

**IMPACT OF RELIGION AND ETHNICITY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF
NIGERIA**

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project was carried out by SAMSON DENGIEFA GIFT with matriculation number ART1701167 in the Department of History and International Studies, Faculty of Art, University of Benin, under supervision

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to God Almighty for His love and protection throughout my study in University of Benin

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO STUDY

Introduction

Nigeria is located in West Africa bordering on the Gulf of Guinea, and lies between the Benin Republic and Cameroon. The country has a total of 923,770square km, 13,000square km of which is covered by water. The boundaries of Nigeria extended for 4,047 km and countries with co-joining borders include; the Benin Republic (in the South West), Cameroon (in the South East), the Republic of Chad (in the North East) and Niger Republic (in the North West).¹

The three major ethnic groups are Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo. There are, however, other sizable ethnic groups which include Ijaw, Kanuri, Ibibio, Ogoni, Igbira, Jukun, Tiv etc. The major religious groups are Muslim, Christian and indigenous beliefs. The official language is English. This is as result of British colonisation that lasted for more than hundred years; whereas, the other languages associated with the three major ethnics groups are Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo. These socio-cultural differences have separated Nigerians from each other and constitute one of the main factors militating against national integration.²

National integration is a process of creating a sense of national consciousness, uniqueness of identity and loyalty among people of different socio-cultural identities (racial, ethnic, language, religion, and so on) into a single territorial political society³.

These diversities are evidently manifested in the citizens' cultural and religious practices. For instance, there are more than four hundred documented ethnic groups across the country comprising of millions of people who are adherents of the two major religions.⁴

Nigeria from all indications since independence has not been able to attain her set objectives of unifying the diverse ethnic groups in all facets of socially, economically, politically, among others. The contributing factors to this reality could be attributed to lack of unity caused by ethnic and religious conflict. Ethnicity started during colonial era. For instance, in 1953 when the nationalists representing Nigeria were offered the platform to come to terms with an agreed date of independence, ethnic sentiments and insecurity came to the fore as the Northern (Hausa-Fulani) delegates at the constitutional conference objected to a 1956 date proposed by the Southern delegates, among whom was late Chief Anthony Enahoro who moved the motion.⁵ The Hausa-Fulani leaders had made it clear by their stout objection that they were not ready for independence as the fear of Southern dominance in a post-colonial Nigeria was rife.⁶ These ethnic sentiments had negative effects on Nigerians. For instance, the Action Congress (A.C) was led by late Chief Obafemi Awolowo, a Yoruba, and the NCNC was headed by late Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, an Igbo, while the NPC was led by Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Saruana of Sokoto, a Fulani and a Muslim.⁷ 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 which were West-Yoruba, North-Hausa/Fulani and East-Igbo which

consequently reproduced the three major ethnic groups in the country. It however opposes secularity which is constitutionally allowed in religious pluralistic societies like Nigeria, it has threatened the stability and development of the nation with a claim to numerical superiority.⁸

These ethnic politics that outplayed during the early period of independence, promoted the religious belief of the respective regional political leaders to the utmost level of the country's governance. Consequently, the elevation of the Sharia law into legal and political system, the issue of Nigeria becoming the member of organization of Islamic countries (OIC) among others as well as the formation of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) all took place.⁹ Unarguably, Nigeria is a country that is blessed with enormous human and material resources, but ironically, the same country has become the bastion of inequitable state policies, injustice, barefaced corruption, social decay, poverty-ridden, etc., where ethnicity religious beliefs has pervaded every facet of the Nigerian life, and more fundamentally determines who gets what, when and how.¹⁰ Ethnicity has been considered to be the cause of the 1967-1970 Civil War in Nigeria, elections which have been rigged and those which have failed can be blamed on ethnicity, the manipulation of census figures can only be understood from the ethnic dimension.¹¹ As such In this context, few questions arise: What are the effects of ethnic politics in Nigeria's political development?; why has ethnicity persisted in Nigerian politics?; what are the impacts of ethnic politics on Nigeria's development? This research

work seeks to answer these questions as it extensively assesses the impacts of religion and ethnicity on Nigeria's development.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to Assess the Impact of Religion and Ethnicity in the Development of Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are;

- i. To study the history of Nigeria as a nation-state.
- ii. To study the religious and cultural composition of Nigeria
- iii. To give a historical analysis of the historical growth of religion and ethnicity in Nigeria political development
- iv. To evaluate the impact of religion and ethnicity on Nigeria's development.
- v. To put forth the various ways in which religion and ethnicity has contributed to the growth of Nigeria as a nation.

Scope of the Study

This study covers between 1960–2020. The year 1960 witnessed the granting of independence to Nigeria from the British colonial masters and as such the journey of statehood began subsequently. Within the period, Nigeria has witnessed different form of government which ranges from republican to military regimes with democratic and military general as leaders respectively

Methodology

This research work is anchored on the historical research method. It interrogates the past, with a view to proffering valuable lessons that Nigeria needs to learn from. The study employs the qualitative method of data analysis to buttress its point. The researcher in the course of conducting the study will visit the University of Benin library and other libraries open to the public. It will corroborate both primary and secondary sources and adopt the Modern Language Association (MLA) style of citation and referencing.

Primary Sources: The primary materials that are useful for this study are the constitution of Nigeria, political parties' manifestoes (First republic-Forth republic) and memorandum of understanding, archival documents and oral interviews.

Secondary Sources: The secondary sources that are useful for this study are text books, journal articles, online materials, unpublished works, as well as newspapers.

Literature Review

Many scholars and writers have analysed the growth of Nigeria as state and expressed their opinions. However, one cannot assess the impacts of religion and ethnicity on Nigeria's development without considering and reviewing some scholarly works.

James O. Ojiako, in his book entitled, *Nigeria: Yesterday, Today and ...?¹² 1981*, gave some genesis of the birth of Nigeria as a State during the process of independence. He explained the origin of the role of religion and ethnic in the political development as nation-state. According to him, the state in which the Nigerian independence was attained

was the major cause of the tribal politics. He further states that the state operated regionalism and as such political loyalty was more focus on the regional political authority and not the national authority thus creating tribalistic sentiments in the political growth of Nigeria as a nation and as well as a state.

Olufemi Vaughan, in his work entitled, *Religion and the Making of Nigeria*,¹³ narrates that Nigeria is home to millions of Christians, Muslims, and adherents of indigenous religions. According to him, the complicated relationship between Christians and Muslims in the Northern and central regions of the country has made Nigeria become one of the world's major laboratories for the study of religious-based conflict and reconciliation. He further asserts that many scholars have focused on recurring Christian-Muslim confrontations as an aspect of endemic sectarian conflict in Nigeria showing how an obdurate political class exploits ethno-religious divisions to mobilize collective political action which tend to hamper national growth.

Toyin Falola, in his book entitled, *Violence in Nigeria: The Crisis of Religious Politics and Secular Ideologies*,¹⁴ states that when the country won its independence in 1960, the most destabilizing factor was ethnicity. Thus Power was gradually strengthened at the centre of a federal system so as to keep together the country's diverse ethnic components. Furthermore, since the late 1970s, religion has become as disruptive ethnicity judging from the constant religious riots claiming many lives and wreaking mass destruction of property and places of worship. Religion and politics have been bedfellows throughout Nigerian history judging from the pre-colonial era, religion was

integral to the state; it was therefore seen as part of identity construction, a means for power legitimation, and a determiner of economic might.¹⁵

The next work to be reviewed is, *Nigeria: a new history of a turbulent century*,¹⁶ by Richard Bourne, who discussed the stability of the Nigerian polity and considers the impacts of religion and ethnicity on the Nigerian polity. He states that Nigeria being one of the largest and most important countries in the third world, has been in the news as a major African theatre of religious violence and aggression, as have Sudan and Algeria. According to him, a religious divide separates Christians and Muslims, and long-standing intra-religious conflicts further divide the people. The imperfect distribution of adherents to Islam and Christianity is complicated by ethnic differences: the north (with the exception of central Nigeria, known as the Middle Belt) is predominantly Muslim, and the southeast is predominantly Christian. It is only south-western Nigeria where both religions are equally represented. In a polity that is already fragile and on the brink of collapse, religious trouble at this moment presents a great threat. The institutionalization of religious violence and the aggressive competition for dominance by Islam and Christianity continue to have a negative impact on the development of Nigeria as a nation.¹⁷

Various scholars have expressed different reactions and views on the Impacts of religion and ethnicity on Nigeria's development. Larry Diamond, in his book entitled, *Class, Ethnicity and Democracy: The Failure of the First Republic*,¹⁸ traced the failure of the first republic in Nigeria not to the mere fact of ethnic pluralism, nor to primordial

culture tensions or historical legacies of conflict, but to the ethnic competition that was generated by socio-economic and political modernisation. To him Nigeria simply fell victim to the centrifugal tendencies inherent in all the multi-ethnic new states of the Third World, and especially in the highly artificial nations clumsily carved for colonial convenience. From this perspective, democratic order collapsed because the historic competing nationalisms of Nigeria's three largest tribal nations were never successfully reconciled and united into an overarching Nigerian identity.¹⁹

Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton, in their work entitled, *a History of Nigeria*,²⁰ agrees to the reason given by Larry Diamond in *Class, Ethnicity and democracy*.²¹ According to them, A synthesis of ethnic and institutional explanations stresses the failure of political integration - rooted in the colonial legacy of flawed institutional arrangements, regional disparities, and a restricted political process - while conceptualising 'tribalism' somewhat distinctively as rooted in the ethnic competition between elites.²¹

Monica Emmanuel, in her book entitled, *Federalism in Nigeria: Between Division in Conflict and Stability in Diversity*,²² gave an intensive insight on how conflict instigated by religious and ethnic difference in Nigeria has greatly limited national development in Nigeria. In addition she asserts that the religious and ethnic disunity has created an environment that tends to militates the growth of nationhood among Nigerians.

J.N.C. Hill, in his work entitled, *Nigeria Since Independence: Forever Fragile*,²³ addresses the political and economic impacts of religion and ethnicity on Nigeria's

development. According to him, the social implication of the play of religious beliefs and ethnicity is that Nigerian becomes a state of with growing ethnic disunity and as such, the collective responsibility of national growth becomes difficult to actualise. Politically, the sentiment of the citizen voting along ethnic lines creates an inefficient Government based on tribal or ethnic loyalty thus sacrificing national growth at the altar of tribalism.

However, as fantastic as the works of these scholars and other writers may appear, they remain deficient in some aspects, as they have failed to put into consideration, the impacts of religion and ethnicity on Nigeria's development, which this research work tends to critically assess.

Chapterization

This study is divided into five chapters.

Chapter One: Background to the Study

This chapter provides a general overview to this project. This is introduction which gives a general background and knowledge of the work. It covers the Aims and Objectives, Scope of the Study, Literature Review and Methodology.

Chapter Two: Formation of Nigeria as a State

This chapter gives a detailed historical background of Nigeria as a state and how it started, the journey so far in terms of political development. Furthermore, it examines the series of event that contributed to the growth of the foundation of federalism in the political development of Nigeria as state.

Chapter Three: Role of Religion and Ethnicity in Nigeria's Development

This chapter deals extensively with the relationship between religion and ethnicity and the political growth or development of Nigeria as a state. It further gives a critical analysis of the pivotal role that religion and ethnicity plays in Nigeria judging from the cultural diversity that exists in the cultural composition of the state.

Chapter Four: The Impacts of Religion and Ethnicity in the Development of Nigeria

This chapter analyse in details the impact of religion and ethnicity in the development of Nigeria as a state. It gives a detailed analysis of the social, political impacts that religion and ethnicity has in the Development of Nigeria as a state from independence till present.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

It gives a brief summary of the entire work and also recommends remarks based on the researcher's discoveries.

Endnotes

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CHAPTER TWO

FORMATION OF NIGERIA AS A STATE

Introduction

By about 1850 political and economic transformations had begun to alter the make-up of states in the Nigerian region, to a greater or lesser degree. As the savanna was reconfigured into an Islamic empire centered on Sokoto, the states of Yoruba land grappled with the collapse of the Oyo Empire. In the Niger delta and Calabar, established slave traders began to transform their business practices and power bases towards palm oil exports and were dealing with new forms of competition. Also affecting political, economic, and social processes was the growing influence of British agents, in the form of Christian missionaries, trading interests, and political officials, all of whom were primarily concerned with increasing British influence against what they saw as the nefarious activities of indigenous rulers and other European powers, notably France and Germany. The power and influence of the British became tangible from around the middle of the nineteenth century, and by the end of the century circumstances had led to a dovetailing of British interests that resulted in the colonial occupation of the territories that would become Nigeria.

Colonial Administration

The development of British colonial administration in the Nigerian protectorates was not a process of unified or consistent planning and implementation. On the contrary, colonial administrations emerged over time in each region of Nigeria primarily as a response to the specific circumstances of that region. Although distinct colonial administrations had emerged independently in each protectorate by the early twentieth century, they did have two overarching commonalities. First, all relied philosophically on the concept that British colonial rule should be maximally beneficial both to the British and to the peoples of Nigeria.¹

This was dubbed the “Dual Mandate” by Frederick Lugard in the 1920s,² and the British argued that it was their duty to run the colonies efficiently and effectively so that the United Kingdom itself might benefit from extracting Nigeria’s raw materials and from the opening up of Nigerian societies to European markets. At the same time, the British claimed to be bringing “progress” and “civilization” to otherwise backward African societies by developing the economy, eradicating slavery in all its forms, weeding out the corruption they believed existed in traditional political institutions, promoting a work ethic they believed traditional societies lacked, and educating populations on European conceptions of health, hygiene, and cleanliness, among other things.³

The second similarity between the colonial administrations that emerged in the Nigerian protectorates was the belief in indirect rule as the most effective way to fulfill the Dual Mandate. The point of indirect rule was to govern through existing indigenous rulers. Under indirect rule, traditional kings and chiefs were allowed to continue governing their territories through traditional political and social institutions in a way to which the populations were accustomed. Traditional rulers were also subordinated to British colonial officers, however, whose job it was to make sure they conformed broadly to the values of “civilized” governance that is, the abolition of slavery, the promotion of legitimate commerce, and the acceptance of free trade in their territories. In principle, British colonial officers in every region of Nigeria embraced the idea of governing as far as possible through the traditional ruling class. They felt that indirect rule optimally balanced alien with indigenous governance so as to promote the stability and continuity necessary for the gradual development of broader political, economic, and social transformations in Nigerian societies over the long term. From the British perspective, indirect rule allowed Nigerian cultures to maintain those traditions and customs that were valuable and effective, while weeding out the few practices that hindered the development of Nigerian societies.⁴

In theory, indirect rule made sense to the colonial mind. In practice, it often did not work as planned. In southeastern Nigeria, British colonial officers had an extremely difficult time even identifying who the “traditional” rulers of the region were.⁵ The

process began in the 1890s with the establishment of the Niger Coast Protectorate under the administration of Claude Macdonald. Building on the court of equity established by British consuls on the Oil Rivers in the 1850s, Macdonald had developed a native court in the coastal communities of Calabar by 1892. This native court consisted of representatives from the main ruling houses of Calabar, with the British governor general as the president, and served as a court of appeal for the many minor courts that adjudicated disputes over the larger Cross Rivers area. Soon afterwards, similar native courts were established in Bonny, Degema, and Buguma.⁶

The authority of the native courts derived entirely from the British “certificate of recognition,” or warrant, that a court member received on taking office and not necessarily from any organic relationship to traditional political institutions. The members of the native courts in the southeast therefore came to be known by the derogatory term “warrant chiefs”: indigenous rulers created entirely by the process of establishing indirect rule. The warrant chiefs became poor representations of the traditional governing apparatus in the protectorate, alien replacements that engendered little respect from the subjects under their jurisdiction.⁷

The system of colonial administration began to develop in southwestern Nigeria from the 1860s. In the Colony of Lagos, British colonial officers ruled more directly than in any other part of Nigeria. Because it had been a Crown Colony since 1861, Lagos was officially British territory, as opposed to the rest of Nigeria, which was British-protected

territory. Lagos came under the direct suzerainty of the British monarch, and the inhabitants of Lagos had all the rights of British citizens.⁸ As a result, colonial officials took control of the day-to-day administration of Lagos in a manner unlike any other part of Nigeria. Traditional elites were involved in the colonial administration, but not to the extent they were elsewhere. Administration in Lagos was very much directed by the colonial governor, although local elites did play a substantial role as advisers to him. Under the administration of Governor William MacGregor (1899–1904), a Legislative Council and a Central Native Council made up of members of the traditional ruling elite were established, with MacGregor himself as president.⁹ The function of these bodies was to advise the governor on traditional Yoruba law regarding such issues as land ownership, marriage customs, and ceremonial procedures.¹⁰ While the governor retained the sole right to make decisions on these matters, the councils incorporated the traditional elite to some extent and in principle prevented the governor from angering or alienating his Lagosian subjects through rash or uninformed decisions.¹¹ In this way, the traditional elite maintained some power, although significantly reduced, and the colonial government was able to present itself as concerned with the preservation of local culture.

Amalgamation of Nigeria

The ostensible reason for amalgamating the Nigerian protectorates was economic. Despite the efforts of Lugard and his successors to reorganize the finances of northern Nigeria, the economy of the northern protectorate had floundered under indirect rule and

had not become fully self-financing as of 1914.¹² Taxation had not produced enough revenue to cover the administrative needs of the protectorate, and commerce had not grown sufficiently to make the region profitable. To finance it, the northern protectorate relied on annual subsidies from southern Nigeria and an imperial grant-in-aid from the British government to the tune of approximately £300,000 per year.¹³ Both the Colonial Office and Lugard believed that centralizing the protectorates under a single administration would be economically beneficial. Amalgamation would allow for a streamlining of existing expenses and would allow the central administration to divert resources as it saw fit – allocating southern revenue to the north as necessary. It would also allow for the centralization of infrastructural and development schemes, reducing waste and eventually bringing about the integration of the southern and northern economies on a much greater scale. The amalgamation of the Colony and Protectorate of Lagos with the Niger Coast Protectorate to form a single Protectorate of Southern Nigeria occurred in 1906.¹⁴ Lugard, who had left northern Nigeria in 1906, was brought back in 1912 to oversee the amalgamation of the southern and northern protectorates. This process was completed in 1914, with Lugard becoming the first governor general of a unified Nigeria, a position he held until 1919.

Nowhere were the effects of Lugard's systematization of indirect rule more apparent than in the realm of revenue collection.¹⁵ Indirect rule in the north derived colonial and native authority revenue primarily from the direct taxation of the population.

This tax was collected by the emir and placed in the native treasury. The emir and his servants all received salaries paid from the native treasury, and all other public expenditures came from the native treasury funds as well. This system worked in the north, where the population had a long history of paying taxes to emirs and where emirs had a long history of paying tribute to an imperial authority.¹⁶ In southern Nigeria, colonial revenues had been collected and allocated very differently. In the southwest, the primary source of revenue came in the form of customs duties. In the southeast, the native courts had a native treasury system, but revenues were primarily obtained through fees and fines imposed by the court. In neither of these regions was there a history of direct taxation; nor did the indigenous rulers traditionally have the unilateral power to collect taxes.¹⁷

Despite both indigenous tradition and established colonial practice in southern Nigeria, Lugard insisted that the establishment of native treasuries funded by direct taxation throughout Nigeria was the cornerstone of effective colonial administration and “civilized” governance. He argued that direct taxation served as an indication to indigenous populations of the power that traditional chiefs and kings still held, despite the British presence. He also argued that it was imperative that indigenous rulers be allocated salaries paid by the native treasury in order to reduce corruption and make them indebted to the central colonial government.¹⁸ Although Lugard received reports from various colonial officers in southern Nigeria indicating that direct taxation was not practicable in

most areas of southern Nigeria, he went ahead with his administrative overhaul, imposing direct taxation on Benin in 1914, Oyo in 1916, Abeokuta in 1918, and parts of southeastern Nigeria by 1926.¹⁹ Lugard's indirect rule therefore did no more to preserve traditional societies in southern Nigeria than had the systems devised by his predecessors; in fact, it led to significant political and social changes.

Nationalist Movements

The first three decades of the twentieth century saw the establishment and entrenchment of British colonial administration in Nigeria. Along with colonial rule came transformations to Nigerian economies and societies. While the colonial system brought some material benefits to a few European-educated intellectuals, by and large it frustrated most Nigerians, who believed that colonial rule eroded traditional cultures and institutions. Colonial rule had inspired anti-colonial resistance from the very beginning, although it had not organized around a pan-Nigerian consciousness, instead making appeals to race consciousness on the one hand and local circumstances on the other.

The early resistance to colonial rule soon, however, mushroomed into full-scale nationalist movements. Beginning in the 1930s a new generation of anti-colonial activists emerged in Nigeria, calling for greater involvement of Nigerians in the governance of Nigeria. Led by charismatic visionaries and dominated by the ever-growing class of European-educated Nigerians, the new nationalist movements placed increasing pressure on the colonial government to embark on progressive development planning measures,

particularly after the Second World War which increased spending on infrastructure, education, and health facilities that made the colonial government more responsive to the needs of average Nigerians. Meanwhile, pressure from nationalist groups led to constitutional reforms in the years after the Second World War – reforms that increased Nigerian self-governance at the regional level and ultimately resulted in complete independence for Nigeria from British rule, achieved on October 1, 1960.

The nationalist movements that emerged in Nigeria from the 1930s onwards all had the same basic goal: replacing the colonial government with an indigenous Nigerian government. Beyond this commonality, however, the goals of nationalists often diverged significantly. The most intractable divisions between nationalist movements were regional; however the nationalist movements that had emerged as pan-Nigerian efforts to promote the indigenization of the government in the 1930s devolved into regionally based political parties with memberships that were divided largely along ethnic lines by the early 1950s.²⁰ The independence thus achieved in 1960 was a fragile one, unified under a federal constitution in which politically conscious ethnic groups vied for control of the central government through ethnically based political parties.²¹

Bowing to pressure from an increasingly organized and demanding Nigerian nationalism coming out of the Second World War, the colonial government embarked on a program of development planning and gradual internal self-government for Nigeria. By agreeing to some of the more moderate demands of the nationalists, the colonial

authorities hoped to forestall militant, leftist nationalism among Nigerians.²² The new Labour-controlled parliament of Clement Attlee in the United Kingdom, in power from 1945 to 1951, was far more sympathetic to the agenda of the nationalists than previous administrations had been. This, coupled with the impending independence of India, the United Kingdom's largest and most treasured colony, also contributed to the willingness of British officials to move towards greater development and eventual self-government for Nigeria.²³

The Nigerianization of the civil service gave greater administrative powers to Nigerians; constitutional reforms gave Nigerians greater legislative powers. Three new constitutions were introduced for Nigeria between 1945 and 1954, and each one brought Nigeria closer to full self-governance. The first constitution, known as the Richards Constitution after the colonial governor, Sir Arthur Richards, came into effect in 1947. The Richards Constitution revamped the Legislative Council created by the 1922 Clifford Constitution to allow a majority of unofficial, Nigerian members for the first time. The Northern Region was included in the central legislature for the first time, increasing the unity of Nigeria.²⁴ At the same time as the Richards Constitution promoted Nigerian unity, however, it also exacerbated regional identities, creating regional houses of assembly in each of the three existing regions – that is, one for the West, one for the East, and one for the North. The Richards Constitution therefore became the first step towards

a federated Nigerian state, with a unitary central legislative apparatus coupled with separate and individual legislative bodies at a regional level.

Other parties were supportive of the idea of the regional assemblies. Nationalists in the north were particularly interested in solidifying regional distinctions. Since the Richards Constitution guaranteed the incorporation of the Northern Region into the central legislature, nationalists in the north recognized that their political fates were now linked with those of their southern neighbors.²⁵ The north had developed very differently from the south, however. The north still lagged far behind the south in terms of a European-educated population. The north was also culturally distinct, claiming a population that was predominantly Muslim, whereas the south was increasingly Christian.²⁶ Northerners feared that incorporation into a unitary Nigerian state would mean that they would ultimately become politically and culturally dominated by the south. Since the north lacked a large European-educated population, there were not at that time enough qualified northerners to take up positions in a European-style legislature, nor were there enough northerners to staff the civil service even of the Northern Region. In fact, the colonial civil service in the north had been dominated by transplanted southerners for most of the colonial era. More conservative elements in the north feared that a southern-dominated central legislature would force a secular state on the north, preventing northerners from governing via Islamic law, or shari'a.²⁷ For these reasons,

northern political activists almost uniformly supported the predominance of regional power over central authority.

Nigeria's Independence

Nigeria became independent on 1 October 1960, and the royal representative for the ceremony was Princess Alexandra, the attractive and personable cousin of the Queen. She arrived in Lagos from London on 26 September. This was not just Nigerian history in the making. With some 40M Nigerians ruling themselves and independence in 16 neighboring countries in the same year, the majority of Africans were in command of their destinies for the first time in over a century.²⁸

The whole country celebrated with fireworks, dancing and floodlights on public buildings. The federal government allocated £1.75M for events and £100,000 to each of the three regions, and it took the opportunity to improve street lighting in the capital. The *jeunesse dorée* of Lagos enjoyed themselves at the Kakadu nightclub and cabaret.²⁹

A final election was held in 1959 to determine the make-up of Nigeria's first independent government. The results gave the NPC the largest number of seats, and a majority government was formed through an NPC–NCNC coalition. The AG became the opposition party. Alhaji Tafawa Balewa maintained his position as prime minister, and Nnamdi Azikiwe took a largely ceremonial title as Nigeria's first indigenous governor general. On October 1, 1960, Nigeria became a fully sovereign state in the British Commonwealth. Tafawa Balewa stood in the square in central Lagos which was soon to

bear his name and spoke to all those with a stake in the independence process. He thanked the British for their cooperation and the nationalists for their relentless work over the course of many decades. He noted that the process had been long and arduous, but declared that “history will show that the building of our nation proceeded at the wisest pace: it has been thorough, and Nigeria now stands well built upon firm foundations.” It was a glorious moment for Nigeria, the culmination of nearly 100 years of striving for the ideals of freedom and democracy.³⁰

The foundations upon which Nigeria gained independence were not as firm as Balewa had declared, however. In fact, the federal machinery was very fragile. The new country, united in the euphoria of its independence, was still divided on many levels. Regionalism and ethnicity remained major problems barring the development of a national identity.

Furthermore, although the three largest ethnic groups each dominated a region of Nigeria, hundreds of smaller ethnic groups feared impending domination by a larger group at the regional level. Urban and rural areas were developing along very different paths, and the working class and peasants had reason to fear that they had simply traded wealthy, elite British leadership for a Nigerian bourgeoisie that did not share their values or views on future prosperity.³¹

Nigeria’s political independence was therefore coupled with a continuing economic dependence, as the country was reliant on European knowledge, connections, and technologies and on international market conditions. Further fueling these political

and economic problems facing the newly independent Nigerian nation was the discovery of petroleum in commercial quantities in the Niger delta in 1958. Petroleum would become both a blessing and a curse for Nigeria in the decades to come: the resource with the most potential to make Nigeria a strong, wealthy state, but one that has also fueled the flames of ethnic division, economic underdevelopment, and institutional corruption since the 1960s.

Conclusion

The Colonial administration of Nigerian owes a lot to the religious and ethnic attitudes of the Nigerian Peoples such that ethnicity and religion have grown so much in the political life of the Nigerian state so much.

The nationalist movement which was aimed at the independence of Nigeria was built along ethnic lines and ties such that that regionalism was a political norm which the constitution consolidated during colonial administration. It was this colonial legacy that formed the foundation of Nigeria's first republic political arena such as political parties were regionalized. Consequently Nigeria began to witness some challenges that the regional politicking had for the young state.

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CHAPTER THREE

ROLE OF RELIGION AND ETHNICITY IN NIGERIA'S DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

This chapter is based on ethnicity and political development in Nigeria, where the background to role of religion and ethnicity in national development will be discussed. The artificial creation of Nigeria by the colonial government and the attendant ethnic conflicts that have been the order of the day in Nigeria over the allocation of socio-political and economic resources demonstrate that the country shares a common background of the colonial legacy with the rest of Africa in relation to ethnic conflicts which have contributed to the underdevelopment of the country. This chapter presents a discussion of the analysis of ethnicity and religion in Nigeria.

Religion and Ethnicity in Nigeria's Development

Ethnicity in Nigeria as it is today is propelled and provoked by the politicization and mobilization of ethnicity. Scholars of ethnic conflicts in Nigeria agree that ethnics in Nigeria are divided into ethnic majorities and ethnic minorities. The majorities are dominated by the Hausa-Fulani in the North, the Yoruba in the West and the Igbo in the East. Among these major ethnic groups are minorities such as the Ijaw, Kanuri, Igbira, Ibibio, Nupe, Edo, and the Tiv etc. Apart from these ethnic divisions, religion is another phenomenon that has polarized the country into two camps apart from political division of North and South. The North is predominantly Muslim while the South is

predominantly Christian. In essence, ethnic conflict in Nigeria cuts across all facets of Nigeria's socio-political life.

Nigeria is 62 and still searching for a new political order and as such, the full realization of this objective has been made impossible because of the dominance of the factors of ethnicity, religion and politics, these factors which has affected the survival of democratic rule and national development in Nigeria. Federalism is arguably the suitable framework for addressing ethnic, cultural and religious pluralism in a complex society like Nigeria. In such system, each region or state is allowed to control its resources and develop at its own pace. However, Nigeria who claims to run a federal system of government operates the opposite and does not recognize the identities, interest and needs of the people especially the minorities. The nation's constitution does not reflect the wishes of the people; most government policies are anti-people and do not engender national integration and cohesion.¹

The Nigerian government remains distant from serving the interest of its people. Politics at the federal, state and local levels of the Nigerian federation are dominated by the powerful mandarin who built vast patronage networks during the military days and who now use political office to expand these networks and their personal fortunes. Moreover, many of these so called 'godfathers' have been cultivating, prompting a local arm race in some regions even though several governors are under indictment for money laundering abroad and others are being investigated at home, the bonanza continues at

public coffers for these power holders, while basic infrastructure in many parts of the country remains as dilapidated as it was under military rule.²

Politics today in Nigeria is a 'do or die' affair. The struggle for political power and control at the center has over-heated the nation's polity and created unnecessary tension which has resulted to bigotry between and among regions. Political thugs are recruited and armed by these same politicians who at the end of the day loose grip of these thugs and these arms are used on defenseless citizens.³ The current democratic dispensation since inception has been besieged with unprecedented vice disturbance and social insecurity resulting in massive destruction of property and loss of lives. The religious and ethnic dimension to these upheavals makes them a serious threat to national security. The tension and uncertainties in the country today is not conducive for democratic process and national development. Nigeria in recent times has witnessed a lot of violence eruption and general insecurity in nearly all the states of the federation. Prominent among such is the Boko Haram which has been attributed to the political rivalry between the north and the south towards controlling the political power in the country. It must be realized that, the sudden and apparent emergence of the Boko Haram sect at this period in the history of the country is meant to destabilize the Jonathan's Administration as well as the equilibrium the country has been brought to by the government.⁴

In addition, kidnapping and all forms of maladies, militia groups exist in all geopolitical zones. This has resulted in a lot of bloodsheds, senseless killings, destruction

of property, social and economic dislocation and its attendant poverty, insecurity and unemployment.⁵

This is why it is argued that the number of people in Nigeria bitten by poverty is over 70%. It is only in Nigeria you find political leaders, military chiefs who are clueless, visionless and lack the necessary ingredients to stirring a good socio-economic and political environment, some of them and their cohorts have become sponsors to most crises and conflicts rather than seeing themselves as apostles of peace and national development. Worse still, in all political activities in Nigeria, the factor of ethnicity is reflected. It is particularly obvious in area like voting, distribution of political offices, employment and government general patronage of the citizens.⁶

Also, when national development is mentioned, it is suicidal to ignore the contributions of religious adherents such as Christians, Muslims, African Traditional adherents and other secular ideologists. Today, religion has been used, abused, abused and misused by political elites, and unfortunately the so-called clerics of Christianity and Islam, so much that it has continued to cause conflagrations all over the world. Nigerian experience is one among many of the countries witnessing Islamic extremists' senseless killings and maiming of innocent lives.⁷ Therefore, a discussion of the role of ethnicity, religion and politics on national development in Nigeria is or seems to be highly desirable. It even becomes necessary given that today we still talk about under developed Nigeria as a result of the challenges posed by the indices of pluralism (ethnicity, religion and politics).

Clarifications of Terms

It is important to understand and have the conception of these operational terms ethnicity, religion, politics and national development for the purpose of clarity.

Ethnicity

Like any other terminology employed by social scientists, the concept of ethnicism is a term that does not lend itself to easy definition.⁸ Though, there are general agreement on a few points which germane to understanding the phenomenon. It is agreed that though ethnicity is a derivative of the ethnic group, it only occurs in situations involving more than one ethnic group or identity and to fully understand the meaning of ethnicity, a related concept like ethnic group need to be defined. This is particularly important because of the systemic differences in the definition of ethnicity across societies. Some writers affirm that ethnicity is problematic phenomenon whose character is conflictual rather than consensual. Having enumerated the features of ethnicity on which scholars agreed. Other have defined ethnic group as an informal interest group whose members are distinct from the members of other ethnic groups within the larger society because they share kinship, religious and linguistics ties. Similarly, some sees ethnic groups as a community of people who believe that they possess a common identity based on issues of origin, kinship ties, historical experiences, traditions and cultures, and perhaps share a common language. This means that ethnic groups are social formations, which are distinguished by the communal character of their boundaries.⁹ It is this social formations that affect the performance and functioning of the Nigerian leaders as they

may be influenced in their actions and decisions due to their ethnic inclinations and parochial mentality. The inter-ethnic struggle for social and economic dominance also inevitably leads to nepotism and its attendant consequences, mostly hostility in the form of inter-ethnic violence.¹⁰

Ethnicity is a social formation predicated on culturally specific practices and unique symbols. What this means is that ethnicity is a situation in which individuals in a particular ethnic group consider themselves or are considered by others to have common affinity which distinct them from other groups in the society. Also, distinct cultural behaviors are usually developed; all groups can be identifiable through religion, politics, occupation or language.¹¹ In political terms, ethnicity refers to the ethnic-identity based behavior which seeks, in a competitive setting, to capture political power at the micro level and state, power at the macro level.¹²

Today, ethnicity has become a population subject of intellectual exploration to scholars in different fields both in developed and developing countries particularly of Africa, as it is often considered a prominent factor in the governance and development processes of many countries. It would not be easy to identify a country that is not affected by issues triggered by ethnicity but some countries' situations are particularly striking because of the lessons they provide regarding the impact of ethnicity on national development. It has also been observe that inter- ethnic relations in Nigeria has been one of conflict largely caused by ethnic chauvinism, which manifested in the form of ethnic

nationalism. There is no doubt that this has implications for the survival of democracy and national development in Nigeria.

Religion

Religion as the oldest discipline in human society is the most difficult term or word to define. There is no clear consensus on the conception of religion by theologians and social scientists. This is not merely because scholars grapple with the element of subjectivity, but largely because of the inherent difficulty in understanding the 'inner essences' of religion.¹³ Different people understand religion differently or have different perspectives according to their disciplines. For example, sociologists regard religion as being of social rather than political significance while anthropologists view religion as a component of the cultural aspect of life.¹⁴ To the Theologians, religion is the essence and center of civilization and the sublime aesthetic expression and root of all decision, actions and ultimate explanation of civilization with its invention and artifacts; its social, political and economic system, its past and future, promises and history.¹⁵ Religion can be seen as a collective representation that made things sacred.

Religion can be termed by reference to what is known as extent of purity and impurity.¹⁶ Some perceived religion as the service and worship of God or gods. Others emphasized that religion is a strong element in the traditional backgrounds and exerts the greatest influence upon the thinking and feelings of the people concerned. Obilor (1998) avers that religion is a capacity or a power which enable man to observe the laws of his nature, the natural law and/or of the divine law. Durrant (1920) interprets religion as a

barrier to human self-actualization. There is no doubt that religion can be seen in this light when it has been turned into an ideological tool or else, why did Karl Marx see it as the opium of the people. A palliative used by the leaders to hold the masses in check. In the hand of a villain, religion can be a cog in the wheel of progress and massaging of the ego and dehumanization of the people while in the hand of a saint it becomes an instrument for humanization.¹⁷

It has been argued that one's religion is what makes one a complete whole, this assertion may not be correct because not all people practicing a religion would agree that they depend on their religion to complete them as a whole. Basically, the two major religious practices in Nigeria are Islam and Christianity. While the Muslims believe in Allah, the Christians believe in one God, yet we have African Traditional religion. These differences in beliefs have given rise to the religious conflict we are experiencing worldwide.¹⁸ Today, based on the increasing rise of religious bigots and extremists, one may be tempted to suggest that religion is not relevant to societal development and hence should be extricated from human social life.¹⁹ Religious extremism is commonly known in Nigeria as religious fundamentalism and fanaticism. Fanaticism is seen as an extreme beliefs or behavior, especially in connection with religion or politics. Others posit that religious fanaticism is violent and unreasoning religious enthusiasm as well as the inability of religious adherents to harmonize between those theories and the practical aspects of religion.

National Development

Development means different things to different people. Development could be seen as a process of economic and social transformation that is based on complex cultural and environmental interactions.²⁰ Development is also equated with progress and modernity.²¹ According to Walter Rodney, development is the process that includes: physical development which includes man made goods produced by use of technology, cultural development which comprises of the values, norms and traditions of society, and personal development which includes the psychological directions of individuals. The various conceptions of development include economic growth, increased welfare and human development, modernization, elimination of dependency, dialectical transformation and capacity building. Similarly, some scholars affirms that the purpose of development in the society is to reduce poverty, inequality and unemployment. For some, development involves reducing deprivation or broadening choice. Deprivation represents a multidimensional view of poverty that include hunger, illiteracy, illness and poor health, powerlessness, insecurity, humiliation and a lack of access to basic infrastructure.

The growth rate of a country's per capital income compared to those of other countries can be used to describe its level of national development.²² This increase in per capital income must however be accompanied by an unprecedented shift of the society from a condition considered to be unacceptable to a more acceptable one in terms of poverty level, employment, creativity, efficiency, productivity and equality. Therefore, National development is the ability of a country or countries to improve the social

welfare of the people by providing security and social amenities which include quality education, portable water, transportation infrastructure, medical care, employment among others.²³ In Nigeria, faulty development policies pursued since independence till day have left the people pauperized and decimated. These are manifested in increasing poverty, diseases, unemployment, poor medical care, poor housing facilities, lack of portable water, epileptic power supply, lack of access to power and resources by minority groups and their exclusion from policy making.²⁴

The challenges of national development in Nigeria include intolerance, misconceptions, inadequate grasp of religious matters, fanaticism, extremism, violence, bloodshed, suicide, insecurity, injustice, corruption, immoral acts, ignorance and bad leadership and governance, which are inimical to the progress of a country. When these are added to several instances of youth misinformation, disorientation and other forms of misguided exposures and experiences, the challenges of national development in Nigeria assume such an awful proportion that seems to defy any kind of antidote.²⁵

Role of Ethnicity in National Development in Nigeria

Ethnicity is a politically neutral concept and does not pose any danger to democracy or national development but rather could positively engender national development where interactions and interrelationships are healthy. It is the politicization and manipulation of ethnicity that poses a problem.²⁶ Also, the multi-ethnic states are often prone to conflictual and competitive relationships as different communities struggle

to control political power and other economic resources of the state and this constitutes an impediment to political and socio-economic development.

Therefore, ethnicity provides the platform whereby different individuals mobilize primarily to actualize economic goals. This explanation is relevant in the African context and Nigeria in particular where different groups cry about marginalization with regards to the distribution of national resources.²⁷ The Nigerian state has been weak in acting as an impartial actor in protecting the interests of its diverse population as equal citizens; ensuring equitable distribution of national resources; promoting national integration and unity and actualizing national development goals. Its inability to act as an independent force standing above society and effectively mediating between competing interests in society creates a gap which is then bridged by the diverse ethnic groups and their organizations to mobilize for equal distribution of economic resources.²⁸

Since Nigeria attained independence, several problems experienced in the state include those concerned with state creation; revenue allocation; lack of trust among constituent units; election rigging, restiveness/militancy, Boko Haram insurgency, ethno-religious violence, inter-ethnic violence, inability of some ethnic groups to attain certain political offices and political instability,²⁹ these constitute an impediment to national development. More so, multi-party democracy which has been adopted in Nigeria at different periods in its history instead of alleviating its ethnic problems, have further fuelled the political challenges of the state. The country's democratic experiments has

thus far, not translated into its political development and improved standard of living for the citizenry.³⁰

Ethnicity has been found to be the most powerful force shaping the political and social relations in Nigeria. It brings about conflict and distrust among the three main ethnic groups in Nigeria the Yoruba, Hausa/Fulani and Igbo and has led to equation of the Nigerian nation by the ethnic groups as a national cake to be share among them.³¹ Ethnicity has had a lot of negative consequences for the nation's movement towards democratization to the extent that it remains an enduring threat to institutionalization of democracy and national development in Nigeria. Among its resultant negative consequences as observed by Babangida, are wastage of enormous human and material resources in ethnically inspired violence, encounters, clashes and even battles, heightening of fragility of the economy and political process, threat to security of life and property and disinvestments of local and foreign components with continuous capital flight and loss of confidence in the economy, and increasing gaps in social relations among ethnic nationalities.

Role of Religion in National Development in Nigeria

Religion is fundamental to humans' life and living, thinking pattern, attitudes and relationships. Religion is considered critical for any meaningful, total and sustainable national development in any human society.³² more so, it is only religious community (a social force) that can supply a support structure for morality; the moral law, which is the key to attaining the highest good. In an atmosphere where sound morality prevails, there

is no doubt that peace, unity and stable political dispensation which in turn will positively, affect national development shall not be lacking. If religion is the basis of sound morality, it must attack the materialism of our culture and the misdistribution of the nation's wealth and services that are being managed by the corrupt elements of the society.³³

However, religion in Nigeria functions as a means for the perpetration of violence, fuelling ethnic consciences and solidarity, acquisition of power and socio- economic gains, massive killings and the wanton destruction of lives and vandalizing of property of those considered infidels or who pay allegiance to other religions. This is traced to the acrimony between the two dominant religious-Islam and Christianity which had often resulted in the struggle for power and supremacy, bitter feud and wanton destruction of lives and properties.³⁴

Some religious activities have deterred the spare of political and national development in Nigeria. This supports the assertion that posits that religious terrorism in Nigeria possess a significant threat to national development as it is evident in Northern Nigeria where economic and social activities in some of the highly volatile states (Yobe and Borno) have almost been grounded by the stream of killings, destruction of basic means of livelihood of the people and truncating of foreign and local investments; thereby becoming a cock on the wheel of development of the states and Nigeria at large. The emergence of Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria has affected negatively the political, economic, social and environmental situation of the region and Nigerian economy at large. Since 2011, there were many cases of terrorist attacks which include but not

limited to the bombing of UN office in Abuja, Edet House of Force Headquarters in Abuja, Madala attacks, Gwagwalada Park bombing, abduction of the Chibok girls, among so many numerous attacks especially in the North-Eastern Nigeria.³⁵ Religion therefore is a source not only of intolerance, human rights violations and extremist violence but also of non-violent conflict transformation, the defence of human rights, integrity in government and reconciliations and stability in divided societies.³⁶

Conclusion

The phenomenon of ethnicity and religion in Nigeria has become the most essential aspect of national development in Nigerian political system; this is because people are more susceptible to their ethnic identity than being a Nigerian. From all the discussions made so far it is obviously clear that the socio-political and economic development of Nigeria is on shaky grounds. As long as the problem of uncivil politics anchored by ethnic nationalism and the coloration of citizenship where the determinant of socio-political right of citizens hinges on their ethnic affiliation remains; national integration will continue to elude the polity. As it is today in Nigeria, arguably, there seems to be no empirical socio-political evidence to suggest that ethnic divisions and the nationalism attached to it are losing their significance in any part of the country.

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CHAPTER FOUR

IMPACTS OF RELIGION AND ETHNICITY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIA

Introduction

An evaluation and understanding of the political development in Nigeria requires a consideration of the impact of ethnicity. Without doubt, one can say that ethnicity influences political development in Nigeria as several events and activities such as the civil war, creation of states and the formation of political parties can best be explained from the ethnic perspective. The questions which arises from this include; what are the factors that encourage ethnicity in Nigeria? What are the effects of ethnicity in Nigeria? And in what practical ways can ethnicity be best contained in Nigeria?. This chapter will therefore provide the necessary exposition to promote a clear understanding of ethnic conflict in post-independence Nigeria.

Impacts of Ethnicity in the Development of Nigeria

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country and one of the world's most deeply divided societies, has trod a complex, turbulent and contradictory political trajectory since the attainment of independence in 1960. Nigerian leaders appear to be well informed of the problems facing the nation but they have not always been able to approach them independently of the ethnic interests. Thus the political history of Nigeria is characterized by several examples of ethnic conflict where ethnicity has been

manipulated by the political class to satisfy their selfish interests. Put differently political instability in Nigeria is a function of the negative use of ethnicity which in turn generates a reaction from the marginalized groups who seek to establish themselves through violence.

Unarguably, Nigeria is a country that is blessed with enormous human and material resources, but ironically, the same country has become the bastion of inequitable state policies, injustice, barefaced corruption, social decay, poverty-ridden, etc., where ethnicity has pervaded every facet of the Nigerian life, and more fundamentally determines who gets what, when and how.¹ Ethnicity has been considered to be the cause of the 1967-1970 Civil War in Nigeria, elections which have been rigged and those which have failed can be blamed on ethnicity, the manipulation of census figures can only be understood from the ethnic dimension.²

Ethnicity dominated the political scenario after the 1960 independence in Nigeria. The political parties remained regionally based and when the then leader of the Action Group (AG) Chief Obafemi Awolowo attempted to expand the horizon and reach of the party to a national level, he received opposition from his very own deputy Chief S. L. Akintola who believed that the party should continue to maintain their regional symbol and sustain their grip on the ethnic factor and sentiments. This conflict of ideology eventually led to the breakup of the party and the formation of the United People's Party

(UPP) by Chief S. L. Akintola which later aligned with the NCNC and became the regional premier.³

The entry of the military after the military coup of 15 Jan. 1966 which brought Major General Aguiyi Ironsi as the new Head of States was believed to be ethnically inspired. The July 1966 coup was perceived as ethnocide against the Igbo residents in the Northern region. The two coups apparently led to the civil war in 1967.

The second republic was not free from ethnicity, though military doused ethnic tensions, but it failed to suppress ethnic consciousness among the populace. The military failed to stem the tide of ethnic consciousness partly because of its blockage to democracy.⁴ Contrarily due to the coercive nature of military rule and its arbitrary power people were generally alienated from the state and cleave to traditional solidarities and this was also transferred into the second republic.⁵

Another major event which portrayed ethnicity in Nigeria was the annulment of the 1993 general elections by General Babangida which was widely believed to have been won by Chief Abiola. This annulment was widely interpreted as a calculated attempt to side line the Southerners from the corridor of power in Nigeria by the Hausa/Fulani ethnic group.⁶ This was greeted by a widespread rage and civil unrest in the Southeast and led to the transfer of power to the interim government of Chief Ernest Shonekan, a Yoruba. The bloodless coup of 1993 took over power and abolished all democratic

institutions. The resistance to the Abacha junta served as a unifying factor for various ethnic groups in Nigeria.

In recent times, when looking at the political scenario of Nigeria, we can see ethnicity as apparently a negative value, given that it has contributed nothing but disunity in diversity as ethnic groups are regarded closer and ethnic interest are seen as utmost priority over national interest. Yet ethnicity when viewed in a different perspective could be regarded as a positive value because it exemplifies unity in diversity. The Nigerian existence points to the fact that despite numerous and varying ethnic groups, ethnic militia movements, and recurring ethnic violence for over fifty years, the country still operates and there is still political continuity.⁷

Across the length and breadth of Nigeria, ethnic factor and consideration in politics, economic, social and academic matters cannot be avoided. Politics in Nigeria is ethnic oriented; political parties have ethnic consciousness and pursue ethnic interest differently from the national interests.⁸ The ethnic factor or ethnicity is more often than not the ground on which presidents are elected, governors voted, ministers appointed, contracts awarded and even national policies decided.⁹ The socio-political belief is that one can only get himself or herself to power at the centre through ethnic connections or by fanning the embers of ethnicism. This has led to the formation of ethnic militia which refers to the extreme form of ethnic agitation for self-determination as various ethnic groups assume militant posture and gradually metamorphose into militia groups with

each having its own unique problems, plans, strategy, aims/objectives as well as ethnic identity and acts as the machinery through which the desires of its people are articulated and sought to be realized.¹⁰

Ethnicity has been 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. Nigeria is made up of 250 ethnic groups.¹¹ This therefore implies that Nigeria is multi-lingual and multi-ethnic in nature meaning these tribal differences have given rise for 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’. ‘There is no basis for unity’ (Yakubu Gowon). These expressions are real judging from the happenings in the country since independence than the deceit embedded in the slogan of “one Nigeria”. 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.¹² Also, the current president Buhari once said that Nigerians should vote on religious and ethnic lines.¹³ Whatever the intentions were, these actions and statements could trigger suspicion and crises between the two dominant religious groups. By this definition, it becomes a fact that federal character is a tool for ensuring fairness in public service over professionalism and good attainment which is detrimental to national development. 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. It is observed that parties now adopt the principles of federal character as a means of gaining credibility which goes along with ethnic coloration.

Owing to the intrusion of ethnicity into the "federal character" principle, it has given rise to the promotion of incompetent and unqualified civil servants, military, top government officials, among others into the Nigeria system. Also, the inappropriate application of federal character creates mediocrity, inequality, corruption, lack of transparency and above all tribal dominance by the major ethnic groups.¹⁴ However, the 'federal character' as it is currently practiced in Nigeria tends to inculcate cheating rather than emphasize hard work, selflessness and nation-building, the core values which our founding fathers lived by". The demand and desperation for the creation of states and local governments in the country have been informed by ethnic sentiments and marginalization.¹⁵

The effects of ethnicity could also be noticed as well in the area of allocation of national resources. For instance, in the first republic due to the fact that the control of government was in the hands of the North such opportunity was used to allocate many funds to the Northern parts at expense of the South. Ethnicity had affected the Nigerian policy because it heightens political struggle and competition in electoral contest. The activities of the Northern People's Congress (NPC) in the first Republics when the North insisted that its candidates must win at all cost, to actualize this, some Northern candidates were returned unopposed even before the commencement of the general elections.¹⁶

Nevertheless, the various 'ethno-religious' disturbances were strong force for socio-political instability, and national disintegration. They described the gross inadequacy and ineffectiveness of the state security, security of lives and property could not be guaranteed. The climates of insecurity created by violent conflict deter investment. The economy becomes stagnant and democracy divide equally become an illusion. However, the growing incidence of ethno-religious crisis in Nigeria is worrisome and if ethno-religious conflicts are not reduced now and completely, the memories from such could create future conflicts.

Impacts of Religion in the Development of Nigeria

Nigerians are very religious people. There are three major religions in Nigeria: Christianity, Islam and Traditional religion. 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.¹⁷

No doubt religion has contributed adversely to the disintegration of Nigeria for the following reasons: During the regime of Babangida, Nigeria became a member of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC).¹⁸ Though Babangida's government claimed to have taken the decision on economic reasons; to be able to access the loans available to OIC member countries at a time Nigeria was in need of finance but Christians viewed this as an attempt to 'Islamize Nigeria'.¹⁹ This of course was the beginning of Christian versus Muslim open confrontation in Nigeria.

However, the first religious riot motivated by ethnicity between Muslims and Christians was in Kafanchan, old Kaduna state in March 1987.²⁰ The following month in Ilorin, Kwara state witnessed a conflict when some Christian youths held an Easter procession in a thickly Muslim neighborhood, pointing at houses and singing, "Jesus dey here"? "He dey".²¹ The tension went on and with Zaria, Tafawa Balewa, Zongo Kotaf, Kano and several others.²²

Furthermore, when the former central bank governor Mallam Sanusi Lamido Sanusi was suspended due to financial misconduct and replaced by Goodwin Emefiele, a

Christian. Some groups in the North claimed ethno-religious justification for the removal of Sanusi.²³ Senator David Mark once raised an alarm over the issue of some desperate persons using ethnicity and religion to destroy the unity and peace of the Nigerian nation.²⁴ He (Mark) concludes by saying he observed that most people tend to use ethnicity and religion for the wrong reasons, stating “what we need now is to embark on serious inter-religious dialogue with the spirit of frankness, honesty, openness, acceptance and understanding in order to move forward”.

It will not be an overstatement to state that the national integration of Nigeria as a country is already being compromised. This is justified with the Muslim’s call for autonomy. The constitution does not at all raise any religion to a state religion. Yet, this principle was violated when the governors in the Northern state issued authority to Islamize public life. In Zamfara, the first state to introduce a strict form of Sharia, “the government claimed that its religious reform was bringing about major changes, whereas all spheres of public life were being transformed into Islamic oriented institutions”.²⁵ This state sponsored Islamization affected non-Muslims as well, “they were subjected to gender separation in hotels and restaurants, in buses and taxis”.²⁶ All these have hampered national integration in Nigeria even in terms of social, political and economic development. According to Wilson (2012) the tendency of religious groups “to politicize religious activities has made the country more difficult to govern. For example, in March 2006, a protest against the cartoons sanitizing the prophet Muhammed in the north

overlapped with anti-third term protest”. Following this, dozens of Christians were killed, sparking revenge attacks in the South especially at Onitsha.²⁷

It has been observed that the greatest damage which religion can wreak on the economy is total decline instead of rapid growth as loss of lives are usually experienced. Thus, in 1980-1992, a total of twenty religious riots were recorded and death toll put at 6,775 official figures.²⁸ Also, a record of religious crises in the country were put together by Christian Movement of Nigeria reveals that twenty-four riots occurred between 1993-2006 with casualty put as well over 500 lives.²⁹ In fact, it could be endless making a list of religious crises in the country as it comes up every day . 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 current insurgency of Boko Haram is worthy to mention here which had started long ago and 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, is unquantifiable. Investors both local and foreigners had fled because no one want to do business in an insecurity risk nation like Nigeria. The International community would not invest in the country as long as violence persisted.³⁰

Another negative effect religion has had on the country’s integration is the promotion of culture of corruption. Almost, every aspect of society is corrupt and religion

which ought to have been the tool to correct this abnormality has failed in this regard. Some of the pastors and Imans have aided and assisted corruption by tasking their followers to look for money at all cost because poverty is not meant for the children of God, so as 'to help God'. "In churches today, preaching centers on money, prosperity and so on."³¹ Religious morals are expected to regulate the entire human life or activities. Religion has led to various religious conflicts. Remarkably among them are the Maitatsine riot of 1980 in Kano and conflicts between the Izala and Tijany in Gombe in 1987, the Bulunkutu riot of October 1982, the various Kaduna riots of 1987, 1988, Jigawa riot 2001 and Lagos-Idi-Araba, 2002.³² As 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.³³ This was believed to have been caused due to "blasphemous publication" against the Islamic sect. This happened on the day when "miss world Beauty contest was scheduled to hold in Abuja."³⁴

Conclusion

This chapter has so far revealed that ethno-religious conflicts are inevitable in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society like Nigeria. It is not an over statement to state that ethno-religious conflicts retards national development and integration, soils social relations and destabilizes the economy of Nigeria as a nation. Ethno-religious bigotry in Nigeria has become a hinge of various forms of nationalism. The occurrence of ethnic and religious conflicts in Nigeria is alarming and requires urgent and continued attention.

The use of ethnicity, and religion should rather unite us as Nigerians in order to promote peace, peaceful co-existence and unity. The reverse of this has consequences for Nigeria as there were “ethno-religious” crises that claimed so many lives and property. The spate of ethno-religious crises in Nigeria since independence has produced a catalogue that resulted in an estimated loss of over three million lives and unquantifiable psychological and material damages.³⁵

In fact, ethnicity and religion have affected negatively on the development of the nation in many ways namely: socially, politically, and economically. In order to proffer solution that brings peace and promote national integration, both religious and political leaders must begin to emphasise the need to embrace peace. As the country remains multi-religious and ethno-linguistic pluralism, secularity is the best option that can uphold peace and harmony. It is certain that if Nigeria was not colonized, the issue of ethnic sentiment among the different ethnic groups would have been very impossible. The spirit of indigene-settler and ‘federal character’ phenomenon should be discouraged by the federal government. Also, fanaticism in religion should be reduced in order to pave way for re-designing Nigerian society.

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CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This research work examined the impacts of Ethnicity and religion on Nigeria's development. It was informed by the fact that since the amalgamation of Nigeria in 1960, Nigeria had witnessed various negative impacts from the abuse or the wrong application of ethnicity and religion on Nigeria's development. The phenomenon of ethnicity in Nigeria has become the most essential aspect of national identity in Nigerian political system; this is because people are more susceptible to their ethnic identity than being a Nigerian. From all the discussions made so far it is obviously clear that the socio-political and economic development of Nigeria is on shaky grounds. As long as the problem of uncivil politics anchored by ethnic nationalism and the coloration of citizenship where the determinant of socio-political right of citizens hinges on their ethnic affiliation remains, national integration will continue to elude the polity.

Furthermore, the interplay of ethnic culture as supported by the politics of citizenship in Nigeria has meant persistent threat to socio-political and economic development and national integration. The preponderance of the spirit of ethnic culture as discussed earlier in this work has given rise to the emergence of ethnic militias all over the country. It has given rise to the emergence of ethnic militias all over the country. For example, Odua Peoples Congress (OPC) for the Yoruba nationality, Arewa Peoples Congress (APC) for the Hausa/Fulani nationality, Indigenous people of Biafra (IPOB) for

the Igbo nationality and Egbesu Boys for the Ijaw nationality to mention but a few. The emergence of these ethnic militias translates to an increase in the level of political violence, and ethnic conflicts with its attendant effects on development and national cohesion.

This research work has also argued that ethnicity, religion and politics, as operated in Nigeria has retarded the integration of the country and has continued to impede the attainment of national unity and development, as centrifugal tensions, resource control and self-determination, ethnicity based identity politics and religious cleavages have enveloped national development. The process of national development in Nigeria has faced challenges from ethnicity, religion and politics. These social dynamics have weakened and hampered the development of institutions necessary for nation building. The research work has also revealed through its perceived findings that ethnicity, religion and politics have a negative effect on national development in Nigeria. This is sequel to the growth of ethnic chauvinism, ethnic politics, political disorientation, ethnic consciousness, ethnic sentiment, religious bigotry and religious fanaticism in Nigeria. Therefore, if there must be national development in our country, Nigeria must develop a supra-national consciousness and Nigerians must shift their loyalties from their ethnic and regional cum religious groups to a new Nigerian nation. This does not in any way imply a strategy that denies the socio-cultural or ethnic roots of Nigerians, but taking advantage of our multiculturalism, multi-religiosity and multiple identities, all Nigerians

must contribute to create one nation which all nationalities (majorities, minorities and sub-minorities alike), can identify with.

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