Ethnic politics and National Integration in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

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Abstract

One of the contentious issues affecting national integration in Nigeria is ethnic politics. An ethnicity is a potent tool for mobilizing access to power and resources in Nigeria. It has not only affected nation-building but has also constituted security and governance challenges threatening national integration. Despite different measures adopted to foster national unity among different ethnic groups, primordial sentiments pervade the political system, festering like a malignant tumour with associated prognosis. The paper explored the implications of ethnic politics on national integration in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. Data elicited from secondary sources were utilized for the study. The findings showed that the dominant ethnic groups determine party formation, voting patterns and allocation of public goods. Ethnic politics is deployed by the political class to access and maintain their grip of power while other sub-ethnic groups are sidelined. Undue ethnicization of Nigeria's politics has not only encouraged prebendalised politics but affected democratic development. Electoral malpractices, political instability and crises experienced in Nigeria have their roots in ethnic politics. The study recommended, among other things, that there is a need for reorientation of Nigerian citizens on the danger ethnicized politics portends to nation-building and national integration. Furthermore, there is the need to redefine citizenship, indigene-settler syndrome and son of the soil conundrum that has been spurring ethnic politics in Nigeria.

Keywords: ethnicity, federalism, identity politics, prebendalised politics, national integration

Introduction

Ethnic politics is one of the challenges threatening the corporate existence of the Nigerian State. It is a fundamental threat to political order, institutional stability and state cohesion. It is not a security and governance issue in Nigeria alone, it has caused hostilities in other African countries such as   Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Kenya and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In some developed nations, it has spawned a series of contradictions, such as the threat to political stability as

witnessed in the cases between the Ukrainian and Russia federation, Scottish and English, white Americans and black Americans, Turks and Greek Cypriot (Ologbenla and Okeke, 2017). It has become more pronounced in Nigeria as a result of the centrifugal nature of the State.

As an independent state, Nigeria has been confronted with a myriad of challenges, such as citizenship, security, poverty, and unity. Inter and intra-communal conflicts have been experienced as a result of ethnicized politics. The deployment of ethnic sentiments in gaining access to power has given room to electoral malpractice, political violence, the crisis of legitimacy and poor governance. Increasing militancy and perceived subjugation of minority ethnic nationalities by the majority ethnic groups have characterized the body polity. The desires of the elites to win elections at all costs through deploying ethnic sentiments have given room to a politics of "do or die affair", thereby threatening good governance. The dichotomy of " we" and "they" adopted by ethnic groups against one another has created an atmosphere of disunity which the political class exploits to their benefits. The problem of ethnicity manifests in all areas of social life in Nigeria. As argued by Cohen (1969), ethnicized politics manifests in intergroup relations as exhibited by the Hausa traders in their interactions with the Yoruba people who engaged in trading activities with them in Sabo, Ibadan, before Nigeria's independence... The Hausa traders (settlers) established a monopoly over the sale of cattle and kola between their homeland and the Yoruba metropolis. Hausa settlers, who constituted a single highly self-conscious cultural and ethnic group, monopolized the trade relations between them and Yoruba butchers and farmers. Even after 50 years of interactions with the Yoruba people, Hausa traders became more tribalistic than they had ever been, which became aggravated with the coming of the puritanical Tijanyya in the 1950s, which further built-up ethnic tension between the two groups.

The essence of adopting federalism to manage ethnic conflict and ensure peaceful co-existence has been a challenge to nation-building as the country has continued to thread the precipice of disintegration. Communal conflicts, political instability and primitive accumulation of wealth have been the products of ethnicized politics. Communal conflicts are social conflicts relating to groups in society, they are community-based primarily due to competition, claims and contestation over communal values (Nlewem, 2017). The communal values contested for can be farmland, religion, chieftaincy title, territorial border and natural resources such as gold, diamond and crude oil (Nlewem, 2017; Oboh & Hyande,2006). Cases of such communal conflicts with ethnic underpinning were included but not limited to clashes between Tiv and Jukun in Taraba, and Benue states, Ife and Modakeke, Aguleri-Umuleri conflict, boundary disputes between Enuguand Kogi states' communities, Urum and Achala communities in Anambra state with fatal

implications (Nextier SPD, 2020). Also, ethnic politics is employed for political mobilization and entrepreneurship, which allows the dominating ethnic groups to exclude the minority groups in national politics, which results in a security dilemma in the country (Ologbenla & Okeke, 2017).

Since the colonial period, national leaders wielded ethnicity to mobilize people for votes and retain themselves in power to the detriment of other sub-ethnic groups. Despite the mechanisms put in place to ensure the integration of different ethnic groups, agitations for self-determination and secession still hold sway in Nigeria sixty years after independence. The incessant call for restructuring in the country is linked to the fact that political leaders cannot unite the disparate groups that constitute Nigeria to bring about development. Fear of alienation and incessant and acrimonious disagreements on how the resources of Nigeria can be shared among groups have encouraged mutual distrust, which hampers peaceful co-existence (Adeforiti, 2018).

In light of the preceding, the paper focuses on how ethnic politics has constituted a serious challenge to national integration in Nigeria. The first section is the introductory part. The second section deals with the conceptualization of the central key terms such as ethnicity, ethnic politics and national integration. The third part looks into the historical overview of ethnic politics, while section three examines the nexus between ethnic politics and national integration. Section four examines some policy measures designed for ethnic politics in Nigeria. The last section concludes the study.

Concept of ethnicity

Ethnicity, as a social construct, has attracted different conceptualizations from various scholars. Geertz (1973) conceived ethnicity to be assumed blood ties. According to Jinadu (2003), ethnicity involves a myth of common ancestry, shared historical memory, common culture, and association with a specific homeland. As a social category, it is not static and can be affected by an external factor such as intermarriage other than blood ties and birth. From the standpoint of Nnoli (1978), ethnicity is a social phenomenon associated with (communal) competition among members of different ethnic groups. It is a sense of peoplehood which has its foundation in the combined remembrance of experience(s) and common aspiration (Azeez, 2004). Macionis (2010) defines ethnicity as people with a shared cultural heritage, common ancestry, language, and religion, which gives them a distinctive social identity.

In the opinion of Salawu and Hassan (2011), loyalty to an ethnic group involves a degree of obligation associated with the rejection of people who do not belong to the ethnic group. Ethnicity promotes "we" and "they" consciousness in intergroup relations in society. It is a social construct which should be understood within the historical context of how individuals are called to accept ethnic identity as an explanation of who they are, what exists, what the world is, what nature is and what men and women are like (IDEA, 2010). It constitutes a way in which people think of themselves and others and also makes sense of the world around them.

From a different perspective, Osaghae (1995) sees ethnicity as the employment or mobilization of ethnic identity and difference to gain an advantage in situations of competition, conflict or cooperation. Lergo (2011) advances the view that ethnicity is socially constructed, becoming important only because a society institutes a distinction. Ethnicity is a strong sense of identity with a distinctive population sub-group (Abedin, 2012). It involves a human group that engages in a particular form of social relations through which the groups seek an advantage by appealing to ethnic identities or shared group characteristics (Kalejaiye and Alliyu, 2013). Ethnic identities are points of personal reference such as perceptions of common descent, history, fate, culture, language, physical appearance, and ritual regulation of life by religion. Ethnicity connotes the strife between ethnic groups during which people stress their identity and exclusiveness. It is a social identity formation that rests upon culturally specific practices and the uniqueness of symbols and cosmology. Within an ethnic group, there is a belief in a common origin, history, ancestry, symbols, events, values, and hierarchies, which inform the social identities of both insiders and outsiders.

The foregoing conceptualizations of ethnicity show that it is both a positive and negative phenomenon. In its negative dimension, it connotes a situation of conflict, while on the positive dimension, it implies a form of identification or pride people have towards their ethnic group.

Ethnic politics

Adeforiti (2018) avers that ethnic politics connotes forms of political participation that are ethnical in nature and represent the single most challenging issue to settle in Nigeria. It is seen as the underlying reason for various forms of ethnic nationalism, which range from the assertion of language and cultural autonomy to the demand for local autonomy and self-determination in Nigeria (Osaghae, 2004, cited in Adeforiti, 2018). Adamu and Ocheni (2016) see ethnic politics as an organization and

formation of groups of societal elites whose aims and objectives are strategically achieved through the mobilization of ethnic groups, which are coordinated on a sentimental basis and elusive emotional sympathy to gain group's support against perceived majority oppressors from the nationalistic point of view. Ethnic politics involves a political group operating as political actors with the aspiration and desire to have political rights. As observed by Adamu and Ocheni (2016), political rights might be to increase representation in administrative and political institutions, share and control over local resources, and use of specific language as a medium of instruction and communication. It is a part of identity politics adopted by either a minority or majority group in pursuing material benefits within the political system. Any ethnic group in society can mobilize people within its group to gain access to power and resources and also maintain themselves in power. An ethnic community can mobilize ethnic consciousness in order to garner support for the power elites in their factional struggle of acquiring power and access to the resources of the State (Mbalisi, 2017). A marginalized ethnic group can employ ethnic sentiment to access public goods, and in so, conflict may arise, causing more division rather than unity. Ethnic politics can be viewed as a situation in which politicians mobilize support based on an appeal to ethnic identity, and people tend to support their leaders from the same ethnic group (Ologbenla & Okeke, 2017). It is regarded as a problem when different groups see each other as competitors for power, and when members believe they will be excluded from the benefits of state assistance and protection if one of their own is not in power.

National integration

National integration as a social concept is nebulous, attracting different perceptions by scholars. From the perspective of Odetomi (2013), national integration as a concept has to do with creating a sense of territorial nationality, thereby eliminating parochial loyalties. This implies that even though there is ethnic plurality in a society and every group has its language or cultural affiliation, national integration creates a form of unification. It has to do with the problem of creating a sense of territorial nationality, which overshadows the subordinate parochial loyalties (Fatile and Adejuwon, 2013). It is a situation in which citizens see themselves as people bound by shared historical experiences and shared values and imbued by the spirit of patriotism and unity, which transcends traditional, primordial diverse tendencies (Edewor, Aluko & Folarin, 2014). It is a strategy for forging unity in diversity. It is a post-colonial project necessary for national progress and development. National integration aims to ensure cooperation, patriotism, togetherness, peoplehood, and development among different ethnic nationalities corralled under one nation called

Nigeria. As Nigeria is a colonial project handed over by the British government to the nationalists, national integration is a post-colonial project meant to unify all the different socio-cultural groups in order to constitute a wedged nation. The desire of ethnic groups to constitute a homogenous group is just at the level of rhetoric when it comes to real politics; individuals tend to glue to their primordial groups. The political class does not help matters as they quickly whip up sectional sentiments in accessing power and public goods, thereby threatening national integration.

From the perspective of Ojo (2009), national integration is the relationship of community among people within the same political entity, a state of disposition to be cohesive, togetherness and commitment to mutual programmes. It involves awareness of a common identity amongst the citizens, which make up a particular nation and have different identities such as religion, culture, ethnicity, language, and history, yet they are united. This can also be referred to as "unity in diversity". That is, despite the difference in social identity, a unity exists among ethnic groups in a society. Through national integration, people are united, both the dominant and subordinate groups, having a sense of belonging, enabling them to enjoy peaceful co-existence with their fundamental human rights equally protected (Taylor, 2017). From another perspective, Osimen, Balogun and Adenegan (2013), see national integration as the process through which people live within the geographic boundaries of a country, forgetting their differences of race, religion and language and imbibe the spirit and sense of unity and allegiance to the nation. It also implies bringing together people of different religions, ethnic back, race, culture, economy, politics, among others, into unrestricted and equal association on national issues. It reduces socio-cultural inequalities among the citizens of a nation, thereby engendering unity and national progress. National integration is also viewed as a process by which members of a social system develop linkages and connections so that the boundaries of sub-systems become less consequential in affecting their behaviour (Ojo, 2009). It is the process followed by ethnically plural society in which different groups are having various languages, cultures by eliminating their parochial loyalties. It has to do with the creation of a sense of territorial nationality which overshadows subordinate parochial interests. The problem of integration varies from nation to nation, depending on the history and composition of the ethnic groups. Besides, it involves bridging the elite mass gap on the vertical plane and reducing cultural and regional tensions on the horizontal plane, thereby creating a homogenous community. From all indications, national integration can be viewed as a situation in which different groups in a political do not system place priority on ethnic, religious, linguistic, and other social affiliations.

Ethnicized politics in Nigeria: A historical overview

Like other African nations, ethnicized politics causing political instability threatening peaceful co-existence and national integration was laid by the colonial authorities. Indeed, it was a grandmaster designed to cause disunity among the different ethnic nationals corralled together in order not to challenge the crass exploitation of Nigerians by the British government. The colonial policy of divide and rule was strategically adopted by the British colonial government to curb pan-Nigerian nationalism and maintain its stronghold in power (IDEA, 2000).

Structurally, the British colonial administration emphasized differences among Nigerians rather than harnessing their similarities towards nation-building after independence. After the amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914 by the British colonial administration, it succeeded in imposing different forms of administration, laws and practices. The British type of education was accepted in the South, while their administrative system was willingly embraced in the North by Emirs and Islamic clerics, which pleased the British government since it suited the exploitative colonial system (Fatile, 2018). The North and South developed at different paces, with the former lagging behind socio-economically. As observed by Fawole (2018), the disparity in the socio-economic advancement of the North and South has constituted a serious challenge to political development and national politics even after independence. Apart from the fact that the British government created a divided society for its self-interest, ethnic sentiments and politics were deployed by the various regional leaders for membership mobilization. Hence, before independence, political party formation reflected regionalism and ethnic basis.

Taking a cursory look into the political parties formed to wrest power from the colonial government, they were organized and established based on primordial/ethnic interest. The formation of political parties in Nigeria presents an image of struggle among various ethnic groups, particularly the dominant ones, for sharing national resources. According to Kalu (2016), political competition in Nigeria has brought about ethnic agitation for self-determination making ethnic groups assume aggressive posture bearing ethnic identity, acting as machinery through which the desires of people are sought, and unwittingly creating flashpoints in the country, resulting in ethnic nationalism.

Thus, although the British government laid the foundation of primordial politics in Nigeria, the nationalists also promoted ethnic diversity in political party formation and other socio-economic activities. The first political party formed in Nigeria, the Nigeria National Democratic Party (NNDP) in Lagos in 1923 as a result of the introduction of elective principle by the Clifford constitution in 1922, with representation restricted to Lagos and Calabar, was not national in outlook. The Nigerian Youth Movement later came in 1934 to challenge the domination of NNDP

in Lagos politics. The National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon, which later changed to the National Convention of Nigeria Citizens (NCNC) in 1945 at the initial stage, had a national outlook but was later dominated by people of Igbo extraction. Disparaging ethnicism was also promoted through Arthur Richard constitution of 1946, which introduced regional government, though, it integrated North and South in a common legislative council. It was a constitution that formed the basis of fragmentation along ethnic cleavage (Salawu and Hassan, 2011).

The Action Group formed (1951) in reaction to the NCNC was an offshoot of the Yoruba socio-cultural association called Egbe Omo Oduduwa inaugurated in 1948, which later transformed into a political party called Action Group. After the formation of the Action Group, prominent settlers in Lagos and Ibadan went to their villages. They presented themselves to their chiefs in order to contest for the Western House of Assembly. AG won by a majority in the Western region, thereby enthroning the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo as the head of the regional government (Sklar and Whitetaker, 1991). As a result of fear of domination by other ethnic groups, the Northern People's Congress (1951) was also formed from two northern associations, Jam'iyyar Nutanen Arewa A Yau and Jamiyyar Jumaar Arewa. The Northern Element Progressive Union, led by the late Aminu Kano and United Middle Belt Congress, led by the late Joseph Tarka became the minority parties.

The discovery of oil in 1956 further fanned the embers of inter-ethnic wrangling, which gave room for competition over revenue. The politics of oil brought a situation where new groups emerged in Niger-Delta with a militancy orientation to force ruling elites to look into the grievances of the minority groups in the region (Olurode, 1999).   In the same vein, Kalejaiye and Aliyu (2013) averred that the discovery of oil and the wealth generated had given room for stiff competition for access to the national cake and new forms of conflict rivalry among ethnic groups have increased, and fear of marginalization by the sub-ethnic groups has heightened too.

In the First Republic, it was evident that ethnic and prebendalised politics pervaded Nigerian politics as power tussle was pronounced among the three major political parties culminating in inter and intra-party crises and military intervention. Ethnicized politics that characterized the First Republic before the military takeover further entrenched the fear of the minority ethnic groups. Between 1952 and 1966, party activities were characterized by ethnicity as the dominant political and ethnic groups tried to outsmart one another. Ethnicization of politics engendered crass competition for resources worsening already tensed relationships among ethnic groups in the country. Ethnic sentiments also characterized body polity as promotion in the armed forces, employment in the public and civil service, national appointment

into public office, admission into institutions, revenue allocation, infrastructural development, party formations had an ethnic undertone (Edewor et al).

In the Second Republic, political activities were a replica of what obtained in the First Republic as political parties were ethnically based. For instance, the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) was an offshoot of the Northern People's Congress (NPC) which got enjoyed followership majorly in the core North, made up of Hausa-Fulani ethnic group. The Unity Party of Nigeria's members were majorly drawn from the Western region of Yoruba speaking extraction. Nigeria's Peoples Party (NPP) was the product of the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), which retained its membership among the Igbo ethnic group of the Southern Eastern Nigeria (Momoh, 2015). The Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) had its base in Hausa speaking extraction. At the same time, the Great Nigeria Peoples Party (GNPP) was led by the late Waziri Ibrahim, who controlled the Kanuri speaking area (Oladiran, 2013). In the Second Republic, ethnicity was de-emphasized because of the stipulation of the 1979 constitution that political parties should have a national spread. Even with the condition in place, ethnic cleavage still guided party operation while voting patterns reflected ethnic colouration (Momoh, 2015).

In the aborted Third Republic when the political transition programme was inaugurated, the retired General Ibrahim Gbadamosi Babangida de-emphasized ethnic cleavage in party formation. Consequently, two political parties, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC) were imposed on the Nigerian political system. However, in the constitution of the two parties formed, there was a manifestation of ethno-religious cleavage. As a characteristic of the Nigerian political parties, the Social Democratic Party had its stronghold majorly in the South, while the National Republic Convention was deeply rooted in the North. The two political parties died a natural death when the June 12 presidential election in 1993 was annulled by the military administration, thereby awakening the lulled ethnic consciousness and polarization. After June 12 presidential election had been confined to the dustbin of history, Nigeria witnessed the coming to power of the late General Sanni Abacha. During his regime, five political parties were formed to compete for elective posts during the election, which included the Congress for National Consensus (CNC), Grassroot Democratic Movement (GDM), United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP), National Centre Party of Nigeria (NCPN) and the Democratic Party of Nigeria (DPN). The five political parties eventually adopted the late General Sani Abacha as the consensus candidate. This trend made late Bola Ige christened them the "five leprous fingers of the same hand" (Momoh, 2015). The reason for his adoption of the five political parties was to fulfil his ambition of transforming himself into a civilian leader like Balise

Campaore in Burkina Faso. With the demise of the late General Sanni Abacha in June 1998, the political parties went into oblivion.

Ethnic colouration was experienced in the Fourth Republic when political parties were formed again by the retired General Abdulsalam Abubakar, who organized a short transition programme. Initially, 26 political associations sought registration, but only nine were eventually registered. The dominant ones among them included the Democratic Advance Movement (DAM), Movement for Democracy and Justice (MDJ), United People's Party, National Solidarity Movement (NSM), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), All Peoples Party (APP) and Alliance for Democracy (AD). Like other political parties before them, APP had its membership majorly drawn from Hausa/Fulani, while the AD leaned towards the Yoruba while PDP had a little bit of national spread. As observed by Ademola (2012), PDP was an amalgam of retired military generals and other power-seekers. Unlike the political parties formed in the First Republic that had clear objectives and interests, most of the political parties formed in the fourth republic had vague objectives and general ambition of seeking political power.

Prelude to 2011 general elections, 63 political parties were registered by INEC. Of the 63 registered parties, 9 of them won some seats in representative institutions at the federal and State levels. They included the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), Allied Congress Party of Nigeria (CAN), All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP), Accord Party (AP), All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), People's Democratic Party (PDP) and Labour Party. All the dominant political parties reflected ethnic cleavage. The death of the elected president, Shehu Umoru Yar' Adua, shifted power configuration to the South while the North insisted on producing the president in 2015 (Oladiran, 2013).

In the build-up to the 2015 general elections, four political parties merged to form the All Progressives Congress (APC). The merger parties were the All Peoples Party (APP), Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) and All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA). The alliance was to produce a party with a national outlook as an alternative to the voters and also to assume national leadership. Despite various attempts, party formation in Nigeria after independence is a continuation of the pre-independence years. As the experience in Nigeria, party formation reflects ethno-regional colouration, which has been affecting national integration. Most often in Nigeria, when political parties coalesced, they broke up due to personalized and ethnic interests, weak ideological basis, and issued-based politics.

Challenges of ethnic politics to national integration

Mobilization of ethnicity in Nigeria's politics has different multiplier effects which threaten national integration. As a result of the ethnic-induced politics of ' divide and rule' introduced by the colonial authorities, ethnic rivalries and suspicion have continued to hold sway in Nigeria. Creation of Nigeria by the British government fostered divisive ethnic politics among the various nationalities. Looking at the politics in the first, second, aborted third republics till the present dispensation, it is clear that national integration is confronted with many challenges which ethnicity is one. In electing and appointing public office holders, instead of adopting criteria like integrity, credibility, ability, merit, capacity and skills, ethnic sentiment is deployed in determining who gets what, when and how. Rather than making use of credible people to direct the affairs of government, primordialism pervades the system resulting in purposive leadership deficit and political corruption. For instance, the adoption of the federal character principle in appointment to public service has not only promoted mediocrity by employing incompetent and less qualified people to implement government decisions. The effect of this is poor governance outcome that affects socio-economic development. Sub-national or ethnic groups are most often marginalized and denied access to public benefits. Every ethnic group in power tends to favour its group rather than allowing equity and justice to prevail in the allocation of public resources (Ologbenla & Okeke, 2017). Political instability characterizing Nigeria's political system due to ethnic consciousness, particularly in political party formation creates disintegrative forces. Rather than politics being an avenue for rendering service to humanity and equitable allocation of resources among different groups, it has encouraged zero-sum game. Election into public offices appears to be like going to war due to pre-election and post-election violence, as experienced 2007, 2011 and 2019 general elections.

Also, situations abound in Nigeria, where students' admissions into the federal and state institutions have been jeopardized on the notion of ethnicity because one ethnic group is given preference over the others. Also, the location of industries has been dictated by primordial sentiment. An ethnic group in power may site industries in its area to satisfy selfish ethnic interests. There are some states where governors concentrate developmental projects in their place of origin rather than spreading them across all ethnic groups. In most cases, developmental programmes are used to siphon funds for personal enrichment while people live in abject poverty (Edozie, 2022).

Appointment into positions after elections have been conducted has become a contentious issue, most especially when it manifests ethnic attachment. During the first term of the incumbent President Mohammed Buhari, ethnic interest

characterized his political appointment as he favoured the North. His political appointment was lopsided (97% to the North and 3% to the South) and this constitutes a threat to national integration. The appointment made by the incumbent President Mohammed Buhari contradicted the global best practices, particularly Goal No 2 of Sustainable Development Goals which emphasizes social, economic and political inclusion of all members of the society, not minding the age, disability, ethnicity, religion, origin, economic, sex, among others. It also contravenes the 1999 constitution which states that all appointments should reflect federal character. When appointments into government parastatals and top political posts are lopsided and favour a particular ethnic group, it affects national integration. In a situation where an ethnic group dominates the critical areas of governance, there will not be any sense of belonging, and other ethnic groups will feel alienated. In the opinion of Fawole (2018), politics in Nigeria after independence continue to reflect deep-seated ethnic polarisation, making political leadership succession a serious problem. Also, supporters of the candidate who loses during elections quickly mobilize for violence, claiming that their mandate has been stolen.

Crave for the creation of more component units, such as state and local government areas have been propelled by the marginalized ethnic group. A look into state-creation exercises in the history of Nigeria shows the dimension of entrenched ethnicized politics. The hues and cries of the minority ethnic groups who feel marginalized and cheated in the power equation and access to public goods necessitate the creation of more states. Most of the political elites owe allegiance to their political communities rather than the Nigerian State. The creation of states and local governments has further encouraged intra-tribal wrangling among minority ethnic groups. Meanwhile, the dominant ethnic groups continue to dominate the sub-national groups in power calculation and resource allocation. A case in point is the Tiv domination of the political landscape in Benue state. All the governors that have ever emerged in Benue state are of Tiv extraction, which has led to inter-ethnic rivalry and conflicts. Political marginalization of the Idoma ethnic group in the power equation in Benue state has led to continuous agitation for the creation of Apa state. The same applies to the Ijebu people, who most of the time, demand the creation of Ijebu state. Craving for the creation of more states and local government areas tends to pull ethnic groups apart, fostering disunity. This is the result of the ethnicization of politics which threatens national integration in Nigeria.

Inter and intra-ethnic conflicts are effects of the ethnicization of politics. There has been the frequent manifestation of inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic conflicts in Nigeria as a result of deploying ethnicity in inter-group relations. Communal conflicts and ethnic violence such as in Zango-Kataf in Kaduna state, Tiv-Jukun in Wukari, Taraba state, Ogoni-Andoni in River state, Chamba-Kuteb in Taraba state, Itsekiri-

Ijaw/Urhobo in Delta state, Ife-Modakeke in Osun state, Aguleri-Umuleri in Anambra state, Yoruba-Hausa community in Sagamu, Ogun state, Ugbo-Mahin, Ondo state, Ijaw-Ilaje conflict in Ondo state, Basa-Egbira in Nasarawa state, Eleme-Okrika in Rivers state, Eza-Ebilo in Ebonyi state, Fulani-Tiv in Benue and Nasarawa states are effects of ethnicized politics with reverberating implications at the local level (Mba& Nwangwu, 2014). Inter and intra-ethnic conflicts affect the development of the communities involved and Nigeria as a nation, as there will always be mistrust, intolerance and suspicion among the ethnic groups. Due to the rent-seeking attitude of ethnic groups, the conflict has become inevitable over the provision of public goods. Usually, the dominant ethnic groups use power to access public goods for the intrinsic benefits of their members (Mbalisi,2017). That is the more reason when an ethnic group is in power, other groups are excluded from accessing social benefits, and this has been a recurrent challenge in Nigeria, particularly in the first tenure of the APC led President Muhammadu Buhari administration. As argued by Wonah (2017), identity politics, mainly ethnic politics, is deceptive because instead of seeing it as a politics of recognition, most leaders of the ethnic groups hide under it to exploit and marginalize members of their group for selfish interests. The result of this is that the group becomes susceptible to exploitation, oppression, and marginalization by other groups.   National integration can occur in a multi-ethnic society when ethnic groups understand the strength and weakness of the groups and are prepared to tolerate one another in the atmosphere of "give and take" (Wonah, 2017). The experience in Nigeria is that there is no tolerance among ethnic groups, and politics of exclusion characterizes the societal domain.

Ethnic politics has also generated an indigene and settler conundrum, which affects national integration. The indigene and settler conundrum is ethnic-induced, and it is a burning issue precipitating violence among communities in Nigeria. A Nigerian who is not an indigene of a particular state is treated as a mere stranger and can be denied political appointments and employment opportunities in another state or local government. The citizenship question arises in which a citizen born and bred in a particular state is seen as a foreigner without any legal option for adopting the State as his own. Ethnicity has constituted a barrier to Nigerians who live outside of their states of origin as it becomes difficult for them to contest for elective posts in most cases. Rather than members of ethnic groups being seen and treated as Nigerians, they are first identified with the primordial/ ethnic group they belong. Indigene and settler dichotomy limits the Nigerians in achieving their full potential. Indigene and settler dichotomy can be traced to the policy of Sabongari introduced during colonial administration. It was meant to ensure the Southern and Northern migrants were separated from the local population. The policy encouraged separate existence between the local (indigenous) population and the migrants (settlers) from the North

and Southern parts of the country (Ologbenla & Okeke 2017). The policy introduced the indigene and settler conundrum, which Nigeria is still battling to date. The policy widened the gap among different ethnic identities in Nigeria, as experienced during the apartheid regime in South Africa, which segregated people according to race. As it turned out to be, it fostered separate development and fanned the embers of ethnic jingoism in Nigeria.

Measures adopted in managing ethnic politics in Nigeria

A policy measure put in place to manage ethnic politics in Nigeria was federalism in 1954. It was instituted to guarantee local autonomy, mitigate inter-group suspicion and minimize the struggle for power at the centre. The plurality of Nigeria as a nation and the need to contain differences necessitated the need to adopt the federal solution (Obiyan, 2010). Federalism has to do with decentralization and devolution of state power to ethno-regional entities. The essence of federalism is to ensure that sub-units are independent and, at the same time, linked to the centre. Despite its adoption to ensure ethnic groups are recognized and taken care of in a federalist state, the political elites have exploited the diversity to satisfy their selfish desires. As a mechanism, federalism has further entrenched inter-group suspicion, fears and ethnic sectarianism.

In order to foster national integration in Nigeria, the National Youth Service Corps was introduced after the end of the Nigerian civil war in 1970. It is expected that the Nigerian youths serve their fatherland irrespective of their ethno-regional backgrounds. This was to enhance inter-group relations among the youths who would be the future leaders. Also, the establishment of Unity Schools and Federal government secondary schools was to encourage inter-ethnic relations among youths from different parts of the country early in life.

In 1979, the government introduced the federal character principle and quota system for even representation of all ethnic groups in the decision-making process. According to section 14 (3) of the 1979 and 1999 constitutions, the main objective of federal character is to represent all ethnic groups and sub-national groups in the national decision-making process among the various ethnic nationalities. Also, they are meant to reduce ethnic consciousness while national unity is embraced. Despite the loaded objectives, they have not been effective in mitigating ethnic politics; rather, corruption characterizes the political process and meritocracy is sacrificed for mediocrity.

A rotational presidency or power shift was also instituted as a measure to douse ethnic politics that dominates the political process. Though, not enshrined in the 1999 constitution but adopted by political parties in Nigeria, particularly the Peoples Democratic Party. The intention of the policy was to rotate the presidency among the six geo-political zones, namely North-West, North East, North Central, South-West, South-East and South-South. Like other previous policy measures, it has given room for the concentration of appointments and development programmes to the zone the incumbent president comes from while other zones are neglected. It further widened the marginalization of the minority ethnic groups in the power equation and social advantages.

The languages of the three major ethnic groups as national languages, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba (WAZOBIA) were also employed to foster national unity among different ethnic groups. The negative implication of the approach is that it has further marginalized the sub-ethnic groups, relegating their languages as if they are non-Nigerians. Besides, the creation of national symbols such as the coat of arm, national flag, anthem and pledge and promotion of sports and cultural activities was implemented to promote national integration. The essence of all these policies was to primarily reduce tension, distrust, suspicion and promote one united Nigeria despite diversity. With the measures still in place, a Nigerian prefers to associate with his or her ethnic group rather than showing national solidarity.

Conclusion

The paper established that ethnic politics has constituted a serious challenge to national integration in Nigeria. Ethnicity is deployed for the allocation of national resources, which leads to the marginalization of the minority groups in Nigeria. Despite different mechanisms adopted to mitigate the effects of ethnicized politics, it festers like a malignant tumour threatening the corporate existence of the country. Nigerian citizens must be re-orientated on the havoc caused by the phenomenon so that its emphasis can be reduced in both public and private lives. There is a need to de-emphasize the formation of political parties based on ethnic lineage. Contending issues surrounding the citizenship problem, indigene and settler syndrome, and federal character principle, among others, should be given adequate attention by the political leaders so that Nigerians will have a sense of belonging in their country. Political leaders need to develop an attitude that will promote national integration rather than employing divisive mechanisms that promote their interests.

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