

Ethnic Diversity and Public Policies in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT Ethnic diversity, the albatross of many nations, has caused conflicts and wars all over the world. It has hindered the sustainable development of the culture of peace and equity in Nigeria. The objective of this article is to demonstrate the various public measures instituted to cope with the problem of ethnic diversity, and their effects. To achieve this objective, the article after an introduction deals with the conceptual framework, treats the theories of ethnic conflicts. A chronological view of the ethnic struggles and conflicts in Nigeria, policy measures to deal with the problem of ethnic diversity and their implications for nation building are treated. Finally, panaceas for the reduction of the problem of Nigerian ethnic diversity were treated.

INTRODUCTION

Ethnic diversity or pluralism usually inclines to confliction and coercive political behaviour in a society (Furnivall 1948). The ethnic conflicts are usually struggles and wars of subordination, rebellion and hegemony. These are characteristically struggles for autonomy and freedom from exploitation by small groups from large groups, for example the ethnic struggles that led to the break up of the Soviet Union, or by large groups under the thumb of powerful minorities, for example, the wars in Rwanda between the Hutu majority and the Tutsi powerful minority. The bid to gain relative advantage in competitive access to goods and benefices catalyze these struggles or wars. The result is usually a crisis of state power which leads to ethnic unionization, to seize the apparatus of the state as an instrument for seeking advantage or exclusive aggrandizement (Otite 2001).

Most of the wars fought in Africa during the last four decades have been termed ethnic conflicts. The Ethiopian civil wars are waged between the Amharas and the Tigreans, Oromos, and Eritreans. In Somali the conflicts have raged between the Maraheens and the Isaacs, or between the Darods and the Ogadenis, In Djibouti the conflicts are between the Afars and the Issas. The Sudan conflicts are between the 'Arabized' northerners and African Southerners. Politics in Sierra Leone has been characterized by ethnic rivalry between the Moslem Temme of

the north and the Mende of the South with the powerful and influential majority, the Creoles playing a balancing role. Ethno-regional politics has also orchestrated severe ethnic conflicts in Congo-Brazzaville contributing to the wobbling of democracy in that country. The story is not different in Uganda where ethnic struggles to gain access to state apparatus has culminated in incessant exchange of leadership batons between ethnic war lords such as Milton Obote, Idi Amin and Yoweri Museveni. The situation in Chad is also illustrative ethnic diversity occasioning bitter and violent struggle for political power among the different regions and ethnics groups. The Nigerian civil war was ethnically motivated arising from competition to control state power by the dominant ethnic groups.

Ethnic conflicts have hindered the socio-economic and political development of ethnically plural societies (Otite 2000; Nnoli 1978). This article is motivated by the incessant violence that is endemic in ethnically plural societies particularly in Nigeria in spite of policy initiatives as coping measures. The objective is to critically discuss how ethnic diversity has led to the formulation of some policies to ameliorate the volatile confliction relationship that characterizes ethnically diverse societies. Are these policy measures sufficient panaceas to the problem of ethnicity, to assuage the destabilizing ethnic struggles and conflicts for power in an ethnically diverse country like Nigeria? In order to achieve this objective the article starts with a brief introduction. This is followed by the conceptual framework in section II. The theories of ethnic conflict are treated in section III, while section

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IV deals with ethnic struggle and conflicts in Nigeria. Policy measures to deal with the problem of ethnic diversity in Nigeria forms section V. The implication of the policies for nation building is discussed in Section VI. Finally, Section VII forms the conclusion and recommendation.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Ethnic Diversity

What is ethnic diversity? What has made this phenomenon in Nigeria? Why is ethnic diversity of sociological importance in Nigeria? Ethnic diversity is a situation of encapsulation of indigenous nationalities into a new state or society. Kuper (1971) observes that the basic determinant of the structure of ethnically diverse societies is culture, with language as a key element. Otite (2000) captures an ethnically diverse society as 'a sociological aggregate consisting of distinct culture-groups and institutions society'. Which interact within and make claims on the resources of the wider encapsulating

Before the advent of colonialism indigenous nations and ethnic groups such as the Igbo, Yoruba, Ikwere, Afizere, Angas, Ndokwa, Bini, Gusu etc, existed as separate societies. Colonialism brought these disparate geo-political entities together in a new nation for political, administrative and economic purposes. Thus emerged the ethnically diverse society of Nigeria with the corollary inter-ethnic relations, particularly of exploitation resulting in struggles and conflicts. The Nigerian ethnically diverse society has witnessed several cultural units involved in the building of alliances and various strategies in the struggle for limited resources in the state. Ethnicity has become vehicular in the attainment of the ethnic group's fair share of the national cake, catalyzing serious conflicts and truncating the sustainability of socio-political development in Nigeria.

Public Policy

Every social group is plagued by specific incompatibility problems, especially plural societies characterized by struggles and confliction relations as earlier noted. This calls for regulatory principles or propositions to assuage the negative influences that vitiate

harmony in, and good governance of, the society. Public policies are consequently made to enhance manageability, orderliness and peaceful coexistence of the diverse elements of the society. A public policy therefore, could be defined as a plan of action or statement of ideals proposed or adopted by government for the attainment of sustainable good governance, peace and harmony in the society. Having done with the conceptual issues, let us now focus on the theories of ethnic conflict in the following section.

The Theories of Ethnic Conflict

There has been an upsurge of ethnic conflicts and violence the world over in recent years. It should be noted that not all conflicts that appear to be ethnically based can be so explained. All conflicts have several dimensions and it will be wrong to classify so many contemporary conflicts as ethnic. However a conflict is considered ethnic when it involves organized political movement, mass unrest, separatists' action, and civil wars with opposing lines drawn along ethnic boundaries. It is usually a conflict between minorities and dominant majorities, where the majority controls access to the power and resources of the state and the minorities, often without going into open confrontation with the dominant group, question the state structure as a whole and act violently when the society and the state are unable to suggest any mechanisms for regulating and resolving these contradictions (Stavenhagen 1991).

Various theoretical approaches to the study of ethnic conflict have been articulated. There is the sociological approach. The proponents of this theoretical approach argue that ethnic conflict is catalyzed by the usurpation by members of one ethnic group of certain privileged social niches and also the effects of social discrimination based on ethnic characteristics (Nnoli 1988; Osaghae 1994; Otite 2000). In Nigeria empirical experience has shown that;

"The control of the state is the greatest prize in ethnically plural societies— it is regarded not only as the source but also the distributor of resources commonly valued in the society. As the chief 'allocator' of services, facilities, and factors of development, the state becomes a target over which control, ethnic territorial groups engage in an endless struggle" (Otite 2001: 179).

This explains why such prime political positions as the presidency, either of the state or of the senate, speaker ship, governorship of the state, the chairmanship of public establishments are hotly contested by the various ethnic groups.

An important economic determinant in the orchestration of ethnic conflict is the tendency to control the trade and market activities by members of a certain group, usually a minority. This often causes a negative reaction on the part of the rest of the population. A whole series of pogroms have been visited on the Igbo ethnic group in different parts of the country, particularly in the north because of their dominance in trade and market activities in Nigeria. Otherwise how could one explain the selective massive destruction unleashed on the Igbo traders and their cooperative kiosks during the April 1991, Bauchi crisis? It was a crisis that erupted between the Suya and the Hausa-Fulani ethnic groups in Tafawa-Balewa which spread to Bauchi city and the Igbo traders became the victims (Ojie 2004). Aside from economic calculation there could be other powerful dynamic in operation in occasioning ethnic conflicts.

A powerful dynamic in the explanation of ethnic conflicts is the elite based theory of conflict. It is a political science theory which sees the role of intellectuals and politicians in mobilizing ethnic feelings and interethnic strife as key. This approach is germane to ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. The issue of power and the hedonistic predisposition to rule on the part of elite elements, the interaction between power and material reward are crucial factors for understanding the causes of ethnic nationalism and conflict in Nigeria. The elite as the holders of pre-eminent positions in society manipulate the non-elite in their attempt to optimize their assets to gain maximum resources. They achieve this through their actions and utterances.

Let us consider two important statements credited to two prominent members of the Nigerian elite. Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa was recorded as saying in the 1947 Legislative Council Debates (March 24) that he decided to "make it clear to you that if the British quieted Nigeria now at this stage, the northern people would continue their interrupted conquest to the sea". Two years later, on July 6, 1949, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe in the *West African Pilot*, said that:

"It would appear that the God of Africa has specially created the Ibo nation to lead the

children of Africa from the bondage of the ages 'and that' the martial prowess of the Ibo nation at all stages of human history has enabled them not only to conquer others but also to adapt themselves to the role of preserver... The Ibo nation cannot shirk its responsibility".

These statements served as warning as well as incentives to elite from other parts of Nigeria to seek greater ethnic identity which has led to fierce inter-ethnic struggles and violence in Nigeria. The concept of conquest present in the two statements was very inciting. Read what (Nnoli 1978) has to say:

"The remarks create possibilities for the emergence of conflict spirals capable of escalating inter-ethnic hostility into violence. By their negative effects on the perceptions of ethnic opponents, such utterances create the opportunities for the emergence of an increasingly intense spiral of self-reconfirming, self-reinforcing, and self-perpetuating hostile suspicious actions, and counteractions which fan the embers of ethnic antagonism and violence". P.232.

This is because rank-and-file participants are often ready to follow their leaders out of a sense of collective solidarity, irrespective of the consequences. It should be noted that this approach cannot fully explain the phenomenon of mass mobilization itself, the intensity of emotion among participants in conflicts, nor the strength of group desire for autonomy and the readiness to sacrifice and to use the most violent methods to achieve goals formulated by activists (Amirahmadi 1987).

A potent factor in the explication of ethnic conflicts is the psychological fear of domination often expressed by discriminated and dominated minority groups. This 'reaction of concern' comes from the exaggerated feeling of danger and leads to 'extreme actions in response to rather moderate danger' (Horowitz 1985). These are the fear of having one's established values changed thus cutting one adrift in a wider and more uncharted sea called Nigeria that seems to lack an articulated goal and value system, the fear of competition for scarce resources, and a lot of other fears that may be explicit or implicit. This irrational fear of losing cultural integrity became a powerful political reality in Nigeria that has occasioned internecine inter-ethnic struggles and conflicts in Nigeria.

At the outset of politics in Nigeria, political activities were organized based on the three ethno-regional groupings. The Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) was a northern based party for the Hausa-Fulani and all other ethnic groups in the northern region, the Action Group (AG), for the Yoruba and all other minority ethnic groups in the west, while the National Council of Nigerian citizens (NCNC), was for the Igbo and the ethnic minorities in the east (Adebisi 1998). Fear, suspicion and uncertainty informed the formation of political parties by the minority ethnic groups in the various regional groupings. For example, J.S. Tarka led the Tiv and other ethnic minority groups of the middle belt to form the United Middle Belt Congress (NMBC) while alhaji Aminu Kanu formed the Northern Elements Progress Union (NEPU). These are in response to the domination of the North by Hausa-Fulani ethnic group. Ethnicity and ethnic conflicts based on fear can hardly stop in plural societies such as Nigeria for there will always emerge new majorities and minorities with the changing structure of the state (Osaghae 1986).

Group legitimacy and a sense of collective identity compel the idea of a state as an attribute and guarantee of preserving group entity. The state which connotes territory, institutions of power, and resources, must be imbued with ethno-national character and an element of a certain cultural system. According to (Tishkov 1994), the state is the apparatus through which the ethnic group establishes territory and language symbols of collective legitimacy and protection. The Nigerian Multi-ethnic society has witnessed secessionist struggles characterized by symbolic rather than pragmatic interests. The declaration of the Delta Peoples Republic in 1966 and the Republic of Biafra in 1967, and a host of other threats emanate from these symbols of collective legitimacy. The distribution and acquisition of prestigious symbols is a real and rational subject for ethnic conflicts and these are different from material interests. Ethnic conflicts arising from prestige and symbols are extremely difficult to negotiate and redistribute because they are expressed in moral and emotional categories and are not quantifiable (Tishkov 1994).

Ethnic Struggles and Conflicts in Nigeria

The amalgamation of the Southern and the Northern Protectorates of Nigeria in 1914, by the

British colonial administrator, Lord Lugard, unified the disparate ethno-nationalities into the nation Nigeria. This increased the frequency of group and individual interactions in a multi-ethnic polity, exacerbating the phenomenon of ethnicity and ethnic conflicts. These ethnic conflicts have been generated from conditions of contested claims over access to or control of scarce resources, opposing perceptions by multiple users or potential beneficiaries, of limited resources and politico-economic dividends of government and governance (Otiye 2000).

The earliest near riot situation that brewed between the Hausa settlers and the indigenes of Jos area for ascendancy was in 1932. This smoldering ethnic struggle culminated in the Jos riot of 1945. The riot was an ethnic conflict between the Hausa and the Igbo that lasted for two days. Two people were killed with many injured and considerable property was destroyed or damaged. The Igbo masterminded general strike of 1945 occasioned severe hardship for the Hausa who readily, gulped the British colonial administration's insinuation to catalyze the riot (Nnoli 1978).

There was also the Kano violence of 1953 that erupted between the Hausa and Igbo. The genesis of this violence was the contentious issue of self-government in 1956, but the Hausa-Fulani led ethnic groups in the north were strongly opposed to that date. At the height of the tension between the northern and southern leaders violence ensued which mainly engulfed the Igbo ethnic group, which has, over the years, become the traditional victims of Northern hostility because they are the major socio-economic competitors of the Hausa. This conflict lasted for four days leaving thirty-six dead and two hundred and forty-one wounded (Northern Region of Nigeria Report 1953).

Another ethnic uprising of note occurred between the Tiv and the Hausa-Fulani settlers and their supporters in the Middle Belt in 1960. Consequent to the Hausa-Fulani ethnic majority in northern Nigeria, Tarka foisted the United Middle Belt congress as a rival political party to the Northern Peoples Congress, to ensure the liberation of the Tiv from socio-economic domination. The United Middle Belt Congress had a land-slide victory over its chief opponent, the Northern People Congress in Tiv land to the displeasure of the Hausa-Fulani political and traditional elites. The traditional rulers through

the Native Authority system unleashed oppressive rule against Tiv supporters of the United Middle Belt Congress. Many were dismissed from employment, while many were harassed, arrested and imprisoned. This sparked off the spiral of conflicts that occurred between August and November 1960 characterized by large scale arson and deliberate murder. Similar riots occurred in Tiv land in 1964 in which about two thousand people died with much property destroyed.

The military coups of 1966 set in motion a series of ethnic pogroms against the Igbo. In January 1966, a military coup led by Major Nzeogwu, christened Igbo military coup, toppled the government of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. The counter coup of July brought into power the military officers of the northern extraction led by Yakubu Gowon. The Igbo, both military and civilian, were attacked and killed all over the northern cities. According to (Nnoli 1978):

"Igbo lives and property were attacked on a massive scale on 29 and 30 May, 1966. It began with the demonstration in Zaria of the students of the Institute of Administration and the Ahmadu Bello University against the unification decree which they feared would adversely affect their competition for jobs by throwing open the relatively closed job market of the North to Southerners..... Following closely in the wake of these May killings came the July massacre of the Igbo within the armed forces... the Northern soldiers were determined to end Igbo supremacy in the military and the Federation. On 29 July, 1966, they descended with ethnic vengeance on the Igbo officers and men, eliminating them in large numbers, and forcing the others to go into hiding". P.243.

These culminated into the thirty months atrocious civil war in which the Igbo ethnic group was the victim. During the civil war millions of people lost their lives and property worth millions of naira were also destroyed. This reinforced ethnic divisions and mistrust, as did the annulment of the 12 June election of 1993.

Today in Nigeria, rural ethnicity has grown pitting ethnic communities in the rural areas against one another in their struggle for ethnic entitlements. The Hausa-Kataf, Jukun-Tiv, Kuteb-Jukun, Hausa-Mambilla, and Ogoni-Adoni conflicts are concrete examples (Jike, 2002). Ethnic conflicts in Warri can be traced to three main factors. The first is the change of the title of

Olu of Itsekiri to Olu of Warri. This involved the Olu of Itsekiri ruling over all the three ethnic groups in Warri; Ijaw, Itsekiri and the Urhobo and other inhabitants. This internal colonialism was abhorred by the Urhobo and the Ijaw and it led to violent and bloody confrontations particularly in 1952 and 1953. The relocation of the Warri South Local Government headquarters from Ogbe-Ijaw, an Ijaw town, to Ogidigben an Itsekiri settlement is the second factor that caused several inter ethnic conflicts between the Ijaw and the Itsekiri in Warri. The perception of gains from the creation of Local Government Councils and the location of their headquarters is a perception of access to limited development opportunities. Thirdly, conflicts arise out of claims to royalty and compensation by different communities and ethnic groups for the use of land or creeks, the ownership of which is contested, especially by the Ijaw and Itsekiri in the riverine areas.

The Nupe-Yoruba conflict in Kwara State in June-July 2000 is a conflict reminiscent of the defence of ethnic interest. Nupe and Yoruba farmers had claims over a small piece of fertile land (Fadama). According to July 31 publication of the "Nigerian Tribune", two farmers, one from Share and the other from Isaragi, had interest in the land. The two fighters were perceived as representatives of the Yoruba and Nupe ethnic groups and this resulted in violent inter ethnic clashes leading to loss of several lives and property.

The Zango-Kataf conflict in Kaduna state was caused by the decision to relocate the Zango Kataf district market to a new and more spacious and accessible site with opportunities for expansion (Akinteye Wuye and Ashafa, 1999). As the new site was located in Kataf area, the relocation proposal was welcomed by them, while it was vehemently opposed by the Hausa community in Zango. Some kataf, women who went to the site for market activities on 6 February, 1992, were harassed and assaulted by members of the Hausa community in Zango town. Kataf men were provoked and the ensuing conflicts claimed many lives and property.

At the wake of the sharia judicial system declarations in some northern states of Nigeria in 2001, unparalleled ethno-religious massacres occurred in Kano, Kaduna and Plateau states. So severe and devastating were the conflicts particularly in Plateau state, that the President of

the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo, declared a state of emergency in Plateau state to stem the ugly tide.

These pogroms are usually camouflaged ethnic riots for supremacy between the various ethnic groups. Let us read from the record of 'Tell' (Olowolabi 2002) about the conflict in Plateau:

"Since the September 7, 2001 bloodbath in Jos the city seems to have fallen from the respectable Plateau, as home of peace and tourism. From the Jos city tragedy to the recent killings in the adjoining towns and villages, the state has been engulfed for just one reason: the battle for supremacy between Hausa and Fulani settlers and the indigenes. And this has been largely exploited by religious bigots and political jobbers". P.43.

Inter-ethnic conflicts aside from the truncation of sustainable socio-economic development of a nation, the bequeathing of a legacy of enduring bitter memories of inter-ethnic relations, it touches on human life, shelter, and the making of a living. Therefore public policies have often been evolved in ethnically diverse societies to neutralize ethnicity's capacity to catalyze inter-ethnic conflicts. Let us now take a look at such public policies in Nigeria.

POLICY MEASURES TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM OF ETHNIC DIVERSITY IN NIGERIA

Various policies have been articulated and implemented by different governments in Nigeria with the objective of containing ethnic conflicts in the polity. The colonialists were apprehensive of the intrinsic potentiality of ethnically diverse societies in catalyzing conflicts and instituted the 'Sabongari' policy in northern Nigeria, which enforced separate existence between the local population and migrants both from the south and other parts of the north. This was done in the erroneous belief that the 'Sabongari' policy would minimize inter-ethnic contacts and ethnic problems.

The native authority system was another colonial policy that was aimed at the creation of ethnic citizenship different from the civic citizenship of the urban areas. The policy permitted each ethnic group to sustain its particular heritage in accordance with colonial interests. Unfortunately these measures failed

abysmally as their only success was in the exacerbation of ethnic divisions, thus creating a new symbolic focus for ethnicity in Nigeria (Otite 2001).

The adoption of Federalism, characterized by the decentralization and evolution of state power to ethno-regional entities was another policy to douse ethnic tension in the Nigeria polity. The states were relatively autonomous and tenuously linked to the centre. Federalism, has been practiced in Nigeria since 1953, beginning with the three regions; north, west and east. These have since metamorphosed into the present thirty-six states and the federal capital Abuja. The irony of it is that ethnic sectarianism and tension have not only persisted but intensified. The practice of all sorts of inhibitive measures that sabotage unity by the states. Has helped to worsen the ethnic problem. Such practices include the operation of exclusive employment opportunity policy to state indigenes, the denial of admission to non indigenes in state owned schools, and the charging of discriminatory fees between the indigenes and non indigenes. These are protective socio-economic policies that have greatly hampered the much needed unity in diversity.

The therapeutic policies of the National Youths Services Corps (NYSC), unity schools, and federal government secondary schools were instituted for the evolution of a more harmonious inter-cultural perception leading to a reduction in inter-ethnic conflicts. The National Youths Services Corps is a policy that makes it mandatory for fresh Nigerian graduates of below thirty years of age, to undergo one year national services in ethno-regional area other than one's own. This was believed to enhance inter-cultural understanding among the youths and leaders of tomorrow.

Similarly, the unity schools and the federal government secondary schools were meant to bring youths from the diverse ethnic groups into close contact very early in life and create an enduring atmosphere of love and trust for each other that will lead to a reduction in mutual suspicion and mistrust. The increasing spate of ethnicity and ethnic conflicts in Nigeria belies the efficacy of these measures.

The unabated search for a just policy for the harmonious coexistence of the diverse ethnic nationalities has been the critical concern of Nigerian politicians before and since independence.

The quest culminated in the doctrine of 'federal character' enshrined in the 1979 constitution. This means that the distribution of appointments to high offices must reflect the multiplicity of ethnic nationalities that make up Nigeria (Okpako 1998). The states must be similarly run to reflect the existence of different ethnic groups of local government areas.

The failure of the policy of 'federal character' as it has not prevented the feeling of marginalization in certain sections of the federation, impels a further search for policy measures to assuage the already volatile ethnic conflict ridden polity and salvage the nation from imminent collapse. This guided the development and inclusion of the principle of 'Rotational Presidency' or power shift in the 1995 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The presidency, the highest office of the nation, is to rotate among the six geopolitical zones, namely; North West, North East, North Central, South West, South East and South-South. This, they argue, is to ensure justice, equity and fair play in the polity.

The questions arising from the foregoing are:

1. Has the implementation of the various policy measures brought the much desired justice, equity and fair play in the multi-ethnic state of Nigeria?
2. What are the socio-economic implications of these policies? Let us turn our search light on these.

The Implications of the Policies for Nation Building

The primary objective for the institution of the policy measures during both pre and post independent Nigeria has been to weld together, through justice, equity and fair play, the disparate ethnic nationalities, by the elimination of the dynamics of ethnic conflicts in the society. Weighted against this backdrop it can be argued that the policies have had some salutary effects on the society in the short run. The British colonial policy of federalism has helped to provide the gestation period necessary for understanding each other, a necessity for better inter-ethnic relations in Nigeria.

The effects of the public policies of unity schools, federal government secondary schools, and the National Youths Services Corps, even though unquantifiable, have drastically enlarged

the national horizon of our youths. These policies have resulted in the encouragement of inter ethnic marriages and domiciliation in ethno-regional areas other than one's own. A plus for national unity and cohesion.

However, the pursuit of the federal character principle has proved inadequate for effective nation building in Nigeria. It is argued to be at the heart of corruption among high office holders, who see their appointments as privilege, not responsibility, and are primarily concerned about enriching themselves and their people (Okpako 1998). Another problem with the policy of federal character is that it subverts the principle of justice and fair play to the individual citizen. It sacrifices national progress and development on the altar of ethnic sectarianism as mediocrity takes precedence of meritocracy in the conduct of state affairs. These are evident in the admission of students into our national and state institutions, appointments to positions in federal and state governments and parastatals, localization of industries and amenities (Ojie 1998). These actions are directed by the imperative to satisfy ethnic yearnings rather than the pragmatic genuine desire for sustainable national development.

The inadequacy of the federal character principle to eliminate ethno-regional conflicts in the polity led to the evolution of the principle of rotating presidency. This is a new principle that is to face its litmus test in 2007, but has been characterized as an institutionalized avenue for zonal looting of the national treasury (Okpako 1998). The president ideally symbolizes the conscience of the nation, but people are pessimistic as to how a weak zonal president would be charismatic enough to galvanize the diverse ethno-regional elements for sustainable nation building. The principle of rotating presidency on the basis of the six geopolitical zones would further exacerbate the negative national identity crisis in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Ethnic diversity has become an albatross, profoundly disabling the realization of equity, impeding socio-economic and political development in most nations. Such nations are characterized by conflicts of subordination, rebellion and hegemony, usually struggles for autonomy and freedom from exploitation. Various

theoretical approaches to the study of ethnic conflicts have been articulated. These include the sociological approach, the elite theory, the psychological fear of domination theory and the group legitimacy and a sense of collective identity theory.

Nigeria, since amalgamation in 1914, has witnessed several ethnic struggles and conflicts of varying magnitudes. The most devastating is the 30 month civil war between 1967 and 1970.

Consequent upon these destabilizing ethnic conflicts, various public policy measures have been enunciated as remedies to the nagging problem of ethnic diversity. These include the public policies of National Youth Service Corps, Unity Schools, Federal Character and Rotating Presidency. The implications of these public policy measures to nation building were discussed.

We have not the least pretension that our advocacy constitutes the magic wand to the Nigeria socio-economic and political problems. The problems are multi-dimensional. It takes a combination of antidotes to penetrate its deep seated fabrics. The primary cause of the socio-political and economic instability in Nigeria is the issue of resource agglomeration and distribution at the centre.

The presidency is the unique national institution vested with the authority to perform this function. Access to it entails conflicts and even confrontations involving units interested in its control. The practice of true federalism and resource control will not only reduce its attraction but will re-channel the dissipated energies of the various federating units to resource creation. This should be the practice in the short run to reduce the tension generated by ethnic struggles and conflict and create the enabling socio-political environment for an ultimate powerful centre. What is needed on the long run is a strong presidential institution reminiscent of the American pedigree.

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