FROM COLONIALISM TO IDENTITY POLITICS: NIGERIA'S HISTORICAL TRAJECTORY

Chinemerem Ojiego-Okoro
Department of History and International Studies,
Godfrey Okoye University,
Enugu State, Nigeria
wojiego@gouni.edu.ng
&
Innocent-Franklyn Ezeonwuka Ph.D
Department of History and International Studies,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
Anambra State, Nigeria.
if.ezeonwuka@unizik.edu.ng

Abstract

This study examines the impact of colonial policies on Nigeria's ethnic and regional dynamics by analysing historical and contemporary sources. It discusses how arbitrary boundary demarcations, exploitative resource extraction, and divisive administrative techniques have significantly influenced the country. Colonialism has created a situation in Nigeria where different ethnic groups are divided and unfairly competing with one another, leading to increased tensions and the rise of identity-based politics. Qualitatively driven, this study made extensive use of secondary materials, observing amongst other issues, that the unequal allocation of resources and opportunities across various areas and ethnic groups has prolonged sentiments of being excluded and treated unfairly, leading political figures to organise based on ethnic affiliations to gain electoral benefits. The research is of the view that, although Nigeria's colonial history is a significant aspect in comprehending its identity politics, other factors such as strong external interests and

manipulations, post-independence governance and economic inequality also play vital roles in the intricacies of the nation's identity dynamics. The study continues by highlighting the significance of redressing past injustices, advocating for inclusive governance, revoking the neo-colonial yoke, undertaking a complimentary dialogue of culture towards cultivating national unity as crucial measures to reduce the influence of identity politics and establish a more unified national identity in Nigeria.

Key words: Identity Politics, Colonialism, Culture, Ethnicity, Governance

Introduction

Some nations and sovereignties may have to pass through persistent, complex and terrible revolutionary challenges before attaining cohesion and development, while a few others may not. The complexities and dimensions manifested by the litany of crises and disturbances within the Nigerian polity points to deep-seated lack of trust, suspicion and an eclipse of fraternal confidence amongst the diverse cultural and religious entities inhabiting the area. These discordant tunes have continued to exert its toll considerably on human and material resources, hence a deadly threat to the functionality and structural existence of the country. Ethno-religious divide remains the identified issue, fanned by indoctrinated stereotype and primordialism. Unfortunately, Nigeria has remained one of the most controversial plural societies in the world today. Pre- and post-independence in 1960, the annals of Nigeria's history are replete with ethnic-oriented disturbances. Ethnic chauvinism, in addition to many ethical crises are created, setting off multiple ripples.

> *The 'one Nigeria' mantra has become nothing but a pure sarcasm, just as unity and peace in Nigeria appears dead. Ethnic politics and polarization along primordial*

cleavages is not new in Nigeria, but the dilemma is the momentum with which it is unfolding, day by day. Fairness, equity and meritocracy have been banished on the altar of faulty federalism. All these have bequeathed on the nation incongruous and inept leadership with myriads of negative implications. There is practically no Nigerian in Nigeria, and this is daily stringently propelled by the challenges of massive population growth, unimaginable rate of unemployment and insecurity, added with the ever-rising debt profile.[1]

Most scholars are of the view that British imperial presence had been felt in the area that later became Nigeria as from the middle of the 19th century. The same set of scholars also accent to the fact that despite the above, British colonial administration officially commenced in Nigeria on 1st January, 1900 *vis a vis* the eventual termination of the Royal Charter previously granted the Royal Niger Company to administer the area on behalf of the British government. To effectively secure administrative convenience, imperialist Britain not only adopted the policy of divide and rule, but went deeper into the colonial scheme by applying the marriage of convenience of primordially independent nationalities. Thus, Britain deliberately placed some ethnic nationalities at vantage positions over the existing groups, since this lopsided arrangement was done without consultations from involved groups. Such was the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1914. It may be poignant to note that prior to this incident, through the Land and Native Rights Ordinance of 1910, the British Colonial Power not only tried to separate the Northern ethnic groups from their Southern compatriots, but went ahead to discourage the migration of Southerners to the North. This policy gave birth to the *Sabon Gari* System that became prevalent in many Northern Nigeria cities as from 1911. Such divisiveness aided British perpetual grip and manipulation of Nigeria.

Nevertheless, ample historical evidences show that 'Nigerians' have fairly interrelated harmoniously for centuries, before being brought together in a new modern nation state, but the caveat is not on the basis of ethnicity or religion. Expatiating on this, Usman stated that:

> *The privacy source of our history showed that the fluid boundaries of the ethnic divide were very rarely conterminous with the boundaries of the polities, intensive migration, extensive networks of division of labor and commerce did not allow for the emergence of ethnically monolithic polities.*[2]

Ethnicity, ethnic politics and religious bigotry became lethal weapons purposely to create evidence-based fruits of the divisive and discordant seeds sown by imperialist Britain which emphasized cultural and linguistic differences[3], hence condensing and raining socio-political upheavals in Nigeria. Cultural and linguistic differences were glaringly emphasized, while communal sentiments got encouraged[4]; mistrust and suspicion came to the fore, leading to the poisoning of inter- ethnic relations within and between Nigeria's regions. It was therefore the colonialist that created Nigeria's ethnic consciousness through the use of local authority structure of divide and rule, and as the indigenous political class intensified their struggle to inherit power from the departing colonialist, ethno-religious cleavages got aggravated. Nigeria's political history is replete with British and self- inflicted errors and anomalies which got wilfully absorbed into its pathology overtime. In its more than 58 years of existence post its pseudo-independence, Nigerians have had to contend with the vicious vicissitudes of the 1960s political unrests, a 30 months genocidal civil war, miss-rule, suppression and oppression under the almost 30 years military administration, terrorism, human rights abuse, poverty and classical underdevelopment. The

ambitious military in their ignoble incursion into governance on the platform of their spurious claims, ended up heightening and fuelling ethnic polarization and democratic agitation in the country. Ethno-religious identity became the footstool of these Generals; hence a scholar was irked to lend credence to this noting that;

> *The escalation of ethnic and regional symbolism can also be connected to the patronage of sectarian, ethnic and religious organizations and the extension of largess to their leaders by the regimes of General Babangida and Abacha, which went around in circles looking for legitimacy even at the expense of undermining national unity. They made ethno-religious basis relevant in the recruitment of their agents.*[4]

Amidst myriads of absurdities and national governance anti-thecal to internationally acceptable human standards, Nigeria has staggered into its fourth republic all the more dazed with unprecedented level of ethno-religious altercation, violence and mayhem. The *Boko Haram* continuous depredations mostly in Nigeria's North-East is turning out to be a child's play *vis a vis* the emerging trend of ethnic and culture-group oriented killings and cleansing enveloping certain parts of the nation's Middle Belt region, including some parts of the core Northern States. It is sad to observe that this scenario is hatched and executed over an atmosphere of grave state silence and non-intervention. Nigeria is bleeding profusely, and sentiments are emotionally feeding fat from the daily butchery of fellow paternal relations and religious adherents in cold blood.

In the midst of this squalor, Nigeria's democratic aberration has continued to midwife the nation's political challenges to grow in leaps and bounds so much so that apart from the military

imposition of the 1979 Constitution on the populace, the emergent political parties post-1979, continued to tow the ethnic angles (Unity Party of Nigeria-West, Nigeria People's Party-East, National Party of Nigeria-North). While hinging on this development, it may be recalled and asserted that post-independence in the 1960s, Nigeria's nationhood took the slippery political road of nepotism, ethnocentrism and primordial inclinations, hence this polarity vehemently became manifest in the Igbo Union from the East, the Arewa group from the North and the Omo Oduduwa from the West, among others. Suffice it to say that the existing political parties then, either by design or coincidence, ended up towing these ethnic colourations. This bad sequel ended up creating an atmosphere of distrust. Presently, in the year 2018 to be precise, Nigeria could boast of harbouring 91 registered political parties, a population of more than two hundred million citizens and a prospective economic base; "but the drawback on its developmental strides is its stereotyped ethno-religious inclinations, hence the political class, the elite and the leadership steering the ship of state have largely remained retrogressive, disoriented and incongruent to the needs and demands of 21st century nationhood"[6]. When leadership impunity remains widespread, the judicial and legislative caution, control and regulation appear a mirage, an atmosphere of political apathy and hopelessness is bound to dominate the land, "...more so where the polity appears over- policed, but simply under-secured".[7]

The citizenry is bound to react in various ways, either through political dejection and apathy or organized agitations and demands for better alternative conditions in the face of perceived abject state marginalizations. These agitations have grown over the years in both complexities and sophistication, from passive to violent formats in almost all parts of Nigeria – from the terror-laden approach of the Boko Haram in the North East, to the threat-based strategy of the Indigenous People of Biafra in the South East

and the melodramatic approach of the Odua People's Congress of the South West to mention but a few; Nigeria's political environment is simply in a combustible mode. In the midst of this agitations, consultations still engage the many polarized ethno-religious groups operating within the Nigerian environment AREWA, OHANEZE, PANDEV, AFENIFERE, MEND, The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs. When many groups agitate and clamour for self-determination or restructuring at the same time within a particular political polity, the problem must be endemic and terminal, hence the dire need for sincere observation and proportionate attention. Stereotyped Nigeria factually is wallowing in the challenges of ethnicity, religious inclination and primordialism, hence lacking in a clear-cut political identity, since the interactive currencies are fear, prejudice and discrimination.

Theoretical Framework

This study uses the Group Theory as its analytical framework for its research purposes. The Group Theory emphasizes that groups, not individuals, make up the bulk of the political system. The notion that the society is composed of several groups—which are not simply a collection of people but rather a web of interactions—is emphasized. According to David Truman, several organizations are founded on the idea of interest[8]. The interest is created by the shared attitudes.

In essence, every group is an interest group. Thus, it becomes clear that the interests of the group's members are the foundation of every organization. The organizations strategize on how to best gain access to the government's resources while defending their interests. They also assert their identities. These interests frequently conflict, and if an effective institutional arrangement based on democratic principles is not in place, conflict may result.

Identity politics is defined as the deliberate actions taken by a group in its interactions with the other groups to uphold its identity and defend its interests. The essence of politics is thus concealed behind the face of the properly established and acknowledged bodies by which decisions are made, falling within the scope of group dynamics. It is concealed within the never-ending struggle between groups for dominance and influence[9].

Given that Nigeria is a pluralistic society, it is clear how applicable Group Theory is to this study. It consists of various ethnic groups that are perpetually engaged in conflict over dominance, influence, and the defense of their interests. The divisional tendencies engendered by the colonial methods of indirect control and isolation made this fight even more painful.

The abrupt merging of the many ethnic groups in 1914 constituted a "marriage of inconvenience," which increased the communities' dread of dominance and repression. In an effort to defend their interests and affirm their identities in the face of this anxiety, various ethnic groups withdrew into their "ethnic cocoons". The ethnicization of political parties served as evidence of this. Political parties consequently, by virtue of their establishment and intentions, became agents of division rather than serving the proper role of interests' consolidation for national unification.

This study is bound to largely float without due analysis and considerations of related and relevant works done in this respect. Drawing insights from them and taking cognizant note of the different lacuna posed by them on the subject matter, would help steer the present work, towards proffering solutions that are aggregately plausible, and proactive. Along this pedestal, Ojo ventured to trace identity politics in Nigeria, back to the period before 1906, when the British colonial government established

different administrative systems for Nigeria's North, East and West[10].

In an effort to address this administrative disparity, the 1914 amalgamation created another anomaly by drawing an incorrect boundary, which, as was evident during the Biafra agitation, led to internal demarcation issues. The Lord Lugard-led 1914 experiment has undoubtedly received a number of unflattering nicknames, including "a simple geographical phrase" by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, "the mistake of 1914" by Ahmadu Bello in 1953, and "the Sardauna of Sokoto" (1947). General Yakubu Gowon (1966) said that "the basis of unification was no longer present"[11]. Indirect rule, which was in place in the Northern Province, was repeated in the Southern Province as a result of the union of the Northern and Southern provinces in 1914, according to Mohammed[12]. This strengthened colonial rule across all of the provinces.

Ojo further opined that The British did not intend to create a nation-state in the traditional sense when they organized Nigeria's governmental system. Instead, it was a scheme to make the difficult process of running the provinces more manageable[13]. The repercussions of the local administration merger were more noticeable in the north than the south. In other words, the north was in a position to profit from the south's wealth while the south had to observe and absorb the knowledge and experience of the north's politics. According to Akinyetun, amalgamation caused an imbalanced topographical distribution between the north and south, with the north receiving a greater artificial geographical limit that it used to its advantage when allocating resources[14]. The south was greatly disadvantaged as a result. Without a doubt, the Northern area received more than half of the country's total topography, according to a superficial examination of Nigeria's geographic terrain and its ultimate division. Due to the unfair split,

the north received an unfair edge in political representation, which has been a key driver of ethnic conflict and political unrest in the nation.

Akinyetun opined, that the majority of the seats in the current Nigerian National Assembly, which has 109 members, and House of Representatives, which has 360 members, belong to politicians of Northern descent, making it difficult for the Southern representatives to influence a bill because the north frequently uses its numerical strength to either kill or influence the passage of a bill, depending on how well it aligns with its interests, regrettably, this did not start today[15]. At the Ibadan general conference in 1950, there was conflict between the North and South (composed of the Eastern and Western regions), specifically over the former's desire for half of the House of Representatives seats and the use of population as the basis for income allocation. The Eastern and Western areas, of course, were adamantly opposed to these requests. Despite their opposition, the conference gave half of the seats in the central assembly to the Northern area, inevitably leading to a strategic transfer of power to the North[16].

Most of the post-independence challenges the nation faces in the modern age, including the military interregnum, ethnic friction, ethnic agitation, and identity politics, were caused by this aberrant configuration of political oddity. According to Adegbami and Uche, the various ethnic groups in Nigeria have allegedly engaged in a recurrent struggle for power[17]. For control of natural resources with no restrictions, both at state and federal levels, these conflicts are either fought by the major ethnic groups (Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo) or by the minorities (Niger Delta communities, Kaduna communities, and Middle-Belt communities). This has the effect of exacerbating the wounds of fragmentation and making them more difficult to heal because each group has only cared about and

battled to maintain its own interests and identity, without concern for national integration or national identity. Because of this, a number of political factions have cited marginalization as a justification for their demands for a separation, breakaway, or secession from the union. The Nigerian elite has preferred the use of force through the state machinery to achieve political benefit rather than sheathing its sword of dominance. To hide its acts, the elite has sought sanctuary in ethnicity and stoked feelings rooted in identity politics.[18]

According to Ebegbulem, the result of amalgamation is the creation of ethnic-based political parties, in which ethnic groupings collaborate against one another to control Nigeria's political affairs[19]. Political parties dominated by the North banded together during the Second Republic to oppose Chief Obafemi Awolowo of the Action Group (AG) in southwest Nigeria, branding the group a Yoruba political ethnic group. Politicians from the North predominated in the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) and Northern People's Congress (NPC), while the Igbos in the East founded the National Council for Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), providing the foundation for ethnic politics and ethnic nationalism[20]. These all went beyond the political sphere and spread to other parts of the nation. For instance, sectionalism predominated in appointments, transfers and promotions at a hitherto unheard-of level, particularly in the military. These incidents raised awareness of one's own identity and stoked distrust between major and minor ethnic groups.

Meredith added, given that Nigerians are naturally distinct, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa emphasized that the British colonialists' illusion of Nigerian unity is a fabrication[21]. Okpan & Otega, who advocate a different viewpoint, claim that Nigeria's experience with ethnic diversity is poor because the government and political elites use ethnic identity for their own self-serving and financial

gain[22]. The elite have emphasized racial distinctions in their campaigns in an effort to seize and maintain power. Conflicts based on ethnicity and recurrent electoral violence brought on by identification are the results of this.

Akinyetun noted that the British colonial amalgamation, which brought the several ethnic groups in Nigeria together into a non-consensual union of British convenience, snuffed out the tranquil atmospheric ambiance that the diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria would have otherwise enjoyed[23]. Due to frequent accusations from each group that the other is a predator preventing access to fair representation in Nigerian democratic politics, this has inflicted an irreparable damage of gigantic scale to the integration of these diverse, distinctive, and plural groupings.

Osaghae stated that the prevalence of ethnic politics in the nation is seen as a symptom of the state's escalating legitimacy crisis, and it is justified by the ethnic strategy's effectiveness, the frailty of alternative identities and political units, the pervasive environment of lawlessness that now permeates the political landscape of the nation, and the state's inability to function as a reliable provider of distributive justice[24]. Similar to this work, Aluko sees the legacy of colonialism, the dominant ethnic groups' monopoly on power, and the minorities' subsequent marginalization as key elements fostering ethnic nationalism in Nigeria[25].

Ezeonwuka in his book, *Stereotyped Nigeria: Religion and Ethnicity as Identity Politics*[26], was in-depth in his multidimensional analysis of the historical complexities, indoctrinated stereotypic primordialism and entity ethno-religious bigotry bedevilling the Nigerian politics since independence in 1960. From a politics of hide and seek to the status of structural implosion; from a bequeathed challenge of

faulty federalism to an abundance of bereft leadership, Ezeonwuka tries to cumulatively aggregate Nigeria's faulty physiognomy as British induced and sustained. From 1914 when the embers of the Nigerian project came into being, up till the present, Nigeria has continued to be steered with faulty conspiratory agenda. Humans are driven by interests and the ambivalence of human interests is not questionable. Since the actualization of these interests are dictated by the chess game that is socialization and politics, the focal point must revolve on identity consult. Unqualified fully as a nation, a state or country, Nigeria's redundant mission in state crafty and development is cumulatively systemic with a poor prognosis. Ezeonwuka went on to bemoan the ever-busy Western clandestine external interests who have busied themselves stoking the sharp edges of Nigeria's domestic prebendal divisions, thereby re-enacting national discord, suspicion and acrimony, hence an eclipse of fraternal confidence. He went on to warn that no true Nigerian identity and patriotism can emerge as long as religion remains the 'opium', that is allowed to run through the ethnic arteries of the disparate peoples occupying the innermost part of the Gulf of Guinea.

Profusely rich and informing as these reviewed literatures conclusively appear, the present study is poised to wholistically gather and garner all presented challenges to Nigeria's identity consult through a more profound sequential historical context, not without implementable recommendations.

Nigeria's Identity Quagmire: Historical Context
The colonial history of Nigeria, particularly the union of the Northern and Southern protectorates of Nigeria in 1914, is the root of ethnic identity politics. A federal state for Nigeria was not an idea Sir Lugard came up with when he submitted his recommendations on May 9, 1913, the colonial office issued a statement that read, "According to Sir Lugard's predictions, there

will be an unclassifiable state". Lugard had no plans for a unitary, federal, confederal or any other type of government for the nation. As an alternative, two regions were combined for administrative simplicity and cost saving. This explains why the country's successive constitutions which were written between 1914 and 1951, are difficult to classify as unitary, federal or confederal. The Macpherson constitution of 1951 came to an early end due to the tumultuous political environment which prompted the creation of Nigeria's first federal-style constitution in 1954.

The colonialists deliberately and consciously created ethnicity in order to exploit it as a means of control and dominion over their colonies in Africa, this assertion is acknowledged by Nnoli when he said:

> *… the working class and trade unions' capacity for revolution was diminished by a variety of measures that the British colonialists put in place. Some of these laws were a part of the overarching colonial policy and techniques that were employed to subjugate the colonized population as a whole. Others were developed specifically to counter the mindset of the working class. In the instance of the working class in Nigeria, the imperialists explicitly employed ethnicity to impede working class collective action. The more militant peasantry, the working class' natural political ally, was thus unable to act as a political force.*[27]

Before, there was hardly any problem with envy towards another ethic group, the various ethnic groups lived separately in small, autonomous villages of 100 to 500 people in various geographic locations. Their places were widely apart as a result. For instance, there was no need for bias because the Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo were geographically distinct enough. These numerous ethnic

groups were gradually combined by colonialists into provinces, protectorates, and regions before being combined into a single geopolitical entity that would be ruled by a single person and have a single treasury.

The emergence of ethnicity in Nigeria began with Sir Bourdillon's introduction of federalism in 1939. He created regions and regional councils for each of Nigeria's three major ethnic groups. According to Nwabughuogu:

> *With a central council in Lagos and regional councils in the provinces, Bourdillion has now started to develop the federal notion. To put his thoughts into practice, Bourdillion did something useful. He created eastern and western regions inside his administration over southern Nigeria. When he left Nigeria in 1943, he had not, however, created a really federal government. The imbalance that is detrimental to the growth of a true federation was made worse because he continued to maintain the North. However, Bourdillion had laid the groundwork for a federation.*[28]

Bourdillon's federal framework gave rise to the idea of "divide and rule". The former single southern protectorate was split into the West (Yoruba) and the East (Igbo). However, the Northern Protectorate, which is larger than both the West and the East put together, was left intact. Unanswered is the question of why the Northern region has not been divided. The Hausa/Fulani ethnic group may have dominated the north. The West and the East withdrew into identification with their particular ethnic groupings at this juncture, abandoning their usual joint actions under the theory of southern protectorate solidarity.

Nigeria was already clearly structured into three major regions by 1951: The Northern Region (Hausa/Fulani); the Western Region

(Yoruba) and the Eastern Region (Igbo). In Nigeria, these primary ethnic regional groups served as the foundation for numerous political, administrative, and economic initiatives. These groups grew aware of their identities and insisted on receiving favours from the national government for their home regions.

Ekeh provides more support for the ethnic awareness that the British colonial masters cultivated in Nigeria by saying:

> *Before 1950, in the previous Provincial Administration of Eastern Nigeria under British colonial administration, the constituent ethnic groupings evolved independently. In the provinces of Calabar and Ogoja, the Igbos were substantially divided from the Ijaw, the Efik, and the Ibibios; each of these small ethnic groupings had its own administrative districts. All of these ethnic autonomies in the Eastern region were abolished in the 1950s due to political upheavals. The division that took place made the Igbos the majority ethnic group, both politically and in terms of population.*[29]

Similar results were achieved with the Yoruba in the Western Region as they were with the Igbos in the Eastern Region as a result of the provincial partition. The Yoruba were not at first the majority ethnic group among those it encountered. This led Ekeh to observe that:

> *Western Nigeria had six provinces under British colonial administration. Of those, four were Yoruba. Two of them, the provinces of Benin and Warri, had relatively limited interaction with Yoruba people prior to colonial administration. A significant labour movement brought about by colonialism created a relationship between Yoruba and non-Yoruba in the western region. However, the provinces, especially the Yoruba ones, were run*

separately on a political level. With the political split of Nigeria that began in 1954 and abolished provincial administrative autonomy, all of these political structures underwent significant upheaval. Within a few years, the non-Yoruba ethnic groups in the provinces of Warri and Benin became ethnic minorities and the Yoruba gained political clout in western Nigeria.[30]

Following the political events mentioned above, Ekeh went on to observe that:

The new minority ethnic groups in the provinces of Warri and Benin responded in different ways. While the Action Group, a Yoruba-led political organization, enjoyed significant support from Itsekiri's Yoruba-speaking kin as well as from Urhobo in Northern Benin Province and Warri subsequently Delta Province. In the provinces of Delta and Benin, there were complex political relations between the new ethnic majority Yoruba and the new ethnic minorities.[31]

Another element that contributed to ethnic resentment was the implications of Nigeria's integration into the global capitalist system. In order to support their domestic businesses and sell the finished items they had imported from Europe, the British colonial authorities wanted raw materials from their African territories. They must transport the raw materials from their various production facilities to the seaports or the hinterlands for evacuation to Europe in order to export the raw materials from Nigeria effectively. The construction of infrastructures including roads, trains, and telecommunications was necessary for the process of obtaining and gathering raw materials. The colonial rulers coerced the populace into performing forced labour as part of these public works; also, the locals need money (in the form of

British currency) in order to pay the taxes imposed on them. As a result, many people moved from rural areas to urban areas where there were job possibilities, such as in the construction of train roads and other public works.

Urban cities became filled as a result of the rural-to-urban movement, and as a result, many people from many ethnic groups who came to work there began to congregate there. The various ethnic groups began to associate with one another in groupings. As a result, many ethnic groups established ethnic and cultural organizations in the cities to further their shared goals. Later on, these ethnic organizations developed into strong unions or associations to the point where they began meeting the needs of their members independently of the government. Idoma Hope Rising (for the Idoma ethnic group), Egbe Omo Oduduwa (for the Yoruba ethnic group), Tiv Progressive Union (for the Tiv ethnic group), and Jamyyan Mutanen Arewa (for the Hausa/Fulani ethnic group) are a few of these organizations. Fafowora claims that when urban centres grew in colonial Nigeria, a large number of migrants came there in search of work after the colonial government instituted a tax scheme. Colonial control was made more efficient and lucrative by economic integration. However, this evolution sparked a chain of events that increased interethnic contact and competition for domination.[32]

Ethnic sentiments and the relentless struggle and competition among the ethnics in Nigeria today have its origin in the political and economic activities which were the reasons for colonization. Therefore, ethnicity and colonialism cannot entirely be separated. The various ethnic groups, which had previously been divided, were compelled to come together under the rule of colonialism. The state has failed since it does not guarantee the safety of its citizens or provide them with social amenities because it was this

forced union of the many ethnic groups that gave rise to emotional feelings by one ethnic group against the others.

The colonial authority permitted the nationalists to create political parties between 1948 and 1951. For instance, the Egbe Omo Oduduwa, a Pan-Yoruba group, unexpectedly changed into the Action Group political party, with the goal of ensuring a "large tomorrow" that would allow the Yoruba people to compete with other tribes in Nigeria (AG). The AG was generally a Yoruba-based political party in Western Nigeria. The Western Region and AG were led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo.

The Western Nigerian experience was duplicated in the Northern Region. Jamyyan Mutanen Arewa, an ethnic Hausa group, evolved into the Northern People's Congress, a political party (NPC). Sir Ahmadu Bello, the political head of the NPC, served as the leader of the north. The Igbo ethnic union, led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, in the Eastern Nigeria Region, evolved into the National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroons, a political party representing the East (NCNC).

By 1959, when the Federal General Election was to be held, the elections were based on these three ethnic-based political parties. The NPC, NCNC, and AG are those. Following independence, it became abundantly evident that Nigerian politicians had not internalized the political ramifications of relying solely on ethnically-based political parties.

It is impossible to prevent competition for power among ethnic groups when there is mutual suspicion and fear of dominance. And it is because of this fear of hegemony that ethnicity has always played a significant role in the creation of political parties in Nigeria. Nigeria was left with a non-hegemonic state by colonialism, which made the nation's ethnic issue worse.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The colonial experience of Nigeria has greatly influenced the course of its identity politics, establishing the basis for intricate socio-political dynamics that continue to exist in the present. The colonial era, characterised by the establishment of arbitrary borders, the exploitation of natural resources, and the execution of divisive administrative practices, established the foundation for ethnic and regional rivalries that still exert influence on Nigerian politics. Colonialism in Nigeria has resulted in a feeling of fragmentation and competitiveness among the country's various ethnic groups. This is because colonial officials used divide-and-rule strategies to exert power. This method fostered suspicion and distrust among communities, intensifying pre-existing divisions based on ethnicity and religion and fuelling the rise of politics centred on identity. Moreover, the lasting impact of colonialism can be observed in the unequal allocation of resources and opportunities among various areas and ethnicities, hence sustaining sentiments of marginalisation and unfairness. Consequently, political participants often organise themselves based on ethnic affiliations in order to promote their own interests, taking advantage of ethnic identities to acquire votes and perpetuate a cycle of conflict fuelled by ethnicity.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that Nigeria's colonial history is but one facet of its intricate identity politics. Colonialism undeniably exerted a substantial influence on the current political dynamics, but other elements like post-independence administration, economic inequalities, and the competition for power and resources also add to the intricacies of Nigerian identity politics. To effectively tackle the underlying reasons for identity-based politics in Nigeria, it is necessary to adopt a holistic strategy that resolves past injustices, promotes inclusive government, and builds national unity. This may need the implementation of

measures that support fair and just development, encourage communication and resolution amongst different ethnic groups, and enhance democratic structures to guarantee that every Nigerian citizen has a say in the political system.

In conclusion, Nigeria's colonial history has had a significant impact on the development of identity politics in the nation, moulding the socio-political environment in a manner that still holds relevance in the present day. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of this historical heritage is crucial in order to effectively tackle the issues related to politics based on identity and to establish a more encompassing and unified national identity in Nigeria.

In politics, two emotions remain very strong – fear and greed. While greed leads to certain extremist tendencies like corruption, fear opens the door to certain excesses of religion, nationality and identity cult. This scenario directly introduces a hedge towards national integration and development. Undoubtedly, the Nigerian country as a product of the faulty foundation of 1914 has not only continued to prove the chemical law which shows the incompatibility of oil and water, but the terrible intrigues embedded in ambivalent nature of human interests. Though no normal individual wilfully and knowingly seeks his own destruction, moreover since lack of knowledge could attract wrong choice, most especially when in a dilemma, for Nigeria, all exit routes are not yet blocked. In driving the rationality of human behaviour, knowledge, intention and voluntariness are always handy towards distinguishing 'human act' from 'the act of man'. The Nigerian society is suffering from the ambivalence of human interest, hence the upsurge and celebration of a litany of vices- embezzlement, mismanagement of public funds, election rigging, impunity among others. This situation is so widespread that it stands to be disproved that the Nigerian Civil Service is not the

most corrupt in the world. To make matters worse, since the law of self-preservation in spurring one to avoid what would destroy him, attracts him rather into selfish interests rather than collective, a great number of the populace entangled in one way or the other in the sharing of these booties and loots, ignorantly remain implicated in encouraging and celebrating the underdevelopment of Nigeria. Human interest is ambivalent according to Asouzu, because it has a double capacity and as such can represent something negative and positive at the same time. When such interests have to mislead to unintended, yet wilful and insightful actions and conclusions, lies the danger of its inherent ambivalence.[33]

All in all, Nigeria's survival as an entity lies on its ability towards stimulating and instigating viable mannerisms and actions emanating from the various diverse culture groups aimed at downplaying group interests that is clearly detrimental to national good. Though the road towards attaining such really appears far, it is apparent that the first solid steps must come from the political class *vis a vis* the political parties, as major actors in the country's developmental process. The journey to greatness is driven by dreams and ideas, but lofty ideas devoid of structured plans ends in mere mental hallucination. Patriotism is an anathema in the Nigerian context according to Ezeonwuka, simply because neither the political parties nor the country itself have ever ventured an attempt at a driving ideology. 'A country or society without ideology is like a family without focus, plan, vision and mission. Ideology gives support, and can validate action by giving meaning or explaining in details, and even bind society or people together amongst other things'[34]. Mullins states that, 'the significance of ideology in mobilization is not that it causes one to do, but that it gives one cause for doing, and so provides grounds or warrants political activity engaged in'[35]. Since ideology conceptualizes the historical process, and orients human beings for shaping it,

ideology in itself is an active agent for social change and a stubborn base for the evolutionary growth of strong institutions in human societies. Wherever strong institutions are lacking, strong personalities quickly grow and fill in the gap leading to the promotion of corruption, political redundancy and impunity. Strong societal institutions are propelled by certain ideologies which stream from national consciousness, empowering such institutions to remain as viable elements of checks and balances to politicians and state actors.

However, since ideology sometimes may appear as an elusive essential condiment of society, one may easily equip and organize it through the following five attributes: all inclusive, configurative, functional and compositional, distortive, pejorative and transformative. Mittleman goes further by stipulating that the elements of ideology are critique, activism and prescription. In order words, ideology includes a theory of history, a program of action, and a conception of a desired state of affairs. He sums up by observing that an ideology is operative in so far as behaviour is structured, manipulated and justified in terms of its beliefs and values[36]. Ideology usually is for legitimation, rationalization, interpretation, solidification, communication and mobilization. In fact, ideas can become powerful forces, but only to the extent to which they are answers to specific human needs in a given social character[37]. Nigeria's future is dependent on a domesticated identity, compactly projected and propelled by an evolved ideology. Diversity of ethnic or culture groups can only be an advantage to any political entity, only when there is mutual respect tailored by fairness and mutual trust, devoid of any hidden agenda. Financial gifts and gratifications from the many buoyant sovereign states in the Gulf and the Middle East could do much better if diverted into the many global humanitarian emergencies, rather than simply identifying with the continued Islamisation covertly or overtly of Nigeria. Issues concerning religion and ethnicity

remain delicate areas in any multiethnic/religious sovereignty, hence must be guarded and guided with certain limitations, reciprocal respect and utter considerations. Resort to terror and forceful domination most often results to fulminating circumstances detrimental to peace and development.

A true Nigerian identity is dynamically entrenched in the genetic disposition of the many peoples of the Igbo, Hausa, Fulani, Yoruba, Tiv, Efik among others, inhabiting and thriving within the present Nigerian country, but have continued to only pay lip service to the needs of the Nigerian project. Under the complexities of linkage politics *vis a vis* groups, coherent ideological, religious, economic and political cooperation could later create a clandestine inspirational platform that would not only promote trans-ethnic activities, but erode prebendal boundaries. The problem and challenges of post-independence Nigeria and its plural identities is primarily that of politics of inclusion, exclusion and participation. Collectively agreed, restructuring is advocated, which would stir healthy mutual competition emanating from a balanced federation. Expected output and growth from diverse culture groups and regions in different economic endeavours would not only reduce unemployment, but spur domestic complementary growth and development. It is only then that is dare, that a true and reasonable Nigerian identity would emerge, sustained by viable national patriotism. Here in lies the roadmap to Nigeria's national re-birth and development. 'When identity remains in the 'head' rather than in the 'mind' patriotism is permanently jettisoned by mere sentiments!'[38] The time for a real Nigerian identity is simply now, considering Nigeria's economic distress, seasoned by massive leadership ineptitude, profligacy, corruption and unemployment; aggravated by reliance on a mono-economy of oil.

End Notes

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