

**ETHNICITY AND RELIGION IN NIGERIAN POLITICS, 1999-2019:
CONCEPTS FOR DEVELOPMENT OR CULPRITS FOR ITS
UNDERDEVELOPMENT?**

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ABSTRACT: This study examined whether ethnicity and religion in Nigeria's politics have contributed to its development, or otherwise accounted for its underdevelopment. Nigeria started out as a democratic state prior to military rule which lasted for about 29 years. Twenty years later, events have shown that Nigeria is challenged by numerous factors which militate against its social, political, and economic development. However, ethnicity and religion in Nigeria's politics have exposed the extent of fragility of Nigeria's democracy. The study is hinged on the Marxist theory of neo-colonial state. The case study research design is adopted in the study. Data are collected from previous studies which are focused on the subject, and content analysis method is relied upon. The study concludes that: ethnicity and religion in Nigeria's politics has further divided the people by eroding their faith in the 'One Nigeria' project; religious considerations in Nigeria's politics has engendered disunity, lawlessness, acts of murder, arson, ethnocentrism, and even given rise to such terrorist groups as Boko Haram. The study recommends that: ethnicity and religious beliefs be made to be inconsequential for occupation of political or public offices; Nigeria as a state should discontinue subsidizing/financing citizens' annual religious pilgrimages to Israel and Mecca; and, declaration of one's faith, creed, ethnic background, state of origin, and tribe should be de-emphasized in Nigeria, being a certified Nigerian should suffice.

Keywords: Development, Ethnicity, Underdevelopment, Neo-colonial state.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is inhabited by large populations of over 400 different multi-ethnic nationalities (Salawu,2010).It achieved 'flag independence' from Britain on the 1st of October, 1960 just like many other states in Africa especially south of the Sahara. These countries were at an appreciable level of political, social and economic development as at that time; hence it was expected that with sound policies and programmes, they would achieve all-round development in a few decades. However, that projection was not to be for Nigeria, while such states as Malaysia, Brazil, China, Mexico, Indonesia, and Singapore have all moved on to achieve improved standards of living for their citizens. In the case of Nigeria, it would soon be embroiled in a fratricidal civil war which raged between 1967 and 1970-an incident which set it and its citizens many years backward. Looking back now at the incidents that heralded the war it still seems that Nigeria and its citizens have not learnt any lessons from the war judging by political developments more than half a century after. Ethnic and religious considerations

have remained the main parameters for consideration when it comes to political appointments, promotions in the civil service and other sundry state affairs like sitting of essential infrastructure.

The state of origin of individuals is required whenever one approaches state agencies for one transaction or the other. Also, access to different kinds of amenities is tied to who one is connected to, or related to. These happenings have been taking place in the country for decades, and the youths of Nigeria seem to have had enough of those. They have also demonstrated their hope and willingness to make a change in the system.

Statement of Problem

Economically, it is clear that Nigeria is the largest economy in Africa (UN, 2019 p. 90), but if the strength and tenacity of the economies becomes the parameters for measurement, it would certainly not be Nigeria but South Africa, Ethiopia, Ghana, Botswana, Kenya, or Egypt (UN, 2019 p.90). Socially, Nigeria is one of countries in the globe where annual recurrent expenditure over the years has continually surpassed capital expenditure. This accounts for why there is acute shortage or near non-existence of critical public infrastructure in the country. This is joined with the fact that insecurity of lives and property has been the order of the day in the country especially since 1999. Hence, it is not surprising therefore, why investors rather choose Ghana as destination instead of Nigeria, even though the latter is the largest market not only in West Africa but also in the continent of Africa as a whole on account of its large population. Talking about politics, Nigeria has been regarded as a failing state where career in politics automatically translates to opportunity for primitive accumulation of wealth by public office holders and their cronies (Joseph, 1987) instead of an opportunity to serve the people. Added to that was the fact that Nigeria became synonymous to coups and counter coups with the continual instabilities that goes with it not until the return to participatory democracy in 1999. Even after that watershed event, Nigeria and its leaders seem to have lost the opportunity to be great African leaders to the spate of unending terrorist attacks, armed banditry, ethnic politics, et cetera. The above-mentioned anomalies which have held Nigeria spellbound for decades could be linked to ethnicity and what may be seen as 'religious politics'.

Objectives of the Study

The aims and objectives of the study are as follows;

1. To ascertain whether ethnicity and religion in Nigeria's politics has led to social, political and economic development in the country.
2. To find out whether ethnicity and religion in Nigeria's politics has had impact on government policies and programmes in the country.

Research Questions

The study attempts to fill the gap in the literature within the context of the following research questions:

1. Have ethnicity and religion in Nigeria's politics led to development of the country?
2. How has ethnicity and religion in Nigeria's politics impacted on policies and programmes in the

country?

Literature Review

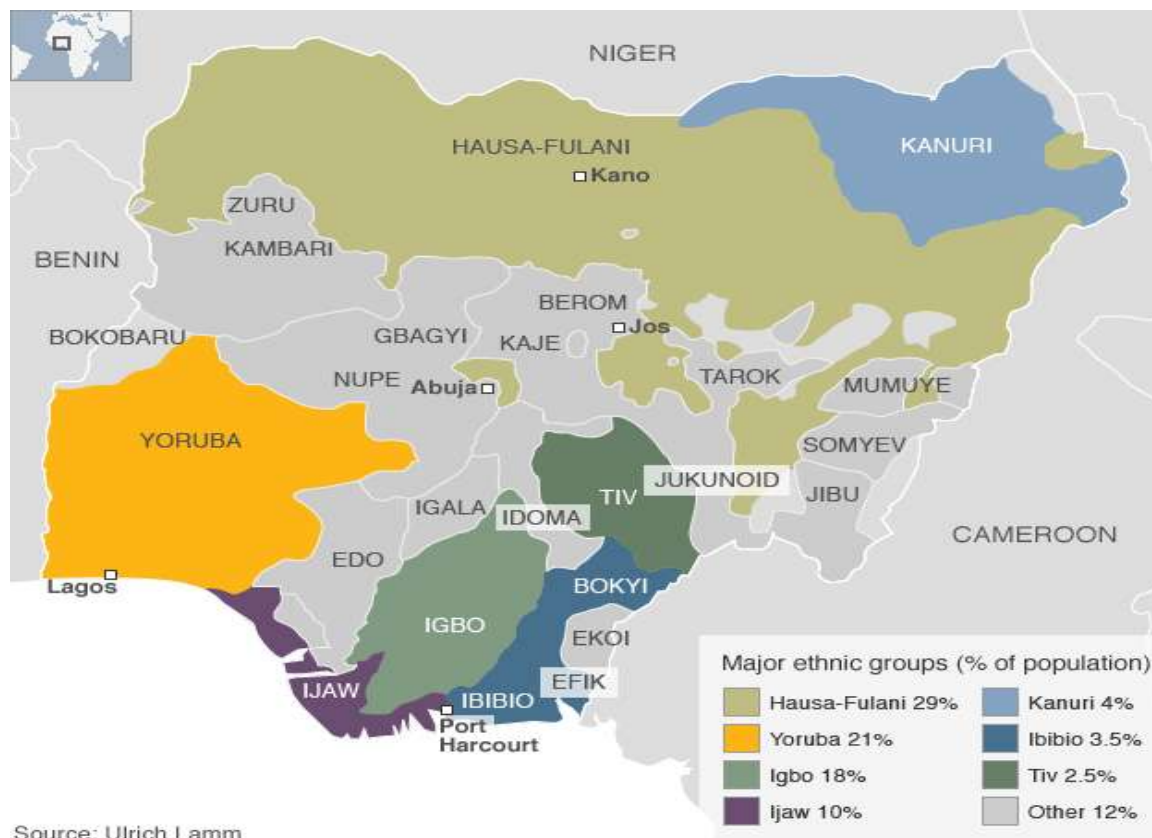
Review of extant literature in this study was carried out under the following themes;

1. Ethnicity and Religion in Nigeria's Politics,
2. Consequences of Ethnicity and Religion in Nigeria's Politics, and
3. Measures by the Nigerian government to curb negative impacts of ethnicity.

Ethnicity and Religion in Nigeria's Politics

We shall consider what ethnicity and religion are, and how they have impacted politics in Nigeria. Ethnicity and its impact in Nigeria have a history that dates back to pre-independence times. Fig 1 below shows the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria and scores of minority groups both in the North and in the South. The Hausa-Fulani in the North, the Yoruba in the South West and the Igbo in the South East

Fig. 1: Ethnic groups in Nigeria.



Source: Ulrich Lamm

Source: Ulrich Lamm; McKinsey Global Institute analysis, accessed April 16 2020.

are the major groups, while the Ibibio, Edo, Tarok, Tiv, Idoma, Gbagyi, and many others form the minority groups. However, at a particular time during the struggle for self-rule some political elites from the South had called for independence from the British in 1957, but Edewor, et al (2014, p.73) records that the “Hausa-Fulani leaders had made it clear by their stout objection that they were not ready for independence as the fear of Southern dominance in a post-colonial Nigeria was rife.” This shows that there had been fears of ethnicity and its negative effects in Nigeria prior to independence. Ajayi and Alagoa(1980, as cited in Edewor, et al., 2014, p. 72) notes that: Ethnic and cultural conflicts in Nigeria are rooted in the 1914 merger of the Northern and Southern Protectorates by the colonial administration of Lord Frederick Lugard. The amalgamation brought about the involuntary unification of culturally and historically diverse ethnic groups, some of which had been rivals and overlapping imperialists in the pre-colonial times. That unification of the two protectorates set the stage for the occurrence of ethno-religious conflicts. Ethno-religious conflict is seen as a situation in which the relationship between members of one ethnic or religious group and another of such group in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society is characterized by lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion and fear, and a tendency towards violent confrontation (Achumba et al., 2013; Salawu, 2010).

Although, ethnicity on its own is not evil as Adetiba and Rahim (2012, p.659) notes that “ethnicity does not constitute any threat to the socio-political and economic development of a state. It is the negative employment of ethnicity-negative attitudes towards those regarded as outsiders-that constitute the threat to socio-political and economic development.” This negative application of ethnicity often takes place in multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, and multi-religious communities where the struggle for control of power is rife. Nigeria as presently constituted fits perfectly into that description. They further stress that “the 30-month Civil War, demonstrated an outburst of the deep-seated ethnic resentment and hate that had etched into the polity” (p.73).

Immediately after the Nigeria-Biafra civil war in 1970, rather than roll out palliatives to cushion the effects of the 30-month long conflagration, certain elements in the Nigerian government applied economically strangulating policies one of which was that which automatically reduced any amount of money owned and deposited by any person of Igbo descent to just ten pounds. Hence, indigenes of the South East were allowed to withdraw an equivalent of ten pounds no matter the amount deposited in banks prior to the civil war. That represents very bad application of ethnicity on a people that had endured starvation, diseases, dispossession, and even mass death. Therefore, following the declaration of cease fire, rather than abate, ethnic equation was taken higher in the scheme of things in Nigeria. It actually became a factor to be considered in everything planned in the Nigerian state Omoruyi (2008). Capturing succinctly the way things stand at the moment in Nigeria, Omoruyi (2008, as cited in Edewor, et al., 2014, p. 73) stress that “appointment and promotion in the armed forces, employment in the civil and public services, political appointment into public office, admission into institutions of learning, revenue allocation, infrastructural development and formation of political parties...” are all viewed through the pinhole of ethnicity and religion. Meritocracy has long been relegated to the background in governmental business in Nigeria that the result is now what plays out in its social, economic, and political arena. Though, it is pertinent to note that it has become very obvious in the polity since after the end of the Nigeria-Biafra civil war. Many youths nowadays have wondered aloud whether the war prosecuted with the purported objective of unifying the country did actual achieve its aim at the end. Stating clearly the extent of decay in Nigeria’s body polity, Adogame (2006, as cited in Afolabi, 2015, p. 43) notes that “Nigerian politics is characterized chiefly by “politicization of religion and

religionization of politics” at all levels of its administrative, political, economic and social life. Consequently, citizens of the Nigerian state do not seem to have equal rights to benefits and privileges within the state. It could be argued that the youths have lost faith in the ‘One Nigeria’ project, hence they do all they could to survive any place they find themselves.

Consequences of Ethnicity and Religion in Nigeria’s Politics

Ethnicity and religion in Nigeria’s politics have over the years triggered some crises in several cities, towns and villages. These crises rage on between people of different ethnic backgrounds, and also different faith. Majority of the crises have occurred in the middle belt states of Plateau, Benue, and Nasarawa, and also Borno, Yobe, Kaduna, Bauchi, Kano, and Sokoto. However, this study would examine the impact of ethnicity and religion in the politics of Nigeria as a state. Some the major consequences are enumerated below;

Ethno-Religious conflicts: Intra-ethnic and intra-regional conflicts have led to loss of human lives and material possessions in such instances as the Tiv-Jukun, Atyap-Hausa/Fulani, Tiv-Hausa, Andoni-Ogoni, Umeleri-Aguleri, Ife-Modakeke, and Birom-Fulani conflicts. Many of these conflicts were actually ignited by manifestations of domineering acts by one ethnic group against the other, or fear of such acts. Sometimes the control of a natural resource, or citing of an important government project, or claim to a town, village, or city results to exhibition of ethnicity in inter-ethnic group relations, and at the end, breakdown of law and order results.

Ethnic Agitations: Ethnic agitations for recognition, or acceptance, or access to national resources are direct consequences of ethnic and religious bigotry. For instance, Nwosu (2013, p.338) notes that “despite the fact that Ogoni oilfields for over 30 years have provided the Nigerian nation with billions of Naira revenue, the Ogoni people have received nothing in return-neither pipe-borne water, nor electricity, nor employment for its citizens...” hence, the formation of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) with the primary aim of protecting the rights and interests of the Ogoni people. So also have other ethnic groups in Nigeria formed different organizations to fight for their rights. By so doing, the polity is overheated.

‘National Cake’ Syndrome: Since appointments into public offices at the centre are majorly based on ethnic/tribal and religious considerations, many of the appointees see themselves as representatives of their different divides, and they also tend to position themselves for acts of prebendalism in office. Earlier in Nigeria’s history, public office holders and civil servants are caught and punished for stealing a few thousands of state funds, but recently especially since the commencement of the fourth republic, public funds are now looted to the tune of hundreds of millions and even billions. People now see public funds as ‘national cake’ to be cut for their own ethnic divide.

Appointments based on ethnic background and not merit: Appointments into offices of high responsibility at the centre are often made based on peoples’ ethnic and religious leaning instead of competence. A clear indication of this is the appointments made by the incumbent APC-led government of Muhammadu Buhari for those chosen as Chiefs of staff of security agencies in the country. Eme and Onuegbu (2015, p.12) lists appointments made by President Muhammadu Buhari thus;

National Security Adviser: Babagana Monguno (Borno State, North-East), Chief of Defence Staff, Abayomi Olonishakin, (Ekiti State, South-West), Chief of Army Staff: Tukur Buratai, (Borno State, North-East), Chief of Naval Staff: Ibok-Ete Ekwe Ibas, (Cross Rivers, South-South), Chief of Air Staff, Sadique Abubakar, (Bauchi State, North-East), Chief of Defence Intelligence: Monday Riku Morgan (Benue State, North-Central), and Director General, State Security Services, SSS: Lawal Daura, (Katsina State, North-West).

The service chiefs appointed by the Buhari administration from its inception show that all other geopolitical zones were represented; some of them in three major appointments but the South East which is primarily inhabited by the Igbos were totally excluded. Though some of the present service chiefs have reached their mandatory 35 years' service, or 60 years of age, yet they have not been replaced. Basically, this is clear indication of ethnic and religious bigotry. The implication is that the government of the day has created more room for suspicion, because assuming there is a security threat in Nigeria today; there would not be any person from the South East when the President sits with the service chiefs. Therefore, their interests will not be considered, let alone protected.

Politicization of the military: Promotions and deployments to sensitive posts are not based on competence and seniority; rather officers' ethnic and religious leanings determine these. Therefore, there is low motivation and lack of drive to serve within the ranks. Also, unprofessional acts by officers and men of the Nigerian army in their relationship with civilians, and with officers of other arm-bearing agencies like the Customs, Immigration, the Police, and the National Security and Civil Defence Corps speaks volumes about the influence of ethnicity in the country's security structure.

Endemic corruption at all levels of governance: Linked with gross impunity in all governmental business is the incidence of endemic corruption in Nigeria as a result of ethnicity and religious bigotry. For instance, when people occupy the positions they do just because they are related to or acquainted with someone in the corridors of power in Abuja, then no severity of corruption they commit it would never lead to their removal or prosecution. Such scenario most likely explains why the fight against Boko Haram has gulped billions of Naira since 2009, but Boko Haram continues to slaughter Nigerians every other day. This has prompted calls by citizens for the removal of the service chiefs for poor performance. However, these calls have been swept under the carpet and the carnage persists in the North East and other parts of Nigeria.

Ethnic or regional based political parties: Political parties in Nigeria have always been those that protect the interests of particular ethnic groups. On that note, Osimen, Balogun and Adenegan (2013:81) hold that:

There was the Northern People's Congress (NPC), formed by the northern educated elites in 1951. The National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), formed by national political party, but it was quickly taken over by Nigerians of the Igbo extraction. In the West, there was the Egbe Omo Oduduwa, which quickly

metamorphosed into a political party in 1951, by the name of the Action Group, dominated by the Yoruba nation. These regional political parties sought to advance regional and ethnic interests instead of the overall interest of the country.

There are basically no national political parties in Nigeria; most of the parties in Nigeria are those that represent the interests or propagate the agenda of one ethno-religious group or the other.

Measures by the Nigerian government to curb negative impacts of ethnicity

Administrations in Nigeria right from independence, but especially after the civil war have made efforts to mitigate the negative impacts of ethnicity and religion in the polity.

Creation of states: A total of twelve states were created out of the four regions of Nigeria after the civil war in order to engender integration, as the military made the people to understand. But as the creation of more states continued over the years, certain elements threw the need for balance and equity over board and implicitly used the act as a means of crafting measures with which to dominate other ethno-religious groups. At least the political economy of revenue sharing and numerical strength at the National assembly would attest to that.

Establishment of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) in 1973: The National Youth Service Corps scheme was established to aid in achieving national integration amongst the diverse ethnic, religious, cultural, and linguistic groups in Nigeria. It is a scheme in which youths in Nigeria who are fresh from high school or tertiary institutions both in Nigeria and abroad are given the opportunity to serve in locations different from their nature settings. However, such occurrences as members of the corps being kidnapped, raped, or even murdered by such ethno-religious and terrorist groups as Boko Haram whose name literally means in Hausa that “Western education is forbidden by Islam” (Thurston, 2016, p. 5) has resulted to graduates from the Southern parts of Nigeria rejecting postings to the Northern part for fear of losing their lives. Hence, Fatile and Adejuwon (2010, p. 330) note that:

The national youth service corps (NYSC) was created *in 1973* in a bid to bring about national integration, to reconcile and rebuild the country after the civil war. But recent developments and studies have shown that the scheme (NYSC) has failed to serve its purpose. (*Emphasis mine*)

Many have even called for its abrogation because people who are less educationally inclined cannot continue to kidnap, rape, maim, and murder children of those that value education and Western values in the name of national integration.

The Federal character principle and quota system: On the Federal Character Principle in Nigeria, Aondoakaa and Orluchukwu (2015, p. 5) notes that its application in relation to admission into Unity Schools has resulted to “many qualified candidates are usually denied admission while some candidates that performed woefully in the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination are given admission.” Also, appointments to offices at the centre are done in such a lopsided manner that the policy becomes a tool

for underdevelopment and inequality, rather than for equality and inclusiveness. Even the quota system applied in Nigeria is used to favour one group while impoverishing the others in the name of 'disadvantaged' section of the country.

Theoretical Framework

The Marxist theory of neo-colonial state has its roots in the classical Marxist theory of the state. The theory was popularized by scholars like Poulantzas in his 1973 study titled *'Political power and social classes'*, and also the 1977 study *'Classes in contemporary capitalism'*; Miliband's study in 1969 titled *'The state in capitalist society'*; Claude Ake in his 1985 study titled *'Political economy of Nigeria'*; and Hamza Alavi in his joint studies with Teodor Shamin in 1981 and 1982 titled *'Introduction to the sociology of developing societies'* and *'Sociology of developing societies'* respectively. These studies were focused on the state apparatus in developing states and the society. The thrust of the argument between and amongst these scholars was whether or not relative autonomy exists between the state and the society. Though Poulantzas held that there ought to be relative autonomy of the state for it to marshal out the use and deployment of capital, and also be able to allocate resources, and finally exercise coercive power. To Miliband, the state is only but a non-concrete or unrealistic creation, or at most an abstraction. Miliband believed in the existence of certain essential institutions which combine to give flesh to the phenomenon called a state. Though he agrees to the notion of state autonomy, but he disagrees that autonomy automatically translates to the state being an instrument of coercion in the hands of the ruling class (Miliband, 1969). The positions taken by both Poulantzas and Miliband exposes features of the state as cited by Fadakinte (2015, p. 33) thus;

The state is an agent of transformation providing for order, organizational principle and cohesive factor, thus maintaining the unity of the social order... Second, the state becomes the arena for the interpretation of class domination and transformation. Third, it is at the state level that structural transformation takes place.

Considering these submissions, it becomes obvious that the state while exercising coercive force and the power to allocate scarce resources and make extensive policies that impacts the society, also preoccupies itself with the interests of the masses. However, these attributes of the state could be hijacked or diverted to the fulfilment of the interests of the dominant class or ethnic group. This is more glaring in neo-colonial states where the ruling class majorly represents the interests far removed from those of the masses or society. In Alavi and Shamin's view, neo-colonial states have inherited structures and institutions from metropolitan countries that bequeathed them with strong bureaucratic military oligarchy which tries to galvanize peace and order in times of crisis. A summation of Alavi and Shamin's position on neo-colonial states could be taken as cited in Fadakinte (2015, p. 34) thus;

First, the class that were formed in African societies were without a dominant and ruling class but a complex and multiclass relationship thereby giving the military bureaucratic oligarchy a special role of mediating the competing interests of the social classes. Second, the strong influence of the metropolitan bourgeoisie still continues even after independence and as a result

the subordination of the local bourgeoisie automatically turns them weak. Third, because the local bourgeoisie are weak, they become unable to subordinate the relatively high/developed colonial state apparatus.... Fourth, the state is therefore no longer an instrument of a particular class and it becomes relatively autonomous.

Consequent upon Alavi and Shamin's arguments, it could be discerned that due to non-formation of ideal states in neo-colonial states, and due to relative autonomy enjoyed by the state, it ceases to represent the interests of the general society, but those of the dominant ethnic group. Hence, its policies and programmes may not be aimed at realization of the society's interests; rather it could generally represent the interests of the power players through economic, political, and social manipulations. To emphasize more on the foregoing, the characteristic of relative autonomy of the state accords the bourgeoisie in Nigeria undue advantage with which they dominate the masses who are in majority, also they use such advantage to hold down and continually exploit the masses (Jakuboski, 1973).

Ake's theory on the other hand, differs from the ones already considered because it takes its root from the development of productive forces in post-colonial states. Ake recognizes that states in neo-colonial societies manifest limited autonomy in relation to the society. He links the state to the control of the mode of production and hence, concludes that the state cannot be said to be independent of the social class since it serves the interests of those that own the means of production. This is a clear departure from Poulantzas and Alavi and Shamin, this view perfectly mirrors developments in African states. Ake (1985, as cited in Fadakinte, 2015, p. 34) notes that in neo-colonial societies "The state appears to be neutral and autonomous of social classes, its element of class domination is not apparent but all the same, state domination,....., remains class domination not just in spite of autonomization but precisely because of it." The study further notes that development in neo-colonial states remain at low levels which manifests primitive accumulation by those that occupy positions of authority. Access to power is generally seen as a means of acquiring wealth.

Application of the theory

In relating the Marxist theory of neo-colonial state to this study, it is pertinent to realize that; First, the interests protected by those in positions of authority in neo-colonial states are theirs and those of their cronies with little or no consideration for the plight of the masses. Second, as a result of non-formation of a dominant united ruling class in these states due largely to ethno-religious diversities, those that exercise political power do so to achieve their personal interests and those of their cronies. Third, in these states, power becomes the only sure means to primitive accumulation, and the only consideration becomes how to retain it at all costs. Non united ruling class in neo-colonial states have resulted in a situation whereby political office holders develop tick skins when it comes to relinquishing power after exhausting their constitutionally guaranteed terms. This is a manifestation of non-autonomous ruling class which gives rise to unequal distribution of power and resources.

Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive research design which relies on correlational processes and considerations in order to arrive at conclusions. Explaining what descriptive design is all about, Ndagi

(1984, as cited in Biereenu-Nnabugwu, 2011, p.172) stress that “descriptive research is concerned with interpreting existing conditions such as prevailing practices, beliefs, attitudes, and on-going processes.” This refers to developments in the society which may not be totally novel in nature, but which needs to be unravelled, explained, and built upon in order to add to the extant literature. Descriptive research majorly aims to unravel and discover the main elements of a phenomenon Anikpo (1986) in social relationships. Hence, the descriptive design is ideal for this research on the effects of ethnicity and religion in Nigeria’s politics.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria have been caused by feelings or allegations of neglect, exclusion, oppression and other forms of acts of domination by one ethnic or religious group against the other (Ikelegbe, 2001).

Kwaja (2011:2) notes that in the course of rising insecurity in Nigeria “...five men were arrested while attempting to smuggle rocket launchers, grenades, AK-47s, and large quantities of cash into Plateau State”, these arms could not have been used for any other purpose than destructive ones.

Conflicts caused by ethnic and religious bigotry also adversely affect the economy of a state. Incessant conflicts in any polity are a veritable reason for lack of foreign direct investment (FDI).

Politicization of peoples’ identities is fallout of ethno-religious politic in Nigeria. Paden (2015, p. 8) notes that the “The future stability of Nigeria may well lie in the hands of those at the top levels of the party system who must be thoughtful and skilled in managing the realities of religious identity politics.”

Mutual suspicion, With the introduction of Shari’a law, some Christian groups have ‘translated’ the current Muslim debate into the realm of Christianity and demanded the introduction of (Christian) canon law in predominantly Christian states (Imo, 2008)

Paden (2015, p. 9) notes that “The Boko Haram narrative at present seems to be antigovernment and is moving toward a new order, an Islamic caliphate that caters to the needs of the grassroots.”

Ethnicity and religion in politics makes states to embark on unnecessary projects that have no economic value for the citizens and the state, in Nigeria,

Prior to the 1900s, pilgrimages to Israel and Mecca by the Nigerian Christians and Muslims were embarked upon privately, however, at the moment the government has created Pilgrim Welfare Boards for the two religions whereby these journeys are state sponsored or at least subsidized (Mala 1996), this represents denial of the rights of practitioners of the African Traditional Religion, et cetera.

Religion in politics have profound effect on a state’s stability level, Paden (2015) stresses that:

...unless interfaith relations are set right, other policies of conflict management are not likely to succeed. Courage, leadership, and thoughtfulness are needed in all domains: religious, political,

social, military, economic, and academic. Clearly, political leadership is essential to facilitating interfaith cooperation and confronting violent extremists.

Wanton destruction of lives and properties, Afolabi (2015, p. 46) notes that “in February 2006 when Muslims were outraged at the caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad which led to a massacre of dozens of Christians in the North, followed by reprisal killings of Muslims by Christians in the South. More than 150 people were killed and numerous churches and mosques destroyed.”

Ethno-religion backed militias in Nigeria, Salawu (2010, p. 345) notes in part that “...ethnicity and religious intolerance have led to incessant recurrence of ethno-religious conflicts which have given birth to so many ethnic militias” causing widespread loss of lives and wanton destruction of properties.

Discriminatory practices in all official matters in a state, most times, are consequences of ethnicity and religion in politics. Okoro (2012, p. 160) notes that:

In schools, fees are discriminately charged. In some ethnic regions that operate tuition free schools, indigenes are exempted from school fees, and non-indigenes are made to pay for the same teaching services they enjoy. There is a quota for indigenes and also for non-indigenes, even though all are equally the same Nigerian citizens.

Instability in the state, Paden (2015, p. 9) notes that “The current Boko Haram crises throughout the north, and increasingly throughout the middle zone of the federation, have the potential to destabilize the entire country.”

Conclusion

Consequent upon the review of extant literature, the study advances the following findings;

Ethnicity and religion in Nigeria’s politics has led to the politicization of any and every policies and programmes of administrations in Nigeria, no matter the purpose such programmes are meant to serve. The Nigerian people are deeply divided on how to carry out virtually every plan for social, economic, and political development. This has led to disunity, lawlessness, and acts of sabotage on all fronts.

Unqualified and clueless individuals are foisted on the country as leaders due to one or two ethnic groups working together to lay claim to state power, even at the instance of not knowing what to do with such power when acquired. Hence, mediocrity and backwardness has been the order of the day in Nigeria’s leadership. In order to access or hold onto political power, electoral violence has been relied upon in almost all the processes that lead up to declaration of winners.

Ethnicity and religion in Nigeria’s politics has further divided the people by eroding their faith in the ‘One Nigeria’ project; ethnic and religious considerations in Nigeria’s politics have engendered disunity,

lawlessness, acts of murder, arson, and even given rise to such terrorist groups as Boko Haram which intends to establish an Islamic state in Northern Nigeria.

Ethnic and religious considerations in Nigeria's politics have resulted to both pre- and post-electoral violence in the country. It has also dictated the voting behaviour of electorates in Nigeria. Most electorates do not consider each candidate's antecedents, career records, or avowed policies and programmes before casting their votes for or against, rather they consider the candidate's ethnic and religious leaning. Therefore, ethnicity and religion in Nigeria's politics have contributed to its social, economic, and political underdevelopment.

Recommendations

Consequent upon the findings in this study, it recommends as follows; first, that ethnicity and religious beliefs be made to be inconsequential for occupation of political or public offices in Nigeria.

Second, Nigeria as a sovereign state should discontinue subsidizing/financing citizens' annual religious pilgrimages to Israel and Mecca, rather policies and programmes should be put in place to utilize state funds for improvement of the peoples' lives by provision of infrastructure.

Third, such matters as completion of administrative forms which require declaration of one's faith, creed, ethnic background, state of origin, and tribe should be de-emphasized in Nigeria, being a certified Nigerian should suffice. This policy has been introduced in Rwanda which went through the horrors of genocide in the 1990s, but since its introduction Rwanda has moved on strongly economically, socially, and politically.

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