ETHNICITY, MARGINALIZATION, INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Olusegun Charles AJAYI

Department of International Relations

Estam- Benin University Cotonou

Republic of Benin

Dr. Bimbo OGUNBANJO

Department of Government

Lagos State University

School of Basic and Advanced

Studies, Lagos- NIGERIA

Summary:

There exist immanent contradictions between marginalization on the one hand and national integration and development on the other. To the extent that the Nigerian State and its resources have become privatized and appropriated by a few ethnic chauvinists, nay ethnic groups, to the utter exclusion of other ethnic groups, the minorities especially, to that extent have national integration and development remained elusive. This paper examines the nexus between these concepts drawing from the Nigerian experience. Noting that no system built on exclusion and injustice can thrive, the advocates the restructuring of the Nigerian State in such a manner as to guarantee greater autonomy and participation of Nigerians in the affairs of the country, regardless of whether they belong to majority or minority groups. Additionally, the paper underscores the need to change the dominant perception of the state as a violent and uncaring superstructure that exists for the personal and sectional interests of a few, to one that exists for the common good of all.

INTRODUCTION

Cries of marginalization among Nigeria's different ethnic nationalities and particularly from her ethnic minorities, have continued to resonate. Not very infrequently such cries have graduated from mere rivalry to palpable hatred and then to conflagrations of destructive proportions. They explain nearly all the countless military coups and counter coups that dwarfed in Nigeria over time, including the very famous Gideon Orkar coup of 1990 that canvassed the excision of parts of the country (Nwankwo 2000: 156-157; Jega 2005). Nigeria's fratricidal three-year civil war was fallout of alleged ethnic cleansing and marginalization by one of the country's ethnic nationalities. Since the return to civilian administration in May 1999, the country has bled to no end from ethno - religious cum communal - based contestations and strife. From the Ibos in the South East, through to the oil-bearing minorities of Niger Delta, to the minorities of the middle belt, and across Nigeria, allegations of marginalization, discrimination and injustice have remained the principal refrain (Oronto and Doifie 2003; Digifa 2013). In some cases, and decades after flag independence, these feelings of marginalization have crystallized into agitations for self-determination and even secession (Fawehinmi 1999; Adejumobi 2003; Faseheun, 2003).

This paper takes the position that a proper understanding of the post-colonial Nigerian state's character and activities must be sought in order to understand the constant gravitation toward ethnic politics and decomposition into micro sectional identities, with the attendant rivalry, hate, and conflicts that are evident in Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa. Far from being a neutral apparatus for balancing ethnic sensitivities, the Nigerian state has remained an instrument for primitive accumulation and the pursuit of narrow sectional socio - economic and political interests. The

enormous resources at its disposal and its centrality in determining the course of socio - economic and political development, make the control of state power in Nigeria as in most of Africa, a doorway to unlimited personal booties, and often becomes the basis to enthrone group hegemony and dominance (Alavi 1972; Ake 1996a; and Ibrahim 2005). Closely related to this is what passes as the ethnicization of the Nigerian state – a phenomenon most epitomized by the brazen usurpation and monopolization of major positions by members of one or a few selected ethnic groups, to the near exclusion or marginalization of other ethnic groups. More concretely speaking, Nigeria's major three groups – the Hausa/Fulani, the Ibo and the Yoruba – or what has come to be known as the tripod of the Nigerian federation, have continued to maintain hegemonic dominance in all spheres, with the minority tribes living literarily on crumbs from the tables of these imperial overloads, bereft of a voice and effective representation. Of course among these big three cut-throat competition and hate are deep seated, as they battle to outwit one another in the quest for the control of the state, and quite infrequently, their minority counterparts who also want a taste of the action or the crumbs join in the contest, but on the whole Nigeria has remained largely the exclusive property of the 'big' two ethnic groups, the Hausa/Fulani and the Yoruba. The remaining major ethnic group (the Ibo) is still striving relentlessly to maintain hegemonic dominance in every sphere of the Nigerian federation.

As Egwu (2015) notes, the battle for the control of state power is often intense, and usually involves the mobilization of diverse primordial sentiments by political elites – ethnic, communal, religious, etc. The seeds of ethnic divisions, hatred and conflict are sown during these moments. Additionally, Nnoli (2016) invokes the coercive unilateralism of the state or what he calls state violence through policy formulation and

implementation, in his explanation of the resurgence of ethnic consciousness, hate and conflagration. Such state sponsored acts of violence are hardly ever devoid of sectional interests.

The paper is concluded on the note that national integration, peace and development are at variance with marginalization and exclusion, and may continue to elude Nigeria until there is a change in the present perception of the state and its unconscionable deployment both as an instrument for personal enrichment and for the enthronement of sectional hegemony. Every nationality and especially the minorities, who have lived almost eternally on the fringe, must be integrated and given a sense of belonging. More forcefully put, the Nigerian federal system must be restructured to reflect the wishes and dreams of all, majority and minority alike.

CONCEPTUALIZING ETHNICITY

The concept of ethnicity has never ceased to elicit scholarly interest and inquiry. This is probably not unconnected with its pervasiveness as a denominator of social life and interaction especially in developing countries, and more so because contrary to theoretical postulations the world has continued to gravitate towards ethnic – based and micro group identities.

According to *A New Dictionary of the Social Sciences* (2019: 263), the word 'ethnic' derives from the Greek word ethnos and refers simply to tribe or race. In modern social science literature, shared religion, culture and common biological origin are ascribed to this group. The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (2016) draws a distinction between ethnicity and ethnics: The former represents ethnic quality or affiliation, while the latter refers to large groups of people classed according to common racial nationality, tribal, religious, linguistic, and cultural origin or backgrounds. This latter category approximates what Otite (1990:1-2) calls ethnic groups and which he says

are groups of people characterized by exclusive symbolic formations, value systems, language, normative behaviour and territory. More aptly put, members of an ethnic group must be sufficiently different in terms of culture, beliefs, values and customs such that its members feel an in-group identity, which sets them apart from others (Atere and Olagbemi 2018; Diamond and Zanowski 2019). They relate with and define themselves as belonging to a named or labeled social group with whose interest they identify, and which manifests certain aspects of a unique culture, while constituting a part of a wider society (Sanda 1988: 32). Nnoli (1988:5) observes however, that as social formations, ethnic groups do not necessarily have to be homogenous even linguistically and culturally. Sub-ethnic delineations may exist following minor variations within an ethnic group as among Ibos of Abakaliki, Nsukka, Mbaise etc or the Ekiti, and the Egba of Yoruba (see also Badru, 2010:258).

In the word of Nnoli (1988:5), ethnicity is "a social phenomenon associated with interactions among members of different ethnic groups. Badru (2010:257) contends that the term describes the intensity of ethnic identity or a feeling of allegiance to one's ethnic group in the context of multi-ethnic existence. It manifests through common consciousness, identity, exclusiveness and ethnocentrism (Nnoli 1999:2; Leys 2015:132) and represents a feeling of 'we-ness' among members of an ethnic group that enables them to consider themselves as having a distinct identity.

Ethnicity and Ethnicism are derivatives from ethnic groups and arise in the course of social interaction and or struggle over scarce resources. Their salience derives from the choice, access and (re-) distributive questions raised by the scarcity problem and the dialectics of the social relations of production in the state. It cuts across class and other solidarity ties (Jinadu 2004:8). Like all social phenomena, ethnicity is not immutable,

is not static and is not unaffected by extraneous forces and factors other than ties of blood and birth, such as conversion, intermarriage, passing, 'forgetting origins' and the like – as well as merger of sub groups (Horowitz 1995:53). It can change in form, place and role in society.

Mulinge and Munyae (2011:143) speak of positive and negative ethnicity. The former is healthy and integrative, and describes the consciousness whose objective is to preserve the identity of the group and pride in its culture without generating or sustaining hostilities/hatred, unhealthy competitiveness, resentment, discrimination against, differential and unequal treatment of, or conflict with members of other ethnic groups. It is in this sense that Nwankwo (2000:156) describes the terms as "an exhibition of common ethnic identity in difference to the members of other cultural groups within a definable geo-political setting". It is also in this sense that a Yoruba man or even the Ibo man could be conscious of his "Yoruba-ness" or "Ibo-ness" as the case may be and yet remain objective in his dealings with members of other ethnic groups in matters of common interest (see also Akinboye, 2012:162; Weiner 2018). This form of ethnicity is in short supply in most of Africa.

The other form of ethnicity is a direct contrast to the one described above. It is unhealthy and disintegrative and represents the consciousness that has acquired negative undertones and can lead to overt or covert conflict between ethnic groups.

In Nigeria and most of Africa, the manifestation of ethnicity has had more negative character than positive. In fact, it has become one of the defining characteristics of social conflict. Ethnic hate and scars arising there from have literarily stalled Africa's march to greatness. Nnoli (1999) finds an explanation for this in the struggle over scarce resources. He argues that the struggle for survival acquires the character of inter-ethnic competition as

groups tend to perceive their material advancement or otherwise in terms of the activities of other groups. Survival in most of Africa is, itself intricately tied to access to state power, making its control subject of fierce contests. In the succeeding part of this paper, there is a careful examination of this character of the Nigerian state and how this has contributed in the exacerbation of ethnic consciousness and competition.

MARGINALIZATION

This is yet another word that has enjoyed tremendous intellectual interrogation lately. In nearly every human society, people have alleged one form of marginalization or another. If women are not bemoaning their alleged marginalization, it is the minority tribes, the poor or even some professional categories that are lamenting their unfair treatment. Also, the less developed nations have never failed to point to the inequalities at the international level as an evidence of their marginalization. It is against this backdrop that a proper understanding of the word becomes imperative.

According to Gordon Marshal's *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*, marginalization is a process by which a group or individual is denied access to important positions and symbols of economic, religious or political power within any society (2008:385). He adds that a marginal group may actually constitute a numerical majority.

The thinking in most enlightened circles is that Nigeria has been captured and privatized by a tiny fraction of the elites who use public institutions and resources to terrorize non-bourgeois groups and communities. Over the years, we also witnessed a tendency by the captors of the Nigeria state to translate the country into the private property of one, nay a few dominant ethnic nationalities. It is in this sense that Olurode (2012:460) and Jason (2019:156) conceive of marginalization in terms of disempowerment and social exclusion. Keen observers of Nigeria's political

history are agreed that the triumph of identity politics is traceable to feelings of marginalization and exclusion. Marginalization breeds bitterness, frustration and disloyalty. It negates national integration and development.

NATIONAL INTEGRATION

Generally speaking, national integration refers to 'the process of bringing culturally and socially disparate groups into a single territorial unit and the establishment of a national identity' (Weiner 2018: 643). The term presumes the existence of an ethnically plural society in which each group is characterized by its own language, or other self-conscious cultural qualities, which generate 'the problem of creating a sense of territorial nationality which overshadows or eliminates subordinate parochial loyalties' (p. 643). In post-colonial societies, such as Nigeria, in particular national integration embodies a strategy of forging unity in diversity, and connotes a striving to be a unified people in a modern, colonially created, nation-state (Jega 2016).

In most plural societies, the promotion of national integration is often a conscious agenda of the state. Usually, policies are pursued that will encourage individual and group allegiance to the state and its institutions as opposed to sub-national, ethnic, religious or other group loyalties. The object usually is to create patriotic citizens out of disparate, often antagonistic, groups.

On its face value, it could be said that successive governments in Nigeria have taken steps to weld the peoples of Nigeria into united nation-state with a common destiny, in spite of their sharp religious, ethnic, linguistic and or cultural differences. For example, the Military regime of General Yakubu Gowon introduced the National Youth Service Corps programme. There also exist a number of constitutional provisions including the Federal Character and quota principles, which are as it were, guarantee against marginalization. But as our contemporary history

abundantly shows, these efforts may not have yielded much result. The unbridled manipulation of ethnicity and similar primordial sentiments has made the dream of a united Nigerian nation state a dream (Jega 2016:7).

The commitment to national integration as a project of the state, like nearly everything else in Nigeria, has been far from whole hearted. Successive governments and especially the military, either sought to wish away ageless historic socio-cultural differences or to impose uniformity in spite of complex cultural diversity. Unfortunately, the more such project were pursued, the more acute the contradictions became, the more conflicts erupted; and the more problems were created, which posed obstacles to unity, peaceful coexistence, progress and stable development. Many people are wont to argue that people of Nigeria are more divided today than they were at independence. Indeed, the idea of a Nigerian nation state is still imaginary to many people. Oronto and Doifie (2013:41) underscored this position when they wrote: 'Is there a Nigerian nation? To us and perhaps to other perceptive Nigerians, the idea of a Nigerian nation is not real. Nigeria exists merely as a matter. It is yet to take form as a nation'. These feelings explain perhaps the rising spate of self-determination and separatist agitations and of course, the often violent and communal conflicts in the country. The impact of the attendant socio-economic instability on progress and development is only imagined.

DEVELOPMENT

The concept of national development is problematic because of its ideological undertone. We do not intend to go through the ritual of a definition here. We use the term however to suggest the holistic improvement in the quality of human lives, the raising of the quality of life of the masses, and the creation of an 'egalitarian society' where equal opportunities are available and there are adequate provision of educational,

health, employment and housing facilities as well as food. Development is sustainable when it generates economic growth, guarantees equitable distribution of benefits and empowers the people rather than marginalize them. Development is one of the main priorities of the United Nations. The United Nations views development as a multidimensional undertaking to achieve a higher quality of life for all people (Diamond 2015:167). Economic development, social development and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development.

The United Nations has emphasized the importance of sustainable economic growth for all countries' economic and social development, particularly emerging countries. Countries will be able to increase their people's living standards by eradicating poverty, starvation, sickness, and illiteracy, providing appropriate shelter and secure employment for all, and preserving the environment's purity through such growth, which should be broad-based to benefit all people.

Democracy, respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development, transparent and accountable governance and administration in all sectors of society, and effective civil society participation are also necessary foundations for social and people-centered sustainable development to be realized (Diamond 2015:205). Furthermore, women's empowerment and full involvement in all aspects of society on an equal footing are critical for growth.

Weighed against all possible indices of development, Nigeria cannot be said to be doing very well relative to the resources available to the country. Her economy is marked by declining per capita income, diminishing healthcare services, sliding literacy rate, rising impoverishment of the mass of the people, and skyrocketing unemployment. Also, there is

massive deficits, hyperinflation, capital flight, crumbling infrastructure and severe brain drain. She is ranked among the ten least developed countries in the world. There is a high correlation between the manipulation of ethnicity in Nigeria and the country's slow pace of socio-economic development.

POST-COLONIAL NIGERIAN STATE AND ETHNICITY

Not a few people hold the Nigerian state responsible for reproducing the country's deepening socio-economic and political contradictions including heightening ethno-communal consciousness and mobilization (Ake 1996a:23, Ake 1996b:73; Osuoka 2013:113-4; Fisher 2018). The state appears to engineer division and worsen the country's position with every policy move or inaction it initiates or fails to initiate in an attempt to consolidate the interests of its caretakers. In the words of Ihonvbare (2000:76):

"*the state has never been able to build an appreciable degree of confidence among Nigerians, ensure some discipline within the ranks of the elite, manage the economy in the interest of the people, and construct the much-needed platforms of inclusion, tolerance, and participation... For all intents and purposes, the repressive and "captured" post-colonial Nigerian state seems to do everything to provoke non-bourgeois forces*".

To a large extent, this character of the Nigerian state has a historical root in colonialism. Under colonialism, the state existed to promote and protect the interest of the colonial overlords and of capital generally. This was consummated through the tactics of divide and rule (Nnoli 1988). Although the dispensation and the actors have changed, the character and role of the state have remained largely the same. As a matter of fact the indigenous elites who took over the reins of power from the British perfected the policy of divide and rule originated by the colonialists with the intent to control the diverse native populations, and like its colonial

equivalent, it consciously and systematically divided the diverse peoples of Nigeria through policies and politics that were designed to guarantee primitive accumulation, survival and domination (Babawale 2015:204; Cockerham 2015).

References are also variously made to the authoritarian and militarized character of the Nigerian state particularly in generating ethnic awareness and mobilization (Faseun 2003:106; Babawale 2015:208). Again, this is traceable to the colonial origin of the state in Nigeria (Ihonvbere 2000:77). The authoritarian character of the post-colonial Nigeria was heightened by years of military adventure in governance. Of Nigeria's sixty years of independence, the military ruled for 29 years. Students of Nigerian history contend that throughout that period and even up till now, the country witnessed a disturbing disdain for democratic rules of restraint, accountability, constitutionalism and legal opposition. This is not unexpected because "authoritarianism breeds a disdain for security and rights of the dominated, be they groups or individuals. It also encourages a neo-patrimonial perception of the definition of the use of state power that thrives on a distributive perception of politics and its perquisites. To that extent, it breeds patterns of exclusionary practices in the corridors of power, largely insensitive to the breached rights of the excluded while encouraging among the privileged self-delusions of anointed grandeur" (Agbaje 2003:2).

It will be superfluous to reel out statistics but few instances of this authoritarian and repressive character of the state will suffice here. One was the unexplained annulment of the results of the presidential election of June 12, 1993. Before this time, the government had taken the entire country through an endless wilderness trip of political transition, squandering in the process billions of taxpayers' money. Of course, all of these ended in the legendary banning and unbanning of aspirants before the election for

reasons, which only the military knew. The June 12 annulment of the verdict of 14 million Nigerian voters was the climax of this gerrymandering. Traditionally, the action was interpreted from purely ethnic and sectional prisms particularly because the election was the first to have been won by a southern candidate (from the West) in the country's history. The failure of President Babangida, a military officer from the North, to offer credible and acceptable reasons for annulling the results of the election which was widely acclaimed by local and international observers as the freest and fairest in the annals of elections in Nigeria heightened ethno-regional sentiments. This was compounded by the highhandedness of the military to the general outcry that attended the annulment. Faseun (2003:103) and Jega (2016:112) recount that the military became highly brutal and repressive.

The hanging of Ken Saro Wiwa and his kinsmen of Ogoniland on November 10, 1995 on the orders of the then Head of State, General Sani Abacha, and the rape that was visited on the entire Niger Delta people because of their principled outcry against environmental degradation and sheer biocide by oil companies, neglect, cheating and robbery by federal and state governments, were epitomic of state violence and high handedness. No better explanation can perhaps, be given for the resort to ethnic alignments in Nigeria than this state sponsored terrorism and highhandedness.

Again, the post-colonial Nigerian state, like its forebear, has remained detached from, and relatively autonomous of, the Nigerian society. Jega (2016:34-5) argues, however, that this is only partly so because virtually all states derive from the society even though they operate over and above it. This character of the state underscores the dominant role it plays in primitive accumulation and in determining the course of socio-

economic and political development. That the Nigerian state and its functionaries have been far from fair and equitable in this respect is not in doubt. Narrow personal and sectional considerations have shaped the direction of state action. In short, government investments, appointments and promotions have been known (and still are) to favour certain communities and groups in total disregard of merit and qualifications. In the words of Jega (2016:34-5), the state "reinforced acute patrimonial and prebendal dispositions in the use of public office and state resources... state functionaries increasingly became unresponsive and unaccountable to the people, dispensing federal largesse to patrons and clients, and withholding public projects and programmes to punish opponents (and outsiders)". In other words, access to resources either to the individual or to the group is tied as it were to one's relationship to state power.

Furthermore, the Nigerian state is patrimonial in character, and to a large extent, this has not helped the cause of national identity. Patrimonialism simply means the blurring of the distinction between the public and the private domains and the personalization of power, as a source of wealth (Ibrahim 2005:52). Simply put, it means the conversion and privatization of state power and resources to the exclusive property of those at the helm of affairs. Not too long ago, Nigerians went through a painful moment of mental torture as our military predators rained accusations and counter accusations of how they looted the public treasury at the Justice Chukwudifu Oputa Panel on Human Rights Violations. Today, these same people, now retired, have again highjacked the so-called civilian government, courtesy of their loot.

This character of the state facilitates division and bitterness. The sense of loss attendant to this bizarre character of the state for the mass of the people, paints a picture of the state as wicked, aloof, insensitive, corrupt,

and distant force; an enemy that must, as opportunity permits, be subverted, avoided, cheated, dismantled (Ihonvbere 2000:76; Fisher 2018:94). Related to this is what is commonly described as the rentier character of the Nigerian state. According to Ibrahim (2005:52-53), 'a rentier state or economy is one that relies on substantial external rent. In such states, the creation of wealth centers on a small fraction of the society, while the rest of the society is engaged in distribution and utilization of the wealth so created. In a rentier state, the government is the main recipient of external rent. One of its features is that production is relegated to the background and, in fact there is at best a tenuous link between individual income and activity. Getting access to the rent circuit is a greater preoccupation than attaining production efficiency (see also Beblawi and Luciani 2017:13).

An apparent feature of a rentier economy is the existence of a curious disconnect between the work – reward causation. In such economies, reward/income or wealth is not related to work and risk bearing, but instead to chance or situation. For a rentier, reward becomes a windfall gain, an isolated fact, situational or accidental as against the conventional outlook where reward is integrated into a process of end result of a long, systematic and organized production circuit (Beblawi 2017:52). Luciani (2017:70) refers to it as an allocation, as distinct from a production, state. More often than not, the legitimacy of a rentier state flows from its ability to guarantee access to resources to a relatively large cross section of the society. Any failure in this respect either as a result of a short fall in rent, or the greed of the ruling clique would almost always result in loss of legitimacy and political crises (Ibrahim 2005:54). For Nigeria, the problem is not that there has been any short fall in the rent of the state. If anything, it is to the contrary. The problem is the seeming resolve by the ruling clique to

hijack state resources both for themselves and for their 'people' at the expense of the outsiders.

Ake (1996a:23) and Alavi (2018) followed a similar path when they argue that the Nigerian state is both overdeveloped and too powerful. By this, they refer to the enormous power and resources of the state, and its rentier character, which they argue, define the intense competition, conflict and struggles by contending forces in society for state power. Since access to state power facilitates primitive accumulation and as well as group socio-economic and political hegemony, it is only natural that such control will involve intense contestations.

But perhaps more fundamental in the resurgence of ethnic nationalism is the seeming ethnicization of the Nigerian state. In the words of Mulinge and Munyae (2011: 142 – 143), "an ethnicized state is one whose major positions are populated by members of a particular ethnic group or by a few selected ethnic groups in a situation of multiple ethnicity. In such a state, social, economic and political power is monopolized by a single ethnic group or by a combination of a few, with the near exclusion or marginalization of others". This approximates the Nigerian situation. In Nigeria, the state became first, the exclusive property of the ethnic group or region that had political power, and then of the three major ethnic groups that attained national power through regional dominance in the awry politics of the decolonization decade of the 1950's. As Jega (2005:29) puts it, "only the constituencies and clients of those who control state power actually...have access to state resources through patronage". This became most evident during the immediate past three but one military regimes. Aside from cornering the juiciest positions for their folks, development was evidently skewed in the same direction. One of the complaints frequently associated with the Petroleum Trust Fund set up by the Abacha junta was

that it benefited the North most ditto to other appointments. It was also not unusual, especially under the Abacha junta that persons from the same ethnic/religious group occupied all the top ten senior positions in the country (Ihonvbere 2000:86; Jason 2019). Military disdain for the principles of federalism was so palpable; especially under Abacha that Nigeria literarily became a fiefdom of a particular ethnic group.

However, relative to Nigeria's over 250 other ethnic nationalities, the major nationalities of Hausa/Fulani, Ibo and Yoruba manipulated state policies towards fostering their positions right from the country's independence. In fact, Nigeria was (and still is) perceived only in terms of these three (Omoruyi, 2001:8-9). Moru (2012:77) recalls President Obasanjo's October 1, 2000 national broadcast where he called for a parley among the leaders of the Afenifere (Yoruba), the Ohaneze (Ndi Igbo) and the Arewa (Hausa/Fulani) to resolve Nigeria's lingering political issues as a pointer to this. That no other ethnic group has been able to produce either the President or the Vice President after the nearly sixty years of the country's independent existence is also instructive in this regard, especially in a country where the power to decide where national resources should be invested and to hire and fire almost all the top officers in the bureaucracies rests with the President, and his surrogates.

The majoritarian tendencies of the Nigerian state are as it were given a constitutional backing. For instance, in a country of over 250 distinct ethnic groups, the 1999 constitution declares in Section 55 that the language of the national assembly shall be English, Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba. If anything, this provision underscores the perception of the rest groups as mere appendages to the dominant three.

As a matter of fact, Nigeria may have returned to the path of civil rule, but the military decreed structures of the state are still visible. One such

structure is the unbridled concentration of power at the center, which over the years has become the exclusive preserve of the majority ethnic groups, and their political families. As under the military, the 1999 constitution still retains the controversial Land Use Decree of 1978 that gives ownership of all land anywhere in the federation to the federal government. This arrangement robs the states of the federation of control over their own resources and has become the basis for agitations for autonomy and political restructuring demanded by various groups, especially the minorities (Ihonvbere, 2000:95).

As it were, the 1999 constitution not only turned a blind eye to the patently skewed structure of the Nigerian state which has been the basis for agitations, it put in place provisions to reinforce it. This is demonstrated by the unattainable conditions for amendments, state and local government creation, and boundary adjustments. For instance, to create a new state, Section (1) of Chapter 1 provides that an Act of National Assembly shall be passed only if a request is supported by at least two thirds of majority of members representing the area demanding the new state in the Senate and House of Representatives, the house of assembly of the state concerned, the local government councils in the area concerned, a referendum approved by at least two thirds of the majority of the people in the area where the demand originated, the result of the referendum is approved by simple majority of all states of the federation through a simple majority of members of the houses of assembly, and finally the referendum is approved by a resolution passed by two thirds majority of members of each house of the national assembly.

Given these stringent conditions, no one is left in doubt as to the desire of the powers that be to preserve the current structures that favour the majority nationality groups and silence the yearnings of the minorities.

The helplessness of the State came to the fore following attempts by some of them to create additional local governments. States like Lagos that tried it were denied their monthly allocation from the federation account for failing to revert to status quo ante.

MARGINALIZATION, NATIONAL INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Emerging from the foregoing discourse is a picture of a Nigerian state that is structured by design and default to make ethnic and other primordial affiliations attractive and necessary. Because of its absolute economic and political power, and especially because of its primacy of role in primitive accumulation, survival, and domination, the intense battle for its control among contending political elites, has involved overtime, the mobilization and deployment of all forms of primordial arsenals, including ethnicity and religion, and of course the formation of ethnic political parties. The personalization and ethnicization of state power and resources by its custodians marginalize/exclude a majority of the people. As Jega (2016:29) argued, "a regionally segmented elite struggles for political power by mobilizing religion, regionalism and ethnicity. The faction that gains power also relies on these to establish hegemony and to perpetuate its control on state power".

Unable to ever capture state power because of their largely territorial incontiguity, linguistic disparateness, and the conspiracy of the constitution against them, the pang of marginalization has been more palpable for the minority ethnic nationalities. In the Niger Delta the Nigerian state stripped them of their God-given resources and turned their neighbourhood into an environmental nightmare, and up North, the minorities bemoan their marginal status relative to their dominant Hausa/Fulani overlords.

Among the dominant ethnic nationalities too the Hausa-Fulani faction became the dominant faction, which controlled the federal power structure for decades. Consequently, the two other major contenders have had cause to complain of marginalization. The Igbos complain that they are being singled out for punishment and discrimination as a consequence of their secessionist attempt, which led to the Nigerian Civil war. Similarly, far from forgetting the criminal annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential elections, which was won by one of their own, late Chief M.K.O. Abiola, and the persecution of their people by Hausa/Fulani dominated military government of the time; the Yoruba seek a decentralization of state power to allow for autonomy within the Nigerian structure (Akinboye 2012:165).

It needs also be pointed out that the Hausa/Fulani was uncomfortable when power was transferred in 1999 to a civilian government under President Olusegun Obasanjo, a Yoruba. Cries of marginalization were also heard from this group. Thus, there is a feeling of marginalization and bitterness among virtually every ethnic group in the country. These feelings of discontent fossilized during the military and flourished following the enthronement of civilian rule on May 29, 1999, with the emergence of various ethno-communal associations like the Afenifere, the Oodua People's Congress, the Ohaneze Ndi Igbo and the Arewa People's Congress. Elsewhere in the country, we had such groups as the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People, the Ijaw People's Union, Middle Belt Forum, Supreme Egbesu Assembly and the like. The message of hate and division generated by these bodies, and more so the physical and psychological scars inflicted on the nation by their militant wings will take a while to disappear, if ever. In the West of Nigeria, up north and nearly everywhere, members of other ethnic groups were hunted and mauled down like animals in the bush, while property running into billions of Naira

became prey to bitter ethnic conflicts. Today Nigeria's diverse ethnic nationalities live in mutual suspicion of one another, making social harmony and integration a strange phenomenon.

Even in the era of civilian governance, within the last twenty years, Nigeria's decomposition along ethnic and sectional lines is still up beat. Today, we hear of Northern Governors Forum, the Southern Governors Forum, the South-South Governors Forum and the like. Their agendas are all sectional than national.

Keen observers of the politicization of ethnicity and the free slide to micro nationalism, and the bad blood attendant upon this, contend that Nigeria's progress and development as a nation has suffered adversely. Successive custodians of state power and resources opted for ethnicity as an instrument of discrimination by acting as patrons capable of delivering the maximum benefits to members of their own ethnic groups at the expense of other groups that make up the nation state.

Out of the ethnic allocation (allocation based on ethnic representation rather than on need or potential for good returns) of resources has emerged uneven or unbalanced development. A number of consequences attend this scenario. The first of these is that 'the investment of productive resources is concentrated where returns cannot be maximized and this curtails economic growth in general' (Mulinge and Munyae 2011:151). Wasteful, wrong and anarchic allocations of resources on account of ethnic and regional forces are common in Nigeria. In a number of occasions, these same forces have combined to delay the take off of projects (Egwu 2015:45).

A related consequence of ethnic allocation of resources is that segments of the population are denied of their own share of the national cake, and are thereby subjected to continued poverty and deprivation. This

has led to the creation of 'development corridors spanning those parts of the country where the chief executives in various ministries and other organizations that are responsible for socio-economic development originate' (Mulinge and Munyae, 2011:151). In Nigeria, what we have seen is the continued neglect and stagnation of mainly the minorities in terms of socio-economic development in favour of the dominant groups, and especially those who have had more opportunities to hold the presidency. Often, the majority groups (except the Ibos who suffer relative marginality because of their involvement in the civil war) enjoy the best infrastructural facilities, and significant amounts of government resources for socio-economic development. Relative to their minority counterparts, these groups also have greater access to the best government jobs including the control of ministries.

Under the military, and especially under the Abacha regime, the North literarily cornered all the strategic appointments in both the military and the civil service. The Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF), which is government set up, was also believed to have favoured the North in terms of infrastructural development. Because state power often translates into economic power, the majority tribes also control the private sector. The minority groups have continued to suffer neglect because only crumbs from the banquet table of the major ethnic groups are due to them. The proliferation of arms and agitations for self-determination especially in the Niger Delta are natural reactions to the deep sense of neglect and exclusion by the people of the area.

The sacrifice of merit and efficiency criteria in public sector employment on account of ethnicity also takes a toll on development. In Nigeria, employments are based not so much on merit, but more so on one's connections with people in positions of authority. Quite often, those in

authority give considerations first to members of their own ethnic groups. Aside from the mediocrity that is enthroned through this practice, it creates a situation where certain establishments become the exclusive preserve of people from certain areas. Usually, the majority ethnic groups hijack the juiciest establishments, while the minorities are left to struggle for the others. This situation has become a basis for feelings of marginalization and bitterness.

But a more fundamental consequence of ethnic marginalization is what manifests as ethnic tensions and conflicts. Between 2016 and 2017 Nigeria witnessed the resurgence of arms struggle in the Niger Delta. A basis for ethnic conflict is regional and/or ethnic differentiation in the distribution of (and uneven access to) resources. The conflicts in several African countries like Sudan, Angola, Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi, etc. have their roots in feelings of marginalization. As Diamond and Zanowski (2019:155) put it, 'it cultivates a general feeling among disadvantaged groups that the advantaged group(s) has taken over the country and paves the way for inter-ethnic struggles and conflicts'. This is basically what is happening in Nigeria. The oil-bearing minority ethnic groups of the Niger Delta are quite restive over their perceived marginalization in the country. Increasingly, they are agitating for control over their resource, to the point of engaging in arms struggle. The prospect of national integration in the face of all these is quite slim.

CONCLUSION: THE WAY FORWARD

Any system built on injustice and inequity will crumble. Nigeria is built on gross inequity and injustice, and cannot be an exception unless definitive steps are taken by those who see it as their birthright today, to let go. The Nigerian state must be reconstructed. Nigeria must return to the path of true federalism. The various peoples of Nigeria, regardless of

whether they are majorities or minorities must be allowed autonomy and say in the management of their affairs. Cosmetic attempts at forging a non-existent sense of nationhood such as the coercion of political parties to adopt superficial national symbols in their logos, names and presence in geographical spaces, and hypocritical speeches and sermons on patriotism are merely what they are — cosmetic.

The bitter struggle for power especially at the center and the ethnic feelings that are generated is because of the enormous power and resources at that level of government. The arrangement is exclusionist, overbearing and unjust. It is strongly felt that the situation will change for the better if we decentralize power and resources. This is why Nigeria cannot continue to shy away from addressing the nationality question. There is the need to revisit the power and revenue sharing arrangement in such a way as to widen the scope of participation and allow opportunities for equal involvement by all the nationalities.

As it is today Nigeria exists merely in name. It means virtually nothing to most Nigerians. This is because for long, it ceased to cater for their welfare. That is why thousands of them escape from the country through all manners of routes, including very suicidal methods such as travelling through the desert to Europe. Until Nigeria begins to treat the welfare and existential needs of her people with concern, she may continue to exist in abstraction. This is why the government must not allow the opportunities offered by the present democratic era to slip. Everything must be done to change the dominant perception of the state as violent and uncaring, and to enthrone accountability in governance. The personalization and privatization of state power and resources as are evident today must give way. That way, the state can once again begin to command the loyalty and support of the people.

All these may never come through without heart to heart discussions among the various peoples of Nigeria on how to save Nigeria. It is not important what name we give to this, what is important is that the peoples of Nigeria are given opportunity to express their grievances and offer ideas on how to recompose Nigerian federalism; an opportunity for them to reach some consensus on how the nation should be structured, how rights will be protected and how a truly democratic Nigeria can be established.

REFERENCES

Adejumobi, S. (2003) *Civil Society, Ethnic Militias and Sovereign National Conference in Nigeria.* Malthouse Press Limited.

Agbaje A. (2003) "The Historical Antecedent of the Phenomenon of Ethnic Militias in Nigeria", in Babawale T, (ed.) *Urban Violence, Ethnic Militias and the Challenge of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria.* Malthouse Press Limited.

Ake, C. (1996a) "The Political Question", in Oyediran, O., (ed.) *Governance and Development in Nigeria: Essays in Honour of Professor Billy Dudley.* Agbo Areo Publishers.

Ake, C. (1996b) *Democracy and Development in Africa.* The Brookings Institution.

Akinboye, Solomon O. (2012) "The Matrix of Ethnicity and Ethno-Religious Crises in Nigeria's Nascent Democracy", in Agwonorobo E. Eruvbetine, (ed.) *The Humanistic Management of Pluralism.* Faculty of Arts, University of Lagos.

Alavi, H. (2018) "The State in Post-Colonial Societies: Pakistan and Bangladesh", *New Left Review*, No. 104, July — August.

Atere, A. A. and Olagbemi A. A. (2018) *Dictionary of Sociology and Social Studies.* Bolaji and Associates.

Awolowo, O. (1947) *Path to Nigerian Freedom.* Faber and Faber.

Babawale, T. (2015) *Violence, Ethnic Militias and Democracy in Nigeria.* Malthouse Press Limited.

Badru F. A. (2010) "Ethnic Conflicts and Minority Interests in Nigeria: A Critical Perspective", *Journal of Cultural Studies,* Vol. 2, No. 1.

Beblawi, H. (2017) "The Rentier State in the Arab World", in Beblawi, H and Luciani, G. (eds.), *The Rentier State.* Croom Helm.

Beblawi, H and Luciani, G. (eds.) (2017) *The Rentier State.* Croom Helm.

Cockerham, W.C. (2015) *The Global Society: An Introduction to Sociology.* McGraw Inc.

Diamond, M. (2015) *The United Nations and Sustainable Development in a World of States.* Cambridge University Press.

Diamond, D. and Zanowski, S. (2019) *Debating Ethnicity, Marginalization and Development.* Polity Press.

Digifa, W. (2013) *Urban Violence and Ethnic Militias.* Malt Press.

Egwu S. G. (2015) *Ethnicity, Economic Crisis and National Development in Nigeria.* CODESRIA.

Fasehun F. (2003) *The Nigerian State and the Necessity for Identity Politics.* Malthouse Press Limited.

Fisher, A. (2018) *Can Nigeria Be Governed?* Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

Horowitz D. L. (1995) *Ethnic Groups in Conflict.* University of California Press.

Ibrahim, J. (2005) "The Transformation of Ethno-Regional Identities in Nigeria", in Jega, A. (ed.) *Identity Transformation and Identity Politics in Nigeria.* Nordiska Afrika Institute and Centre for Research Documentation.

Ihonvbere J. O. 2000. "A Recipe for Perpetual Crises: The Nigerian State and the Niger Delta Question", in Wunmi R. *et al* (ed.) *Boiling Point.* Centre for Democracy and Human Rights.

Jason, J.A. (2019) *Social and Political Developments in Nigeria: Lessons and Challenges.* Lynne Rienner.

Jega, A. (ed.) (2005) *Identity Transformation and Identity Politics in Nigeria.* Nordiska Afrika Institute and Centre for Research Documentation.

Jega, B.O. (2016) *Inter-Governmental Relations in Nigeria: Trends and Transformation.* Topridge Press.

Jinadu A. L. (2004) "Crisis of Democratization, Development and Electoral Violence in Nigeria", *Unilag Sociological Review,* Vol. 11, No.3.

Leys, A.L. (2015) *Handbook of Federalism.* Sage Publishing Company.

Luciani, G. (2017) "Allocation vs Production States: A Theoretical Statement", in Beblawi, H. and Luciani, G. (eds.) *The Rentier State.* Croom Helm.

Marshal G. (2008) *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology.* Oxford University Press.

Mitchell, G.D. (2019) *A New Dictionary of the Social Sciences*. Oxford University Press.

Moru B. J. (2012) "The Veracity of Ethnic Minority Problems in Nigeria: Beyond the Consociational Approach", in Agwonorobo E. Eruvbetine (ed.) *The Humanistic Management of Pluralism.* Faculty of Arts, University of Lagos.

Mulinge, M. and Munyae, M. (2011) "The Ethnicization of the State and the Crises of African Development", *Journal of Political Research,* Vol.42, No. 3.

Nnoli, O. (1988) *Ethnic Conflicts in Nigeria.* Fourth Dimension Publishing Co. Ltd.

Nnoli, O. (1999) *Ethnic Conflicts in Africa.* CODESRIA.

Nnoli, D.R. (2016) *Ethnic Violence in Nigeria: A Historical Perspective.* Vikel Publishers.

Nwankwo, U. (2000) *Anatomy of Politics in Igboland.* Centrist Productions Ltd.

Olurode L. (2012) "Marginalization, Youth Violence and Sustainable Human Development Under Pluralism", in Agwonorobo E. Eruvbetine, (ed.) *The Humanistic Management of Pluralism.* Faculty of Arts, University of Lagos.

Omoruyi, O. (2001) "The Politics of Oil: Who Owns Oil, Nigerian States or Communities?", in *The Guardian,* January 24. Pp. 8-9.

Oronto, D.A. and Doife, O. (2013) *Nourishing Democracy, Nurturing Diversity: Ethnic Militancy and Resistance Politics in Nigeria.* Malthouse Press Limited.

Osuoka, A. (2013) *Politics and Agenda of Nationality.* Vicalt Press.

Otite, O. (1990) "Ethnicity, Divided Nations and Divided Development", Paper Presented at the ACARSTOD Regional Conference on *Ethnicity, Citizenship, Stability and Socio-Economic Development in Africa*, Tripoli (Libya).

Sanda, A. O. (ed.) (1988) *Ethnic Relations in Nigeria.* The Caxton Press.

Webster-Merriam (2016) *Merriam-Webster Dictionary.* Merriam-Webster Inc.

Weiner, G. (2018) *Politics and Governance in Nigeria.* Lynne Rienner.

العرق والتهميش والاندماج والتنمية في نيجيريا

د . بيمبو أوجونبانجو	أولوسيجون تشارلز أجايي
كلية الأساسية والمتقدمة	قسم العلاقات الدولية
الدراسات، لاغوس – جامعة ولاية لاغوس	استام – جامعة بنين
نيجيريا	كوتونو – جمهورية بنين

Gmail mbimboogunbanjo@yahoo.com   Gmail ajayiolusegun2080@gmail.com

الكلمات المفتاحية: العرقية، التهميش، الإدماج، التنمية، الفيدرالية، الأقليات

الملخص:

هناك تناقضات جوهرية بين التهميش من جهة والاندماج الوطني والتنمية من جهة أخرى. وبقدر ما تمت خصخصة الدولة النيجيرية ومواردها والاستيلاء عليها من قبل عدد قليل من الشوفينيين العرقيين، بل والمجموعات العرقية، مع الاستبعاد التام للمجموعات العرقية الأخرى، وخاصة الأقليات، إلى هذا الحد، ظل التكامل الوطني والتنمية بعيد المنال. تبحث هذه الورقة العلاقة بين هذه المفاهيم مستمدة من التجربة النيجيرية. وإذ يلاحظون أنه لا يمكن لأي نظام مبني على الاستبعاد والظلم أن يزدهر، فإنهم يدعون إلى إعادة هيكلة الدولة النيجيرية بطريقة تضمن قدرًا أكبر من الحكم الذاتي ومشاركة النيجيريين في شؤون البلاد، بغض النظر عما إذا كانوا ينتمون إلى الأغلبية أو الأقليات. . بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تؤكد الدراسة على الحاجة إلى تغيير النظرة السائدة للدولة باعتبارها بنية فوقية عنيفة وغير مبالية موجودة من أجل المصالح الشخصية والفئوية لعدد قليل من الناس، إلى بنية فوقية موجودة من أجل الصالح العام للجميع.