



CHALLENGES OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates of Nigeria in 1914 marked a turning point in the evolution of the entity called Nigeria. The effect of this development was the fusion of diverse political entities involved. The amalgamation broadened the national boundaries and merged North and South into one country but ignored the need to integrate the various people for the new administrative entity. National integration was supposed to promote national development as it would blur and ameliorate ethnic, religious, political and cultural differences and enable the people to acquire a sense of shared citizenship and common national consciousness. The 1914 Amalgamation was not followed by a general redrawing of the boundaries of the administrative divisions of the unified entity as was done in the case of protectorate of southern Nigeria and the colony of Lagos in 1906. The result of this paradox created bedevilling imbalance between Northern and Southern Nigeria. What seems to exist is the crises of marginalization and practice of sectional and tribal politics which have negative consequences on the socio-economic and political lives of the citizenry. Politics, ethnicity, religion and culture have great effects on national integration in Nigeria. Though Nigeria is a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-party country, the combined territorial boundary is expected to bound the different ethnic groups together as a nation. However, those factors have rather made national integration very difficult in Nigeria. Recommendations for the promotion of national integration in Nigeria include: The religious, ethnic-cultural and political differences that often plague Nigeria and thereby negatively affect its national integration and unity must be urgently addressed. The major religions and leaders must begin to emphasis the need to embrace peace within the multi-religious and ethno-

linguistic pluralism. Secularity should be embraced as the best option that can uphold peace and harmony in Nigeria. Religious fanaticism should be avoided in order to pave way for re-designing Nigerian society. The government should respond to religious crises on time in order to arrest the situation. Leaders should strengthen existing policies that promote tolerance of other people. General issues of governance should not be religionized or tribalized to the detriment of the collective good and Nigerians must learn to love one another and imbibe the spirit of patriotism and nationalism.

Keywords: *Decentralization, Police-operation, Capability, Insecurity, Nigeria.*

Introduction

The balkanization of Africa by European powers which culminated to the 1885 Berlin conference laid the foundation for contemporary states in Africa, including Nigeria. Ikelegbe (1995) observe that the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates of Nigeria in 1914 marked a turning point in the evolution of the entity called Nigeria. The effect of this development was the fusion of diverse political entities including the Hausa-Fulani, Oyo and Kanem Bornu empires, the Igbo and the Benin kingdom among others into one entity called Nigeria (Eric, 2016). Amalgamation broadened the national boundaries and merged North and South into one country. According to Ikelegbe (1995), the end result was not to actually have a new territory, but was for economic exploitation. The merger became more pertinent for administrative convenience and to stop internal animosity among the different nationalities, and more importantly, reduce administrative costs. It ignored the need to integrate the various people for the new administrative entity. Indeed, national integration is important for national development as it would blur and ameliorate ethnic, religious, political and cultural differences and enable the people to acquire a sense of shared citizenship and common national consciousness.

Umar (2000) asserts that when the British Colonialists took political control of Nigeria, they decided for their administrative convenience to amalgamate the nationalities. Under such artificial creation, the spirit of nationalism was difficult to inculcate. This development served as the foundation for perpetuating ethnic identities in Nigeria's political landscape. It is evidenced by

intense regionalization of politics that made national integration and `unity almost impossible. Sequel to this is the problem of unity in diversity, patriotism and national integration. Most of the works on the discourse of the Nigeria's political history contend that the British Colonial policies that metamorphosed into 1914 amalgamation were counterproductive to national integration in post-colonial Nigeria. This strategy was later sustained in the country's political landscape which led to intra-class struggle fragility and failure in nation-building and integration.

The 1914 Amalgamation was not followed by a general redrawing of the boundaries of the administrative divisions of the unified entity as was done in the case of protectorate of southern Nigeria and the colony of Lagos in 1906. The result of this paradox created bedevilling imbalance between Northern and Southern Nigeria with the former encompassing 75 per cent of the land area and 60 per cent of the population of the country (Nwabueze, 2014). Akinjide (2000) notes that from the time amalgamation in 1914 to independence in 1960, the British intentionally allowed minimum contact between the North and South; an action that exacerbated the differences between the two regions in Nigeria. The British colonial rule employed the policy of "divide and rule", which deepened the differences between the various ethnic groups.

Nigeria became an independent nation in 1960 with the hope that the various peoples and regions would be integrated with one another for the purposes of coexistence, administration, and development of the nation. The decision to become the federal republic required that the people would be integrated with one another for the purpose of co-existence, unity, national integration, and development. What seems to exist is the crises of marginalization and practice of sectional and tribal politics which have negative consequences on the socio-economic and political lives of the citizenry. According to (Ajah, 2012) "national integration in Nigeria after independence is an ontological necessity and not a choice". Nigeria is a diverse country with about 200 million people and it is multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and clearly heterogeneous (Ejikeme, 2016). The beauty and strength of Nigeria's existence as a nation lie in the variety and unity of its set up.

The government of this emergent nation was based on a weak coalition between the NCNC and NPC with the AG in opposition. The political crises that dominated the era in Nigeria's political history were impelled by disagreements over the 1962/63 census that were allegedly rigged in favour of Northern

Nigeria. The political elite set Nigerians of different ethnic nationalities against each other because of their selfish and inordinate political ambitions. Consequently, the birth of a new nation called Nigeria marked the birth of intense ethnic nationalism which has deepened over the past sixty years of political independence.

Statement of the Problem

Though there was amalgamation of the Southern and Northern protectorates into one country, Nigeria in 1914 by the colonial master, the country has never been really one but rather diversified by politics, religion, ethnics and culture. This has been the major cause of disunity, crises and lack of social-economic development in the country. What are the causes and the effects of the non-united diversity in Nigeria? How has politics, religion, ethnicity and insecurity affected national integration in Nigeria? This study aims at examining the ways politics has been a challenge to national integration in Nigeria, how religion has constituted a challenge to national integration in Nigeria, **how** ethnicity has challenged national integration in Nigeria and how insecurity has been a challenge to national integration in Nigeria.

Theoretical framework

Integration Theory: The study anchored on the Integration Theory propounded by Leonard Binder in 1964. He postulates that there exists a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society in which the various groups are defined by their respective languages, or other self-conscious cultural qualities and that their interaction is characterised by the tensions and discontinuities on the horizontal plane. Within this context, integration is used to refer to the process of creating a homogeneous progressive reduction of cultural and regional territorial political community. It is a process of inter-locking linkages where every hitherto dividing boundary are deliberately dismantled to allow for a more frequent contact, cooperation, consensus and community. Integration entails a careful and thorough understanding of the fundamentals of the past, conceiving practical steps of what happens after being subjected to a mutually agreed programme. Also, Leonard Binder describes integration as involving a high degree of comprehensiveness. This theory therefore brought the understanding of different attempts by the Nigerian government to create a harmonious and cohesive society, culminating in the formulation of quota system and federal

character principle with the intention of conjuring nationwide development. This is to address the issue of developmental imbalance, fear of dominance and suspicion between and among the various ethnic groups.

Methodology

The descriptive survey method was adopted for the study. The design was based on historic facts about the past, the present and the likely expected relationship among the different religious, political, cultural and ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Politics and National integration in Nigeria

National integration “is a process of creating a sense of national consciousness, uniqueness of identity and loyalty among people of different socio-cultural identities (culture, ethnic, language, religion, and politics) into a single territorial political society” (Binder,1964). The politicization, or outright mischievous projection of these sectarian differences or identities combined with ignorance and deep-seated suspicions and stereotypes are what often resulted into violence and conflicts at the intra and inter group levels with severe consequences on the security and integration of the nation. Raji, et al. (2014) asserts that in recent times, the frequency and occurrence of such conflicts appear to be on the increase in Nigeria and this situation has become worrisome to most Nigerians. Sixty years after independence, Nigerians are still threatened with some unacceptable facts about social reality that continues to dent the integrity and unity of the nation. Most conflicts had left traces of political, social, economic, and psychological losses and pains, injured and poisoned established relationships among Nigerians.

Nigeria as a nation since 1960, from all indications has not been able to attain her set objectives of unifying the diverse ethnic groups in all facets socially, economically, politically, among others. Political manipulations show in elections that are usually rigged to the extent that voting no more counts. Politicians often forced themselves on the citizens at will. Such attitude leads to disorder, hostility and confrontation which does not promote national integrations nor promote development

Ethnicity and National Integration in Nigeria

Ethnicity started during colonial era with its negative effects on Nigerians. For instance, the Action Group (A.G) was led by late Chief Obafemi Awolowo, a Yoruba; the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) was headed by late Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, an Igbo; while the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) was led by late Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Saruana of Sokoto, a Fulani and a Muslim. The leadership of these parties were drawn along ethnic cleavages with their ethnic patterns. All these were products of the colonial administrative arrangement that encouraged ethnic politics in that it divided Nigeria into three regions that is, West-Yoruba, North-Hausa/Fulani and East-Igbo. This division represented the three major ethnic groups in the country. It however "opposes secularism which has threatened the stability and development of the nation with a claim to numerical superiority" (Tiamiyu, 1997)

Ethnicity is a major task confronting the achievement of democracy in Nigeria since independence in 1960. Ethnic sentiment is present almost in all areas of Nigerian political, economic and social organizations. In fact, low productivity and ineffectiveness presently experienced in the country can be attributed to ethnic sentiments. Ethnicism has negative effects on national integration in Nigeria which is made up of more than 250 ethnic groups (Ejikeme, 2016). This implies that Nigeria is multi-lingual and multi-ethnic in nature. These tribal differences have given rise to diverse nature of the Nigerian nation. This indicates that though housed in one country, the ethnic groups do not have identical needs, objectives and aspirations. No wonder (Obafemi Awolowo) opines that 'Nigeria is a mere geographic expression' judging from the happenings in the country since independence.

Most often, ethnic sentiments are used in place of merit and skills. For instance, in the case of appointment, 'God-fatherism' comes in, and one has to favour his people whether they are qualified or not. Ethnicity has been one of the major factors that have seriously reduced the image and glory of Nigerian party politics. The "federal character" principle, which has been enshrined in Nigeria constitution since 1979, seeks to ensure that appointments to public service institutions fairly reflect the linguistic, ethnic, religious and geographical diversity of the country (Adamolekun, et al, 1991). Federal character is a tool for ensuring fairness in public service over professionalism and good attainment. According to Oladiti, et al. (2012). "the total systematic collapse in Nigeria's socio-economic and political environment can be attributed to the

federal character practice”. The implication is that Nigeria will have unqualified people in sensitive government positions. The intrusion of ethnicity into the “federal character” principle, has given rise to the promotion of incompetent and unqualified civil servants, military, top government officials, among others into the Nigeria system. Ethnicity which creates feelings of pride or inferiority complex led to social injustice and serious conflicts in Nigeria. The sentimental feeling of either minority or majority would never help in nation building. Nigeria can only develop when there is peaceful co-existence and due regard in social interactions.

Religion and National Integration in Nigeria

Nigerians are very religious people. There are three major religions in Nigeria: Christianity, Islam and Traditional religion. Kukah (2009) opines that “in 1960, the country was divided along religious zones of influence notably the Muslims in the North and the Christians in the South. The traditional religion appears to be un-proselytized religion because it does not go forth seeking converts neither does it pick offense when deserted by its adherents nor assume that its object of worship is superior. It has the rare quality of accommodation and tolerance to other religions (Adebayo, 2003). It seems religion has contributed adversely to the integration of Nigeria for the following reasons: During the regime of Babangida, Nigeria became a member of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). Christians viewed this as an attempt to ‘Islamize Nigeria’ (Simon, 2014). That was the beginning of Christian versus Muslim open confrontation in Nigeria.

The national integration of Nigeria as a country is already being compromised. This is justified with the Muslim’s call for entrenchment of Sharia law into Nigeria’s constitution when the constitution does not make any religion a state religion. Yet, this principle was violated when the governors in the Northern States issued authority to Islamize public life. Zamfara was the first state to introduce a strict form of Sharia when the government claimed that its religious reform brought about major changes, whereas all spheres of public life were being transformed into Islamic oriented institutions” (Adebayo, 2003). This state sponsored islamization agenda affected non-Muslims as they were subjected to gender separation in hotels and restaurants, in buses and taxis (Asemota, 2013). All these have hampered national integration in Nigeria even in terms of social, political and economic development. The tendency of

religious groups to politicize religious activities has made the country more difficult to govern.

It is not only that lives are lost at each religious riot, but many are usually injured. Scores of children are rendered orphans at tender age, people are rendered refugees in their own land and these constitute socio-economic problems for the national integration of the country. The insurgency of Boko Haram had destroyed lives and properties. In terms of damages done to the country by Boko Harm as far as human and material resources are concerned, it is unquantifiable. Investors, both local and foreigners had fled because no one want to do business in an insecure and risk prone nation like Nigeria. The Fulani herdsmen and farmers have also ravaged the country. The international community would not invest in the country as long as violence persisted (Jekayinfa, 2002).

Remarkably among them are the Maitatsine riot of 1980 in Kano and conflicts between the Izala and Tijany in Gombe in 1987. Included also are the Bulunkutu riot of October 1982, the various Kaduna riots of 1987, 1988, Jigawa riot 2001 and Lagos-Idi-Araba, 2002. As if these were not enough, another riot erupted on 22nd November, 2002 in which about 200 people were reportedly killed, and property worth millions of naira were destroyed. This was believed to have been caused by a “blasphemous publication” against the Islamic sect. Religious conflicts are inevitable in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society like Nigeria. Religious conflicts retard national integration, soils social relations and destabilizes the economy of Nigeria nation. Religious bigotry in Nigeria has become a hinge of various forms of nationalism. The spate of religion crises in Nigeria since independence has produced a catalogue that resulted in an estimated loss of over three million lives and unquantifiable psychological and maternal damages. It is obvious that religion has many negative effects on the national integration and development of Nigeria.

Culture and National Integration in Nigeria

The early nomads in Northern Nigeria were organized into small village groups and were rigidly organized in tribal groups, acknowledging a chief and hierarchy of leaders. The pagan Hausa lived in small villages of exogamous patrilineal kin. The Yorubas had larger towns than any other ethnic group in Nigeria. These towns were ruled by Obas while the villages were ruled by the Bales. In the Benin Kingdom, the village was the basic political unit where the

government was based on age-grade associations that existed in every community. These associations performed both political and social functions. On the political level, the most senior of the age-grade associations ruled. The age-grade associations of the middle-aged and the youths formed the executive arms of the government to the extent that they implemented the decisions of the ruling group as well as matters concerning its welfare and those of its members. In some areas, the leaders of the age-grade associations were given titles. Generally, the ruling elders were called Odionwere.

Among the Igbo, the recognized head of the village was Okpara. In the village political system, the people practice true democracy. Matters were discussed at village meetings. Such matters were brought before the elders, and every member had the right to air his views. The matter was discussed by the group until a consensus was reached. There was no room for majority votes, every decision had to be reached by consensus. Such cultural diversity must be either integrated or tolerated for the promotion of the required national integration.

Promotion of National Integration in Nigeria

By the time Nigeria won her independence from Britain in 1960, its artificial origin, coupled with other factors led to some fundamental problems, one of which was the challenge of integrating, into a cohesive socio-political whole (Bamisaiye, 2003). In view of this, the necessity for a political structure that would help cohesion had to be implemented. The adoption of a parliamentary system of government and existence of an opposition party following independence enabled equitable influence by the three major ethnic groups- Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo. While the office of the prime minister and president was occupied by a Northern and an Easterner respectively, the opposition was under the auspices of the Westerners. This was no doubt a noble foundational effort for strong national unity that was formed, however, it came out to be futile effort at the eruption of the Nigerian Civil War between 1966 and 1970. It could be acknowledged as the first major effort in pursuit for national integration in Nigeria as it was meant to unite Nigeria as a single nation. Since the pre-existing regional structure encouraged ethnic classifications and loyalty in Nigeria, the adopted new state structure was aimed at redirecting the loyalty and commitment of the citizens to the state instead of their ethnic affinities and organisations. Further, the adoption of a state structure in place of the regional structure in 1967 represents another attempt of unifying the nation.

The efforts at national unity include the adoption of a new constitution in 1999. (Eme-Uche, 2013). The 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria affirms that the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria solemnly resolved to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign nation. In addition, the motto of the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be Unity and Faith, Peace and Progress. Other efforts to promote national integration include:

1. The Federal Character Policy to foster unity amongst the federating units by having equal representation of all sections of the nation at the federal level. The federal character policy justifies the adoption of the quota system in admissions into federal educational institutions, recruitment into the civil service, armed forces, and the leadership of political parties and appointment of political office holders. The Senate is composed on the principle of equality of states which is dominant feature of federating units that guarantees equality of status for the component states. For the purpose of election to the office of the President, the whole federation shall be regarded as one constituency components of national unity.
2. The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Scheme was introduced in 1973 to aid national integration in Nigeria. According to the Act, the aim of the scheme is among other things, to develop common ties among Nigerian youths and promote national loyalties. The scheme was implemented such that fresh tertiary institution graduates were deployed to serve the nation in states or communities other than their states of origin with the intention of broadening their socio-cultural orientation and to instil the virtue of tolerance in them.
3. National symbols comprise ideas, objects and events that are national in character which are frequently employed by governments to secure legitimacy and foster national unity (Eme-Uche, 2010). In effect, national constitution, national anthem, the national pledge of loyalty, objects, concepts, monuments, events, ideas, the Naira and all others that all Nigerians collectively identify with are acknowledged as objects of national identity and unity.
4. Over the years the federal government embarked on large scale socialization programmes to promote national unity. The National Orientation Agency (NOA) was saddled with the responsibility of re-

orientation of Nigerians to engender national unity. The mass media (print and electronic) have also been involved in this process.

Challenges militating against National Integration in Nigeria

The most serious challenge militating against national integration in Nigeria in recent time is insecurity. Of recent, the issue of insecurity was birthed by the Boko Haram insurgence. Boko Haram, which has been the single most lethal terrorist group in the world over a decade has maintained a culture of extreme violence since 2009 in Nigeria when its founding leader, Mohammed Yusuf, was killed by Nigerian security forces. The terrorist group has been waging a war against the Nigerian state in its effort to carve out a section of the country as an independent Islamic state. In the wake of its activities, thousands of people have lost their lives while millions of people have been displaced internally. Properties worth billions of naira have been destroyed and businesses closed down. Thus, the group has also shattered the fragile peace and cohesion that existed in Nigeria before its birth.

Presently, the Nigerian military has waged a serious war against Boko Haram, particularly since 2015. Despite losing its headquarters in the Sambisa forest area as well as its territories in North-Eastern Nigeria, the group has retained its determination and lethality as it embarks on a guerilla-based tactics which has eventually spread to all parts of the country. The kidnappers are enriching themselves from the ransom they demand from relations of their victims or from the government. The Fulani herdsmen are raping and killing people in their fathers' land in the southern Nigeria and the middle belt without anybody calling them to order. The above situation raises certain serious questions: Under what terms should state entities or groups associate freely in Nigeria? How negotiable is Nigerian unity? What should be the nature and conditions of citizenship across Nigeria? What constitutional or institutional reforms are needed to delimit citizenship rights across communities, states, and zones in Nigeria? How can individual and group equality and rights be ensured constitutionally in Nigeria? What institutional arrangements or constitutional rules should be put in place to ensure the rule of law without fear or favour? How should land and natural resources be owned or shared in Nigeria?

Another major problem militating against national integration in Nigeria seems to lie with the manner in which these policies and programmes are being implemented by the ruling elites. For instance, in the utility of the federal

character principle in the sustenance of the corporate existence of Nigeria, there has been incessant abuse of the principle especially in the recent time. On the issue of abuse of the federal character principle, out of over 40 initial appointments the current president Muhammadu Buhari made, only a few persons from the southern regions of the country were appointed. The South East Geopolitical Zone have largely been ignored from the president's appointments and key positions of government both at the executive, legislative and judiciary arms. Besides, the northern region appears to have enjoyed monopoly of heads of government since independence as shown in the table 1 below:

Table 1: List of Heads of State by Region and States of Origin in Nigeria since Independence to date.

Tafawa Balewa	1/10/60-15/1/66	Bauchi	North-East
JTU Ironsi	15/1/66-29/7/66	Abia	South-East
Yakubu Gowon	29/7/66-29/7/75	Plateau	North-Central
Murtala Mohamed	29/7/75-13/2/76	Kano	North-West
Olusegun Obasanjo	13/2/76-1/10/79	Ogun	South-West
Shehu Shagari	1/10/79-31/12/83	Sokoto	North-West
Mohammed Buhari	32/12/83-7/8/85	Katsina	North-West
Ibrahim Babangida	27/8/85-26/8/93	Niger	North-Central
Ernest Shonekan	26/8/93-17/11/93	Ogun	South-West
Sani Abacha	17/11/93-8/6/98	Kano	North-West
Abdusalam Abubakar	8/6/98-29/5/99	Niger	North-Central
Olusegun Obasanjo	29/5/99-29/5/07	Ogun	South-West
Musa Yar'Adua	29/5/07-5/5/10	Katsina	North-West
Goodluck Jonathan	5/5/10-29/5/13	Bayelsa	South-South
Mohammed Buhari	29/5/15-Date	Katsina	North-West

Source: State House, Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Conclusion

From the discussion above, it is vividly seen that politics, ethnicity, religion and culture have great effects on national integration in Nigeria. Though Nigeria is a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-party country, our combined territorial boundary is expected to bound us together as a nation.

However, those factors have further divided us and rather make national integration very difficult if not impossible in Nigeria. The list of former Heads of state shows that the leadership of Nigeria is seriously one sided. The leadership in Nigeria has been dominated by the northerners that had 10 out of the 15 heads of state since independence. Out of the 10 heads of state from the north, 6 of the were from the North-West geo political region. Out of the 5 Heads of state from the southern Nigeria, 3 of the were from the South-West geo political region while only 1 each was from the South-East and South-South geo political regions respectively. Most of the national crises in Nigeria including insecurity were birth by religion, ethnicity and political factors.

Recommendations

1. The religious, ethnic-cultural and political difference that often plague Nigeria and thereby negatively affects its national integration and unity must be urgently addressed. All hands must be on deck to foster national integration in Nigeria.
2. The major religions and leaders must begin to emphasis the need to embrace peace within the multi-religious and ethno-linguistic pluralism in Nigeria.
3. Secularity should be embraced as the best option that can uphold peace and harmony in Nigeria.
4. Religious fanaticism should be avoided in order to pave way for re-designing Nigerian society.
5. The government should respond to religious crises on time in order to arrest the situation and to prevent destruction of lives and properties that always accompany such crises.
6. Leaders should strengthen existing policies that promote tolerance of other people in Nigeria.
7. General issues of governance should not be religionized or tribalized to the detriment of the collective good of Nigerians.
8. Nigerians must learn to love one another and imbibe the spirit of patriotism and nationalism.
9. Corruption should be violently resisted while the corrupt officers be made to pay highly for their fraudulent acts.
10. There should be death penalty for Boko Haram, Kidnappers, Bandits and other criminal elements to serve as deterrent to others.

11. Political office holders should shun tribalism and nepotism and serve the entire nation without fear or favour.

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