

Management of ethnic diversities as a panacea for nation building: The Nigerian example, 1960-2017

Ellah, Timothy Ogbang

History and International Studies,
University of Calabar,
Calabar, Nigeria

Aboh, James Ajang

History and International Studies,
University of Calabar,
Calabar, Nigeria

Patrick O. Odey

History and International Studies,
University of Calabar,
Calabar, Nigeria

Abstract

This study examines nation-building and the management of ethnic diversities in Nigeria, 1960-2017. In attempting to evaluate and understudy political development in Nigeria, there is a need for a consideration of the impact of ethnicity on nation-building in the country. Without mincing words, historical facts have demonstrated that ethnicity had and will continue to influence political developments in Nigeria as several events and activities such as the federal character principles, the civil war, states creation and the formation of political parties can best be explained from the ethnic milieu. The questions in which this study intends to address include; How have the Nigerian political leadership managed the different diversities in the country since 1960 to enhance nation building? What are the effects of ethnicity in Nigeria's nation-building? How can the issues associated with ethnicity be best contained to enhance nation-building in Nigeria? The theoretical framework of analysis adopted by this study is the group theory which holds that in the society there is no effective individual interests, that every group has her interests, and that these interests always result in group actions and that, there is no one group interest that includes everyone in the society. This study adopts the primary and secondary methods of data collection with a multidisciplinary approach.

Key words: Development, Equity and Justice, Ethnic Diversities, Nation Building, Nation, Nationality

Introduction

It will be historically wrong and unassuming for any scholar to assert and give the impression that what later became a conglomerate Nigeria after the arrival of the British maintained a common historical and political cohesion. The template prior to 1914 amalgamation was a separate number of independent



nation states and entities which were all politically and territorially separate, and in many cases linguistically and culturally divergent. The above narrative indicates that British imperialism foisted these separate nations states together without recourse to their consents. Nigeria's concept of what became a Nigerian nation state later was entirely a British creation as suggested and coined by Miss Flora Shaw on January 8, 1897. It should be noted that, prior to 1914 there was neither the name nor any demarcated, single, political unit, with any other name whatsoever; governing the area on which present day Nigeria stands. But not withstanding what existed in the area now known as Nigeria was a group of free and independent kingdoms, republics, nationalities, and loosely associated communities"¹. These divergent ethnicities and kingdoms were independent of one another with diverse culture. Some examples of such independent political groups that existed in what later became Nigeria in 1914 were the old Oyo Empire, the old Benin Kingdom, Sokoto Caliphate, Kano and Zaria Emirates in addition to many other republican city-states especially among the Igbo people² of today's southern Nigeria.

The process of nation building in what later became Nigeria in 1914 has a chronology and here is an insight. At about the 1860 Lagos was captured and annexed in 1861, and by 1900 the colonization of Nigeria was complete when the Royal Niger Company Charter was revoked by the British. In the process of times, two significant changes took place in 1906 and 1914 respectively. In 1906, the colony of Lagos and Southern protectorates were merged to form one territory under a single government and administration, known as the colony and protectorate of southern Nigeria. In 1914 northern and southern protectorates were amalgamated to form a single colony and protectorates of Nigeria. The fusion of these formerly separate administrative entities into one administrative unit was based on the recommendations of the Lord Selbaoune's Committee, set up in 1898 by the Secretary of State for colonies, Sir, Joseph Chamberlain, to map out the future development of Nigeria³. What is today's Nigeria after independence is a product of imperialist design, created and foisted together in 1914. Nigeria was formed partly by accident and partly by design, in a state of political servitude under British colonial control. At about 1860-1960 under the British colonial administration the process of nation building in the Nigeria culminated in resource exploitation, under development and political balkanization of the country.

Mindt admits that as Nigeria approached independence, there was a consensus that the states should come to independence as a single nation. The Independent Nigeria was born on 1st October 1960, but the independent foundation was parlous characterized by ethnic divisiveness and in-cohesion convulsed and precipitated impasse and imbroglio. Nigeria's independence at

¹E.E. Idike. *Zikism: The Political Philosophy of Nnamdi Azikiwe*. (Nsukka: Fullady Publishing Company, 2000).169.

² E.E. Idike. 170.

³C. G. Chidume. Centenary Celebration of Nigeria and Challenges of Nation Building. (European Journal of Research and Reflection in Arts and Humanities Vol. 2 No. 2, 2014), 25.

the federal and state level experienced a very short honeymoon⁴. Within the period of six years, it was crisis upon crisis. For example, the western coalition crisis, the census controversy and the 1964/65 General Election violence orchestrated the military intervention in 1966, which terminated the First Republic. Nigeria emerging from excruciating colonialism and imperialism fell under the deluge and clutches of military rule between 1966 and 1999. Although, with intermittent periods of civilian rule (1960-1966, 1979-1983). Within this period in the political annals of Nigeria, political structures and institutions have been atrophied and debilitated leading to too many problems rocking the polity⁵. The cumulative and net effects of these problems continued to reecho as a result of disequilibrium in the polity. It on the above mentioned anomalies that this study is attempting to interrogate how Nigeria has after independence managed her ethnic diversities to enhance nation building.

Theoretical Framework

From studies, it has been discovered that a research work must be one that is founded on other peoples' experience, knowledge and past work or experimental research. It must have a foundation on what has already been tested. Therefore, the theoretical framework use in this study is the group theory. A major proponent of the group theory is Arthur F. Bentley who is regarded as the father of group theory in, "The process of Government" (1908), the other is David Garson among others. The group theory encompasses the elitist perception and the pluralist conception of the society. Bentley, argues that, there are no effective individual interest, that every group has its interests, that these interests always result in group action and that there is no one group interest that includes everyone in the society. Furthermore, he believes that all things involving government are determined by the conflicting group pressures and these group pressures are the determinants of the course of government policy. He is of the view that the activity of people fighting to attain their goals takes place not individually but through groups in which they are united by common interest⁶. Also Truman on his part argues that individuals join groups because this activity is a natural action of people with similar beliefs and interest⁷.

In his work titled "*Group Theories of Politics*", G. David Garson (1978) constructs a history of interest groups as participants in the policy process. Garson examines the historical tension between two rival theories of groups in the context of political science: Pluralism and Elitism. The beginning of group theory is really the acknowledgement that "the State" is composed of actors, both institutional and non-institutional, and these actors are a product of their historical, socio-economic, political and various other contexts⁸. Implicit in this

⁴ R. J. Mindt. et al, Politics in Nigeria in Almmmed, G. A. and Birghan, G. (eds) *Comparative Politics Today: A world view*. (India: Pearson Education Inc. Publishing, 2010), 659.

⁵ G.C. Aro. Challenges of Good Governance and Democratization: A Preliminary Survey of Nigerian Experience between 2000-2012 in P. U. Omeje and U.U. Okonkwo. (eds), *New Perspective on West African History*. (Enugu: Madonna University Press, 2013), 424-436.

⁶ A. F. Bentley, *The Process of Government: A study of Social Pressure*. (Bloomington: Indiana press, inc. 1908).

⁷ David Truman in his book "Social Order and Disturbances" (ND)

⁸ D. Garson. "Group Theories of Politics". (Bervely Hills: calif, Sage Pub., 1978), 216

concept is the idea that groups have competing sets of interests and the State acts as a control mechanism. As Arthur Bentley, the founder of the "group theory" of modern political science put it, "there is no group without its interest"⁹.

Application of the Group Theory in the Study

In applying the group theory on this study, it emphasized and recognizes the pluralistic and multi-ethnic nature of the Nigerian nation state and how these non-states actors in form of ethnic groups who are either in the minority or the majority are products and results of historical, political, and socio-economic contexts. The activities of these ethnic groups and the impact of ethnicity on Nigeria are as a result of the quest for power and satisfaction for their common and different interest which differs from those of other competing ethnic groups. Indeed, a nation without a sense of history suffers. A nation endowed with both human and material resources; cerebral heavyweights in historical scholarship with international acclaim, unfortunately has no consciousness of history. She has obliterated the pioneering works of the Dikes; and defaced and incinerated with the ashes blown into oblivion the Ade-Ajayis, Biobakus, and the Ayandeles.¹⁰ Therefore, there is the struggle for national recognition and political powers which serve as a guarantee for freedom and inclusion. Also, in order to achieve their unique and peculiar ethnic group interest, various means are employed and applied e.g. violent protest, lobby, campaigns and the use of registered and unregistered groups to project ethnic interest. The basis for the usage of such group is to distort and stress the political system as is the case in Nigeria into submission. This then results to pressure on the political system where different ethnic groups use various means to exert pressure on policy makers in government to tilt public policies in favour of their ethnic interest. Some of these groups for example are: the Arewa Elders Council for the Hausa Fulani, Ijaw Elders Council for the Ijaw nation of the Niger Delta, the Ohaneze Ndigbo for the Igbo ethnic group and the Afenifere Elders Council for the Yoruba nation etc. The above mentioned groups are registered and recognized by government while they are others who are not recognized but are known and continue to muscle policy makers or government to make policies to favour their ethnic groups, they include different militant groups in the Niger Delta, separatist groups in south east of Nigeria with different names, some alleged terrorist groups in Northern Nigeria, some socio-cultural groups in the south west and others. Their activities revolve around militancy, vandalism and the kidnapping of both local and foreign personnel, workers and government representatives to pressure government to recognize their ethnic interest.

Also, the group theory explains why the party formation and associations in Nigeria has been greatly influenced and driven by ethnic sentiments, ethnicity and ethnic interests, why dominant political parties right from the colonial

⁹ A. Bentley, 20.

¹⁰ Patrick O. Odey and Daniel O. Ntui. "The Role of History in National Integration: A Study of Nigeria in The 21st Century" *International Journal of History and Philosophical Research*, Vol.7, No.4, October 2019, 9. ISSN 2055-0030(Print), ISSN 2055-0049(Online). Accessed 5th August, 2021.

period represented the major and dominant ethnic groups, and why minor or small political parties are products of the minorities even till today. For example, Northern People's Congress (NPC), Action Group (AG), National Council of Nigerian Citizen (NCNC), All Progressive Congress (APC), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) all representing or dominated by Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Ibos respectively and using these parties as an instrument of their ethnic groups to maintain stronghold on political power and as a platform to influence national interest in favour of their different ethnicities. Furthermore, the constant struggle and contest for state control in Nigeria between and among ethnic groups wearing the masks of political parties corresponds with the claim and idea of the group theory that, no group has a claim on the general will of the people and such struggle has not been able to enhance effective nation building.

Nation Building and Ethnicity: A Conceptual Perspective

Nation Building

According to the United Nation Report, Nation-building entails regional, political, social and economic activities that are directed towards national development. It is a complex undertaking because of the task of fitting the basic interconnected structures of any country (political, economic, taxation and judicial systems, infrastructure, cultural, educational, and medical institutions and more) into a unified, organic whole. It involves the policies and programmes put in place to ensure that a nation does not become a failed state¹¹. Pan had noted also that nation-building as described by the United Nations (UN) entails essential steps such as: Security which guarantees citizens a safe environment; Political reform that involves building a civil society, developing strong local and provincial governments, and ensuring freedom of the press and other civil liberties; Economic reconstruction implying the restoration of economic infrastructure by establishing lines of credit for business, restarting industry, creating jobs especially in the agricultural sector, which accounts for most of the Gross Domestic Product (GDPs) of developing countries; and Strengthening legal institutions by ensuring functional and independent judiciaries¹².

Also Ahmed-Gamgum defines nation-building as the conscious and focused application of the people's collective resources, energies, and knowledge to the task of liberating and developing the psychic and physical space that we identify as ours. It involves the development of behaviours, values, language, institutions, and physical structures that elucidate our history and culture, concretize and protect the present, and insure the future identity and independence of the nation. Nation building is deliberate, keenly directed, focused energetic projection of national culture, and collective action to develop a political and economic system. From the political perspective, it is in the area of developing and instituting a democratic policy. Nation building thus entails the ability of the nation-state to sustain itself as a sovereign state by giving freedom and liberty to its people to use a well laid mechanism or system of

¹¹ United Nations Report on Nation Building, 2000.

¹² E. Pan. United Nations: Nation Building, Council on Foreign Relations: Backgrounder, 2005.

leadership recruitment and leave a legacy or culture of smooth succession of power to future generation¹³.

The study defines nation-building as the process of constructing or structuring a national identity using the power of the state; it is a process which aims at the unification of the nation's people within and outside so that it remains politically stable and viable in the long run. Nation-building sometimes uses propaganda or major infrastructure to enhance social harmony and economic development. It also believes nation building has many important aspects. First, it is about building a political entity which corresponds to a given territory, based on some generally accepted rules, norms, and principles, and a common citizenship. Secondly, it is also about building institutions which symbolize the political entity – institutions such as a bureaucracy, an economy, the judiciary, universities, a civil service, and civil society organizations etc. Above all, however, nation-building is about building a common sense of purpose, a sense of shared destiny, a collective imagination of belonging. Nation-building is therefore about building the tangible and intangible threads that hold a political entity together and gives it a sense of purpose. Even in these days of globalization and rapid international flows of people and ideas, having a viable nation remains synonymous with achieving modernity. It is about building the institutions and values which sustain the collective community in these modern times¹⁴.

Ethnicity

An ethnic group is a group of people whose members identify with each other through a common heritage consisting of a common culture including a shared language or dialect. The process that results in the emergence of ethnicity is called *ethno genesis*¹⁵. Among the first to bring the term “ethnic group” into social sciences was the German sociologist Marx Weber (1922) who defined it as those human groups that entertain a subjective believe in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonisation or migration; this belief must be important for group formation, furthermore, it does not matter whether an objective blood relationship exists. Weber maintained that ethnic groups are artificial i.e. a social construct because they were based on subjective belief¹⁶.

In addition, Nnoli, defines ethnicity as a “social phenomenon associated with (communal) competition among members of different ethnic groups”. While ‘ethnic groups’, are social formations distinguished by the communal character

¹³ W. A. Ahmed-Gamgum. Nigeria at 100 Years: The Process and Challenges of Nation Building. (Public Policy and Administration Research www.iiste.org.Vol.4, No.8, 2014), 115/116. Accessed on the 12/09/2019.

¹⁴ I. A. Gambari. The Challenges of Nation Building: A Case of Nigeria. (A First Year Anniversary Lecture of Mustapha Akanbi Foundation, Sheraton Hotel Abuja, Nigeria, 7th February, 2008), 3-4.

¹⁵ S. A. Adeniji & M. E. Ofiwe. The Impact of Ethnicity on Nigeria's Political Development: An Assessment, 1999-201. (International Journal of Research and Development (IJRD), VOL. 2, ISSUE 12. December, 2015), 75.

¹⁶ M. Weber's Economy and Society: A Critical Companion. (Stanford University Press 1922), 403.

of their boundaries and membership especially language, culture or both, with language constituting the most crucial variable in Africa¹⁷. Nnoli points to the following features of ethnicity:

- i Ethnicity exists when a nation-state is characterised by multiple ethnic groups;
- ii Ethnicity is characterised by an element of common consciousness vis-à-vis other ethnic groups;
- iii Ethnicity leads to the formation of inclusive/exclusive groups and attitudes;
- iv This in turn leads to prejudice, discrimination and outright hostility¹⁸.

Furthermore, Cox sees ethnicity or ethnic group generally as a socio-cultural entity “while inhabiting the same state, country or economic area, consider themselves biologically, culturally, linguistically or socially distinct from each other and most often view their relation in actual or potentially antagonistic terms”¹⁹. Finally Azeez sees ethnicity as a sense of people hood that has its foundation in the combined remembrance of past experience and common aspiration²⁰.

The Process of Nation Building, Ethnic Nationalism and Party Politics in Nigeria since 1914

The process of nation building and the political history of Nigeria especially after the amalgamation of 1914 became inundated with serious problems of ethnicity and disunity foremost among these is the quest for the unification of peoples into a common nationality and nationalism, in which there is a sense of near lack of a collective citizenship. It is therefore not surprising that apart from the issues of corruption in which the various administrations has grapple with after 1960, the leadership has been confronted with issues of integrating and stabilizing the Nigerian society, toward creating national symbols and viable institutions; to achieving legitimacy for the state; as well as the numerous task of harnessing the human and natural resources of the country to meet the goals of nation building.

Nevertheless, Nigerian nationalism suddenly degenerated into ethnic nationalism, micro –nationalism or sub nationalism. The emergence of ethnic nationalism is consequent upon the existence of so many ethnic nationalities in Nigeria which has overtime created ethnicity as intractable problem in the polity. Nigeria has been embroiled with identity crisis right from the time of amalgamation of Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1914 by Frederick Lord Lugard. Nigeria is made up of over 250 ethnic groups agitating for recognition and sometimes autonomy from the Federation²¹. The growth of nationalism and the subsequent emergence of political parties based on ethnicity rather than national interest was responsible for the root causes of the civil war from 1967-1970.

¹⁷ O. Nnoli. *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria*. (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1980), 5.

¹⁸ O. Nnoli, 5.

¹⁹A. S. Adeniji, 73.

²⁰ A. Azeez. “Ethnicity, Party politics and Democracy in Nigeria” *Peoples’ Democratic Party (PDP) Agent Consolidation*. (Ilorin stud Tribes Tribal’s, Vol. 7No.1, 2009), 329. (sic).

²¹ G.C. Aro, 432.

The collapse of Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) formed in 1936 by Samuel Akinsaya, H.O. Davies, Ernest Ikoli, Dr. J.C. Vaughan and Obafemi Awolowo was because of an inbuilt fusionist tendency, it was unable to consolidate the various anti-colonial pressures. It became riddled with internal dissensions and subsequently, an unwholesome rivalry between Ernest Ikoli and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe over who stands for a vacant legislative council seat which finally culminated in the demise of Nigerian Youth Movement in 1941 and convulsed into the formation of ethnic/tribal unions that metamorphosed into the three various political parties in the aftermath. The departure of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe led to eventual formation of two ethnic/cultural unions: the Igbo State Union and Egbe Omo Oduduwa. These were the inner wheels of the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) and the Action Group (AG) which were formed in 1944 and 1948 respectively marking the inception of ethnic politics in Nigeria²². The Jam'iyyar Mutanen Arewa (JMA) metamorphosed into the Northern People's Congress (NPC) with a "slogan one North". These three Political Parties operated from the ethnic background of their formation.

The quest toward independence in the early and late 1950s did more or less expose the ethnic milieu associated with these parties. According to Amucheazi, in the pre-independence era and immediate post-independence period, the parties were more or less ethnic based. The most popular party in the 1950s and 1960s was the NCNC which started as the foremost nationalist party but later became identified largely with the Igbo people of the South East, even though it had a substantial following in the South West. The Action Group emerged as a Yoruba ethnic organisation, Egbe Omo Oduduwa and therefore was conceived ab initio as a Yoruba party. The major party from the North was the Northern People's Congress (NPC) which even declined the initial suggestion to change its name to Nigerian People's Congress (from the activities of the NPC, emerged groups like Taron Masun Zumunta, Kano Youth Association, Non-Muslim League and Jamiyar Mutanen Arewa). Thus, the three principal parties anchored themselves in the then three regions and among the major ethnic group in each region.²³

Also in the Second Republic 1979-1983, the formation of political parties was ethnic driven and clouded. The five political parties that featured during the period still bore ethnic colorations and tinges. The parties were the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), the Nigeria's Peoples Party (NPP), Great Nigeria Peoples Party (GNPP), and the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP)²⁴. Between 1979 and 1983, the NPP was by and large a reincarnation of the NCNC, UPN manifested the image of the Action Group and the NPN replaced the NPC. The GNPP represented the independent minded Bornu Youth Movement of the old North Eastern zone of Nigeria. The other significant party was the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) which was basically a Kano-based

²² E. E. Uwakwe. Nationalism, Sub nationalism and Micro Nationalism in Nigeria. A Historical Overview in Onuoha, J., Okpoko, P. U. (eds) *Ethnic Nationalism and Democratic Consolidation: Perspective from Nigeria and the United States of America*. (Nsukka: Great AP Express Publishers Ltd, 2004),73.

²³ E. Amucheazi. Party System and Party Politics, in Oyovbaire S (ed), Governance and Politics in Nigeria: The IBB and OBJ Years. Spectrum Books Ibadan, 2008).

²⁴ C. G. Chidume. 27.

movement, the home of NEPU (Northern Elements Progressive Union) of 1950-1960s, and led by the nationalist, Mallam Aminu Kano.

In the botched Third Republic 1992-1993, Nigeria experienced the formation of two political parties namely: the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC). Chief MKO Abiola contested the presidential election on the platform of SDP and Bashiru Tofa also on the platform of NRC all campaigned based on ethnic biases. According to Chiume, the soul of the Third Republic was murdered on the altar of ethnicity when Gen. Ibrahim Babangida annulled 1993 Presidential elections on the ground that his ethnic party (NRC) was defeated at the polls²⁵. The election was adjudged free and fair within the domestic and international context; so there was no justifiable and sufficient reason for the annulment.

At the demise of the Third Republic, multiple parties came on board during the reign of Gen. Sani Abacha. The following parties emerged as the United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP), the Democratic Party of Nigeria (DPN), the National Centre Party of Nigeria (CPN), the Grassroot Democratic Movement (GDM) and the Congress for National Consensus (CNC), which were at one point ridiculed by the Late Attorney General and Minister for Justice, Bola Ige as the five fingers of a leprous hand. The sudden demise of Maximum Dictator Abacha Sani saw the end of these aforementioned parties.

In the build up towards the emergence of the Fourth Republic, the emergence of three Political Parties are the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Alliance for Democracy (AD) and the All Peoples Party (APP) also had ethnic approach. The choice of Olusegun Obasanjo on the Platform of PDP was hinged on ethnic consideration to placate the agitation of the South Westerners over the annulment of 1993 June 12 Presidential Elections. Ethnicity has been the motive force controlling the party politics along ethnic affiliations. It soars high and stands as the tinder box that is capable of shipwrecking the Nigerian polity. Care must be taken by the present Nigerian State to weather and nip in the bud the ominous phenomenon of ethnic nationalism in order to ensure the continuous stay of Nigeria's corporate entity²⁶.

Managing Ethnic Diversities and Nation Building in Nigeria since 1960

There is strength in diversity. The heterogeneity of Nigeria is a source of strength since pre-colonial times. The over 360 ethnic groups that were woven together by the Lugardian craftsmanship and to bear a nomenclature assigned to them by the taxonomist, Flora Shaw were never in isolation or made to interact by the Europeans. These people evolved extensive inter-group relations among themselves in the form of migration; socio-cultural exchanges, like exogamous marriages; trade; and wars.²⁷ Prior to Nigeria's independence in

²⁵ C. G. Chidume, 28.

²⁶ C. G. Chidume, 28.

²⁷ Patrick O. Odey and Daniel O. Ntui. "The Role of History in National Integration: A Study of Nigeria in The 21st Century" *International Journal of History and Philosophical Research*, Vol.7, No.4, October 2019, 10. Accessed 5th August, 2021.

1960, she adopted federalism as a system of government with three regions- Northern, Southern and Eastern regions. The adoption of federalism was a conflict management strategy of the heterogeneous composition of Nigeria. According to Tamuno, the term federalism is that form of government where the component units of a political organization participate in sharing powers and function in a co-operative manner through the combined forces of ethnic pluralism and cultural diversity. Delicate arrangements of this kind were carefully worked out, to provide sufficient room for the co-existence of "centre-seeking and centre-fleeing forces"²⁸. Succinctly, the assertion demonstrated above shows how a successful federalism tends to exist. It is historically known that Nigeria federalism was a socio-political contraption of colonialism and imperialism. It was actually foisted on Nigeria with the instruments devised by Niger Committee of Lord Suboune in 1898, laying the groundwork for the amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914 by Lord Lugard. The constitutions of Benard Beurduillon and Lord Milverton evolved the idea of federalism and subsequently pursued by other colonial governors leading to the political independence in 1960. It is believed that its adoption was to create peace and unity amongst the divergent ethnic groups in the country.

In 1963, the Mid-Western region was created out of the Western region bringing the regions to four. In January 1966, the military intervention which brought Major General Aguiyi Ironsi to power, abolished the regions and created groups of provinces. After a second coup in 1967, Major General Yakubu Gowon became the Head of State. He abolished the group of provinces and created twelve federating states. In May 1976, 7 more states were created by the Murtala/Obasanjo military regime bringing the number of states to nineteen. In 1976, Local Government Councils were created and by 1979, they were accorded constitutional recognition as the third tier of government. By 1987, there were twenty-one states with the creation of 2 more and by 1991, 9 more states were created, further increasing the number to thirty with a Federal Capital Territory. In 1996, 6 more states were created bringing the total number of states to thirty-six²⁹ at present. The essence of the division of the regions into states and more states was mainly to give identities to the varied groups (ethnicities) which make up the country but had been subsumed under the three main ethnic groups - Ibo, Hausa and Yoruba. The preference for the federal system of government for Nigeria was reflective of the heterogeneity in the Nigerian society and to date has been the most viable option for managing the diversity within the country and mitigating the demands of the competing interest groups³⁰.

In addition, the aftermath of the Nigerian civil war fought between 1967 and 1970 created another avenue for the Nigerian Federal Government to enhance the quest to manage the different diversities in the country. After the war, the declaration of the "No Victor, No Vanquished" by the Federal Government was accompanied with some post-war reconciliatory programmes to regenerate the

²⁸ T. N. Tamuno. Nigerian Federalism in Historical Perspective in K. Amuwo, et al (eds) *Federalism and Political Restructuring in Nigeria*. (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd 2003),13

²⁹ N. Umoh & E.M. Adeyi. Social Integration: A Nation-Building Strategy for Nigeria's Federalism. (Review Public Administration Manag, 2019), 2/7.

³⁰ N. Umoh & E.M. Adeyi. Social Integration, 2/7.

sinew of national unity. It was in line with this that the Gowon Administration came up with the National Youth Service Corps Program. The NYSC scheme was created in a bid to reconstruct, reconcile and rebuild the country after the Nigerian Civil war. The unfortunate antecedents in our national history gave impetus to the establishment of the National Youth Service Corps by decree No.24 of 22nd May 1973 which stated that the "NYSC is being established with a view to the proper encouragement and development of common ties among the youths of Nigeria and the promotion of national unity". This is well captured in the National Youth Service Corps Act establishing the scheme which states as follows: An Act to establish the National Youth Service Corps, specify the objectives of the Corps and the conditions of service for corp members under the Corps.

Furthermore, the attempt to manage Nigerian ethnic diversity has been enhanced through the inclusion of the federal character principle clause in the Nigerian federal constitution. According to Olagunju, Federal Character is a deliberate design to accommodate less dominant but often forcibly expressed interest...³¹. Also, Ikejiani and Ikejiani, had noted that multi-ethnic and multi-racial affiliations in the country is the root cause of constant crises and blamed governments for not trying to arrest the ugly situation. They believed that the panacea to this problem lay in the adoption of federal character concept as it relates to the location, staffing and admission of students into tertiary institutions in the country, employment and appointments or elections³². Similarly, Ezenwa had noted that federal character arose out of the need to correct the anomalies that emanated from the random and uneven distribution of natural and economic resources and thus doubtful of whether such principle could correct such anomalies that have already been inculcated and imbibed by the various ethnic groupings in Nigeria. He however, pointed out that this inequality which found succour in areas of revenue allocation and educational advancement worsened after independence³³. Finally the composition of the Federal Government or any of its agencies and the conduct of their affairs shall be carried out in such manner as to recognize the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity and to command national loyalty. Accordingly, the predominance in that government or its agencies of persons from a few ethnic or other sectional groups shall be avoided³⁴.

Notably, the different ethnic groups, regions and subsequently states that have existed and exist in Nigeria developed at varying pace in different sectors and the educational sector is not an exception. Since the British government stepped in to educate Nigerians as clerical staff to help in keeping the colony in a subordinate position for colonial continual exploration, Nigerians have

³¹T. Olagunju. "Federal Character and National Integration", (NIPSS Conference Proceeding, 1987), 33.

³² O. Ikejiani & M. Ikejiani . Political Imperatives: Desiderata for Nationhood and Stability. (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publisher, 1986), 7-8.

³³ U. Ezenwa, (1987). "Participatory Politics: The Socio-Economic Dimension", (NIPSS Conference Proceeding, 1987), 87.

³⁴ A. Gboyega. "The Public Service and Federal Character." In P.P. Ekeh & Osaghae, E.E. (eds) Federal Character and Federalism in Nigeria. (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, 1989), 177.

continued to struggle for this limited chances for education. However, British government education style in Nigeria was alien and enslaving, hence, Lord Lugard noted that: The chief function of government primary and secondary schools among primitive communities is to train the more promising boys from village schools as teachers for those schools, as clerks for local native courts and as clerks for the administration³⁵. Meanwhile, the significance of education is outstanding as educational attainment has a correlation with occupation of top economic and political positions in both the public and private lives. In 1955 and 1957, both the Western and Eastern regions respectively introduced the Universal Primary Education while the North was entirely left out. By independence, education had become an issue for the federating units in Nigeria. In 1974, the National Policy on Education was formed. The main thrust of education in Nigeria was to achieve integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizenry and equal educational opportunities for all citizens at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Hence the aim of this outfit was to inculcate national consciousness and national unity, the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society³⁶. Again deliberate attempt has been made to institutionalize the federal character principle in Nigeria's public affairs. In the educational sector where for instance, the Northern Nigeria is obviously disadvantaged while the South is advantaged, a policy is often recommended to right this wrong. Briggs had argued that the panacea for this inequality lay in adoption of the federal character principle in staffing, locating schools and admission of students into schools. Today, more students are admitted into Nigerian universities based on the logic of locality and educationally least developed states than those admitted on the basis of merit³⁷ all in an attempt to create and manage an inclusive federation.

The Challenges of Nation Building in Nigeria

Numerous issues have culminated in the challenges to nation building in Nigeria. For example while the nationalists and people of Nigeria, were struggling to get liberated from the claws of colonialism, the colonialists were also busy institutionalizing ethnic /sectional politics in the country by promoted one ethnic/sectional group over the other. Although, this has been denied over the years by scholars, but a recent British Broadcasting Corporation radio documentary and other documents on the events leading up to the independence of Nigeria, Britain's former colony, charged the British government with interference in the election to ensure the result was in line with its interests. These sources cited two files held in the British National archives covering the period leading up to independence in 1960 that to this day remain closed to the public and will remain closed for another 50 years³⁸.

³⁵A. O. Eme. Issues in Federalism. (Benin: Ethiope Publishing Corporation, 1968), 10

³⁶M. Adamu. The Hausa factor in West African History. Zaria: ABU Press, Afigbo A. (1987). "Federal Character; Its Meaning and History" Quoted in I. Ukwu Federal Character and National Integration in Nigeria, NIPSS Conference Proceeding, 1978.

³⁷ B. Briggs. "The University System", (NIPSS Conference Proceeding, 1987), 142.

³⁸ Oral interview by M. Barry. Britain and Zik :Britain rigged election before Nigerian independence BBC documentary, 9 August, 2007.

After independence, it has been discovered that one major bane of nation building in Nigeria is leadership. According to Chinua Achebe, the trouble with Nigeria is the failure of leadership. Leadership is a critical factor in nation-building and it should be understood in two important but related ways. First, there are the personal qualities of integrity, honesty, commitment, and competence of individual leaders at the top. Secondly, there are the collective qualities of common vision, focus, and desire for development of the elites as a whole³⁹. The standards for recruitment and the performance of our individual leaders over the years have left much to be desired. We do not need leaders who see themselves as champions of only some sections of our population. We do not need leaders who do not understand the economic and political problems of the country, not to talk of finding durable solutions for them. We do not need leaders who are more interested in silencing their opponents, than in pursuing justice. We do not need leaders, who preach one thing, and do the exact opposite. We do not need leaders who place themselves above the constitution and the laws of the country, but leaders who lead by upholding and respecting the rule of law. We do not need leaders who have no sense of tomorrow, other than that of their private bank accounts⁴⁰. If Nigeria as a nation state is to succeed in nation-building, the nation must have a leadership that is committed to the rule of law and has a demonstrable sense of fair play and democratic tolerance; a leadership with ability and integrity; above all else, the nation must have a leadership that can see beyond the ostentatious pomp of office. The nation must have leaders who have a vision for a Nigeria better than the one they inherited; leaders who will lead by deeds and not by words; achievers, not deceivers. The nation need leaders that will not only leave their foot-prints on the sands of time, but one, which by dint of hard-work, fair play, dedication and commitment, will live a good legacy forever in the hearts of Nigerians.

Furthermore, in Nigeria, the threats to nation-building are embedded in the characteristics of her federalism. Nigerian federalism is a fake federalism. Her 'holding together' background makes the achievement of unity in diversity which federalism offers, a herculean task. Since the pre- and post-independence era, the competing constituent groups have remained loyal to the ideologies of the individuals whom they consider their founding fathers - the Western Region to Awolowo, the East to Azikiwe and the North to Ahmadu Bello etc. The above has continued to elude the country and its ethnicities the peace and unity it deserve.

Also there is need to note that fiscal federalism in Nigeria leaves a lot to be desired and its handling erodes the doctrines of true federalism. The ripple effects reverberate throughout the cores of numerous contending interests with the minority groups decrying their marginalization in the resource distribution equation. The majority of Nigeria's revenue sources are found in the South-South (Niger Delta region) which is perennially prone to devastation, degradation, neglect and poverty as a result of the activities of the transnational

³⁹ Chinua Achebe as quoted in I. A. Gambari. The Challenges of Nation Building: A Case of Nigeria. (A First Year Anniversary Lecture of Mustapha Akanbi Foundation, Sheraton Hotel Abuja, Nigeria, 7th February, 2008), 15.

⁴⁰ Chinua Achebe as quoted in I. A. Gambari, 15.

corporations. The Federal Government is complicit in that it does little or nothing to bring erring transnational oil exploration corporations to book rather, it ascribes all the accruing revenue to herself and based on the principle of derivation, allocates certain percentages to the states and local government⁴¹.

Corruption within the Nigerian political and socio-economic landscape is endemic and continues to hinder the performance of the key sectors of the economy. It resonates in the failure to adequately deliver on governance policies cognizant of the diverse groups and interests that make up the polity. Agitations and protests by the minority groups are for development or protests against the drive of the political class for personal gain, the lack of genuine commitment to serve the people and the failure of their representatives in the central and state legislatures to deliver on their promises. Widespread poverty, insecurity, illiteracy, poor health facilities and lack of basic utilities continue to plague majority of the populace bringing the issues of bad governance and leadership failures to the fore. Service delivery is at an all-time low and quality of life continues to drop below the minimum acceptable standards. Suicide rates in Nigeria have spiked with Nigeria ranking fifth in the World Health Organization report published by Spectator Index⁴².

The emergence of militant Islam especially in Northern Nigeria has given rise to Islamic fundamentalism spearheaded by the notorious Boko Haram Group that has pitched itself against westernization, the government and its institutions while the notoriety of the Fulani herdsmen continues against the rural populace in many parts of the country.

The intangibility and dysfunctionality of the numerous governance institutions in Nigeria are pointers to the failures of leadership in Nigeria. These institutions are EFCC, ICPC, INEC, NOA and others created to enhance nation building but have suddenly become so weak because of the intervention from people in high places. Calls for the amendment of the 1999 constitution to address lapses in electoral matters, power sharing, resource control as well as other issues with the capacity to destabilize the nation have gone unheeded. The fear of constitutional amendments is not that it might serve the interests of the government. For example under Obasanjo, it was intended to prolong his stay in office by propagating the third term agenda, when it was not accepted other items in it were jettisoned. Without a re-evaluation of the power sharing formula in Nigeria to clearly define and enhance state and local governments spheres of responsibility and influence, the risks of hampered nation building cannot be eluded.

Finally it is believed that years of military dictatorship introduced a form of unitarism in the country and further ingrained the federal dominance established under British rule. Constitutionally-defined structures were dismantled through series of decrees that transferred state resources and control over intergovernmental relations (even during civilian regimes) to the Federal Government in an unbridled over-centralization of power. Under Obasanjo's civilian rule, the nation slowly evolved into a one party state and the

⁴¹ N. Umoh & E. M. Adeyi, 5/7.

⁴² M. Alake. Here is why our country is ranked 5th on Annual suicide list. Pulse.ng, 2018.

witch-hunt of political opponents became a feature of the governing process⁴³. This militarization of democracy has advanced under the Muhammadu Buhari-led civilian administration which disregards inputs and decisions of the legislative and judiciary in policy and governance matters⁴⁴. Today Nigeria parades very weak political parties who when not in power cannot challenge the ruling party formidably. With flawed elections and judicial recklessness and near lack of consolidation of electoral democracy in Nigeria, the quest for nation building becomes elusive.

Conclusion

This study has attempted an investigation of Nation Building and the Management of Ethnic Diversities in Nigeria, 1960-2017. The study has discovered that political and economic imbalances exist amongst the divergent states or ethnic groups that made up Nigeria. These imbalances have created some anomalies which arose from the nature and character of the colonial and post-colonial Nigerian state. These imbalances exist in almost every sector hence most ethnicities feel marginalized. The emergence of various militia groups in the Niger Delta and others in the other regions are indication of the existence of rivalries between ethnicities as a result of the lopsided nature of the Nigerian federalism. The study discovered that some ethnic groups seem to be so strong that they can hold the others to a standstill. This therefore denies some ethnic groups of their constitutional right of self-development and actualization. It is in view of correcting this abnormality that the government had taken steps toward the management of ethnic diversity to foster nation building that a federal constitution, Federal Character Commission, National Youth Service and other government policies were adopted. The Nigerian state therefore, over-emphasizes, the federal character for equity while deemphasizing merit, hard work, promote and defend mediocrity and parochialism in running of the various sectors in the country.

To achieve Nation-building in Nigerian nation state, the people must incorporate the actions, activities and commitment of reoriented and responsible citizens if it will be maintained. The need for integration and citizen reorientation encompassing law, order, patriotism, loyalty and commitment to governance processes play a key role in ensuring the success of government efforts and the delivery of social services and governance dividends. Also unequivocal to nation-building is the influence of technology and communication in the twenty-first century political socialization, civic engagement, the development of new political identities consistent with the norms of citizen engagement and a constantly evolving society. Finally, nation-building process is continuous. What is relevant in the process is that Nigeria evolves and develops according to its peculiarities and the influence of her inherent characteristics.

⁴³ S. E. Oyovbaire. The crisis of governance in Nigeria, a Lecture Delivered at the 23rd Convocation ceremony of the University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria, 2007, 5-22.

⁴⁴ M. Omilusi. From civil rule to militarized democracy: Emerging template for governance in Nigeria. *Int J Polit Good Gov*, 2015, 1-20.