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ETHNIC POLITICS AND SOCIAL CONFLICTS: FACTORS IN NIGERIA'S UNDERDEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Although Nigeria is blessed with abundant natural and human resources, yet the country remains underdeveloped. In line with this, consensus is emerging that ethnic politics and social conflicts are the most fundamental factors to this underdevelopment. In this study, the authors supported the view, through the content analysis of literature reviewed, that ethnic politics and social conflicts have hindered political, economic and social developments in the country. In many instances, they have slowed down the development process, which is essential for pulling Nigeria out of poverty and placing it more firmly on the path of stability and sustainable development. In order to combat these challenges and encourage development in the country, this paper recommend that, Nigerians should aim at operating a true federalism, cultivate a suitable political culture, and out-grow ethnic rancor and stop blaming ethnicity for any social policy that affects a group unintentionally.

Keywords: Ethnicity, Ethnic Politics, Social Conflicts, Underdevelopment, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

In spite of the abundant natural and human resources which could have served as a source of power for international relations, Nigeria remains underdeveloped. For instance, Nigeria is almost always ranked low in indexes such as health cares, poverty reduction, capacity building, educational standard, unemployment reduction, water supply and sanitation. The reason behind this is as a result of the various ethnic politics and social conflicts played and caused by our leaders, religious fanatics, greedy politicians and self-centered individuals (Coleman, 1995). The country's major 'national issue' remains largely an unresolved political, economic and social crisis. The steady growth and consolidation of communal allegiances and socio-cultural identities among various ethnic groups in pursuit of competing material and value preferences, and their negative aftermath effect have characterized most of Nigeria's political, economic and social

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underdevelopment, particularly since the 1950s (Usen, 2010). Across the length and breadth of Nigeria, ethnic considerations in political, economic, social and academic matters can hardly be avoided. Politics is ethnic oriented; ethnicism is more often than not the consciousness of Presidents, Heads of states, Ministers, and those on National assignments. This has been one of the most important causes of social conflicts in Nigeria, especially in a situation where this consideration do not favour the minority group and some elites in the majority group. This social conflicts in the form of violence resulting from destruction of lives and properties has been perceived in general as a major obstacle to the overall political, social and economic development of the country.

With that in mind, the central objective of the paper is to examine ethnic politics and social conflict in Nigeria and to examine how ethnic politics and social conflicts serve as factors in Nigeria's underdevelopment, with special reference to her political, economic and social domains. This twofold-objective can be interpreted as: a discussion about the concepts: ethnicity, the trigger of ethnicity in Nigeria, ethnic politics and social conflicts in Nigeria and; a critical examination of how ethnic politics and social conflicts have affected Nigeria's political, economic and social development process. In this paper, we shall hold Nigeria's underdevelopment to mean qualitative and quantitative hindrance to political, social and economic development with regards to negative consequences from ethnic politics and social conflicts that have occurred so far in the country. Some conclusions and useful recommendations are drawn afterwards.

Conceptual Clarification

What is ethnicity?

Our clarification of the concept of 'ethnicity' starts from what ethnicity is not. This is necessary to remove many ambiguities surrounding the meaning and usage of the concept. Ethnicity is not the same as nationalism, neither is it the same with race. At one level, nationalism can be seen as the continuation of ethnicity at the national scale. Gellner and Kedourie, Craig Calhoun (1993) explains that nationalism is a 'theory of political legitimacy' which maintains 'that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones...and [those] boundaries should not separate power-holder from the rest.' The central propositions of nationalism are three, namely: that humanity is naturally divided into nations, that nations are known by certain characteristics which can be ascertained, and that the only legitimate type of government is national self-government. Nationalism is also believed to be a modern creation with a relatively recent history. Race on the other hand refers to one of the groups into which the world's population can be divided on the basis of physical characteristics such as skin or hair colour (Encarta, 2009). Compared to nationalism where we lean toward attitude or feeling about idea of what ought to be (as against what is), race is usually employed descriptively. Race, says Arash Abizadeh (2001: 23), can be defined as humans who share common ancestors from whom they have inherited some innate traits, such as phenotype. Suffice it to note that although they refer to different aspects of social reality, nationalism and race are nonetheless intricately linked to ethnicity. The paper shall return to this later but for now we must attempt to define ethnicity.

In the *Ethnicity: Anthropological Constructions* (1996), Marcus Banks defined ethnicity as '...a collection of rather simplistic and obvious statements about boundaries, otherness, goals and achievements, being and identity, descent and classification, that has been constructed as much by the anthropologist as by the subject.' Banks arrived at this definition after outlining several definitions by other writers in order to demonstrate, and justify, the futility in attempting to define ethnicity. Some of these other definitions are listed below:

The term 'ethnicity' refers to strife between...ethnic groups, in the course of which people stress their identity and exclusiveness. (Abner Cohen 1969:4) Ethnicity is a social identity

characterized by fictive kinship. (Yelvington 1991:168). Ethnicity is a term that half-heartedly aspires to describe phenomena that involve everybody, and that nevertheless has settled in the vocabulary as a marker of strangeness and unfamiliarity. (Chapman *et al.* 1989:16)

What will be noticed from the above definitions is that they are one-sided, skewed and unbalanced. These authors generally feel that we may not be able to define ethnicity. However, some features of ethnicity may still be deduced from them. Consider Cohen and Chapman *et al* description for instance. They alluded to components such as 'ethnic groups,' (ethnic) 'identity,' 'exclusiveness,' and (difference or) 'strangeness/unfamiliarity.' Ethnicity occurs primarily at the level of a group even though the individuals remain central. It refers mainly to segmented *human groups* who engage in a particular type of social relationship. In addition to the supposition of groups, Osaghae's definition of ethnicity is closest to being able to account for some other components of ethnicity in the quotations above. To him, ethnicity has to do with 'the employment or mobilization of ethnic identity and difference to gain advantage in situations of competition, conflict or cooperation.' Ethnicity is embedded with a 'we/them' state-of-affairs where membership of a group is the only determinant of whether someone may benefit from a particular *ethnic* social group or not. Emphasizing the place of group in ethnicity, Banks (1996: 12) noted that the boundary does not bound 'something' off from nothingness, but rather it distinguishes between two (or more) 'something.' Thus, *tapping* into ethnic identity in social relations in order to gain advantage requires that the *tapper* be a member of the group from which advantage is sought. In other words, Mrs. X *must* be a member of *social relations A* in order for her to tap into *social relations A* for advantage and that Mr. Y who is a member of *social relations B* *cannot* tap into *social relations A* for advantage.

So, ethnicity involves first of all a type of social relations in which members of different ethnic groups seek advantage by appealing to their various group, ethnic identities or shared group characteristics. These ethnic identities or characteristics include points of personal reference such as perceptions of common descent, history, fate, and culture, which usually indicates some mix of language, physical appearance, and the ritual regulation of life, especially religion (Weber, 1978; cited in Hale, 2004: 473). Before we move on to the next section, we will return briefly to the point made earlier that ethnicity is linked with nationalism and race. Nationalism is essentially an ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population some of whose members deem themselves to constitute an actual or potential 'nation' (Smith, 1996: 447). Fundamentally, we can describe ethnicity as a product of nationalism that is intended to create homogenous or a 'we' consciousness (B. Williams, 1989: 439, in Banks, 1996). Race on the other hand, describes physiological and biological characteristics share by a people and usually used for categorization at a higher level than ethnicity which in addition to physical attributes combines immaterial, attitudinal aspects in describing a group.

THE TRIGGER OF ETHNICITY IN NIGERIA

In Nigeria, the colonial urban context constitutes the context for ethnicity. It was within the colonial urban context that ethnic groups acquired a common consciousness. Ethnicity is therefore a product of the colonial and post- colonial state in Nigeria. The proliferation of communal associations which attracted a large proportion of urban dwellers triggered intra-class and inter-individual socioeconomic competition especially among the various town unions. Nnoli (1980) opines that, the pervasive scarcity and inequality of the peripheral capitalist state challenged and stretched the resources of the unions. The failure of the state to provide employment and other services to the citizenry boosted the importance of the unions. They became the only institutions through which the individuals could find a meaning to their lives. This resulted in greater cohesion within the unions and greater dependence by the individuals on the unions. As the bond between the individual and the union became stronger, his loyalty was transferred from the state to the union which gave meaning to his social existence. This transfer of loyalty was rewarded materially

and emotionally, thus, further alienating him from the state. Any wonder that both the individual and the unions joined forces to fight the state for resources. This joining of forces heightened inter-ethnic competition which often times resulted in conflicts. These conflicts increased the social distance between the various ethnic groups. With increased social distance, each group tended to corner the resources of the state for its own members while excluding other groups. Nnoli (1980) posits that the various activities embarked upon by the unions outside their ethnic enclave reflect integrative endeavours. Thus, a combination of group loyalty with in-group cohesion enabled the unions to successfully challenge any super ethnic institution. As the ethnic groups grew stronger and cohesive, it periled the development of a nationalistic consciousness in the individual. This truncated the development of a national selfhood. Sensing the dangers of these parochial associations, Eyo Ita in 1945 warned Nigerians to "seek coordination among the ethnic unions in a way that will help build a strong national consciousness". This conflict of economic interest set the stage for the events that propelled the country into the politicization of ethnicity. The logical deduction is that ethnic politics was born from the failure of some factions of the elites to achieve their economic interests. This is why politics during the period of the struggle for independence was dominated by conflicts arising from the assertion of interests of the various factions of the elite. Nnoli (1980) argued that the "class character and interests of the nationalist parties were reflected in their activities when Nigerians assumed political positions of authority". They embarked on the use of political machinery to pursue their narrow political interests of amassing wealth to the detriment of the majority. The politicians and bureaucrats became the new men of wealth in the country. "Thus, the search for petty bourgeois and comprador bourgeois fortunes dominated the struggle for power. Its inevitable consequences were the regionalization of politics and the politicization of ethnicity" (Nnoli, 1980: 148). The petty bourgeois and comprador bourgeoisie of each region perceived their needs and interests as unconnected with those of their counterparts from other regions. As argued earlier, the politicization of ethnicity was encouraged by the colonialists. For instance, the Richard's Constitution of 1946 led to a political and budgetary regionalization of the country. The constitution was designed to preserve the indirect rule system; it established a legislature in each of the three regions of North, East and West. The regional legislatures sent representatives to the central legislature. "The Constitution was premised on the assumption that regional political integration was a necessary first step toward national political integration (Bourdillion, 1946). The colonial administration reinforced regional politics through its policy of "Sabon-Gari" in the North to ensure that the North had no closer interaction with its Southern brothers and sisters (Soyombo and Attoh, 2009). In addition, the discovery of oil as a state resource in 1956 introduced a new factor in inter-ethnic relations in Nigeria. Olurode (1999) posited that, oil has affected the outlook of the different people of Nigeria. It has enabled the various groups to come in contact with people from several spheres of life and to be in competition for the allocation of the revenue that accrues from the sale of crude oil. He argued that, as a result of this competition, new forms of conflict are set in motion. Ethnic rivalry has heightened and the fear of domination has not been assuaged by the measures crafted to overcome such fears. The politics of oil gave birth to new groupings especially in the Niger Delta region with its attendant militancy to coerce the ruling elites to peek into the grievances of the minority in that region. Hence, the inability of some ethnic groups and political elites to have equal access or any access to the 'national cake' cum activities of corrupt and incompetent leaders via ethnic politics have mainly resulted in the social conflicts in Nigeria. Sometimes, social conflicts have been between ethnic groups who have hitherto, subsisted in the same political unit. An example of this is the conflict between the Ijaw/Itsekiri, and Itsekiri/ Urhobo communities in Warri, Delta State and Hausa/Fulani crisis, recently in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria. The conflict in this instance is a struggle against the forcible incorporation of incompatible ethnic groups in Nigeria.

ETHNIC POLITICS AND SOCIAL CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA

Nigeria is a multicultural society and ethnicity is at core of this multiculturalism. Onigu Otite (2002: 163) shared this belief when he noted that 'multiculturalism is overtly and covertly sustained by strong charges of the several coexisting ethnic systems of symbols...' Before political independence in 1960, colonial rulers were said to have employed ethnicity as a core administrative strategy in the governance of Nigeria (Attoh and Soyombo, 2010: 40; Salawu and Hassan, 2010: 30; Mustapha, 2006: iv; Ukiwo, 2005, Cyril, 2001: 16). Although group identification existed in the geography that was to become Nigeria, the idea of ethnic group as we know it today can be said to be a creation of colonial rule, as earlier said in this paper. Lentz (1995: 320) stated that colonial 'ethnification' helped the masters to maintain the pre-existing social inequality, fostered cooperation between colonial authorities and local culture brokers – that is the chiefs and newly schooled groups. Throughout the period of colonial rule, the regional disparate systems of political organization in 'Nigeria' were preserved and as Mustapha (Mustapha, 2006: 3) observed, despite amalgamation, the British continued to run the two halves of the country—North and South—as separate political and administrative entities with little common linkage outside of common economic infrastructure such as roads, railways and a common currency. Thus, ethnic consciousness was rigidly sustained by the colonialist to ease governance and instrumentally promoted by nationalists in the wake of the struggle for political independence in the 1940s. Unfortunately, fear, anxiety and bloody violence followed post-independent relations among 'the new citizens' as nationalism waned – and replaced by ethnic sentiments. For instance, the years between 1952 and 1966 brought change in the political culture of the country, transforming the three regions into three political entities. Thus, the struggle for independence was reduced to the quest for ethnic dominance. At this time, ethnic and sub-ethnic loyalties threatened the survival of both East and West, while the North was divided religiously between Christianity and Islam. It was a period of politicized ethnicity and competition for resources, which worsened the relationships between ethnic groups. There was a high degree of corruption, nepotism and tribalism. The national interest was put aside while politicians used public money to build and maintain patronage networks. Since independence, the situation in Nigeria has been fraught with ethnic politics whereby the elite from different ethnic groups schemed to attract as many federal resources to their regions as possible, neglecting issues that could have united the country. The anarchy, competition, and insecurity led to the demise of the first republic. Military intervention culminated in the gruesome ethnic war from 1967 to 1970, when the mistreated Igbos of eastern Nigeria, called Biafrans, threatened to secede from the federation. The Igbos' grievances were because they were denied of their basic human needs of equality, citizenship, autonomy and freedom, (Burton, 1992). Wherever such basic needs are denied, conflict often follows as the aggrieved groups use violent means to fight for their human rights. Ethnocentrism in the country and evidenced corruption of the electoral and political process led in 1966 to a number of revengeful military coups in the country. The first military coup was in January when a collection of young leftists under Major Emmanuel Ifeajuna and Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu led a coup, it was partially successful; the coup brought about the death of some notable figures such as the former Prime Minister, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Premier Ahmadu Bello of the Northern Region and Premier Ladoke Akintola of the Western Region. Though they could not set up a central government, therefore, President Nwafor Orizu was then pressured to hand over government to the Nigeria Army under the command of General JTG Aguiyi-Ironsi. Later, another counter coup by another successful plot, which were primarily supported by the Northern military officers and those Northerners who were in favor with the NPC. This time, it was planned and carried out by the Northern officers and gave Lt. Colonel Yakubu Gowon to become head of state. This series of coups led to an increase in ethnic tension and violence. The Northern coup, which was mostly motivated by ethnic and religious reasons, resulted into bloodbath of both military officers and civilians, especially those of Igbo

extraction. The violence against the Igbo increased their desire for a demand of their own autonomy and protection from the military's wrath. By May 1967, the Eastern Region had declared itself an independent state calling themselves "Republic of Biafra" with Lt. Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumekwu Ojukwu as the leader, (Murray, 2007). However, the southerners distrusted the military regime because they felt it was trying to maintain Hausa-Fulani hegemony in Nigeria. On June 12, 1993, Chief Moshood Abiola, a Yoruba from southwestern Nigeria, won Nigeria's presidential election, but his presidency was annulled by the military regime. In retaliation, southern Nigerians began to form militant organizations to protest unfair treatment and demand a democratically-elected government. During the authoritarian rule of General Sani Abacha, a Muslim from the North, Southerners increasingly feared political marginalization and demanded an end to the Hausa-Fulani domination of the political arena. This was the case of the Yorubas' boycott of the 1994 constitutional conference arranged by General Abacha's regime. The conference was meant to resolve the national debate over ethnicity. Inspired by the pan-Yoruba militant groups, the Afenifere and the Oduduwa People's Congress (OPC) in southwestern Nigeria threatened secession and intensified violent protests across the country. Of late, the seeming intractable conflict in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria has assumed a much dangerous dimension resulting in the wanton destruction of state properties and loss of lives and private properties of inestimable value, due to struggle for control and equitable access to the means of distribution of wealth in the country.

To this end, a glimpse of the ethnic politics which resulted into social conflicts among some ethnic groups in the past in Nigeria is diagrammatically given bellow:

Date	Place	Element	Cause	Effect
1963 - 1964	Kano And Kaduna	The Elites	Secession from the elites against traditional rulers/kings	Bloody death of both the elites traditional rulers/kings
1966 - 1970	Nigeria civil war	Igbo And Hausa	Biafra demanding self-determination in a state which could protect the lives and properties of its citizens. The secession of the former eastern region of Nigeria as a sovereign state, Biafra	Military casualties estimated over 100,000; Death as a result of starvation from half a million to 2 million, (John P.Mackintosh et al. 1966;498-501, John de St. Jorre 1972)
1992 & 1999	Ketu & Mile 12	Yoruba's & Hausa's	Traditional Market Union leadership tussle, (Sillo, 1999:1)	Mayhem lives and many properties lost.
June 1999	Bodija Market In Ibadan	Hausa's & Yoruba	Hausa man who was a cattle rarer and a Yoruba man who was allegedly knocked down by Hausa man's cattle became an intense quarrel between Hausa-Fulani cattle rarer & the Yoruba's traders.	Eye witness stated: Causalities of 10 people lost their lives; 24 vehicles burnt & 130 shops were burnt.
July 1999	Shagamu Lagos	Yoruba & Hausas	Long standing political rivalry; land ownership & observance of the rituals of a traditional Oro festival of Yoruba people	
1999	kano	Hausa - fulani	Planned revenge for the losses incurred at the Sagamu violence. One Kano ethnic indigenes, Alhaji Dangote, a prominent Lagos business who brought the Sagamu survivors in trailers back to Kano, on getting to Kano, the returnees reportedly recounted a	

			glory picture of their kiths and kin. This was said to have caused anger and bitterness to the people of Kano who descended on the Yoruba's who dwell in Kano.	Lives and countless of properties were destroyed
2002 - 2003	Kano & Kaduna	Muslim & Christian	Ethnic tension, etc. over the introduction of the sharia law which provides for corporal punishment, amputation of limbs, and decapitation.	In 1999 to 2004, a total Estimation of over 50000 people killed in violence, while a total of 800,00 others displaced.

Sources: (a) Globe and Mail, 23 February 2000, BBC News, October 7, 2004),

(b) Amnesty International, 23 November 2004,

©IRINnews.org, October 11th, 2000.*The table only shows the major conflicts.

However, the spate of bomb blasts, kidnapping, pipeline vandalism and other forms of criminalities in recent times in various parts of the country are emerging trends of terrorism, which many analysts have variously attributed to the disturbing trend of political dissatisfaction, ethnic and religious differences, perceived societal neglect and pervasive poverty among the people. For example, while youth restiveness in the Niger Delta area and parts of the South East, occasioned kidnapping and disruption of oil installations, activities of members of the Odua's People's Congress (OPC) in the South West and that of Boko Haram Saga in the Northern States; have also been worrisome since 1999 (Abimbola and Adesote, 2012). Nevertheless, while the activities of the Niger Delta militants and OPC are trivial now, the activities of the Boko Haram is very worrisome to peaceful loving Nigerians and Lovers of Nigeria across the world. It is abundantly clear from the available evidence that the Boko Haram (Islamic Sect) is against anything that has to do with western values in the country in general and Northern part in particular (Abimbola and Adesote, 2012). This could be seen in a large number of attacks being unleashed on the Nigerian State with a view to achieving their objectives. It is pertinent to have a glimpse of the attacks.

DATE	CASUALTIES
July 26, 2009	Boko Haram launches mass uprising with attack on a police station in Bauchi, starting five-day uprising that spread to Maiduguri and elsewhere.
September 7, 2010	Boko Haram attacked a prison in Bauchi, killed about five guards and freed over 700 inmates, including former sect members.
October 11, 2010	Bumbling/gun attack on a police station in Maiduguri destroys the station and injures three by the group.
December 24, 2010	The group carried out a bomb attack in Jos killing 8 people
December 28, 2010	Boko Haram claims responsibility for the Christmas Eve bombing in Jos that killed 38 people
December 31, 2011	The group attack a mammy market at army Mogadishu Barracks, Abuja, 11 people died
April 1, 2011	The group attacked a police station in Bauchi
April 9, 2011	The group attacked a polling center in Maiduguri and bombed it.
April 20, 2011	A bomb in Maiduguri kills a policeman
April 22, 2011	The group attacked a prison in Yola and freed 14 prisoners
April 24, 2011	Four bombs explode in Maiduguri, killing at least three
May 29, 2011	Bombings of an army barracks in Bauchi city and Maiduguri and led to death of 15 people

May 31, 2011	Gunmen assassinate Abba Anas Ibn Umar Garbai, brother of the Shehu of Borno, in Maiduguri
June 1, 2011	The group killed Sheu of Borno's brother, Abba El-Kanemi
June 7, 2011	A team of gunmen launch parallel attacks with guns and bombs on a church and police stations in Maiduguri, killing 5 people
June 16, 2011	Bombing of police headquarters in Abuja, claimed by Boko Haram. Causality reports vary.
June 26, 2011	Gunmen shoot and bomb a bar in Maiduguri killing about 25 people
August 16, 2011	The bombing of United Nations Office in Abuja, killing over 34 people by the group
December 25, 2011	Bombing of St. Theresa's Catholic Church, Madalla, killing over 46 people
January 6, 2012	The sect attacked some Southerners in Mubi killing about 13 Igbo
January 21, 2012	Multiple bomb blast rocked Kano city, claiming over 185 people
January 29, 2012	Bombing of Kano police station at Naibawa Area of Yakatabo
February 8, 2012	Bomb blast rocked army headquarters in Kaduna
February 15, 2012	Koton Karife prison, Kogi state was attacked by the sect and about 119 prisoners were released and a warder was killed.
February 19, 2012	Bomb blast rocked Suleja Niger State near Christ Embassy Church, leaving 5 people seriously injured
February 26, 2012	Bombing of church of Christ in Nigeria, Jos leading to the death of about 2 worshippers and about 38people sustained serious injuries
March 8, 2012	An Italian, Franco Lamolinara and a Briton, Christopher McManus, who were expatriate staff of Stabilim Visioni construction firm were abducted in 2011 by a splinter group of Boko Haram and were later killed
March 11, 2012	Bombing of St. Finabarrs Catholic church, Rayfied, Jos resulting in the killing of 11 people and several others wounded
April 26, 2012	Bombing of three media houses (Thisday newspaper in Abuja killing 3 & 2 security officers and injured 13 people; Thisday, the sun & the moments newspapers in Kaduna killing 3 persons and injured many others.
April 26, 2012	Attack on Bayero University, Kano, killing 13 Christian Worshippers, a senior non-academic staff & two professors
April 30, 2012	Bomb explosion in Jalingo, claiming 11 persons and several others wounded.

*Sources: Punch 17, June, 2011, Punch 16 & 27, February, 2012, Punch 23, February, 2012, Guardian 20, February, 2012, Guardian 12, March, 2012 Nigerian Tribune 30, January, 2012 etc. in Abimbola and Adesote (2012). * The table only show the major attacks since 1999 to April 30, 2012.*

The above-mentioned analysis of the activities/attacks of the dreaded Islamic sect, Boko Haram has revealed that not less than 1,200 persons, including the civilians, security personnel have been killed since its emergence up to February, 2012 (Punch 16, February, 2012, p2). Also, significant in the analysis is that, activities of the sect over the years have taken different trends and dimensions. The sect has graduated from cruel drive by attacks on beer parlours to bombing of security buildings, public buildings and Christian Institutions (Abimbola and Adesote, 2012).

ETHNIC POLITICS AND SOCIAL CONFLICTS: FACTORS IN NIGERIA'S UNDERDEVELOPMENT

If there is any word that is commonly used by all and sundry in Nigeria is the word 'development' (Alliyu, 2010). This is because, Nigerians are not happy with the state of things like corruption, war,

genocide, political crisis, ethno-religious conflicts, poor infrastructure, discrimination, poor economic activities, unemployment among others, that ethnic politics and social conflicts have brought about, which hinder the development of the country. Two major attempts at re-discovering the meaning of development will engage our attention in order to provide the necessary background against which we can have a better understanding of Nigeria's underdevelopment. The works of Todare (1989 cited in Oyesiku, 2002), Mabogunje (1980) and Seers (1989, cited in Oyesiku, 2002) provides relevant background information on the concept of development. The three experts have cited profusely from the available avalanche of literature on development to demonstrate inter alia that the concept of development has eluded international consensus in many respects. They traced development from the narrow 'economic' sense to the more comprehensive status it now occupies, encompassing not only the economic, but also social, political and spatial dimension. According to Alliyu (2012), development, simply put, is both 'a state of being and a process'. It is a state of being whereby society has transcended above certain barriers or obstacles to human comfort and existence through the conscious manipulation of the internal resources of the society at a point in time couple with ability to cope with external influence. So, as a process, development will mean the various mechanisms consciously put together or harnessed by the people over a period such that it causes transformation of the society from a state to another which can be definable as 'developed' at a state. The inability of Nigeria to have transcended above many barriers to human comfort has naturally place the country among the less developed or underdeveloped nations in the world. The level and degree of underdevelopment in Nigeria is in both qualitative and quantitative terms and it has hindered political, economic and social progress with negative consequences.

Basically, ethnic politics and social conflicts have resulted in political underdevelopment in Nigeria. As a phenomenon, political instability largely caused by ethnic politics has itself connoted a number of implications for the country. For instances, there has been a state of unfavourable atmosphere for taking an effective viable decisions and actions by the leaders. Under a condition of instability, the people and their leaders are distracted by pursuing their self-fish ambitions and embezzlement of national cake and resources. Again, the existence of political instability arising from ethnic inclination and marginalization has been discontinuity in policies and programmes in Nigeria. The series of policy discontinuity registered in the country have successfully undermined the attainment of socio-economic advancement for the country. Analysts, generally agree on the relevance of policy continuity for the attainment of socio-economic development. At some point, newspaper reports, carried stories of abandoned programmes and projects all over the country. Each incoming regime tends to ignore ongoing programmes started by the previous regime (Jacob, 2012) on the basis of ethno-political ground amongst many others. This results in wastages of resources. No doubt, Nigerian political system is seriously overheated with ethnic politics and social conflicts. One can even argue that Nigeria is threatened with disintegration. This becomes more intense as each of the three dominant ethnic groups in Nigeria (Hausa, Yoruba and Ibo) tries to control government activities or shape activities of government following the tenets of her ethnicity. The consequent abuse of human rights following these ethnic politics and social conflicts cannot go unnoticed. Such rights as freedom of speech, life, association, religion and movement are no longer observed. In the face of political instability following these conflicts, the Southerners and Easterners no longer feel safe in the Northern part of Nigeria for fear of loss of life and property and vice versa. Over forty years ago, Baum (1975:15) noted that bad political atmosphere promotes structures of domination in human history and Nwachukwu (2001:212), corroborating the position of Baum noted that:

Policies are carried by emotional sentiments rooted in ethnicity, politics in Nigeria is characterized by ethnic cleavages. The political elites (class) prey upon the masses and use them as

satellite to achieve their socio-political and economic objectives. This is done through orientation, indoctrination or violence using the masses on the already conceived stereotypes against their political opponents. Right from formation of political parties to campaign processes and voting patterns, all tend towards ethnicity. As a result, politics in Nigeria is associated with violence and lack of accommodation.

Hence, if the political process is chartered, how can political development- in terms of true federalism, participative democracy, effective rule of law and people centred leadership be achieved? No wonder, William Easterly (2001), said that, ethnic conflict produces poor substantial government leadership and services, and that Africa, which Nigeria is a part, is example of this factor. For instance, many Nigerians do adduce the present issue of Boko Haram massive killing of people in the North as a reflection of non-acceptance of President Goodluck Jonathan's government, due to his ethnic grouping-south south, by the Northerners in Nigeria. In order to quell the situation and ensure the safety of lives and property of Nigerians and non- Nigerians in this region, Government have spent a lot of money to purchase arms and ammunitions for the military personnel, invite experts from abroad to combat the Boko Haram set, and also spent a lot of money to compensate the victims and the deceased family members involved in the massacre. Meanwhile, the huge amount of money lose during this mayhem would have been spent on education, health, infrastructure or other key sector of the economy that would have brought about development in the country.

In the economic sphere, underutilization of facilities or under capacity production resulting from economic sabotage via social conflicts, especially in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria has forced the government to resort to importation of fuel to meet its energy need. Consequently, in 2011, the NNPC was said to have expended the sum of N91.6 billion on the importation of fuel. By implication, the foreign exchange that could have been used for the purchase of capital goods (equipment or machineries) that are needed for the development of other sectors of the economy are used for petroleum product imports. Like the case of pipeline vandalization, public and private facilities are usually destroyed during social conflicts. The cost of repair of destroyed facilities tends to reduce the amount of funds available to the government for other development purposes (Ogbeifun, 2007). Social conflict also take its toll on the environment. For example, vandalisation of pipelines during social crisis tends to worsen the problem of environment degradation and the pollution of waterways. Environmental problems are not confined to their sources. Water and air pollution, for instance, travels far and wide to impact on more than one region. Hence, oil spillage into waterways destroy the marine and aquatic lives of the immediate environment. More so, fire disaster caused by vandalization of pipelines, increases carbon dioxide accumulation that destroy forest and farmland that could have been used to cultivate agriculture produce, which could have generated revenue to the government that will be used to develop the economy. In addition, one of the keys to economic development of a nation is the quality of human resources. It represents the subject, the object and the process, in building a nation socially, politically and economically (Zainun,2003). Nigeria is blessed, not only in terms of natural resources, but also human resources. However, social conflicts in Nigeria not only result in material loses, but also human loses. For example, between 1999 and 2009, more than 2,550 people have reportedly died as a result of explosion from oil and gas pipeline vandalization(Shosanya,2009), while more than 10,000 people have been killed in sectarian and communal attack in Nigeria(Saheed and Alofun,2010). As human resources is the engine of economic development, so also is the growth and development of educational sector crucial to human resources training and development, hence every nation is striving to provide the necessary amenities to enhance the standard of education of its citizens. However, the attainment of this vital objective in Nigeria, have been hampered by incessant closure

of schools and high institutions in social conflicts prone areas like, Bornu, Yobe, Jos, Kaduna, Kano and in some Niger Delta regions of Nigeria. Social conflicts disrupt academic activities in the affected areas, while the education of students whose parents are forced to relocate are seriously affected. Resettlements in new environment may take a lot of time, while time is wasted searching for new schools for the students, which may negatively impact the psychological and academic performance of the students. In addition to the economic sphere, official corruption is at the climax as a result of ethnic politics and social conflicts in the country and each ethnic group tends to cover up for their members who were involved in the acts of official corruption. Attempts at apprehending and prosecuting culprits have often generated ethnic conflicts in the country (Jacob, 2012). This ethno-corruption saga has negatively affected the pace of economic development in Nigeria. Consequences of social conflicts, especially ethnically and religiously have inspired threat to security of life and properties, domestic and foreign investments with continuous capital flight, and loss of confidence in the economy(Babagida, 2002). Eventually, all these have led to increase in poverty, poor infrastructure and unemployment in the country. Of course, no reasonable foreign investor will like to invest in a conflict prone environment like Nigeria. The aftermath effect of this will be under development in such area. This is the case of some northern regions in Nigeria. This, therefore, contribute to poor Gross national product/ National Income in Nigeria.

Socially, the ethnic politics and social conflicts in Nigeria have waned smooth interaction, oneness and togetherness among the ethnic groups in the country. These ethnic groups do not have trust in people, particularly politicians or leaders who do not belong to their ethnic group, but seeking for their supports into political offices or smooth government. We cannot but mention here that the division whispered by ethnicity in Nigeria has plagued all efforts at national cohesion and development. This divisiveness deleterious consequences do not conduce for the national population's sense of solidarity, morale and commitment to hard work (Usen, 2010). It is so strong that it has polluted, disturbed and upset the political and economic process. Ethnic divides distorts the democratic values of justice and equity in Nigeria. Members of the national elite are willing to turn a blind eye and deaf ears to cases of injustice committed by members of their own ethnic groups against others, in an immoral attempt to show group solidarity with the co-ethnic concerned. Similarly, while group members demand equity for themselves, they are not willing to accept equity for members of other ethnic groups when such acceptance would enable the latter to enjoy superiority over them. This was the case in the 1959 general elections at the dawn of the country's independence, were parties and political elites, conscious of the high price of defeat at the polls, sought to acquire solid political bases by pandering to their ethnic supporters. It worked for them. The Hausa/Fulani NPC enjoyed hegemony over the Hausa/Fulani core North, the Yoruba AG ruled over the western Region and the Igbo-led NCNC captured the Eastern Region(Usen,2010). The phenomenon denotes the crystallization of socio-cultural consciousness among members of an ethnic group which regains itself both as a distinct, identifiable, objective 'group-in-itself' as well as a 'group-for-itself'- a community of interest-relative to other ethnic groups (Usen,2010). Knowing fully well that divided will fall, but united will stand, this social disunity among the ethnic groups in Nigeria cannot bring about national cohesion, which is a vital ingredient for development in any developed country in the world.

CONCLUSION / RECOMMENDATIONS

The dimensions of ethnic politics and social conflicts are too numerous to be examine in a short paper like this one. Issues of resource control, minority rights, power rotation, multi-partism and other related issues are complete treatises on their own. Nevertheless, this paper tried to demonstrate that ethnic politics and social conflicts are reality in multi-cultural societies generally, and in Nigeria particularly. It has been established that Nigeria is blessed with abundant natural and human resources, yet these resources are taken for granted, and wasted through the

destruction of lives and properties resulting from ethnic politics and social conflicts. These ethnic politics and social conflicts were planted by the colonial masters for their own selfish interest. Unfortunately, our leaders who supposed to disentangle the situation, are now using the medium to pull resources, wealth and power for themselves and members of their cultural, educational, political, religious, economic and social group at the expense of the people who do not belong to their group. In a bid to distort this scenario, many aggrieved Nigerians who do not benefit or who do not support these unscrupulous leaders have resolve to engage in social conflicts by disrupting the political process, religious and social orders that bind the people of this great country together. However, it is disheartening to mention here that, while these aggrieved persons engage in social conflicts to correct the absurdity of our leaders, protect their own interest and make their voice heard on national issues, the negative effects of their actions are consequences of political, economic and social underdevelopment in Nigeria. In other to combat these challenges, we, therefore, recommend that, Nigerians should aim at operating a true federalism, cultivate a suitable political culture, out-grow ethnic rancor and stop blaming ethnicity for any social policy that affects a group unintentionally.

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