

National Integration and Sustainable Development of Nigeria: The Emergent Issues

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Abstract- Nigeria became a fostered nation in 1914 through the amalgam of the conquered areas by the British. Since then, deliberate efforts were made to nurtured the amalgam communities into nationhood during the colonial period. With the attainment of independence in 1960, successive government lost no sight in manuring the Nigeria nationhood project through a number of policies and programmes. Though these efforts have kept the hope of evolving a strong united Nigeria nation live, a catalogue of issues and challenges continued to undermine the project. It is in the light of this, that the paper attempts an examination of essential issues towards Nigeria national integration and sustainable development. Using historical research methodology and content analysis the paper sum- up that the issues notwithstanding, the project Nigeria nation is not only releasable but set her on the path of growth and sustainable development.

Index Terms- Integration, Sustainable, Development

I. INTRODUCTION

The project Nigeria Nation began long before the 19th century colonial process as the people, communities and polities that occupied the area has been involved in high level and meaningful interaction over time. The colonial process that began on the second half of 19th century led to the birth of Nigeria nation through conquest and gradual amalgamation of the various groups within the geographical entity. The creation in 1914 by the British was meant to solve and meet the essence of colonialism; maximum exploitation of both human and material resources for the benefit of the metropolis. The creation of Nigeria nation was therefore in the submission of Knottla who opined that such institutions are more importantly social arrangement for dealing with or meeting up with human needs, drives and problems.¹

The British creation of Nigeria nation state was not without minimal problems but relatively met the needs and aspiration of the colonial government up to the time of independence in 1960. The creation also became the foundation of centralized political development and statehood of the country² and the basis for its sustainability. However, since independence in 1960, the much expected unity/integration of the various ethnic groups, culture and polities, sustained socio-economic and political development has been plagued by a catalogue of problems such as misconception of Nigeria nation, political instability and spate of insecurity among others. It is on the note, the paper attempt to look

in to emergence issues in Nigeria national integration and sustainable development.

II. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Understanding Creation of Nigeria

For us to understand the emergence of Nigeria as a political entity, we need to appreciate historical process involved. This process and underlining factors could be explained from two dimension. The first being internal dynamics and the other external influence occasioned by contact with Europeans most especially the British.

The most striking internal dynamics was the geographical compactness which no doubt formed the basis of the historical process. Nigeria has advantage of being located on a coastal shore of Atlantic Ocean in West Africa, with two district vegetation of forestry south and savannah belt. The land is well drained by a number of rivers anchored by Niger and Benue rivers that empty in to the ocean. The ecology was never a barbaric but a unifying factor that encouraged high level of interaction among the people across the geographical divide. The compactness of the environment, according to Ajayi and Alagoa comes from two factors;

The first is the complementality of the Sudan belt and the forest zone with the intervening transitional middle belt dominated by the Jos plateau... the second factor engendering compactness has been the essential unity of the river system... the unity of these waterways encoveraged a network of relationship within the basin. The river networks provided routes of contact between people cutting across the north and south axis and supplementary. It's because of this compactness that despite the fortuitors manner in which the political unity of Nigeria came to be achieved, culturally and economically Nigeria was not really an arbitrary creation.³

The environmental differences of the Nigeria area was never a basner to interaction, rather it encourages migrations trade and intermingling of people and overlapping of settlements. these developments encouraged cross=fertilization of culture and idea that probably contributed to the formation and growth of states in Nigeria. In the course of time and most especially in the 18th – 19th centuries, most states that emerged strong in the area, there political enclave were not limited to their ethnic boundary but have people of different ethnic groups and culture within its area of influence.⁴ For instance, old Oyo in the peak of its power incorporated people of not only Yoruba origin so also was the

case with the Sokoto caliphate whose socio-cultural and political inference was felt down south.

The import of the above is that long before the British creation and contrary to arbitrary creation the Nigeria state was already in the process of formation. This is was at the level of interaction, exchange of ideas and the nature of some existing states that are not homogenous in response to the internal dynamics.

The external factor is anchored on the contact with Europeans and developments from therein. Prior to the contact, conquest and naming of geographical area called Nigeria in 1914, therein existed a number of independent political entities with different and complex system of government. Some of these entities were centralized and others were decentralized in their administration. Among these states, the kingdom of Benin was the first to come into contact with Europeans in 1472 when RoydeSequeira of Portugal ventured into the palace of Oba Ewuare, the Great. The contact introduced catholic faith in to the kingdom and commercial relations based on trade in pepper. Which was overtaken by trade in slaves from the time when other European nation's joined.⁵The trade in slaves lasted up to 19th century when it was abolished due to success in industrial revolution.

The industrial success came with its attendant problems. The critical being the need for raw materials, hence the shift from slave trade to the commodity trade. The basic raw materials needed by industrializing Europe were palm oil, cotton, coffee, ground nut among others. The competition for raw materials and areas of influence among European nations led to negation and signing of treaties with coastal chiefs. Some of the chiefs in southern Nigeria that such treaties were signed with mere with Brass (1834) Bonny (1839) Calabar (1841) and Aboh (1842).⁶ This process was followed by appointment of consult to the Bight of Benin and Biafra, expedition into the interior, establishment of Consulate at Lokoja in 1854 and cut through competition that motivated European conference and partition, (Berlin Conference) to military confrontation and British conquest between 1886 and 1903.

The Berlin conference outcome of the effective occupation made British government to grant charter to Goldies company that became Royal Niger company in 1886. The charter was withdrawn on 29th December, 1899 and on 1st January, 1900 northern protectorate was proclaimed at Lokoja by Fredrick J.D. Lugard, the appointed high commission to the area⁸ From this period, the process to Nigerian nation became accelerated till final amalgamation in 1914.

From the above, the area British conquered and administrated as colonial territory known as Nigeria and since then onward lies along the shore of Guif of Guinea, an arm of the Atlantic ocean in west African and the unity from therein to the southern rivers of Niger Republic to its west republic of Benin while Chad and Cameroon formed the eastern axis of its boundary. In landmass it covers 913,073 km² and with a population of over 180,000,000 cutting across about 250 ethnic groups and culture.⁹

National Integration

For us to appreciate the concept of national integration, we need to reflect and understand the twin words. The word national stemmed from nation which has been given different

interpretation. However, the following are intends with our belief. Cobbarn drawing his analogy from Western Europe experience defines 'nation' as any territorial community, the members of which are conscious of themselves as members of a community, and wish to maintain the identity of the community.¹⁰ In a related definition, Cokman refers to a nation as a large group of people who feel that they are a single and exclusive community destined to be an independent slate¹¹. And, Leeds who was more precise simply described nation as a group of people who consider themselves as one.¹²

The unity of these definition and its import lies in their common denominator of people or group, community or territory they so occupied. This apthly applies to Nigeria and Nigerians as it is today a defined territory with group of people, who are conscious of themselves and identity with the community and its territory.

Irrespective of counter argument put toward by different scholars and opinion leaders of Nigeria Nationhood, Nigeria qualified a nation as no single country is homogenom. Most arguments from opinion and community leaders in Nigeria was as a result of their inability to attained what they wish to achieved despite this, they at one time or the other occupied or which to occupy national offices.

Integration according to wiener is the entire process of bringing together culturally and socially discrete group into a single terri tonal unit and the establishment of a national identity¹³. Integration is therefore the unificationof a different components to make a whole and identity as a whole. From the definition of Integrator, Weiner went further to described national integration on a subjective feeling which individuals belonging to different social groups or historically distinct political units have toward the nation.¹⁴

On the other hand, Goleman and Rosberg defined national integration as the progressive reduction of cultural and regional tensions and discontinuities.... In the process of creating a homogenous political community.¹⁵

From the above definition, national intergraion is a continuous process most especially in the developing countries and indeed to our area of study. Nigeria with a population of over 180,000,000 million people divided into about 250 ethnic group and culture and different believe system.

Sustainable Development

The concept of sustainable development emanated from concern for environment where resources are continuously being exploited without care of future needs. The concern led to series of meeting, studies and establishment of commissions and agencies across the globe. Thus, in one of such meetings organized by World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 defined sustainable development as the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs.¹⁶ in application to our area of study and subject of discussion, sustainable development gives beyond environment but encompacy economic, social and political. It is thus, the ability to forge a strong and virile nation hood, strong economic base, mutual respect for each other and social responsible citizens. Is also connotes evolution of equal opportunities for all based on trust, rule of law and peace or co-existences.

Periscoping Nigerian national integration and sustainable development.

Sustainable development is only achievable in a heterogeneous society where national integration is based on fairness, equity, justice and harmonious resolution of differences. It is on this basis that Duuerger sees national integration as the process of a unifying a society where members are regarded and treated equally and harmoniously.¹⁷ Thus, the British conquest and creation of Nigeria marked the foundation of a unifying or establishment of a centralized political system for the divergent groups. This began with the amalgamation process that ended in 1914 when Northern and Southern Protectorates were brought under one political umbrella with appointment of Frederick J.D. Lugard as the Governor General.¹⁸ The unification thus created an opportunity for diverse people to identify with new political unit and see themselves as Nigerians.¹⁹

The cementing of new political unit and promotion of unity among the people was to be enhanced through subsequent constitutional developments. Thus, from 1946 when Richard's constitution came into effect to the time of independence, a federal framed work was put in place to take care of diversity in unity. This led to the creation of three regions of North, West and East, each with legislative and executive arms. Nigeria thus became a political unit of federal system with three regions.

Since attainment of independence successive governments have been in the fore front in promoting national integration and stimulating sustainable development. This began with the formation of coalition government by the Northern People Congress (NPC).²⁰ It was followed by thirty month civil war to keep Nigeria as a political unit and subsequent developments. Among these were declaration of 'no victor no vanquish', the establishment of National Youth Service Corp, federal character, and related establishment among others.²¹ Despite deliberate effort of building or evolving a strong nationhood and enhance sustainable development, the country is plagued by a number of challenges. These challenges have put to rest the national integration question and shook the very foundation of the nation. Some of these challenges we shall discuss as the 'Emergent issues'.

The Emergent issues of Nigeria National Integration and Sustainable Development.

Sustainable development of any nation including Nigeria apart from materials resources is precipitated on human resource. However, human resources cannot be effectively employed for any meaningful development in the presence of disunity and related vices. Nigeria since 1914 has been struggling to build a nation through integration of people and unification of social, political and economic forces. The process most especially since 1960 has put to question the corporate existence of Nigeria and evolution of Nigeria nationhood. If recent time challenges has led to emergence of issues, some of those we discussed below.

Security Issues

Apart from the thirty months civil war of 1960s, the evolution of Nigeria nationhood has been a challenge by the security question most especially as in the last two decades. Security which is mostly seen as absence of threat or danger to life and properties or state of being secure or free from any physical

attack²² has been a major challenge to individual, groups and the nation since return to democratic governance in 1999. The spate of community conflict, ethno religious and politically induced conflict has been on increase which has transcended to a national affair in forms of insurgency. Insurgency and military whose activities are likened to guerrilla action to unleash violence on the unsuspecting populace and frustrate government.

To achieve their goals of overthrowing government or effect power shift or the sharing of resource,²³ appeared in Nigeria a Boko Haram,²⁴ Oduduwa people congress (OPC) Movement for the survival of Ogoni people (MOSOB) and indigenes people of Biafra (IPOB)²⁵ among others. These groups in their various areas of operation has not only constitute threat to the people and government but caused the death of thousands of people, destruction of properties, undermined government and cause dislocation in its socio-economic life of the nation. The end result being that people or rather Nigerians who have been living for years and decades together now at war with one another. Mutual trust and question of sessions became order of the day. This made Audu in 2004 to observed that

*Nigerians at home and in diaper what was their biggest concern about their country and the collective and overwhelming response will be the growing insecurity in Nigeria forget hunger, forget the parlous economy as target the political disenfranchising of the foremost problem is insecurity.*²⁶

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic nation of about 250 ethnic groups and culture mostly brought together firstly through colonial conquest and secondly by amalgamation. The amalgamation was an attempt to build a Nigerian nation-state based on the principle of peaceful co-existence among the ethnic nationalities.²⁷ To cater for the difference noted, a federal political structure was instituted in 1946 with a strong centre. However, and most especially since independence the minority and fear of domination became a national question. This has led to the creation of states and local government. The fear of 1950s and 1960s of recent has reached again and manifest in the unending ethnic and religious conflicts, Armed banditry, herdsman-farmer conflicts.²⁸ The situation have seen the rise of ethnic nationalist urging people to identify more with their ethnic cocoon as revealed thus;

It is unfortunate that times are changing that people are again becoming hyper-ethnically conscious these days and some public commendation are even advising that each Nigeria should move nearer him or her home base.²⁹

Apart from asking people to move closer to their homes or ethnic territory, government policies and actions have not been devoid of the interpretation that the president, Muhammedu Buhari being a Fulani man is in support of the activities hence no government response to it.

Religious Cocoon.

Nigerians no doubt are religious people divided across two major world religions of Islam and Christianity with the remaining population sticking to traditional religion. In recognition of this diversity and to promote peaceful co-existence the constitution acknowledged the right of citizen to choice and freedom of worship.³⁰ However the constitutional provision notwithstanding, Nigerian political and ruling class have used religion to gain acceptance and ascended to positions of authority.³¹ In the First Republic and to some extent in the Second

Republic this was given prominence, apart for religion being exploited for individual or group gains, Nigerian have witness spate of religions disturbance most especially in the northern part of the country. For examples in the early 1980s, Nigeria saw the case of Maitasine uprising and of recent were the shettes saga in Kaduna And the greatest of all being Boko haram which technically has gone beyond religions explanation. In these crises thousands of lives and properties were lost.³²

The religious uprising though not acceptable and condmmable most especially after over half a century of independence, the worrisore aspect of it is the interpretation and technical encouragement by individual and groups across the two religion. Using Boko Haram as an example, the group is a Muslim fundamentalist whose activities have gone beyond the teaching of Islam. Their action has not been targeted against any religious group but Christians, and Muslims alike have been killed in place of worship. State establishment such as schools, government office, police stations and Military Barack were attacked. Innocent villages and towns were involved and destroyed and end here claimed responsibility. Yet, the voiceful individual and groups that supposed to educate and persuade people have now interpret it otherwise. For example of recent and to be precise on 22nd June, 2018 a group of Christians under, the augies of National Christians Elders Forum (NCEF) in a press conference sees Boko Haram Fighting a jilad on behalf of muslim and nations leadership being led by a muslim muhammedu Buhari.³³

Apart from the conflict, every action of government such as appointment of state officers, Fighting corruption and arresting corrupt officers in the country has been given religious coloration. The most worrisore issues being the fact that while other nations of the world are discarding divisive factor we are re-inventing them with much vegorr. These' not doubt affects national integration and development of the nation

Leadership Syndrome

Nigeria is humanly endowed with a population that is richly divided across the strata along with the human population Nigeria is blessed with both agricultural and mineral resources. The combined resources if well utilized for the good of the country, Nigeria will not only be talking of integration and development but be a leading nation in the comity of nation. For them to happen, Nigeria need a selfless and in corruptive leader and willing followership who are ready to give their support. To this end Chinua Achebe contended that the problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to their responsibility to the challenges of personal example, which is the hallmark of true leadership.³⁴

The problem of leadership began from the colonial period. The political activities that grew out of these was the alienation of national feeling for skewed ethnics and regionalism. The skewed national consciousness of the leadership was to be compa by selfishness corruption and unwillingness to transform the economy for the betterment of the country. The end result being moral decadence, and decayed infrastructure and collapsed system.

Unfortunately, nearly six decades after independence, the characteristics of Nigerian politicians to leadership and governance have not move away from J.S Tarka's position that "as

a politician, I seek power in order to reward myself and my friend and to punish my enemies.³⁵

Towards Nigeria National Integration and Sustainable Development

Irrespective of the circumstance of Nigeria nation emergence over a century of time is enough to reduce the difference and uphold the area of simulation to build a strong geo-economic and political society. a society where ethnic, religion and economic status shall not be the basis of relationship and interaction but that of fairness, justice and equality. To attained this the need for reorientation and building of consciousness towards nationalism. The led and the leaders need to move away from their ethnic, religion and geo-political sentiment for national interest.

Religious, ethnic and political leaders must shun corruption, avoid divisive statement and promote oneness of people irrespective of affiliation. The rule of law must be followed to the letter.

Conclusion

In this paper, attempt was made to examine some silent emergent issue on Nigeria national integration and sustainable development. The conquest and unification of people and regions that gave birth to Nigeria for whatever reason that informed colonial decision, it created not only a political entity but basis for people that lived therein to identify themselves with the politics. Over a century after that political development, Nigeria is still faced with the question of integration and development. Among the issues identified and discussed are security challenge, ethnicity, religion cocoon and above all leadership failure. Despite this, the survival of Nigeria as a political entity after civil wars, unstable politics, ethno-religion conflicts point to the fact that what we need must is a reorientation of the citizenry.

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