowledge of both their historical past and culture which makes it possible for tham to adapt to, and manipulate the situation, and also plan for the future.

Shared cognitive orientation more or less defines the parameter of social interaction by making acceptable norms and the sanctioning of deviant behaviour meaningful. This means that when people engage in social interaction, they can more or less anticipate the consequences of their actions. In Nigeria, this normative framework is seemingly absent as well as shared cognitive orientation. Each ethnic nationality is in search and expression of its "local identity" which have found expression as ethnic, political and religious conflicts across the country.

National intergration according to Weiner (1971), refers to the process of bringing together culturally and socially discrete groups into a single terrritorial unit and the establishment of a national identity. Intergration as used in this context assumes the existence of an ethnically plural society in which each group is characterised by its own language, religion, arts, and other self-conscious cultural qualities. National intergration therefore refers specifically to the problem of creating a sense of territorial nationality, which overshadows or eliminates subordinate parochial loyalties.

Secondly, Weiner (1971) sees the concept as establishing a national central authority over subordinate political units or regions, which may or may not coincide with distinct cultural or social groups. Thus, it has to do with the subjective feelings which individuals belonging to different political units have towards the nation. National intergration therefore refers to the objective control which the central authority has over the entire territory under its claim of jurisdiction.

Thirdly, the concept refers to the problem of linking the people (the ruled) with the government (the rulers). What is implied here is the existence of gap between the government and the people. This gap could be shown in the form of disparity in aspirations and values between the ruling elites and the masses. This of course leads to the disintergration of the society if this gap cannot be peacfully bridged by the ruling elites. An instance is where Nigerians are asking for more efficient transport and power systems, and lower prices for feul for their vehicles while a minister recommends bicycles and generators for them as means of transportation and power generation.

Fourthly, the concept is used to show the minmun value consensus necessary to maintain a social order. These may be values concerning justice, equity, the desirability of economic development as a goal, the sharing of common history and symbols, and in general, an agreement as to what constitutes desirable and undesirable social ends. The value may also centre on means, that is, on the instrumentalities and procedures for the achievement of goals and for resolving conflicts. Here, the problem is with the legal norms, the legitimacy of the constitutional framework, and the means by which it should operate. It centres on desirable and undesirable conduct.

Finally, there is the need of an intergrated behaviour among the people of the political system or the capacity of the people to organise for a common purpose. But a cooperative behaviour cannot be possible in a social system if certain sections of the system feel marginalised or are actually marginalised by the rest or by some groups.

National Identity

National identity refers to the felling of attachment an individaul has to his or her country, its government and people. It is the individual's identification with the political system. It is a feeling of not being marginalised in the scheme of things. A sense of national identity starts with the individual asking himself questions and answering them. These questions are:

- What is my nation?
- What kind of naton is it?
- Do I really belong to it?
- How deep or ambiguious is this sense of belonging?

According to Verba (1968), national identity has to do with the peoples' belief that they really are members of a particular society, that is, the extent to which they consider themselves as members of the nation-state. National identity does not really deal merely with the individual's physical location of himself in a particular place, but includes self identity – a psychological attachment. It is only when one lives within a state and has the feeling or sense of belonging to it that one can rightly say that one has a sense of national identity.

The number of ethno-religious conflicts and acts of terrorism; absence of responsible leadership and good governance in Nigeria since her independence has made Nigerians to re-evaluate themselves on the questions above. The ambiguity of this sense of belonging shows that most Nigerians cannot answer these questions correctly and therefore lack the sense of national identity. Each Nigerian identifies himself/herself first as a member of his/her ethnic group and then a Nigerian.

Verba (1968) distinguished two kinds of identity in his discussioon of national identity:

Vertical identification which deals with the individdual's sense of attachment to his political unit – the country, the state, local government, the village, and the governments at these levels; and for the symbols of the government or the state. Horizontal identification which deals with the individual's sense of intergration and identification with other people who inhabit the political system. It deals with the extent to which the individuals identify with each other as members of the same society; and also the extent to which they have trust and confidence in their fellow citizens.

Some cultures and groups have much more favourable view of some cultures than others. The limit of trust and confidence in fellow citizens also sets limits to the extent one can interact freely with others and build confident economic and political relationships. Hostilities to those outside ones group signifies that imter-group conflicts exist in the system as has been the case with Nigeria. Each group has been on the other group's throat though it is possible for one to have a different view of another group quite differnet from his own group's view about that group.

The National Question

The vast majority of Nigerians have always reduced the national question to contradictions and antagonism between the various ethnic nationalities in the country. In order words, they see the national question in terms of inter-ethnic hostilities only. But the national question is far bigger and more comlex than this. The national question is a big complex of political, economic, ideological, cultural, historical, religious, legal and other problems that arise during a people's struggle for liberation and for favourable internal and external conditions for further development; and also in the course of establishing equal, friendly relations between them and others.

The national question according to Odion-Akhaine (2000) involves the unresolved contradictions in the society that have continued to entrench Nigeria in a vicious circle of crises. The national question posed politically refers to the right to self-determination including the right to secession. This meaning is necessitated due to the oppression of some ethnic nationalities by others in a multi-ethnic setting as Nigeria (Odion-Akhaine, 2000).

The national question is always subordinate to the main problem of the socio-economic development of the society, and has a different content and significance at various stages of a nation's development. As Ismagilova (1978) pointed out, the national question includes the abolitition of all forms of ethnic oppression and ethnic inequality. It involves the establishment of real equality, friendship, and fraternnal cooperation between peoples. It amis at the abolition of the exploitation of a region by the other. This must be discussed to bring about equity and justice in the allocation of the nation's resources to creat a sense of belonging on the peoples of the country and to forster national identity and intergration.

It is only when the various groups and peoples in the country are involved in the formulation of governmental policies and their implementation, get a fair share of the nation's resources and are not considered as peoples whose values, opinions and feelings do not matter in the country that they can cultivate the necessary sense of belonging and

identity with their fellow citizens and the governments at all levels; and work in unity toward the building of a united and strong nation-state in which all will be proud to belong.

The national question is evident on daily basis in the reports of violence against people in the various ethnic nationalities in the country especially in the South-East and the Niger-Delta; against the peoples of the Middle Belt region; against South-Eastern Nigerians living in the Northern region of the country; and in the discussion of revenue allocation and resource control (Iyaji, 2000); and in the calls for fiscal federalism by the southern states in Nigeria. In the South-East geo-political zone, it is seen in their cries against the marginalisation of the Igbos in the political and economic processes of the country for having lost a war of independence in the Nigeria-Biafra war (Ezuonu and Chima, 2010); and in their agitation for state creation in their geo-political zone as the zone has the least number of states when compared to other geo-political zones. In the Niger-Delta, Isa and Adejuwon (2012) observed that the Niger-Delta crises are directed against the State and the oil companies operating in the region. And a close look at the demands of the people of the Niger-Delta shows that their agitation is against frustration, environmental degradation and general socio-economic deprivation of the people when compared with peoples of the other ethnic nationalities (Odion-Akhaine, 2000). They have been afflicted by oil related problems as environmental degradation due to oil spillage and neglect in terms of developmental projects in their region and employment even after the establishment of a Ministry of Niger- Delta and the Niger-Delta Development Commission.

National Integration, National Identity and the National Question

The concept "nation" is just like that of a state and denotes a group of people having or sharing common biological characteristics as race and colour; historical origin and ancestry; cultural practices as language, religion, artefacts, customs and heritage; and the group lives together in a defined geographical territory (Akwara, 1998; Leeds,1978). It approximates to what sociologists and anthropologists refer to as tribe or ethnic group.

In Nigeria, there about 400 ethnic nationalities and linguistic groups. Each of these groups is a nation of itself. The Ibos are a nation just as the Hausas, Yorubas, Jokuns, Tivs, Efiks and Kanuris are nations of their own. Each of these nations is located at a specific geographical area on the map of Nigeria. Before now the entire northern Nigeria was seen as the Hausas/Fulani, but recently, most ethnic nationalities formerly refered to as Hausas/Fulani are now declearing their ethnic identities and autonomies. The Jokun is a Jokun and a Kanuri is not a Hausa/Fulani. A fight would ensue between you and a Jokun if you identify him as Hausa. He is a jokun and would be happy being seen as such. So would a Tiv or a Nupe want to be seen as a Tiv or a Nupe and not a Hausa/Fulani. Each nation has an identity it now declares and wants autonomy from a perceived colonizer; while those whose identities are obscure are trying to carve out one for them at all costs.

Each ethnic nationality sees itself as a state because when a group of people live together in a geographically defined territory under the traditional or legal authority of a government, or a ruler, a state has been formed (Akwara, 1998; Leeds, 1978). A full fledged state has the following characteristics: It has a population – the size of the

population does not really matter. It has a defined geographical territory or national boundsries that seperatees it from other states. The boundaries make it distinct from other states. A state has permanence – geographically, every stste is located at a specific point on the earth's surface and exists there   permanently. But it could have as many governments as situations would warrant. It has a government – a state has a government or an administrative organ to oversee its smooth operation as an entity. Membership to a state is compulsory – everyone comes from a state. Even where a person claims to have fallen from heaven, he/she must have fallen on a specific spot on the earth's surface. It has sovereignity – a state has independence to make laws and to enforce such laws within its territory without reliance on other states and without question from other states. These are the marks of a full fledged state and in this context, every ethnic nationality approximates to a state in Nigeria.

The issue of sovereignty arose because of internal colonisation of one ethnic group by the other, and the external colonization of all the ethnic groups by the Europeans. Every human community is a state because it operates under specific norms and under a sovereign authority. The character and number of people exercising power and authority in a state often determine the origin and kind of state in existence and the purposes or functions of the state and possibly its level of civilization or development. Irrespective of the fact that each of these ethnic nationalities in Nigeria is a nation and was a state before colonialism, they all belong to the Nigerian state. They all share a common nationality – they are all Nigerians. When all the ethnic nationalities in a country come to see themselves as one irrespective of their ethnic or natural differences, they have created a nation-state, and there is national identity and integration.

Causes of Lack of National Identity and Integration and Reasons for the Calls for A Discussion of the National Question

In most African nations and indeed Nigeria, the absence of national identity and integration is caused by ethnic and cultural differences. These ethnic and cultural differences also dictated during the indigenous state formation periods which areas are to be raided for slaves, areas to be traded with, evangelised, or to be attacked and occupied (colonized). Slave raids for instance were carried out outside the raiders ethnic origin and this caused conflicts between the raiders and the raided (Mangut, 2012).

Then, trade and evangelisation and quest for natural resources also led to attacks and occupation of raided regions (Mangut, 2012; Onwubiko, 1976; Ifemesia, 1965; Aderingbe, 1965; Tamuno, 1965). This exercise of control over the raided regions started the internal colonization process of one ethnic region by the other which could also be seen as an indigenous mega-state formation process. This saw the rise and fall of empires and kingdoms. Raids and occupation affected the history, culture, language and religion of the raided ethnic regions as the raids encouraged what Mangut (2012) called "spontaneous immigration" from the raiders' ethnic regions to the raided ethnic regions. Thus the raided ethnic regions had a natural indigenous population (natural indigenes or the natives), and a migrant settlers population (the non-indigenes and aliens). This factor alone accounts for the multiplicity of ethnicity nationalities in each ethnic region in Nigeria. Thus Nigeria's history is replete with histories of origin. Somebody came from

somewhere and no one is from nowhere – an issue that complicates the ethnic and religious conflicts in the country.

This indigenous state formation process started an integration of the various ethnic nationalities in the new states through inter-ethnic marriages, unifying religious and cultural practices and co-option of some of the natural indigenes into leadership positions (Abubakar, 2007) where this would not disrupt the power system in the new states or kingdom or empires as they were called (Ofoegbu, 1976; Mangut, 2012). Most of these kingdoms and empires could not stand the test of time as some of them were over-run by stronger kingdoms or got torn apart by internal contradictions. Thus, some states or empires lasted longer than others. This state of stability and instability amongst the indigenous African states continued until the arrival of the external colonizers - the Europeans and the Arabs.

The European colonization of Africa did not go unchallenged. Almost all African societies entered by the Europeans offered one form of opposition or the other (Hassan, 2012; Magezi, 2012, Ayuba, 2012; Kums, 2012). The colonial state was therefore a conquest state because military force was used to pacify the colonised African states and societies. It was therefore founded on force, violence or threat of the use of force with the sole aim of appropriating the colonised peoples' lands and what the land produced. It acculturated the peoples' culture, values and world outlook (Yadaki, 2012). Ethnic and cultural differences were not taken into consideration in the administration of the colonized ethnic nationalities by the Europeans and the dominant or ruling elites in the African state at the time of European conquest were recognised (in the North) and substituted (in the south) at the expense of the natives. They were empowered at the expense of the natural indigenes without regard for their origins or population. And this disrupted the integration of the various ethnic nationalities that was going on before the arrival of the Europeans. This has made most ethnic groups not to submit themselves to be ruled by men of other tribes, races or religion because they believe that doing so implies submitting to oppression, degradation and exclusion from the moral community as inferior groups or persons whose opinions, attitudes and values do not count. Therefore integration became very difficult.

In places where politics involves a high level of antagonism among groups with opposing political views as Nigeria, there is the likelihood that there would be very bad impression of trust-worthiness of individuals when they are considered in political terms. Sense of confidence in others is very important for the maintenance of stable political system. Unless individuals trust their fellow citizens, irrespective of their ethnic group affliation, they would be unwilling to turn political power to their opponents. The Hausa/Fulani group in Nigeria regrets today for having done that – allowing the power base of the nation to shift to the western and to the south-south regions of the country. When there is a sense of trust and confidence among the people, they would engage in peaceful competition with those of opposing political view and allow the alternation of power among competing groups and elites. Unless the dangers of such competition and alternation of power is too great for the ruling group to bear. This was infact one of the reasons for the annulment of the June 12, 1993 Presidentiial election in Nigeria by General Ibrahim Babangida, a northern military autocrat. The election was won by a southern politician, Chief M.K.O. Abiola to the surprise of the northern politicians and

the military. And the present northern Hausa/Fulani opposition to non-Muslim and non Hausa/Fulani leadership of the Federal Government in Nigeria today is based on the fact that Nigeria is un-integrated.

Sense of confidence in others is very important because if there is general lack of confidence and trust in the ruler and non-identification with the government of the day, the rulers will have to get obedience to their wishes by force even if such force is destabilizing. This has conditioned the use of military expeditions in ethnic nationalities where the crises could not be controlled through any other means in the country. When this happens in a state, it would be very difficult if not impossible to developa sense of identification or national identity.

The Problems Posed by the Absence of National Identity and Integration on National Security and Democratic Governance in Nigeria.

In Nigeria the formation of a sense of national identity has been an up-hill task because it involves the alteration of primodial loyalties and rapid development of political concsiousness among a politically unconscious people. Often, this alteration creats ethnic cleavages between the various ethnic groups. This leads to national symbols to vie with local or tribal symbols. This also leads to divided loyalties and loyalty to sub-national unit becomes primary. This problem has become acute in Nigeria because ethnic or national boundaries are defined by historical, linguistic, religious and cultural boundaries

Since the creation of this sense of national identity is being championed by the ruling elites of the various groups in the country, the sense of national identity by the members of the various groups becomes bi-focal. It focuses on the personalities of the charismatic leaders; and on emotionally charged symbols (Verba, 1968). And when these happen, the sense of national identity thus created is fragile, rejected on the onset, and fades when the symbols and personalities are no longer there. Personality crises result from the vacum thus created by the exit of the personalities and leadership crises ensue. In Nigeria, since colonial days till date, this sense of national identity has been more or less focused on the personalities of the ruling elites of the various ethnic groups as they serve more or less as symbols of ethnic unity and intergration for the particular ethnic group. This manifests in the decoration of any indigene that gets a national appointment with traditional titles and ethnic reception by his/her ethnic group.

Finally the call for the development of a sense of national identiity creats a feeling of lack of self-confidence or self-esteem on the people that have not developed and this makes issues that could have been settled by dialogue between people of different ethnic nationalities to be settled by the use of force which are usually out of proportion as ethnic and religious conflicts because:

They are uncertain of their national boundaries – who are part of them and who are not. They ask themselves the question: "are we members of the same society?" "Why don"t they do like us?" "Let's send them out of our land" "Why can't they allow us to rule the country even once, let us secede"

They do not comprehend the meaning of national identity as such they ask themselves the questions: "what do they want from us?" "Why must we abandone our old ways of doing things?" "Why must we cooperate with them,?" "Have they been cooperating with us?" "We can get along alone, why can't they stay on their own and leave us alone?"

The people do not know the scope of their identity hence they ask the questions: "what is expected of us?" "What shall we get in return?" "For how long will it last?" "What shall we do if we are not comfortable in this arrangement?" "To what extent shall we agree to be one?"

It is because the various ethnic groups in Nigeria do not have ready and convincing answers to these questions that the nation is still unintergrated and parts of the questions have come to the fore in the forms of: application of the Sharia law in the states of the northern region of the country which is being used against non-Muslims in the region; and which often ends in ethno-religious conflicts; the cry for resource control by the southern states that produce 80% of the nation's revenue which pitches the militants in the Niger-delta against the federal government; the call for sovereign national conference by various ethnic nationalities in the country to discuss the basis on which the country should remain as one united country which those within the corridors of power who are the ultimate beneficiaries of the status-quo object to vehemently; the inability of the governments to reduce poverty, unemployment, violent crimes and political assassinations, kidnappings, terrorism, infrastructural decay and corruption among the citizens within the corridors of power.

The Effects on Socio-Economic Development and Democratic Governance in Nigeria

There is the need for the citizens of the country to have a sense of national identity or a sense of belonging and a feeling of attachment to the nation for the following reasons:

Without this feeling of belonging to the nation, it would be extremely difficult for the government to effectively rule the country, maintain its authority and apply rules and regulations within the country. The legitimacy of the regimes would be questioned by some of the people and groups. This the militants in the Niger-Delta did by blowing up oil pipe lines and oil rigs in the region, and the kidnapping of expatriate oil and construction workers, and oil theft. The Boko-Haram is doing so through its terrorist attacks all over the country seeking the establishment of an Islamic state across Nigeria. Under this condition no meaningful development would take place. The citizens of the country cannot unite for a common purpose, face a common enemy or solve a national problem collectively. Development programmes in the country would not be planned and coordinated because the citizens do not see themselves as a people with a common goal and destiny.

Ethnic sentiments will be strong in the country and there will always be the tedndency for local groups to assert their local independence and exhibit secessionst tendencies as has been the case with the states in the South East region of the country – the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB); and the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MASOP) in the south-south region; and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger-Delta (MEND) in the South-South region; the Afenifere and the Odua Peoples Congress (OPC) in the South-West; the Boko-Haram (BH) in the North-East, North-Central and North-West regions. These actions have reduced the level of direct foreign investment in the country and also the volume of internal trade due to violence that follow the actions of these ethnic militias.

As national identity is lacking, the attempts by the ruling groups to establish a strong central government often provokes ethnic sentiments that call to question the legitimacy and authority of the government just as MEND did by blowing up pipe lines and oil rigs; MASSOB did by introducing Biafran currency into circulation; and BH is doing by bombing and shooting innocent citizens with impunity.

The absence of national identity weakens the governmental structures and institutions thereby creating national crises and political intsability. Because the national institutions are weak, the Federal Government cannot rule effectively, fight or check corruption effectively, initiate development programs and execute them successfully. Lack of national identity has caused some governments in the country (federal, state and local) to be detached from the people, acting by themselves and for themselves. Thus government has become an avenue for personal enrichment because the people do not give the necessary supports to it, or question the rationale for certain national policies and actions. It is only when people have a sense of belonging to a nation that the survival of the political system is possible. It is only then that the country can survive any type of crisis. A sense of national identity restrains the emergence of totalitarian regimes because everyone is interested in the affairs of the state and the methods of their conduct.

Ways of Creating and Preserving National Identity and Integration, and Resolve the Problems Posed by the National Question Issue in Nigeria.

For Nigeria to be intergrated to the extent that the citizens would have a sense of national identity, the federal government should take very seriously the call by the various ethnic groups for the convocation of a sovereign national conference. This conference among other things will fashion out a new geopolitical arithmetic or formulae for the nation and usher in a true federalism in the country. The conference would also allow the variouus ethnic nationalities to voice out their hopes, aspirations and fears in the corporate existhence of Nigeria and agree on how all the ethnic nationaliteis will co-exist peacefully and have the true feelings and sense of national identity. Ths sovereign national conference will also discuss the "nationa question". The cries for resource control by the various ethnic nationalities goes to butress the need for the discussion of the national question by the various ethnic nationalities in the country. It is believed that the problems, injustices and inequities associated with state creation, revenue allocation, political appointments, national security, etc. can be solved through the discussion of the national question.

The vast majority of the citizens of this country have always reduced the national question to contradictions and antagonism between the various ethnic nationalities in the country. In order words, they see the national question in terms of inter-tribal hostilities only. But the national question is far bigger and more comlex than this. The national question is a big complex of political, economic, ideological, legal and other problems that arise during a people's struggle for liberation and for favourable internal and external conditions for further development; and also in the course of establishing equal, friendly relations between peoples (Ismagilova, 1978).

The national question is always subordinate to the main problem of the socio-economic development of the society, and has a different content and significance at various stages of a nation's development. As Ismagilova (1978) pointed out, the national

question includes the abolitition of all forms of ethnic oppression and ethnic inequalities. It involves the establishment of real equality, friendship, and fraternnal cooperation between peoples. It aims at the abolition of the exploitation of a region by the other. This must be discussed to bring about equity and justice in the allocation of the nation's resources to creat the sense of belonging on the peoples of the country and to forster national intergration.

It is only when the various groups and peoples in the country are involved in the formulation of governmental policies and their implementation; get a fair share of the nation's resources; and are not considered as peoples whose values, opinions and feelings do not matter in the country that they can cultivate the necessary sense of belonging and identity with their fellow citizens and the governments at all levels; and work in unity toward the building of a united and strong nation-state in which all will be proud to belong. As Odion-Akhaine (2000) observed, it has become very necessary to address the issue because of the deepening ethno-nationalism in the country which has resulted in the proliferation of ethnic organizations (militias) and violent ethnic clashes.

The federal government in Nigeria should put in place measures that would help to create confidence in the people that the government really cares for them. The government should be responsible and accountable to the people. It should respect the rule of law, reduce poverty if it cannot be eradicated; provide functional infrastructural facilities; improve on the security situation in the country and check corruption and conduct free and fair elections across the country; and punish people who violate the laws.

Summary and Conclusion

Ethnic conflicts are endemic Nigeria because of the absence of national identity and integration. The absence of national identity and integration is due to the internal colonization of some ethnic nationalities by others during the indigenous state formation processes (empires building and kingdoms) which was halted by the external colonization of the kingdoms and empires by the Europeans.

The external colonization aborted the integration processes going on in the empires and in some places created status reversals which deepened the integration crises. It also amalgamated ethnic nationalities into un-integrated nation-states where the search for lost ethnic identity and integration started all over again after independence. The amalgamated ethnic nationalities did not consider their ethnic differences during their search for nationhood or national independence as they saw the external colonizer as a common enemy. On independence, their ethnic differences manifested since the ethnic nationalities did not sit to discuss on what basis they would continue to be one indivisible and united country. Having been elude by the dividends of democratic rule – good governance, responsible and accountable leadership, functional infrastructural facilities, peace and security and upholds the exploitation of one ethnic nationality by another; each ethnic nationality now searches for its local identity and autonomy which it does through its local ethnic militias and terrorist groups; and challenge of the legitimacy of the central government as others are calling for a discussion of the national question in a sovereign national conference. It has become very necessary to address the issue in a sovereign

national conference because of the deepening ethno-nationalism in the country as they have become more or less, wars of internal decolonization.

The federal government in Nigeria should put in place measures that would help to create confidence in the people that the government really cares for them. The government should be responsible and accountable to the people. It should respect the rule of law, reduce poverty if it cannot be eradicated; provide functional infrastructural facilities; improve on the security situation in the country and corruption, and punish those who violate national laws irrespective of their positions in the society.

Notes and References:

Notes:

See the distribution of oil blocks in Nigeria. Whereas 80% of the oil blocks are held by peoples of the Northern region that does not produce oil, the remaining 20% is held by members of the southern region that produces the oil and whose environment is polluted by oil spillages.

With the return to civil democratic rule in 1999, the entire states in the northern parts of Nigeria adopted the Sharia Law to replace the Penal Code in operation in that area of the country. This was in defiance of the lamentation of its consequences on the administration of justice in that part of the country. The southern part of the country still uses the Criminal Code and the peoples of the southern Nigeria are judged under the Sharia law in the north.

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