A Political History of Nigeria and the Crisis of Ethnicity in Nation-Building

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The virus of ethnicity has been one of the most definitive causes of social crisis, injustice, inequality and religio-political instability in Nigeria. Ethnicity has been perceived in general as a major obstacle to the overall politico–economic development of the country. Nigeria is marked by underlying ethnic cleavages and inter-ethnic fears and tensions, hence a bellicose nation. These are revealed from time to time by conflicting lobbies at the moments of competition for shares of the national cake and political appointments to high offices, resource control, head of political parties and ministerial positions. Losers in competitions for high national offices often attribute their failures to ethnicity or ethnic marginalization, while winners hardly ever explained their success in terms of the influence of ethnicity, and are therefore not gallant losers or magnanimous in victory. The Nation's incessant appeals to ethnicity have obviously showcased the evils inherent in the politicization of ethnicity. Consequently, the ensuing complications of ethnicity have grossly impinged on the development of the country in all ramifications. The paper, a historio-political venture, argues that the path was colonially charted though; the Nigerian political elite have in complicity exacerbated ethnicity in the country. As Nigeria warms to its centennial amalgamation birthday, the Nigerian political history is summable as a squandered century of nationhood, a nation-building in close call, extremely in dire need of operational reappraisals.

Key Words: Nigeria, Ethnicity, Ethnocentrism, Nation-building, colonialism

Introduction

Nigeria's political history is intertwined between military rule and democratic governance. The First Republic presided over by Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, with a ceremonial President, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, lasted from October 1960 to January 1966. The regime was plagued by antagonistic regionalism, ethnicity, declined revenues, and bitter power struggle, and it wobbled from one crisis to another until it was overthrown by the military (Danfulani & Atowoju, 2012). Coincidentally, the first coup, widely touted to have been led by Major Patrick Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu, was defectively planned and terribly executed as plotters lacked full grips with the consequences, and hence got consumed by its complexities, paving the way thereby for an uninvolved officer, General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi, to become the first military Head of State. However, the coup had significantly compounded the incidence of ethnicity in Nigeria. This inevitably is because both Nzeogwu and Aguiyi-Ironsi were of Igbo extraction, and hence, the coup (dubbed by cynics as "Igbo coup") and the policies of the eventual government were undoubtedly interpreted as Igbo agenda to achieve political ascendancy in Nigeria. Of course, it could be conjectured that Ironsi had tactically goofed, covertly or overtly, by decreeing the abolition of the Federal system on 24th May, 1966 (a previous strategic provision to stymie ethnic rivalry), for an acutely unitary system, and secondly by disparately promoting a number of Igbo military officers ahead of others. Ironsi's strategic miscalculations sent jitters down the spines of other ethnic groups and united them against his government. Billy J. Dudley (1967), a first generation Nigerian political scientist, noted categorically that the Igbo had plans for a unitary state with the Igbo predominating in its governance.

A counter coup was hurriedly organised and executed in July 1966, leading to the emergence of Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon, a self-acclaimed protector of Nigeria's minorities, from the North as the new Head of State. Quite unfortunately the earlier coup had generated serious ethnic bitterness which led to the butchery of Igbos dwelling in the North. The ensuing bad blood led to the Biafran secession and a civil war to reunite the country. Danfulani & Atowoju (2012) observed that the 1970s were marked by dramatic changes which bordered largely on ethnicity, and ethno-political rivalry. The civil war ended in 1970,

for a short while, abating the danger of ethnicity, but introducing the problem of post-war reconstruction, rehabilitation and reconciliation (the 3Rs). The onus of this paper is to critically examine some of the related ills and proffer solutions that will ameliorate or possibly put an end to ethnicity or the fear of ethnic marginalization, mutual mistrust and bitter segregations that often generate ethnic imbroglio in Nigeria plural society. This paper will also discourage the attitude of politicians at taking advantage of tribal sentiment for personal gains.

Concepts, Definitions and Significance of Study

Apart from being controversial, ethnicity is a diehard phenomenon that scholars have endlessly continued to grapple with. A very disturbing reality is the result of a study carried out by Banerjee and Sengupta. It reveals that more than 10 million lives were lost between 1945 and 1975 to ethnic militia violence around the world (Banerjee & Sengupta, 2009). Many scholars of the social science persuasion had contended decades ago that ethnicity and ethnic identifications would fade as the modernization process of industrialization and urbanization ground them down (Henderson, 1998). It is indeed reasonable and convenient to conjecture that ethnic cleavages would recede as the world advanced into post-modernity wherein modern nation-states had become the authoritative interacting units. Of course, that is amidst a host of other non-state actors though influential in the course of direction of the international system, and that is coupled with the supposed shrinkage of the world into a global village where tribes and tongues may differ but deemed inconsequential.

Ethnicity as a concept is deeply related to the general practice of alienation and identity branding whereas branding has always characterised both intra-global and intra-national relations, and where also, opportunities, rights and privileges are functions of *who you are* and *where you are from*. In recent times, the world has witnessed the unprecedented integration of peoples, customs, traditions and businesses in global history and a supposedly boundless economic opportunities offered by globalisation. The modus operandi and other presumptions of globalization as an anti-alienation, post-segregation strategy were believed to be capable of narrowing or collapsing various forms of primordial anti-progressive identities that had thrived on such linkage factors as racial, tribal, cultural, linguistic and religious differences. Its ultimate was to spur a new wave of economic boom and other opportunities for all peoples to partake, irrespective of the forms of dichotomies. It is however

the contrary in that some of the world's worst genocidal ethnicity occurred most recently despite modernization. The ferocity with which the Hutus mauled the Tutsis in Rwanda, and the despicable Serbian aggression against other groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina were testimonies that ethnicity is phenomenally intractable in social scientific calculations. Rather than waning, modernization and other human advancements have provided new issues that fueled ethnicity within national societies where it has worrisomely remained a major and recurrent guzzler of human lives. Against this background, John le Carré had lamented in his novel – Our Game, "*while we're pulling down economic borders, these ethnic crazies are putting up national borders*" (cited in Spence, 1996).

Very many theorists in the fields of social science have made authoritative submissions, particularly, on the subject of ethnicity. Both the concepts of ethnicity and nation-building came into social parlance at relatively about the same period of time. While the socio-anthropological concept of ethnicity was reportedly premiered by the American sociologist David Riesman in 1953 (Teshome, 2008), the period coincided with the timely-arrival of newly independent states in Africa when nation-building as a concept appeared to refer to the efforts of the concerned states towards nurturing the former colonial territories into viable and coherent modern national entities. Perhaps with the exceptions of Ethiopia and Liberia, the entire continent of Africa had originally been carved up into colonial territories by Europeans without regard to ethnic boundaries, and regrettably, without due considerations for their idiosyncratic compatibility. Prior to colonialism, these ethnies had more or less existed in political independence of one another; hence, concern was insignificant for inter-ethnic bickering.

Historical studies, for instance, in intergroup relations in pre-colonial Nigeria area are quite interesting. Though mistrustful and conflictual at occasions, yet there were many other factors that created some forms of cordial interdependence. Such included trade and commerce particularly in the exchange of such items over which there is comparative group advantage in its production or procurement, and which have been brought about significantly by nature (environmental and geographical variations). Despite such interdependence anyway, ethnicity issues hardly arose. Intergroup relations were also fostered by migrations, socio-religious and cultural matters, even as many had diplomatic and deliberate friendly ties. At colonial subjugation, intergroup relations became further heightened but issues of ethnicity were still insignificant since the colonies were governed by non-

Africans who also used force of arms to hold the colonies in place as required. Ethnic rivalry was very minimal as they willy-nilly submitted to their foreign conquerors. Nevertheless, the(se) ethnically conflated colonies became the cradle of modern states of Africa. Interestingly, the two concepts are important to nationhood in that both are mutual inhibitors. Put differently, it is an intractable impingement case of exclusivity in the very face of inclusivity; hence, intra-national relations are bound for the frictions in multi-ethnic political societies. This scenario is particularly notorious in Africa than elsewhere where state-formation initiatives were not indigenous but foreign-crafted, and nationalism activities were similarly colonially induced. In fact, rather than conceptually refer it as *state-formation* or *state-building*, the modern states of Africa evolved from the deliberately organised *state-packaging* or *state-fabrication* at the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885. Then, European Powers were impatient to await the natural evolution of modern states in Africa due to the prevalent international exigencies and strategies. Far from it that Africa was devoid of state formation/organisation for history is replete with African states and societies that were thousands of years old prior to European global conquest. Short of saying, however, that African states were slow to integrate into the emerging international economic/political order as a global initiative of Europeans, it is rather that Africa was comparatively primitive and utterly ignorant of developments around the globe, apart from being totally unprepared to integrate, albeit appropriately.

But then also, the term *primitive* may be prejudicial to Africa. The situation may rather at the time be described as comparative variations in state-conceptualisation between Africans and Europeans. Put differently, Europeans had a particular conceptualisation of the modern state that is completely unafrican in nature. The pre-colonial Africa is characterised by weak and fluidly states with no clearly defined territories and borders. Whereas Europe had settled for a sovereign, industrially prosperous and mercantilist state system, the orientation was absolutely different in Africa. Whereas also Europe, on the alert, had developed a consciousness towards the systematic management of interstate relations, Africa was yet unaware of such critical need to organise her international/global relations. Indeed, and with no political ideal for the concept of sovereignty, or its relatives, to regulate interstate relations, most African states celebrated expansionism and aggression with orgy. The latter was particularly a sign of strength, an instrument of interstate relations, and a game cherished by any capable state.

The entire continent could be imagined as a wild circus of utter chaos and bloodletting. As far as the issues of peace and conflict were concerned, not only is an African state accorded fame and greatness by its revered potentials for aggression, (which could have been channeled into deterrent policy as world powers do today), but often also, that acts of interstate aggression and the attendant plunders and usurpations at conquests were their surest industry to livelihoods, opulence and splendor. Many state armies like the Buganda army and Ibadan warriors were granted license to personally plunder such items as ivory, livestock, women, etc. during wars. The liberty to loot had motivated the soldiers and who also were always eager for the next war as soon as they were broke. It was often a kind of large scale interstate armed robberies in form. Consequently, pre-colonial Africa was clearly a jungle in respect of interstate relations. African states were constantly at wars that were often nonsensical and unjust; but rather for the fun, frivolity and aggrandizement, spoils and slave-raiding. Boundaries were thus in a flux of shifts and obliterations as African states collapse and reconstitute as in a continuum, and all these were at the reckless expense and neglect of political stability for full continental exploration and development, and as well, human advancement.

Europeans indeed paid in blood, money and intellectual sweat for the exploration and claiming of the continent for its potentials, whereas Africans were outrightly complacent and improvident about their future, carelessly paving the way thereby for European imperialism. The European knowledge from the explorations aided the Berlin partitioning of Africa and its colonial subjugation. Little wonder thus that Africa was stagnatory until it got caught up in bewilderment, absolutely unimaginably and unpreparedly, in the imperial web of the West. Of course again, it would be unfair to think that wild and senseless wars were peculiar to Africa. Europe, Africa and other continents have all had their Dark Age experience at one time or the other. Europe had however galloped out of the situation ahead of others to channel the advancements of the entire world.

Africa was then a continent where peoples were continually in despairing moves due either to displacements or migrations (particularly in Southern Africa) motivated most often by credible feelings of insecurity. The craving for strong, peaceful, stable, prosperous and enduring states were grossly lacking, or at best, not yet developed in much of Africa. This is unlike Europe where the Renaissance, centuries of bloody wars and armistice treaties, and to cap it all, the Industrial Revolution and Mercantilism had thought or helped them to develop an unprecedented framework for interstate relations, and a conceptualisation of modern nation-states that are free, sovereign, and contiguous; and conducive to the full unleashing of

human potentials and development in all facets. These nation-states evolved as a move away from the unwieldy and unregulated system of empires, kingdoms and principalities which were the previous units of human political organisation all over the world.

The additional factor, thus, is that Africa was much unprepared to integrate into the then emerging international economic/political order in the appropriate political unit - the nation-state. This is the European-fashioned political unit that could interact in the modern industrial and international society operating within a framework of new rules of engagement. As the world could not wait for Africa, the Berlin partitioning of the continent into the kind of European states became the inevitable. It simply resulted in the world's greatest *border-engineering* in which borders as European prefabs were imported and embedded in Africa. Pal Kolstø (1999), aptly described such scenario, as the *movement of borders across settlements*. Very importantly thus, the mode of formation of African modern states was itself the contagion of ethnicity. However, the incidence of ethnicity is not the direct consequence of either the mode of formation or the nature of the modern state. Ethnic animosities, rivalries and uprisings are rather the bye-products of the kind of inter-ethnic politics and power play that ethnics' cohabitation generated in the modern states. Smith (1996,) thus writes of ethnic politics as that which is characterised by endemic instabilities, unpredictability and acute passions.

Professor Nnoli (1978), an authority on the subject, described ethnicity essentially as that which exists only within a political society that consists of diverse *ethnic groups*; where such groups are characterized by a common consciousness of being one in relation to other relevant groups. It "tends to be exclusive in membership particularly on linguistic and cultural grounds while being rejective of non-members in social relations, hence, social relations are often conflictual. What then are ethnic groups? Without going to its historical origins as that is already well-done, for instance by Teshome (2008) and Salamone (1997), both whose works are highly significant towards understanding the deep-seatedness of ethnicity in Africa, the term 'ethnic group' is used to describe a quasi-national kind of 'minority group' within the State (Banerjee & Sengupta, 2009). Nnoli defines an ethnic group as "social formations distinguished by the communal character of their boundaries. *The relevant factor may be language, culture, or both*" (Nnoli, 1978). In order to distinguish itself from other similar groups, ethnic groups promote an ideology that … asserts a common ancestor for all members, a common set of values, culture, behaviour and ideology, (Salamone 1997).

But then, as observed by Salamone, ethnic groups are political, economic and social action groups formed for a particular purpose; that is, to obtain something that is more easily attained by belonging to an ethnic group than as an individual or as a member of some other ethnic group. This is why this work prefers to adopt Abner Cohen's' operational definition of an ethnic group as *"a collectivity of people who share some patterns of normative behaviour and; form a part of larger population interacting with people from other collectivities within the framework of a social system"* (cited in Teshome 2008).

The essence of this ethnic interaction, as posited by Teshome, explains essentially why Ethnic groups give support (through belongingness) and solidarity to their members to counterbalance the alienation prevalent in the modern world. Basically then, an ethnic group is potentially a lobby group. Quite essentially, the tendencies of ethnic groups to rally, give support, and solidarize, in order to mitigate acts of alienation, prejudices or marginalization from other ethnic groups, and quite importantly to maximize possible gains in any ethnic interaction become the genesis of ethnicity in social systems. Thus, the term ethnicity could be viewed as the characterization of ethnic relations per time in any multi-ethnic social system, and which usually are frictional and opposing.

Ethnicity, Politics and Nation-Building

Ethnicity as a relational product is quintessentially adversarial. Two reasons are responsible. The first, as observed by Matteo Fumagalli (2007), though in different context but very applicable to African social systems by its peculiar nature of state-formation, is that millions of citizens found themselves, almost overnight, in the new condition being labelled or viewed as minority. However, the tag *'minority'* denotes the presence of some sorts of critical competitions in which the former is delicately pitched against a majority other with a leverage of number among other factors. Multi-ethnic states are consequently in a flux of nagging competitions. This is quite particular to African states where there is heavy dependance on public resources for virtually every form of sustenance, more so that the private sector is less developed.

A major blunder committed by early post-independence leaders in their state-building effort is that the state is paternalistically conceived. The state became an omniprovider of an overwhelming plethora of services, many of which could have been efficiently provided by the private sector. Access to the state's (finite) resource base is thus crucial to the competing groups. This explains why the attempt to privatize

certain public utilities, infrastructures and services have met with stiff public resistance, whereas most African states are already overwhelmed and incapable of further services. As Teshome has observed, ethnicity could be the basis for the unequal treatment of people and it may be the cause of ethnocentrism and prejudices against members of other ethnic groups. The second, which derives from the first, is a function of several factors. The fact that the (African) state is in a constant scenario of political competitions is an indication of the economic fact that the resources available for allocation is also never surplus. It is indeed the scarcity of resources that inevitably necessitates, if not aggravates, the politics of (its) allocation.

The stakes of politics are too high. Politics extends beyond mere governmental organisation and operation of the state and its institutions. Politics is critical and determinative of people's fate or fortune in life. Without an iota of doubt, it's a functional determination of *who prospers* or *perishes, who lives* or *dies, who is favoured or marginalized* and *who is famed or defamed*. Politics could be used to engender development and underdevelopment, depending on who is at the winning end of power play. The politics of allocation essentially is about competing to get some scarce benefits from government. Such include health, wealth, scholarships and education, public utilities, infrastructural facilities, loans and grants, livelihoods, fame, respect, land, resource control, security, contracts, import license, influence, skills, and e.t.c. How much that one could get is a critical function of where one belongs in the endgame of politics. Two classical definitions of politics are succinct here. Politics for Harold Lasswell, though bitterly and in the ordinariness, is about *who gets what, when and how*. A technical interpretation of that is David Easton's definition that politics is *the authoritative allocation of value*. Thus, a synergetic fusion of the two, that politics is the *authoritative determination of who gets what, when and how,* brings forth a crucial case of fate determination.

The critical reason why people or groups struggle for governmental power is because it is essentially at the decision end of politics *of allocation*. Therefore, intergroup competitions for the authoritative allocation of value in multiethnic states are inevitable and vicious. They are usually the root cause of inter-ethnic civil uprisings. Nnoli has thus rightly argued that it is not inter-ethnic contact between groups that breeds conflicts; rather it is the extent of competing claims that are associated with the economic and political problems of modern nation states (Nnoli, 1978). However and notwithstanding the status of resource availability in terms of scarcity or surplusage, the *politics of allocation* may become the vulturous *politics of enrichment* to the group(s) with the upper hand in the interplay of power politics, whereby greater opportunities of amassing wealth are effectively, deliberately and greedily cornered by the dominant group(s). The history and politics of revenue allocation in Nigeria clearly depicted this scenario. At Independence when Nigeria's economy relied solely on agricultural exports, the revenue sharing formula based on the *principle of derivation* was adopted. By this principle, federal revenues were distributed to the federating units based on the total or some proportion of certain taxes assumed to have been paid by the citizens of the units. Two of Nigeria's three units then, the Western and Northern Regions (also with two dominant ethnic stocks – Yoruba and Hausa-Fulani) tremendously got enriched under this principle through their exportation of cocoa and groundnuts (then in very high demand in the international market) and other cash crops. The Eastern Region was then less endowed and thus profited less comparatively.

Shortly after, oil was discovered in stupendous commercial quantity in the Eastern Region. The in-streaming petrodollars soon and far outstripped total revenues from agroexports prompting thereby the successful agitation by the same two chagrined regions for Nigeria to adopt a new revenue sharing formula that is either based on the *principle of need* or the *principle of even development/national interest.* Revenue allocation here is either based on the size of the population in an area, or on the basis of public expenditure deemed to be in the best interest of the nation as a whole. The two former regions still profited significantly in this new arrangement as they contained major population centers of the country. And that is in addition to the fact that the political and bureaucratic elites from these regions are also some of the most influential in the authoritative allocation of values and the determination of deeming issues of national interest. The politics of allocation is jealously ridiculous in Nigeria that even a non-oil state would temptingly agitate for similar federal oil-related compensations to oil-producing states, for instance, to cater for environmental oil spillages, or at least would create spurious excuses to partake of similar federal largesse. Geo-political zones that are unable to benefit from certain largesse may agitate to discourage its allocation to the needy zones.

It is also not unnatural that people play the unfair *politics of domination* in their authoritative determination of who gets what, when and how. Put differently, the *politics of allocation* may also transform into *politics of deprivation*, or at terrible times the *politics of marginalization*. Occasionally at moments, with reckless abandon, it could transform into *politics of* (organised) *oppression* or *extermination*. All of these dimensions of politics, for

instance, were remarkably and progressively the experience of Jews, regrettably at the hands of the Nazis. The Tutsis of Rwanda similarly and recently shared these political experiences. In Bosnia-Herzegovina in the early 1990s, the actual and the perceived desire to dominate or resist domination led the three major ethnic groups - the Serbs, the Bosniaks (Muslims Slavs) and the Croats, to fight a vicious war that resulted in one of Europe's worst post-Cold War humanitarian tragedies, during which thousands got hoarded into concentration camps, displaced, tortured, raped or utterly massacred. It is thus not far-fetched why ethnic groupings and group politics are fundamental and diehard in many states, particularly in multi-ethnic and post-colonial situations. The stakes of politics are better obtained by belonging to an ethnic group than as an individual or as a member of some other ethnic group. By essence thus, ethnic relations cannot but be innately adversarial in group contentions for scarce resources, and even for crucial subsistence. Quite remarkably, there is the scholastic consensus that ethnicity and ethnic nationalism is critical to state-making as both generate solidarity and garner popular participation of people in politics, yet, ethnicity, by its adversarial nature, is contraindicated to the concept of nation-building. The aim of this paper again is not to get involved in the debate on the theories and conceptualizations of nation-building as it is also a normative issue. Rather and as earlier posited, this work would adopt preferably the idea that nation-building refers to the efforts of post-colonial states towards nurturing the former colonial territories into viable and coherent modern national entities. Essentially thus, nation-building critically aims at the forging or framing of a national identity and the unification of peoples within the state in order to attain significant forms of stability and endurance, which will in turn ensure its prosperous viability.

Nation-building, includes the deliberate creation of national paraphernalia and symbols of unity such as national flag, national anthem, national day and national investments/holdings, etc. At a deeper level, national identity needed to be deliberately constructed by molding different groups into a nation, especially since colonialism had used divide and rule tactics to maintain its domination (Wikipedia, 2013). Nation-building involves the intricate inclusion of all groups, towards fostering social cohesion and harmony as against the exclusivity and rancorous nature of ethnicity. The opening phrase of the first Nigerian national anthem, *'Nigeria, we hail thee, our own dear native land, though tribes and tongues may differ, in brotherhood we stand',* is a pointer to this. The initial effort at nation-building in Nigeria thus aimed at forging a brotherhood, vis-à-vis, a nationhood of the diverse ethnies, organised in unity for a common

purpose within the state. In other words, social harmony is a critical ingredient of nation-building. However, the attainment of social harmony may of essence be antithetical to the adversarial nature of inter-ethnic politics in post-colonial states where every ethnic group is most tendentiously hostile to nonmembers. The pertinent question is how do multi-ethnic states achieve social harmony in the very face of ethnic politics, rivalries and adversities involved in the competition for scarce resources and the high stakes of politics? Undoubtedly, nation-building is an uphill struggle in multiethnic states, and it is only within these contexts that the political history and the crises of ethnicity in Nigeria can be understood and dissected. It is equally significant to understanding the political situation and future of the Nigerian state.

Ethnicity – Origin and Impact on Nigerian Nationality

Thomas Hodgkin (1960), describes the Nigerian past as many pasts, not one – the past histories of the various peoples and civilizations which constitute modern Nigeria. By this is meant that Nigeria, as we know it today, is a conflation of several ethnic nationalities that have coexisted as one nation. A remarkable aspect of their collective history is that the parts of these nationalities were linked at many points and over several periods of time in myths of origin, commercial activities across borders, crafts, marriage, trade, religions, and other issues that welded them into a unified entity (Babawale, 2007). Notwithstanding Babawale's submission suggesting the prevalence of boisterous inter-group relations among peoples in the pre-colonial Nigeria area, the various nationalities could yet be rightly described as having peculiar values and orientations, idiosyncrasies and traditions, which in many instances were diametrical and antagonistic by modus vivendi and modus operandi. But these never mattered in so far that they were (often) politically independent of one another. In other words, the disparate ethnies were free, sovereign, contiguous and often cooperative. Colonialism came to alter this status quo inter alia. Colonialism had initially coalesced the disparate peoples along two geo-political zones - *the Northern Nigeria Protectorate* and *the Colony/Protectorate of Southern Nigeria*, with separate colonial Governors. At that stage, each geo-colonial zone had relatively contained peoples with trado-cultural affinities; hence, prospects for ethnic bickering were insignificant.

But in a move that distinguished him as the author of ethnicity in Nigeria, Frederick Lugard, the first British Governor-General of the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria (Dec. 1913 – Nov. 1918)

eventually and insensitively forced the various tribal national groups and the Protectorates to amalgamate in 1914, without a proper roundtable agreement. This is aptly described as the '*deliberation deficit*' notable with and undermining many polities in transition, and by which is meant, 'the absence from a given social formation of a common ethos that frames the debate on issues of general concern' (Obadare, 2004). Of course then, the disparate peoples of pre-colonial Nigeria in sublime ignorance, and indeed, generations away from being aware of the economic and socio-political developments around the globe, were in transit to a kind of nation-state that had never crossed their imagination. Several world-changing developments such as the rise of sovereign states and an international order in the post-westphalian sense, and as well the Industrial Revolutions and Mercantilism have taken place, resulting in the evolution of modern industrial societies, the kind that were then grossly absent in Africa. The European conquerors of the world had considered it their manifest destiny to drag and mold the entire world along these modern patterns. This would inevitably result in the regrouping of peoples and the reshaping of *primitive* states into modern nation-states.

Of consequence also, it had been in the plan and process of the British Government, as a matter of their national interest and colonial convenience, to coalesce the two colonies as one. The British Government was prejudicially aware also that the resultant nation would be *a bed of nails for strange bedfellows* with the full awareness that the fundamental differences in values and sensibilities will certainly ever pitch the people against one another. What however mattered to Britain then was the sustenance and even the furtherance of her unrivalled international prestige, power and colonial expediency, and not, though importantly, the consequences of the eventual clash of sensibilities and values (and may be of civilizations) of peoples whose immediate past generations had earlier been forcibly bundled and fettered unto slave ships to farm European plantations in the Americas.

Britain had claimed the fame for building the greatest global empire *on which the sun never sets*, and may thus still wish to experiment with building huge artificial nations many times her own size. But Britain never needed to compound the future by merging the two geo-colonial entities at the time since each was already bigger than most European states and were already viable as modern states. However, Britain could afford to be careless and unsentimental to the eventual plight of the colonial peoples, for after all, the colony itself, like many others, was to double-serve importantly as an asset for international diplomatic and military leverage, and very importantly as well, a business facility for the resource-depleted British

home industries in the aftermath of the second Industrial Revolution and the abolition of Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. The amalgamation was not necessarily the objective building of a workable and beneficial modern polity to organize the locals for their development and prosperous futures in the evolving international order.

Thus, in the foregoing, the amalgamation of these two colonies is a special assignment that requires ruthlessness, audaciousness and atrociousness, particularly as it is bound to meet with resistance by a good section of the locals. As such the mission would require a crazily ruthless fellow with a pedigree for reckless disregard for decorum and scruples. Of all the British colonial officials on field at the time, perhaps the only one with such credential and excellent profiling was Frederick Lugard. With a background career in military and mercenary professionalism, he had been previously hired or commissioned, most times successfully, to secure trade routes, treaties, or territories for imperial British companies, establish British predominance and sovereignty in colonies and other disputed territories, commandeer troops to decisively quell colonial hot spots (even at the forfeit of entire towns to total destruction), and to protect British interests particularly by checkmating the encroachment and aggression of other colonial powers across much of Africa. To achieve this record, he was by no means a gentleman, but a thoroughbred Machiavellian to whom the end only justifies the means.

He was completely unlike William Macgregor who governed the Lagos colony at about the time when Lugard first governed the protectorate of Northern Nigeria between 1900 and 1904. MacGregor trained and practiced extensively as a doctor before veering into colonial administration, and as a governor, he mixed with all ranks of people and listened to what they wanted (Wikipedia 2013). The value systems and orientations of these two colonial officials, particularly towards human administration were completely different and may have been dictated by the nature of their first career and profession. A doctor is trained to love, care and save life, but a soldier is contrarily trained to, perhaps *rapidly* hate and destroy life. Their styles of governance are therefore different as well as their approach to issues. The difference, by no exaggeration, is that between a *manager* and a *bully* of men. William Macgregor was a man given to amity and roundtable, tact, perseverance and much avoidance of bloodshed in accomplishing a state of law and order, and this is effortful and painstaking considering human complexities. By all means he was a social democrat and a liberal administrator. For his sterling efforts in most colonies where he governed, MacGregor won

numerous awards and medals of excellence in service to humanity from non-governmental organisations, first-rate academic institutions and the state (Wikipedia, 2013). On the other hand, the impatient Frederick Lugard believed almost passionately in the easy-use of force to compel obedience, law and order. He was a maximum ruler, and outrightly a non-democrat who thought that disparate peoples could be forcibly glued together in a polity irrespective of fundamental divisive issues. Lugard notably won honours only from, and in service to the state, (the ultimate of which was a barony), mainly and obviously in recognition of his noteworthy contributions to building the vast British Empire *on which the sun never sets.*

Furthermore, one of the two men, both with vast experience in colonial administration, and particularly in the concerned area would soon have to be commissioned to merge the two colonies as one anyway. However, the amalgamation at hand was obviously bound to generate controversy among many locals hence it is no mission for the gentle and understanding at heart and a man with the listening hear like MacGregor. Rather, an enforcer, a bully with a no-holds-barred steely heart would preferably be appropriate. It is thus not surprising that few years later in 1912; Lugard was sent back as Governor-General to accomplish the unpalatable amalgamation of the two colonies. The move clearly generated controversy in the south where it was opposed by a large section of the political class and the media. But because he based his rule on a military system, the amalgamation was by military fiat. And by spending 50% of each year in England, leaving behind non-authoritative subordinates in charge of administration, Lugard ensured that there were no listening ears to the protests of the anti-amalgamation groups which dissipated with time.

Once the amalgamation was completed, issues became a completely different ball game in the eventual entity, and the road map for ethnicity had been fully launched. Ethnicity became exploited as noted in the subsequent British colonial policy of divide and rule that was imposed on the peoples obviously for colonial expediency. Over the years this has continually degenerated into inter ethno-religious suspicion, tribal segregation, hostility and antagonism among various communal groups (Oni, 2008). These anomalies have done a colossal damage to the Nigerian political system. Ethnicity has been perceived in general as a major obstacle to the overall politico–economic development of the country (Oni, 2008). Indeed, Nigeria has wasted a whole century since the amalgamation on a *wild-goose chase* of nation-building as indigenous political elites tortuously strived to hold as one, the deeply fragmented state. Oscar Onwudiwe recalled that Chief Obafemi Awolowo sadly submitted that "…that amalgamation will ever remain the most painful injury a British government inflicted on Southern Nigeria" (Onwudiwe, 2011).

Tactically, the Colonial Office in London had given freedom to its officers to pragmatically govern the colonies as they deemed fit based on the situation on ground. Unlike the French colonial policy that was highly centralised and direct-rule in form, and whose ultimate control was vested in the Minister for Colonies at Paris, the British colonial policy have been characterised variously as one of pragmatism, empiricism, or even opportunism. Unlike the French, the British were less interested in the effort to make their colonial policy consistent and intelligible. British colonial policy was governed more by precedent than by principle, and was also less centralised than French rule. Colonial Governors were allowed considerable freedom within the framework of general guidelines formulated by the colonial office in London to initiate policies suitable to their respective territories. Even within each of the British colonies, officers subordinate to the Governor were given a high degree of autonomy in handling colonial administrative matters, (which is another principle of indirect rule). The Lugardist reckless exploitation of ethnicity for colonial expediency was sanctifiable in the above context, and ever since then, Nigeria has become a huge laboratory for political and other forms of social science. Politicians, bureaucrats, technocrats, researchers and intellectuals, both local and foreign, have experimented, conjectured or concocted all forms of ideas to make it survive and thrive as a modern socio-political entity.

Certainly, nationhood has been pretty difficult and delicate due to the presence of some seemingly irreconcilable differences that were toxigenic to national growth. Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa was absolute when he declared, "We are different in too many ways". He said elsewhere, 'the people are different in every way, including religion, custom, language and aspirations…", and in the acknowledgement of this fact Sir Ahmadu Bello describes the amalgamation *as 'the mistake of 1914'.* Chief Obafemi Awolowo in blunt derision had described Nigeria as "*merely a geographical expression*" that lumped together an arbitrary collection of disparate groups following colonial rule. But despite these scathing criticisms from these foremost pioneering elites, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, a contemporary of theirs was rather hopeful that something could still be created out of the nothingness, hence for him he enjoined, "*Nigeria is now a political reality, let us bury our differences and build it together*" (Onwudiwe, 2011).

From the above it is glaring that Nigeria, though a huge national enterprise, had suffered the poliomyelitic viral attack of ethnicity from its colonial embryo leading to a defective birth, hence it became the *crippled giant*, to borrow from Eghosa Osaghae (1998). But when the fundamental differences came to a crisis point in 1966 and eventually in a secessionist civil war, Francois Duvalier, then President of Haiti otherwise known as 'Papa Doc.', wisely declared on March 22, 1969, though in Haitian declaration of support for the breakaway Biafra that "Federal Nigeria has never since her independence shown the distinctive mark of a united nation. It has been impossible for her to silence tribal rivalries – to achieve that mixture of ethnic/cultural blend required to forge National Unity" (Duvalier is cited in Onwudiwe, 2011). At the end of the civil war which the Federal Government won in 1970, Gen. Yakubu Gowon declared that to keep Nigeria one is a task that must be done. But then, and more than four decades on, experience has revealed that the task is indeed arduous and perhaps futile-bound. It is observed that the failure of the various tribal groups to negotiate their amalgamation is the root of many tribal wranglings and agitations, ethnic hues and cries of marginalization, greed, controversial and inconclusive censuses, vote rigging, stagnated economic growth and nepotism in Nigeria, and not necessarily its huge territorial and population size with its multifarious ethnic groupings.

The Gains and Pains of Nigeria's Ethno-Political Plurality

That Nigeria is composed of many different ethnic groupings should have been of tremendous blessings and strength towards nation-building and the speedy development of the nation. Barring intrigues and political play, its multi-ethnic composition ought to bequeath the country, firstly, with a syncretic array of rich cultures and etiquettes for a well-mannered national society; secondly, a sea of progressive political ideas and thoughts that could, and ought to fast-track national development; and lastly, an inexhaustible manpower base to actualize its economic potentials and development. However and on the contrary, this same factor that ought to strengthen Nigeria has actually posed the greatest challenge to nation building. Ethnic strife has plagued Nigeria from political independence. Nigeria kick-started as a Federation of three regions with a weak center at colonial independence in 1960, that is, the Northern, Western and Eastern Regions, each of which was strong enough, both in land mass and population,

to be an independent nation (Danfulani & Atowoju, 2012).

It stands corrected, quite astonishingly, that the period of Political Regionalism in Nigeria perhaps marked the best period for the country. Regional politicians had carefully harnessed and transformed the natural endowments and potentials of their peoples into actual developmental gains, which were the veritable templates and channels for real sustainable wealth creation and economic development. It is affirmable that Regionalism brought out the best in the politicians as ingenious and developmental programmes were pursued to competitively excel their respective areas. That, for instance, marked the period when the Western Region with an agro-based economy under the Premiership of late Chief Obafemi Awolowo blazed the trail that brought global fame to Nigeria as the first in Africa to establish a Television Broadcasting Service. That singular act elevated Africa very closely to America and Europe as early continents to enjoy the technological breakthrough of telecast. The other novelty was the construction of the first ultramodern Stadium christened the Liberty Stadium (now named after him), and also the very first skyscraper in the country, the Cocoa House.

Rather than being poverty-stricken, the people of this region prospered economically and were well educated at state's expense. The current disparity in levels of education among the peoples of Nigeria is traceable to this period. The people of the South-West remained the most educated, organised, and progressive and intellectually sound in Nigeria. These achievements further affirmed the assertion in the immediate above that the multiple ethnic groupings in Nigeria ought to be of tremendous blessings, assets and strength towards the development of the nation if they all had purposely in concert harnessed their diverse endowments and resources. However and after all, politics at the national level was deeply fragmented along regional and ethnic fault lines, bogging down thereby any national process to move the nation forward. Fundamental differences in values had made leading ethnic groups to be parochial in developmental pursuits, and this at the expense of the nation at large. But earlier than the institution of Regionalism and even political independence in Nigeria had the minority ethnic groups or nationalities strongly felt that the Federal structure of governance was inimical to their interest, especially as it did not provide their people with maximum opportunity for individual or collective development. This informed the setting up of the Henry Willink's Commission on September 26, 1957 to inquire into the fears of the minorities with a view to allaying the minorities' apprehension. The Willink Commission was of the opinion that the fears expressed by the minorities were indeed genuine, but

did not believe that the fears could be removed by mere creation of more states. For example, the *Edos* in Western Nigeria, the *Tivs* in the Middle Belt of Northern Region and the *Calabar*, *Ogoja* and *Rivers* peoples of the Eastern region had earlier agitated for the creation of more states. But the parties in power in the various regions, with the exception of the Action Group (AG) in the West had continually opposed the creation of more states (Danfulani & Atowoju, 2012). Willink's Commission emphasized that the states would not be viable and that new reigns would create new minority problems. Therefore, it favoured the entrenchment of fundamental human rights to allay the fears of the minorities. It also recommended a Unified Police Force for Nigeria under the control of the Federal Government. The Commission also recommended the establishment of minority areas and special areas to speed up socio–economic development of these areas (Alonge, 2005). The submission of Sir Henry Willink's commission was a major landmark in the management of minority/majority issues in Nigeria. The recommended actions were far-reaching because the Commission assumed that subsequent changes in the political scene would adequately address the issues at stake. The Commission posited that the fears expressed before it were on certain assumptions that voting would always follow the lines of the present major groupings, and that the majority would always seek to use power to their exclusive advantages. Given the pluralistic nature of Nigeria, it was generally accepted that the country would be better governed as a federal rather than a unitary system of government. It is pertinent, however, to note that the minorities' request for their ethnic home states which the Willink's Commission initially turned down became realised during and after the Nigerian Civil war. Dudley, (1967), reported that Middle Belt soldiers, essentially *Tiv,* (who then constituted the bulk of the Federal Army,) brought sufficient pressure on Northern Representatives to a conference on Nigeria's future, summoned by General Yakubu Gowon, to influence them to move for a united Nigeria composed of ethnic states.

The political structure of the country has ever remained contentious. The three main ethnic group players in Nigerian politics are the Hausa/Fulani, Igbo and the Yoruba – along with their submerged supporter – ethnic minorities. These three main ethnic groups have given rise to, and embraced three ethnic associational blocs especially between 1999 and 2000. The ethnic socio-political blocs are the *Afenifere* Group for the Yoruba of South-Western Nigeria, the *Arewa* Group for the Hausa/Fulani stock of the Northern Nigeria and the *Ohaneze Ndigbo* of South-Eastern Nigeria. These groups compete for supremacy in the country. The Ijaw National Congress is another minority but prominent socio-cultural organisation fast becoming a political umbrella for its ethnic members. The Ijaw, together with a number of other minority tribes like Urhobo and Ogoni in the oil-rich Niger Delta states have substantially succeeded in agitating, through the threats and actual utility of insurgent activities, for a re-introduction of federal revenue sharing by *derivation principle* to secure more funding for their home states. The Fourth Republic regime of President Olusegun Obasanjo actually reintroduced a partial implementation of the revenue sharing formula based on principle of derivation for oil producing states in Nigeria in which 13% of oil revenues are ploughed back into the oil states based on the proportion of oil explored from each state. Although these oil-inspired ethnic groups are still agitating for far greater percentage shares of oil revenues, the current 13% implementation has placed Niger Delta states enviously far above others in federal revenue shares.

The Nigerian Political Elite and Ethno-Political Sentiment

There are two levels at which ethnicity has been used in Nigeria's electoral politics. First, it has been used by the elite to keep themselves in political office by playing and preying on the ignorance and the fears of the poverty stricken majority of their people. Thus, the elite use the ethnic factor to retain themselves in office as political leaders, directors or managers of National Corporations and Parastatals by making false claims of representing their ethnic groups. Even when they do not perform well in political office, they deceive the people by whipping up ethnic sentiments; raising fears and tensions of the threat that would be posed to their ethnic group if other groups should gain political ascendancy. A typical example was the Second Republic's allegation against Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, who was accused of not paying tax and, instead of refuting or confirming the allegation, he lampooned his accusers with a counter-allegation that he was being victimized because of his Igbo ethnic origin (Babawale, 2007).

The case of northern leaders becomes very instructive here. Many of them have not been known to make any difference to the living conditions of their people in spite of their domination of the national political terrain and the big monthly windfall derived from the Federal Government Allocations for the development of their states (Atowoju, 2012). Northern leaders like Alhaji Shehu Shagari and Col. Abubakar Umar have at different times condemned this attitude of northern leaders. Indeed, Col. Umar once made the point that in spite of Northern dominance of political

power, the North has the largest number of beggars in the country (Babawale, 2007). The second level at which ethnicity has been used is that the politicization of ethnicity has made many Nigerians to have less confidence in the Nigerian state than they have in their ethnic or communal associations. The level of corruption and pillage that goes on within the state apparatus is reflective of the elite's loss of confidence in the Nigerian project. A good number of those who steal money from the state or federal purse without qualms are known to jealously protect their communal association's money when put in their custody. As Claude Ake (1990) puts it:

Most Nigerians confront the state not as a public force but as an alien a hostile coercive power. This is all the more so because the Nigerian state, lacking autonomy, is immersed in the class struggle and is conspicuously a state of the few against the many, because the Nigerian state tendentially appears as irrelevant of hostile, a critical condition for the transfer of loyalties to ecumenical levels is removed. Nigerians embraced ethnic identity all the more. The ethnic groups have been emotionally and materially supportive of their members and do not rely on coercion.

In periods of election, violence erupts once there are suspicions that a member of a particular ethnic group will lose out. State property is destroyed and lives are often lost. The case of the 1964 federal elections, which had a large dose of ethnicity-related violence, readily comes to mind. In 1983, violence erupted in several parts of the country because of real and imagined threats of marginalization by certain ethnic groups. This problem was reenacted in 1993 when there was almost a nationwide violence that degenerated into inter-ethnic rivalry as a result of the annulment of the June 12, 1993 Presidential Election. The election adjudged the freest / fairest election ever held in Nigeria, produced Chief M.K.O. Abiola, a Yoruba, as the President that was never to be, as he died in mysterious circumstance in military custody. To assuage his ethnic group, the northern elites redeemed Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo, a fellow prominent Yoruba, from an earlier incarceration over an alleged coup plot, to become the civilian president between 1999 and 2007. Umaru Musa Yar'Adua that succeeded him from the north as President could not hold power for too long due to his terminal illness. His deputy, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, an Ijaw man constitutionally took the reins of power from Yar'Adua barely two years after. The North has ever since resented his rulership with deadly ethno-religious cum political insurgency by the boko haram group (*Jama'atu Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda'Awati Wal Jihad*, "people committed to the propagation of the Prophet's teachings and Jihad").

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper specifically considers ethnicity and ethno-political crises in Nigeria's history vis-à-vis the crises of development. The structure and dynamics of contemporary Nigeria's socio-political life provide an appropriate framework for understanding the politics of competitive/conflictual inter-ethnic relations in the country. In summary, the growing ethnicity and ethno-nationalism exacerbated by communally-driven discriminatory policies of the colonial administration and the various post-independence regional, state and federal governments and their elite cohorts (Oni, 2008), have largely promoted the pains of ethnicity rather than appropriating the beauty of our cultural, religious and ethical diversity for the development of the country, economically, politically and socially.

The cumulatively divisive impact of ethnicity in Nigeria over the decades, has constantly rendered nation-building experiment in the Nigerian Federalism most difficult. Indeed this process has been, till date, such a woeful failure. The area that ultimately came to be called 'Nigeria' literally the brainchild of British colonialism, has therefore, been variously and disdainfully characterized by administrators, politicians and historians as a political aberration, with few credentials and potentials for ever becoming a modern nation–state. To J.P. Clerk, Nigeria is the proverbial land of no tomorrow. The intractability of political instability engendered by ethnicity in Nigeria has made some American political analysts in 2005 to doubt the survivability of Nigeria beyond the year 2015, an idea that Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, the then Nigerian President, dismissed as *diabolical benchmark*.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is the most populous and the richest black state in the world (Okadigbo, 1989). Nigeria is the 8th largest oil producer in the world, the largest in Africa, sixth in Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), fifth largest supplier to the United States and the most endowed oil producer in sub- Saharan Africa. The contributions of the oil industry to Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings cannot be overemphasized (Ozoemenam, 2012). However, Nigeria has remained a country with political unrests, social disorders, economic instability, ethnic and religious violence, insurgent activities in the Niger-Delta aimed at the jugular of Nigeria's economy via the disruption of oil flows and championed by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger-Delta (MEND), and lately, a thriving kidnap-for-ransom industry, and lastly, a deadly Islam linked terrorism, spearheaded by the *Boko Haram*.

Development defies an easy or one sentence definition. From certain perspectives a developed society is one in which the Gross National Product or

per capital income experience sustained growth. Other definitions stress the ability of the people to lead a modern or civilized existence through access to such facilities as good roads, food, health, water, and education. This has been termed the Basic Needs approach. For other scholars, development implies equitable distribution of goods and services, labeled the redistribution with growth theory by Hollis Chenery et.al, in their book Redistribution with Growth (Ajuonu & Uchenna, 2004). This paper agrees with the Redistribution Theory of Hollis Chenery and co as the appropriate developmental policy for the Nigerian pluralistic society. Development in Nigeria must, therefore, necessarily include equitable distribution of its common wealth and electoral positions without prejudice to ethnic jingoism or religious bigotry. Throughout the country, there must be quick reduction or total eradication of malnutrition, poverty, illiteracy, disease, electoral malpractices, unemployment, insurgencies, corruption, ethnic militancy and provision of infrastructural amenities, avoidance of political marginalization and oppression, mutual respect for people from other ethnic groups, and appreciation of fundamental human right. Ethnicity in Nigeria's electoral politics should play a positive role in its polity and cultural heritage. The issue of power rotation should be faithfully adhered to as an effort to develop a supranational Nigeria identity. Other steps will include the pursuit of policies that will attend to the welfare of the teeming population who will reciprocate by seeing the state as a friend and no longer as an alien institution that is irrelevant to their existential needs.

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