

Regionalism and Security Challenges in Nigeria: The Unending Dialogue, 1954-1970

¹Maduka Ernest Kalu & ²Ruth Nyaguare Amiye

^{1&2}Department of History and International Studies,
University of Calabar, Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This research work on “Regionalism and National Integration: The Unending Dialogue, 1954-1970”, examined the hope for national integration through de-ethnicisation. The study viewed the failure of leadership to galvanise national interest and push for cohesive integration as a critical mis-step with its consequences on the stability of the nation. In carrying out this research, oral interviews were conducted: One of the respondents was interviewed through recorded phone call(s). A total of six (6) persons were interviewed. Secondary sources were also employed in the study. The theory of Federalists integration was adopted and it showed policy implementation and leadership failure. The study reveals that: national integration in Nigeria was undermined by both colonial and local interests; local interest appears(s) to pose considerable threat to national security; persistent appeal to ethnic sentiments; corruption; lack of proactive followership and failure of leadership to harmonise the various contradictions and related disagreement(s) is connected to emphasis on regionalism. The study concludes that leadership biasness and egocentrism negatively affect national integration and nation building the study recommends that government should redirect its policies to encourage genuine national integration and end all forms of structural and institutional inequalities; government and its agents to effectively observe, monitor, evaluate, implement and enforce its secularity rules in order to build confidence in the system.

Keywords: *Regionalism, Security, Challenge, Unending, Dialogue*

Corresponding Author: Maduka Ernest Kalu

Background to the Study

The challenge of national integration, security of lives and property and development have confronted the Nigerian nation since independence and seems unabated. Nigerians at independence yawned for an inclusive, stable politics where equity, equality and restorative justice, etc, would reign, but sixty years after, national and common identity appear to have progressively taken the back seat, despite few policies introduced by various governments to derive the wheel of national integration and development: government has introduced the following: the Federal Character Commission; Federal Government Colleges (Unity Schools); National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) among others. Despite these efforts, yet, the crisis of sectionalism, “divicivism”, deprivation, inequality, hunger, insecurity and underdevelopment, among other indices stare the country in the face¹. These crises arguably had its origin from the combined interplay of the European interests and concessions made by the emergent local elite (s).

Discourse among scholars and other contributors on the roots a cause of the modern Nigerian crisis of integration has gained renew currency, particularly, since the end of the Nigerian civil war in 1970. One of the issues that has generated a lot of controversies in the historical evolution of Nigeria is the amalgamation of 1914. This was the continuous process of bringing together, the people and ethnic nationalities and politics, including systems, as one administrative unit² and, it is today known as Nigeria, after other series of amalgamations going back to 1893³. Closely related to the above, is the division of the country into three unequal and near distinct regions.

One of the proponents of the amalgamation theorists is Mr. Femi Adesina, the Senior Special Adviser to President Muhamadu Buhari on Media and Publicity who insists that the Nigeria's socio-political instability could be traced to the politics of 1914. He argued that,

*“Nigeria had always been divided. Always. Right from amalgamation in 1914, Nigeria has always been divided. Nigeria is an inconvenient... I tell you there is no time in the history of this country that the country was not divided,,,”*⁴.

Also holding similar view is Adewale Ademoyega who claimed that Nigeria's political problems came as a result of the “carefree manner” the British conducted her socio-economic and political affairs and, the failure to weld together the heterogeneous people⁵. Fredrick Forsyth showed more weakness in his attempt to wrongly interpret the historical product of the contradictions of the nation-building, as an effect of British bringing together “irreconcilable peoples” with clear and deep differences as one, and this, according to him was responsible for the various ethno-religious based violence⁶.

This does not, however, reflect or explain the socio-economic, geographical, cultural and political dynamics that shaped the Nigerian historical development at that juncture. They tend to shy away from the fact that these nations, nationalities and ethnic groups did not exist as separate entities nor were they, in anyway, monolithic and fixed. Besides, they ignore the fact that, the contemporary territorial regional units were not, the baseline of Nigeria's, ethno realities⁷. Thus, the historical evolution of Nigeria has always been a function of geographical

intermixing and integration at different epochs. Consequently, the politics of amalgamation was initially informed by the geographical compactness of Nigeria at that time, which appeared to have favoured the British's economic and strategic interests. Secondly, Nigerians interacted at different levels and that, predated the politics of amalgamations. The politics never stood separately apart: they engaged in complex intra and inter-ethnic borrowings at all layer, which historically united the pre-colonial Nigerian societies⁸.

There is nothing wrong with regionalism, it makes for greater integration and accommodates differences in diversity. The Nigerian elite's desire for economic and political sphere, selfishly emphasized (continuously) socio-cultural and religious differences hence, they wrongly implemented and practiced the policy of regionalism as a near exclusive existence, which has become the bane/lots of Nigeria. The Nigerian leaders' failure to show great dexterity in handling and managing the socio-cultural variety as a mosaic to build harmony and strength for the benefits of Nigerians and indeed, Africans became critical.⁹

As will be demonstrated presently, the study faults the prevailing view that regionalism as espoused by Nigerian independent leaders is responsible for the ethno-based violent conflicts in the country. Evidence at our disposal rather indicates that the failure of leadership to harness the abundant human and material resources in a rational way is responsible for Nigeria's underdevelopment status. Indeed, the Nigerian crises of national identity or integration is attributed to leadership failure and followership docility. The authors are concerned that despite the plethora of volume of works done by the historians and other contributors indicating historical and socio-cultural affinity and connections that had existed and bonded the pre-colonial Nigerian communities, yet, Nigerian appear to be poles apart and disunited in many fronts. Thus, the crisis of identity continues to clog her nation-building efforts. The study believes that the followership has a very important role to play (leadership haven been faulted). It sees its failure to engage patriotically in that direction appears to pose more challenges.

This paper does not intend to instill or induce tensions or escalate same, but to build the national consciousness among the people with a view to resisting any attempt to continue to divide Nigerians along ethnic, cultural and religious lines, regional blocs nonetheless. The paper aims at projecting and advancing the need to cherish the Nigerian project beyond ethnic and regional considerations. The paper is discussed under the following headings: historical and structural factor; poverty of leadership; poverty of followership; neo-colonial features and practices; conclusion and recommendations.

Historical and Structural Factor

The Europeans interests for colonial administration in Africa, particularly, in Nigeria derived from the social, economic and cultural changes that occurred in Western European societies from around the 1750's. These radical changes were as a result of the sweeping transformations in the various manufacturing sectors and the society at large and it is known as Industrial Revolution. Consequently, agro-based raw materials replaced the use of slaves: this made the Atlantic slave trade (AST) and its holding obsolete and uneconomical¹⁰. These changes had significant effect on profits rate and capitalization of surplus value reduced. The

desire for raw materials to run the emerging industries and factories swayed the Europeans' foreign outreach, Africa, essentially Nigeria became the hunting ground¹¹. The political developments in 1852 clearly situated the Europeans interests in the Nigerian areas. The establishment of British Consul in Lagos and the subsequent annexation of Lagos in 1861, exposed the real interest (which is exploitation) against the earlier Europeans pretense to be traders and “good” friends.¹².

The British economic desire to save cost and effectively maximised the resources of the entire areas led to amalgamation in 1906 of the Colony and Protectorate of Lagos and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria to create the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria after series of other amalgamations dating back to 1893. This desire was actualised in 1914, following the fusion of the Colony and Protectorates of Southern Nigeria and that of the Northern Nigeria as a unit of administration known as Nigeria¹³. The division of the former Southern Protectorate into East and West, in 1939 with the Northern Nigeria, with its extent and size, remaining untouched marked the beginning of a tripod unequal structural relationship among federating units. The colonial managers of the economy advanced and fueled the message of disunity and diversity for the Divide and Rule policy to be easily implemented.¹⁴.

The various colonial policies, procedures and practices as enshrined in the colonial constitutional changes in Nigeria defined and modulated the relationship that existed between the Nigerian peoples and the various ethnic nationalities. This relationship was designed to feather the colonial nests. The imposed crown colony system had little or no regards to the traditional system of administration in the Nigerian area and clearly alienated majority of the Nigerian people because of its scope(it covers only the Lagos areas) and limited participation. Participation was based on the possession of western-typed education, which a lot of Africans, particularly, Nigerians were then lacking in its acquisition. Few repatriates (educated Nigerians), represented Nigerians in the Nigerian Council from 1862-1922. Their political emphases appeared to wealth and power acquisitions, they, thus, worked hand in glove with the colonialists to manipulate and oppress the people, including dividing Nigerians along thick identity lines for parochial interest¹⁵.

The 1922 Hume Clifford's constitutional intervention did not change much: it replaced the Nigerian Council with the legislative council. The Legislative Council served little interest of the Nigerian people. Although it introduced for the first time, elective principle: it led to the formation of political parties which radicalised the political space. The new council had jurisdiction to cover the southern Nigerian Protectorate. The Northern Nigerian Protectorate continued to be governed by the Governor's proclamation¹⁶. The different administrative system(s) or structures impaired ethnic integration and coherence, despite the legislative council discussing the financial estimates of the whole country. The new constitution, failed to address the perceived ethnic and regional lines which, in its self, is impairing national integration: In spite of the few political reforms injected. The policy of racial and ethnic discord, was largely sustained.¹⁷

The attempt by the colonial masters to soothe and pacify the growing protests mounted by the Nigerian nationalists for greater involvement or participation in their local affairs led to the announcement in 1946, of a new constitution called the Richards Constitution. Despite, the new constitution, increasing the scope of the legislative council to cover for the entire country and increased the number of local peoples' participation, including the creation of Regional Councils at the various Regions which, in effect widened local participation. It still failed to address the core fundamental issues. It retained defective structures that clogged inclusive participation. Regionalism with unitary tenets was created and this marks the departure from a unitary political development¹⁸. It deepened the apparent feelings of ethnic differences.¹⁹ Arthur Richards, rationalizing the import of the constitution in 1946, has this to say:

To create a political system which is itself a present advance and maintain the living possibility of further orderly advance, a system within which the diverse elements may progress at varying speed amicably and smoothly towards closely integrated economic, social, and political unity, without sacrificing the principles and ideals inherent in their divergent ways of life²⁰

The British colonial government's unwillingness to create and build structures that may unite the Nigerian peoples was not hidden: it was expressed in policy and practice. The imperial power was more concerned in developing and sustaining conditions to flourish its trade.²¹ The colonialist took advantage of the disunity (which after all, was erected by the hegemonic power), among the nationalists, to largely limit the growth and space of intergroup relationship, hitherto existed in the pre-colonial era, in terms of social, economic and political interactions among the ethnic units.²²

It is evident that the subsequent constitutional developments midwived by the British failed to create enabling pedestrian/platform for the country to integrate and unite. It instead, accentuated the ethnic rivalry, conflict and distrust among the Nigerian peoples. These conflicts of interests and disunity made the people not to trust each other or one another; hence, varying or group's demands were made. The 1951 Macpherson's constitution that replaced the Richards constitution of 1946 expanded the scope of participation as well, injected few reforms (although not really serving the interests of Nigerians at that time too).

The constitution created House of Representatives and increased the number of local participation and scope of political activities. However, the British dictated the outcomes of every constitutional conferences.²³ They exploited human and material resources to avoid a repeat what happened, respectively, in India and Cold Coast now (Ghana), to happen in Ngeria²⁴. To this end, the British ensured the localisation and regionalization of issues that the regions were at each other at the conference(s) in trying to get regional bargaining advantage²⁵. The division between the Northern and Southern Nigeria affected a lot of things, in terms of socio-economic and politico-cultural relationship²⁶, with great impact on national cohesion and integration, even after independence, and subsequently.²⁷

These fears manifested in different agitations and demands, including the call by the minority ethnic groups for the creation of linguistically based states or regions²⁸. There were popular agitations for the creation of states like: the Calabar-Ogoja-Rivers state(COR); the Benin-Delta; the Middle-Belt and Borno, respectively.²⁹This in the opinion of the minority ethnic groups, was expected to alter the balance of power and secure for them, a nous of social, economic, political and cultural footing for future negotiation with other groups or in-groups in Nigeria.³⁰ However, it is important to note here, that the creation of additional states has not sufficiently proved the merit of the thesis advanced by the creation of more states school of thought. It has rather resulted to more contradictions as more agitations for more states have continued, despite Nigeria having 36 states, presently³¹.

The 1954 Lyttelton Constitution expected to address the core national issues observed in the previous constitutions, instead, toed the same way: the retention of the vestiges of colonial interests and intensification of, carefully entrenched ethnic deep rooted discord. The new constitution, no doubt, created few reforms which increased the number of representation to 184, distributed as: North-92; West-42; Lagos-2; East-42; Ex-officio Members and Southern Cameroun-6. It also introduced true federalism-the centre and the regions shared powers (exclusive, concurrent and residual lists)³²It also created Supreme Courts and High Courts and regionalised civil service and the judiciary among other reforms³³.

The outcome of the 1957/1958 constitutional conferences did not widen n nature, structure and context from the previous ones: it intends to review following growing agitations from the Nigerian people for inclusion and participatory democracy. It retained all oppressive and divisive instruments, Nigerians at the conferences were at loggerheads with each other, to the benefits of the colonial masters. As a result, lost the needed catalyst to achieve inclusive independence and drive national unity and common heritage.³⁴This has some socio-economic effect and intensifies ethno-religious violent conflicts. The core issues were therefore, not addressed and these were transferred to the independence constitution of 1960. That bug the nation subsequently³⁵The British colonial administration effectively constricted the political space from the progressive politicians with radical ideas, like Mallam Aminu Kano. They ensured the enthronement of surrogates who would play the Europeans' card.³⁶

Poverty of Leadership

The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrongly with the Nigeria character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example are the hallmarks of true leadership.³⁷

The above assertion by Achebe is apt and captures the arguments of the paper. However, most scholars have blamed colonial masters to be entirely responsible for the socio-political challenges. It is true that the colonial regime has its own share of the blame, but the local elite or nationalists are responsible. Nigerian and indeed, African leaders, missed the step at a very critical point in the historical evolution of the country. for instance, if the majority of the

nationalists were more nationalistic in their thinking, than being “regionalistic,” inclusive independence would have been achieved, despite, the British creation of ethnic differences, racial and tribal feelings,³⁸ as seen in post-independence India and Gold coast³⁹ respectively. The character and personality of a leader influences the nation's foreign or internal policies.

India and former Gold Coast had almost similar historical experiences with the Nigerian State, yet the colonial policies of Divide and Rule, implemented also in those British colonies, yielded little or no results in terms of the inclusive independence achieved, and subsequent structural stability which account(s) for ethno-religious and sectarian security. Similarly, India and Ghana appear to have zero emphasis on race, creed or state of origin and/or region of origin. Regions or states of origin not basis for socio-economic and political interactions (which determines who gets what and what he gets), as in the case of Nigerian, where emphasis is placed (strongly too) on the state of originship as a basis for interaction or which may qualify one for socio-economic and political benefits⁴⁰.

Although, Caroline Colin (2013) argues that the differences between Nigeria and India is in the structuring of the later's demographic diversity, while Nigeria is prone to political instability as a result of linguistic and cultural characteristics which are geographically separated. That is, India's diversity is existing as “crosscutting cleavages” and according to him, India has what he called nationalistic movement. This movement pursued political and economic policies that impacted on the common identity and unified the population⁴¹. Usman and Abba disagreed with Caroline when they hold that, the ethno-geographical history of Nigeria shows that these ethnic nationalities are unique, complex, multifaceted, intermeshed and interconnected at various levels and at different paces and times⁴². Cleavages were politicised and exaggerated both in Nigeria and India. These cleavages before colonial rule were not necessarily sources of conflicts. The authors agree with Toure Kazah-Toure that most nations and even nation-states are themselves product of diversity and have never remained permanent throughout, but have been historically shaped, including the borders and composition of states in Europe or elsewhere, have been a product of complex historical, political, cultural and social processes, etc⁴³.

The collaboration ensured by the local elite through their various pre and post-independence role(s) or activities, tactically delayed the date for Nigeria's independent and by extension, exacerbated the exploitation of human and material resources by the benefactors-Europeans and comprador (local) elite. The political elite that emerged on the Nigerian political landscape or corridor of power, unlike in India and Ghana, were ethnic bigots and therefore, failed to comprehensively pursuing inclusive local issues. They were more concerned with subsisting colonial reflexes⁴⁴, and to that extent localised the struggle. Nigeria appears to have deficit of leaders with the requisite skills to initiate radical programmes of social and re-organisation or a well-conceived, articulated and consistent plan of reform⁴⁵.

The Nigerian leaders and some scholars had different concept of their understanding of the Nigerian state and the historical developments that shaped that epoch, and subsequent emergence of Nigeria as one country. That significantly defined and influenced their

approach, thought, writings and relationship with other ethnic nationalities. Alhaji Tafawa Balewa voicing the position and concern of the majority of Northerners represented by the Northern Peoples' Congress(NPC), following the growing controversy of that time, which formed the basis of Nigeria's future relationship. He noted that:

...Nigeria's political future may only lie in Federalism so far as the rate of regional progress is concerned... The regions of Nigeria as you are aware have reached different stages of development. Some of them seem to have advanced very much more than the others and they are therefore now naturally asking to be given the opportunity to make very rapid political advance...North is afraid of making this rapid and if I may call it artificial advance at this stage... Since 1914 the British Government has been trying to make Nigeria into one but the Nigerian people themselves are historically different in their background, in their religious beliefs and do not show themselves any sign of willingness to unite.... Nigerian unity is only a British creation for the count⁴⁶.

Similarly, Obafemi Awolowo shared almost the same view with Alhaji Tafawa Balewa. He believed that Nigeria was a mere geographical expression and therefore, the Nigerian's of Nigerians are just in name. He stated thus:

Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression. There is no 'Nigerian' in the same as there are 'English', 'Welsh', or 'French'. The word 'Nigerian' is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not⁴⁷.

The above extracts represent the mindsets/thoughts of majority of the nationalist and that questions the possibility of, or desirability of one political union. Hence, the prospect of a distinct socio-economic and political development approach, was conceived then, as the only option for the country onward. It is therefore, entirely difficult for leaders with such sentiment to build all-encompassing country where peace and unity reigns as sine-qua-non for national integration and development.

Contrary to the above views expressed by Balewa and Awolowo, respectively, it is important to state that no country, nation or ethnic nationality without disagreements or conflict of interests. Conflict of interests are inherently associated with nation-building. Diversity is not peculiar to the Nigerian nation. History has shown that most states of the world have been 'artificially created' and, are not absolutely homogeneous or 'pure'⁴⁸. Toure, Kazah-Toure does not share the view that states have been homogeneously created nor believe that diversity poses a problem and cannot be a license to crisis of identities as evident in Nigeria. He insists that such views 'hold to a limited extent'. In his words:

Most nations, even nation-states, emerged from diversity, and there has not been any nation without changing historical and political processes. Presently, those who are English-apart from Scot, Welsh, Irish and the numerous minorities-are not all of the same origin and do not draw from a single history. The borders and composition of states in Europe have never been fixed for all times, but created at various epochs of complex historical, political and socio-cultural processes⁴⁹.

Diversity has proven to be a source of strength, progress, unity and inclusive national development otherwise, the question is: why are countries with great diversities such as Brazil, India, the United States of America, Great Britain just to mention but a few, whose diversities have clearly shown to be a source of strength, not embroiled with various ethno-religious and sectarian crisis that has challenged the foundation of their nationhood to the extent to which, their national heritage is jeopardised? It is true that these countries may have their peculiar challenges, but not to the point of sacrificing national interest(s). What makes these countries great is the faith, tolerance, confidence, belief, trust and cherish values placed on their national heritage. The dynamic internal mechanism applied in handling internal and/or intra-ethnic disagreements and perceived differences (including divisions), without haven to damage, devalue, stifle, discourage, and deprive the common heritage or common national destiny makes the difference.

Nigerian leaders sixty (60) years after independence have continued to emphasise and implement measures and policies that tend to divide Nigerians along strong ethnic lines. This is in spite of, the glaring indicators, such as political instability, poverty, stressed unity (disunity), insecurity among others posed by devoid of national integration. The failure to galvanise and promote those ideas that unite Nigerians has clogged national development, growth and freedom. Nigeria can realised her potentials in the realm of unity. For the nation to make progress, Nigerian leaders must heed to the advice of Ali Mazrui contained in PLO Mulumba's "Apology to Nkrumah": "what others think as tower of Babel indeed, can be a power of Babel."⁵⁰

It does not mean collapsing or striking down the traditional institutions, no, but traditional institutions maybe integrated in a modern way or scheme of doing things. The leaders of Africa and indeed, Nigeria have not used their diversities as linguistic and cultural mosaic to create energy and synergy for their country's benefits, but allowed same, to be used for the purposes of dividing Nigerians⁵¹. Consequently, Nigerian leaders, by jettisoning those core national values and selfishly created and instilled various fears, sustained crisis of identity, including skills' struggles, effectively cajoled the citizens into paying allegiance to the regions as spheres of political and cultural power, to the point that these regions were wrongly seen as distinct political units⁵². Abukakar Tafawa Belawa was quoted by Nnoli to have stated that:

It is true that we are trying an experiment never tried in any part of the world, that is the devolution of authority from the centre to the regions, but I take it that this is merely temporary up to the time when the regions in Nigeria reach equality. We may have to reverse it when the North can really march with the East and the West, we may have to reverse the recommendation of a regional autonomy and to strengthen the centre and weaken the regions, but we want a strong regional autonomy for a temporary measure that is all and nothing more⁵³.

Today in Nigeria, the practice of 'statetism' has localised and limited capacity, promoted mediocrity, nepotism and corruption. It encourages a carefree system of lifestyle and it is eroding, in a progressive manner, the Nigerian's. Ethnicity has been promoted to the point that

merit is often times, slaughtered on the altar of strict ethnic/tribal sentiments⁵⁶ For instance, the localization of headship of federal institutions like the Federal Universities where the University head (the Vice Chancellor) is restricted, in both practice and principle to someone from the host Community or state. This is true in most federal institutions. This practice does not encourage commitment and limits competition and cross-breeding of ideas in a cosmopolitan way, which diversity brings⁵⁷.

This is not how it was practiced (however), in the early days of independence, otherwise, the likes of Margaret Ekpo, etc., (from the present Cross River State) who contested and won elections in Aba Urban North Constituency under the defunct National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) in 1961 and remained a member of the former Eastern House of Assembly (EHA) from 1961 through 1966, would not have been allowed to contest as non-indigene. Secondly, the constituency which she represented effectively would have lost the legislative experiences he brought to bear through the people's oriented bills she sponsored. She did not have to go to the Calabar area, for instance to represent them⁵⁸. The new trend has led to massive corruption.

Corruption and misapplication of resources have resulted to lack of jobs creation: the quality of growth is not strong enough to create jobs with productive strides. A lot of Nigerians, particularly the youth, have been out of jobs. Nigeria's unemployment rate as at first Q4 of 2020 stood at 33.3%⁵⁸. That is well over twenty-three million Nigerians are jobless. African and indeed, Nigeria's economy continues to punch below the belt. This is not good for the economy. Inequality and poverty lines have widened with potential threats. The suffering inflicted to the society by the deprivation and exclusion that characterised the Nigerian leadership has betrayed the hope of the citizenry where every citizen would have equal opportunity to participate in governance and societal good. The promise by the post-independence leaders to eradicate poverty, illiteracy and disease (which were prevalent indices during the colonial era) waned quickly as the new Nigerian leaders took to primitive accumulation of wealth⁵⁹.

The Nigerian leaders therefore, have a responsibility to revisit and restructure certain structural and historical (colonial) policies that are inimical to national integration and growth. For the country to thrive, flourish and develop, the leaders and followership must rededicate themselves to the Nigerian project. This may certainly unify the Nigerian people around shared and valued national values; promote national identity and breakdown partisan rancour by forging a common destiny. Nigerians will begin to underscore those values that unite the country. The shortsightedness of the Nigerian leaders have caused Nigeria her greatness: Nigerian leaders have sacrificed politico-economic and social integration. The level of insecurity as a result of the leaders' failure, is unthinkable.

The level of insecurity as a result of the leaders' failure is unthinkable. This has led to the rise in new conflicts expressing itself in the form of Kidnapping/abduction, Herdsmen attacks, Boko-Haram and the latest and terrifying brand, Banditry that are targeting schools and other soft targets. A good number of lives and resources are lost on daily basis on the accounts of the

activities of these armed groups. The frequent attacks on schools and students will certainly lead to broken education. Therefore, if this menace continues to go unchecked, the future of education in Nigeria (that is already strained), maybe in serious jeopardy.

Poverty of Followership

Followership and leadership are mutual and interwoven activities that facilitate and stimulate national integration and development in any part of the world, Nigeria is not an exception. The vibrancy and check, followers tend to bring to bear is in dire need in Nigeria. Nigeria can be argued, following independence, has had leaders who failed to deliver to her citizenry the needed quality of life, commensurate with her endowed human and natural resources⁶⁰. The followership has also not helped the situation by holding the leaders accountable, but, they (followers) fall prey to the leaders' divisive tools (ethnicity and other related bogeys) often time, employed to keep the people divided on a possible national interest⁶¹.

Similarly, Irikana (2012), cited in iproject.com, shares the same line of thought when he opines that followership has not done enough to generate debates and initiate the needed checks and balances seen in most civilised climes. The followership instead, has reduced itself to blame games: blaming the leadership, and most times, hold colonialism accountable for their woes. Although Irikana has identified certain protests and resistance variously mounted by the followership. However, it is important to state that those organised protests yielded to little or no results to effect the desired change or needs,⁶² may be as a result of rank's infiltration and ethnically based instigated counter violent protest by the leaders who would want the status quo remain or maintained, just like the End SARS peaceful protest recently organised across the country for almost a fortnight to protest against police brutality and extra-judicial killings. The protest was largely peaceful until certain allegedly paid miscreants infiltrated their ranks and turned the hitherto peaceful protest into violence protest, a ploy that gave the leadership the reasons not just to deal decisively with the protesters, but biased the exercise.⁶³

Poverty as a tool has been used by the leaders to reduce the articulation and social mobilisation's capacity of the masses or people. This has impaired the followership's ability to confront the status quo and maybe, ask certain questions about their welfare: thus, they lack the courage to speak out against real or perceived injustices and leaders' ineptitude.⁶⁴ The followership rather protect, shield and frequently, come in defense of corrupt and unproductive leaders from being criticised or prosecuted on the basis of tribal or ethnic sentiments⁶⁵.

The poor state of followership in Nigerian can be remedied if the followership can rise above being victims: recognise their common enemy-that is, instigated ethnicity and render the needed pan-Nigerian advocacy, until then, the labours of our heroes past, may remain in vain. . Followership must declare support for productive and patriotic Nigerian leaders with the capacity to articulate "radical programmes of social and economic and re-organisation driven by a well-conceived and consistent" plan of action with zero tolerance to ethnicity⁶⁶. The Nigeria's match towards becoming a modern and attractive country in the words of Achebe, begins when all thoughtful Nigerians rise up to challenge and reject all those habits which cripple our aspirations and national heritage and clogs our opportunity of becoming a civilised country⁶⁷.

Neo-colonial Features and Practices

The policy of colonialism was fractured by the rising but continuous socio-political events and forces that were shaping the world at that time. The 1776 United States declaration of independence was a big catalyst. The independence Declaration reads: “...that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable Rights that among these are: life, liberty and pursuit of Happiness...”⁶⁸; the activities of the Pan Africanists and African emerging nationalists combined to make colonialism undesirable. The process of Nigeria's independent agitation culminated in the physical withdrawal of British officials in 1960 when the political independence was attained. With colonialism losing its shine and lustre the colonial master replaced it with yet another project called neo-colonialism with equal dimension of pernicious and pervasive structure, however, in a more subtle manner.

The attainment of independence does not completely decolonise Nigeria socially, economically and politically. The withdrawing colonial power effectively ensured that her pre-independence economic and strategic interests are keenly preserved and protected in post-colonial Nigerian economy and that also informed her post-independence interactions and policies. The coloniser's interests poses as a serious threat to the Nigeria's march towards nation-building. This, no doubt, created room for fears and these fears manifested in different ways and it affected the relationship between the groups and ethnic interest got advanced⁶⁹.

The 1960 independence constitution clearly granted the British control in certain areas such as, economic and political: the Queen of England was still assenting to independence Nigeria's bills and the Nigeria's Supreme Court's decisions were subject to the Privy Council's review in London⁷⁰. However, despite the attempt to decolonise Nigeria in 1963, the Nigerian economy to a huge extent, is still being controlled by the transnational companies such as the Exxon, Shell-BP, British-American Tobacco, etc.⁷¹ The British through the transnational companies and the help of the surrogates' bourgeoisie: controlled all sectors.⁷² The neo-colonial structure has ensured continuation of exploitation of human and material resources for the benefits of Europe and local elites⁷³

Conclusion

In the final analysis, the paper shows that misleadership by the local elite is responsible for the majority of the ethnic based violence and sharp divisions along ethnic lines that are impairing national integration and development in Nigeria. However, this is not to deny that European interests driven by colonial practices play a part in that inglorious odyssey. It has also been shown that diversity does not visibly contribute to the ethno-based divisions rather, geocentric and parochial interests beclouded the judgement of several nationalists.

Evidence shows that India and Ghana with similar historical experiences with Nigeria achieved inclusive independence and pursued national integration despite, the implementation of Divide and Rule policies by their colonial masters. India and Ghana had selfless leaders who were able to harmonise and unite their cultural differences: they used their diversity as a cultural asset to create energy and synergy needs to transform their societies to a more secured and stable polities. Unlike in Nigeria, where the leaders, fueled/fanned the

ember of division and disunity for purely sectarian interests, and that is, responsible for the near broken of state of the country. Nigerian leaders hide behind regionalism to exploit Nigerians. Regionalism is not a bad practice, for if well practiced, it could lead to exclusive and inclusive economy, which may finally transform into integration of Nigeria's economy for economies of scale. The principle and tenets were wrongly implemented to pursue near distinct region.

It is concluded here that colonial policies and practices as applied in Nigeria may have laid the initial seeds of ethnic discord and racial divisions in order to feather her nest. Evidence from the study are unmistakable that poverty of leadership and followership share more of the blame for Nigeria's failure, to apply dexterity in handling local affairs as seen in India and Ghana. They leaders appear to be more concerned for their personal largess and vested interests, than being patriotic and nationalistic for national benefits.

Similarly, the politics that culminated in the amalgamation of 1914, has not significantly proven to be a foundation crisis of Nigeria's multifarious ethnic based violence. Evidence has proven sufficiently that most nations and even nation-states are products of diversity and histories drawn from different directions and sources, which have been shaped and conditioned through continuous and complex historical epoch. Therefore, there no ethnic group that is biologically pure, thus, diversity cannot be a license to violence of the magnitude to challenge the foundation of Nigeria's unity.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are presented to improve the unity and stability of the Nigerian state:

Nigerian leaders must henceforth dissociate themselves from all forms of nepotistic inclinations and rather direct their energies to the promotion of unity and development. Nigeria may have to adopt the Indian and Ghana's templates in this aspiration. This may significantly reduce to a bearable minimum, if not, completely; ethnic based violent conflicts and unnecessary fear.

Those Nigerian leaders should commit themselves to ensuring prudent and transparent management of human and material resources to take care of the citizens' welfare and well-being as well as generate high productive employment for the teeming unemployed youth. The current information released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) indicates that over 23 million youth are unemployed at the rate of 33.3%. This is indeed, not good for the stability of the Nigerian nation which is battling with challenges that appear to be intractable. A hungry man they say is an angry man and no one can moderate the temper of a hungry man and in order to eke-out a living, he can engage in anything available, including carrying of arms against the state as had become common in the country.

Nigeria needs to encourage intensive education, high man power training in order to cut-off the invisible hands of colonialism, neo-colonialism and capitalists imperialism which have indirectly contributed to the poor performance of the economy, lack of accountability and

transparency of the Nigerian leaders because these variables laid the foundation of present economic impoverishment in Nigeria, Africa and other developing economies around the world. . The current and frequent attacks on institutions of learning, including abduction/kidnapping of the school children and teachers, if not stopped may lead to broken education with obvious implications on the future generation.

Importantly, followership should rise and take its rightful place and stop being docile in the face of ethnicity, ethnic based divisions and other ethnic identity lines drawn/instigated by corrupt and tribal leaders to keep Nigerians divided, adverse implications for national integration and development. Proactive and vibrant followership would certainly change the narrative and support the emergent of leaders with zero tolerance to corruption and with capacity to initiate and generate reforms that are capable of driving the cherished national values and heritage.

Government should, as a matter of practice embark on policy redirection towards expunging the policy of state of origin and replaced it with state of residence. This would certainly allow Nigerian citizens living in a particular state or area, to be free to participate and enhance his or her socio-economic and political endeavours within the state of residence. The current practice of state of origin limits capacity and encourages mediocrity.

Finally, Nigerian cultural diversity should be harnessed and transform into a bridge to linkup with others, without having to collapse the traditional institutions, but fine a way of integrating same, in a modern way of doing things for national integration, progress, freedom and development.

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