

## **ETHNIC NATIONALITIES AND THE CHALLENGES OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICAL STRUCTURE OF NIGERIAN STATE**

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### **Abstract**

*This study examines the stance of various ethnic nationalities in Nigeria given the concept, belief or commitment to having a nation or country where justice, fairness and equity would prevail. Since Nigeria gained independence from British colonial rule, scholars and analysts never relented in proffering solutions/ideas through which the country shall achieve development, progress and unity among the distinct tribes that make-up the Nigerian political entity. Yet, these contributions so far proffered, failed to realize the expected objectives. They have equally fallen short of rekindling the hope of the people in promoting and strengthening the concept of nationhood already identified as the bane of Nigerian socio-cultural and political secularization. We adopt the Post-Colonial State theoretical framework as analytical tool in interrogating the issues aforementioned with a view to exploring the consequences of the lopsided Nigerian political structure, which is believed to be at roots of endless pursuit of ethnic objectives, contrary to the notion of unity in diversity. We also employed qualitative descriptive data in projecting our analysis. We subscribe, inter alia, that tangible efforts should be directed at building a nation within the context of regionalism rooted in its revenue derivative fiscal base. The study states some proposals in its recommendation as antidote to the Nigerian current misadventure.*

**Keywords:** Ethnicity, Regionalism, Nationalism, Integration, Secularization

### **Introduction**

The 1900s up to 1914 would ever remain remarkable in the history of Nigeria. They were periods of transition from what could rightly be described as era of unsolicited intervention into peoples' life and culture. It saw great modifications that instigated far-reaching implications on the social, economic, cultural, religious and political setting of the nations that makeup today's Nigeria. These alterations marked the beginning of a new age quite different from that which preceded it. During this era, some European states notably Britain, took decisive measures in suppressing the evil trade of human beings, thus, replacing it with trade in agricultural and forest products of West Africa such as palm oil, timber, gum, cotton, etc.

Prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, European merchants were not scavenging for these commodities in the hinterlands but restricted their trading activities around the coastal areas. Consequently, there were no significant changes in the socio-cultural life of the aborigines. Even when there were traces of influence, it was merely peripheral and only with the coastal indigenes, allowing the political arrangement and sovereignty of

the people the way it were. Nevertheless, the 19<sup>th</sup> century marked the exploration of the interior of West Africa by European Missionaries and Traders during which the spread of European religion, culture and economic ideas became potent factors. The areas covered by those who are today called Nigerians were not left out from this maximum influence. Thus, the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the starting point of European imperialism with total loss of the people's independence as the continent was partitioned between European powers (Onwubiko, 1973). Obviously, the European powers adventured this part of the globe with the primary purpose to advance their own socio-economic and political interests.

It is very logical and reconcilable to state that British Colonists founded Nigeria under a unilateral conceptualization which did not afford any opportunity to various independent nations or ethnic nationalities to offer inputs at the stage of such integration. The degree of diversity which manifested in religion, culture, politics or administration, social patterns of life etc, perhaps informed the colonial introduction of different kinds of administrative mechanism in dealing with issues concerning their eventual colony; indirect and direct or warrant officiating platform. Based on the study and knowledge of the people, these methods of ruling were adopted for proper or hitch-free rule. The first colonial governor-general, Lord Fredrick Lugard, who eventually championed the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern protectorates, renaming it Nigeria, actually executed the decision via military fiat. Integration of the ethnic nationalities was carried out outside supposed consent of the concerned populations or any form of dialogue between the colonial powers and the tribes or among the tribes.

To Nigerians and to reasonable extent foreigners, the country (Nigeria) was artificially created or designed. It comprises of various entities, mutually suspicious of each other. In the current situation, the Hausa-Fulani oligarchies are bent on imposing the values and objectives which undoubtedly are antithetical to general interest; nationalism. Apparently, Nigeria from inception as a state, is saddled with this problematic issue and numerous others; distinctive nationality from her disparate tribes. Obviously, Akpuna (2010) and Chukwu (2014) have remarkably and continually indicated that confederation or regionalism as a panacea precedent condition for socio-economic and political development of Nigeria and her people.

In support of this view point, Nwangwu (2002) avers that confederation as earlier advocated in Aburi Summit for Nigerian and Biafran leaders who participated in the peace initiative in 1967, if given a proper consideration, would have sufficiently yielded desirable result in addressing the Nigerian structural deficiency. No country, since the ancient Greeks codified the essential features of a nation state, has attained any form of development in the absence of the nationalistic interest as the basic ideology for the attainment of her aims and objectives. At its most basic level, a citizenry that does not believe in his country cannot be committed to its development and tranquility.

Tragically, this has been the subsisting political atmospheric condition of Nigeria-state. Over five decades after the infamous public assertions; that Nigeria is a mere geographical expression, that the basis of Nigeria's unity does not exist and a

section of the country threatening to dip her religious book in the ocean, signifying religious compulsion, yet. No iota of strategy nor action or apt legislation to checkmate or forestall these predictions and prophecies of bad omen. In a related development, Sir, Ahmadu Bello, Sarduna of Sokoto did not mince words in admonishing of the negative consequences if by peradventure the colonists depart Nigeria without the North being positioned to be in control of political power for easy and total domination of the rest of the country. This was however one amongst numerous conditions presented by leaders of northern Nigeria before the region could be part of the newly created entity called Nigeria. (Nwankwo, 2000).

Down the memory lane, the 55<sup>th</sup> post independence Nigeria and centenary jubilee have been attained, yet Nigeria remains a conglomeration of ethnic nationalities. Increasingly, the discriminatory inclination is widening and becoming a normal culture. Normal attitude is now perceived as abnormal; vice versa. We are contending on a perplexing irony that various peoples, who jointly consented to the premature decolonization of the Nigeria and her ethnic nations, after several years of self rule, cannot make a nation from these nations. Formally, Nigeria is a federal state, having other federating units. But in reality, does Nigeria operate under the principles of federalism as demanded by the law?

Various reasons were assigned for the 1966 pogrom directed against section of eastern Nigeria. While Akpotor (2001) in his scholarly contribution saw it as attempt to revenge the death of northern political leaders during the first army coup, to forestall Decree No. 34 meant to unify the country, Nwankwo (2002) believe that the pogrom was based on racial, religious, colonial, economic, political and sociological variables. During the formation stage of Nigeria, vis-à-vis the period in which the Nigerian political leaders were seemingly, searching for stability and development of their newly British created state, two remarkable Schools of Thoughts emerged “let us forget our differences and build a strong united indivisible country. On the other hand, another thesis opposes the former, saying; no, let us understand and recognize our differences, religion – Muslim North and Christian East, socio-economic and political – oligarchy, feudalism and nomadic north versus democratic, republican, westernized and capitalist east.

The British Colonists and the Nigerian Military remain the most visible factors in the context of the inventing and sustaining Nigerian amalgamation which was described as the mistake of 1914 (Onwudinjo, 2014). The Nigerian military under several heads of state borrowed the tactics and strategy of conquering and ruling through force, the ethnic nations already subjugated. This negative approach which was exemplified by the British colonial lords had been the template of Nigeria state misrule ever since her formation. There had never been any concretized governmental policy or genuine effort to build a nation from various tribes that were compelled into the Nigeria amalgamation prior and after the departure of the British authority.

In a desperate attempt to evade the negative consequences of the retrogressive approach or seemingly the official resolve against the supposed universal precepts of federalism, confederation or regionalism which the country

naturally inclined unto, successive military regimes since the independence era, were bent on the pursuit of socio-political atomization through the creation of states and sectional consideration in allocation of resources and political offices. The dictatorial regime cult whose primary purpose was to pave the way for ethnic domination, received counter challenge; The civil society groups that hitherto were clamoring for a sovereign national conference to address the national question among others, intensified efforts despite the fortitude of the military to subdue the voices for democracy and restructure of the polity. Between 1994 and 1998, numerous politicians were detained by the military ruler based on frivolous charges. Within this period, Sanni Abacha ordered a National Constitutional Conference which many perceived as a window dressing and avenue to douse tension and a ploy for his presidency ambition, (Azom and Okoli, 2016). The political class unavoidably inherited this situation bordering on ethnicity, resource control, fiscal federalism and sundry matters. The unending demand/clamour from ethnic nationalities and civil society groups for a well defined socio-political and economic structure of Nigerian state induced another conference in 2005, this time around tagged National Political Reform Conference (NPRC) spearheaded by Olusegun Obasanjo. Nigerians were skeptical at the time of pronouncement about the success of a conference of such magnitude which lacks democratic formation in inception; the president handpicked fifty participants, while the thirty six state governors also appointed six persons from each of the states. Eventually, Nigerians were not disappointed over the earlier doubt concerning the integrity of most of the participants and government's sincerity in finding a lasting resolution; the conference ended without any concrete resolution or a way forward. Debates presented by most of the ethnic groups through their representatives were hard sales if the target should be in the interest nation building agenda.

Former President Goodluck Jonathan also yielded to the unrelenting agitation for fiscal federalism and devolution of power by organizing a political summit where the issue of revenue derivative formula was extensively interrogated and eventually consensus agreement was adopted. For the first time, there was sanity in the process of selecting participants and / or representatives on such national assignment. In the case of 2014 National Constitutional Conference (NCC), ethnic nationalities, civil society groups and religious bodies that used to be short changed in terms of not allowing them to choose for themselves, their reps, were not teleguided. The government as the supervisory institution ensured adequate tranquility throughout the period of the 2014 Conference deliberation. Thus, history was made as more than six hundred resolutions reached via consensus were articulated, rectified and agreed upon.

The expression of deep seated phobia for a competitive environment and primacy over regionalism negates the concept of national integration. The unwholesome acts of misrepresentation of the ethnic agenda by the policy makers / executors, to wear semblance of national objectives has been identified as a major factor promoting anti nationalism. Centrifugal adherents capitalize on this defect to reinforce their commitment and resolve in pursuing short sighted interests with

minimal positive impact. In this paper thus, we shall endeavour to reemphasize the crucial need to restructure Nigerian in line with the precepts of regionalism considering the fact that the ethnic groups that make up Nigeria were independent culturally, politically and socially

The study is structured under three major phase; abstract as well as introduction, showcasing the historical dimension of the subject-matter and our preferred or adopted methodology in interrogating the variables / data. We also have the next stage; hypothesis section, having to do with data collection and analysis cum conclusion / recommendation.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

#### **Ethnic Nationalities**

Ethnic nationality is without doubt a political term mostly used in attempt to express degree of similarities existing within a group or race, but though it remains elusive. The difficulty associated with this expression is predicated on the fact that tribe or race does not necessarily imply ethnic nation or vice versa. Even when it refers or involves mutual awareness in sharing beliefs, origin and tradition, ethnicity vis-à-vis preponderance quality or involvement on ethnic group has been tremendously displayed beyond Africa. Ethnic conflict in Northern Ireland between catholic and protestant, Lebanon; between Arab Christians and Arab Muslims, in Balkans; between orthodox Serbs, Catholic Croats and Muslims are cases indicating the magnitude of ethnicity. But to the Basques, Welsh, or Georgians, language provokes crucial level of ethnicity than racism, nationality or religion. In United States and other developed economies, prosperity has greatly doused the tension inclined in ethnic rivalries.

Origin and tradition shared amongst people appears secondary in the context of socio-political situation. Rather, their general consciousness gives rise to ethnic recognition, loyalty and identification. In England or United States, ethnicity is conceived primarily in consideration of the White Caucasian or White Anglo-Saxon Protestant groups in contrast with others (Oxford, 1996). Ethnicity or ethnic consciousness played a decisive role amongst the ethnic biased republics in the demise Yugoslavia, war and ethnic cleansing or deliberate elimination of the hated ethnic groups; Basque and Northern Irish Provinces, violence seemed inevitable and sometimes devolution of power or outright break up becomes the panacea.

However, Africa remains hotpot of ethnic problematic due to poverty, misgovernment, religion and cultural animosity that gave vent to devastating civil wars in Nigeria, Sudan, Ethiopia, Burundi, Rwanda etc. even with the impacts of pogroms, ethnic hatred sometimes precipitating agitation for self determination or secession (Igwe, 2005).

#### **National Integration**

This can be viewed from duo perspectives; as a derivation of a country's national interest and a statutory framework to unite all and sundry for mutual and proper co-existence. Decision or policy of the government to embark on the process

in bringing together various culture and people for optimal performance has been conceived earlier before 14<sup>th</sup> century. The great Roman Empire during her reign, articulated the benefits of national integration after her defeat as a result of disunity within the kingdom.

In Nigerian context, the government under Gen. Aguiyi Ironsi, promulgated a decree that gave the centre government power to integrate all other components of the country under the umbrella of the Federal Government of Nigeria. Till now, Nigeria has been operating like a unitary state whereby the centre government controls the powers including; revenue derivative right, resources allocation, law enforcements – police, army and paramilitary, security, external and internal affairs, state and local government creation, vat / taxes and the international water ways. Inability or official neglect in addressing the national question of a given entity would always jeopardize any attempt to harness the gains in the national integration policy. The ruling class that may slate the policy; national integration, could equally politicize it for individualistic regarding interests. In essence, making it difficult to synthesize distinct ethnic nationalities that have been brought together to form an indivisible polity.

The notion of National Integration is a subject matter which has no definite or universally accepted meaning / definition. Yet, scholars over the years have attempted various view points in revealing this phenomenon. Nwangwu (2002) opines that national integration is the consciousness and awareness of a common identity amongst the citizens of a country. It means that though they belong to different caste, religions, and regions and speak different languages, but the fact remains that these distinct people agreed to be one. This kind of integration is very crucial in the building of a strong and prosperous nation. Unity in diversity: does not imply oneness emanating from racial and cultural similarity. It is unity in spite of great differences, in other words, unity in opposite. An essential historical event in which this unity was displayed was the general solidarity when all Nigerians integrated against British rule.

Taylor (2009) states that integration of nations, tribes or races under a common umbrella of a given state, is a critical step directed to ensure unity and progress, because no meaningful development would ever be achieved in the absence of such initiative and resolve. He identified three principal policies to be considered while engineering for a national integration and cooperation: state's disapproval and implementation of policies that deemphasize tribalism, nepotism, religious extremism and terror expression. Application of a very appropriate political and economic structure of the state cannot be wished away. Articulation of an effective reconciliatory program that would discard an existing experience of a previous crisis which might have caused disaffection between citizens of the state, notably, Biafra and Rwanda conflicts should equally be reasonably harnessed.

Azikiwe (1964) argues in his essay on national integration, that integration, vis-à-vis unity of the hopelessly divided citizens of a state, should be a focus of non-violent means. According to this source, revolutionary activity which intents are to promote national unity given that the state deeply disjointed cannot function as a

whole.

National Integration isn't only about national spirit. It involves a feeling that brings people from all areas, dialects and beliefs together in a common endeavor. When national integration occurs, individuals are likely to work together to build systems that enhance prosperity of a nation and its people (Akinyele, 2002).

### **Political restructure**

Viewing the common definition of structure as a cohesive whole emanating from various components, it may appear that we are projecting a unitary political establishment or attempting to discuss the subject-matter. Nonetheless, we resolve to approach the conceptual meaning of political restructure of Nigerian state. Agbakoba (2002) states that, political structure is the constitutional fragmentation or compartmentalization of the polity into units or sections for administrative purposes vis-à-vis; allocation of the state values, resources and responsibilities via political power and authority. It further implies that the political structure of a nation-state or country-state, determines the amount of influence assert by these structures. This view point shares some similarities with Harold Lass well definition of politics as who gets what, when and how since both debates are stressing on authoritative allocation of power and economic values. In Nigeria's instance, the political structure was fragmented firstly by the colonists during the process of amalgamation and colonization, then, followed by the Nigerian military autocracy under various dictators that unilaterally fragmented the country lopsidedly. Thus, deliberately, creating an unequal political opportunity in which some regions would be at the mercy of others due this inequitable delineation of the political structure of the polity. Okolie, (2015) affirms that political structure is the bedrock of political economy. Essentially political economy is a multidisciplinary social science doctrine which fundamentally deals with laws, processes and structure of production, distribution and exchange of material values in a state. The term was succinctly stated in Nikitin (1983:p.24), cited in Okolie (2015:p.8) that:

Political economy is a science of the development of socio-production, i.e. economic relations between people and the states. It clarifies the laws governing production, distribution, exchange and consumption of the material wealth in human society at various stages of its development.

What can be deduced from the above is that political economy which determines level of citizenry participation in economic matters is already decided by the political structure of the polity in question.

### **Theoretical Perspective**

The subject-matter is such that would attract a range of analytical instruments for the purpose of analysis. Thus, we adopt Post-Colonial State which without doubt, offers deep explanation over ethnic nationalities and national integration in Nigeria.

The theory of post-colonial state is an offshoot of Marxian political economy that places emphasis on material condition of existence in the analysis of political phenomenon (Ake, 1981).

Colonialism and / or colonization was a policy and practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically. Investigations suggest that the current conditions of post-colonial societies have roots in the colonial actions and policies; example, colonial policies such as the type of rule implemented, government system, the nature of investments, and identity of colonizers are cited as impacting post-colonial states.

The principal exponent of this theory in his book “the state in post-colonial societies” states that to understand political events and the concrete prediction of a political system, the role of state in the social production relations should be critically examined. The capacity of state autonomy in mediation of class conflicts and contradictions, determine the class structure of such society. It is the class relations that structures and restructures the politics of a society. Thus, the post-colonial states are institutionally constituted to contend with social segregation, hence, immersed in the endless class struggle. In spite of its shortcomings, this analytical object is viable in explaining political phenomena and has equally been applied to the study of economic situations. Thus, applying it herein would equip us adequately in conceptualizing the foundation of Nigerian state in connection with the contending social classes. The structure of the Nigerian society which gave impetus to the current socio-economic and political condition in Nigeria would be understood deeply for likely predictions in Nigerian political system.

The post colonial Nigerian state is awash in capitalist orientation hence the control of the economy by a clique seen as capitalist agents regulating the activities of production, distribution exchange and politics for the interest of the local and foreign power hawks. This creates class unhealthy competition between the owners of means of production/ political power and the dominated group having no instrument of power at its disposal. But the spontaneous intra-class rivalry within the dominant group, seen as the major factor provoking ethnic hostilities is linked to the influence of the post colonial Nigerian society; Warranting a particular ethnic group undue access to the institutional mechanisms of domination thereby sustaining the lopsided political structure that encourages primitive accumulation of wealth. The above scenario creates disharmony and great animosity amongst the ethnic groups that now counter alleged each other as the beneficiary of the unwholesome system in which the dominated ethnic group ‘s’ most times resort to ethnic consciousness and solidarity.

Within every ethnic group, the dominant class or the political leaders use their financial muscle to decide who becomes what right from the selection / election of the party’s candidate (s) at the party-primary contest. He that pays the piper dictates the tone; some political parties demand certain amount of money from aspirants before flying the party’s ticket in the election. Most times, knowledgeable aspirants would be at the mercy of the bourgeoisies who in turn extract commitment / agreement for unconditional obedience before embarking on such sponsorship. The implication is that when such sponsored candidate gets into office, he cannot afford to



decide outside the selfish desires of his / sponsor(s). Naturally, majority of these political office sponsors are die hard wealth freak, unperturbed about their actions or inactions impairing the national development; let alone working for national integration.

Inevitably nonetheless, the activities of the privileged class in the post-colonial Nigerian state obviously instigate loyalty to ethnicity which the political barons seize as an opportunity for political mobilization and control of political power. In this light, loyalty and consciousness to ethnicity or obedience to a particular ethnic group's ideology and interest, hinders resolution for the Nigerian integration. But the resolve by generality of the ethnic nationalities in Nigeria to shun tribal considerations in private and public life would definitely mark the evolution of a new dawn in which the political structure of the country would be aptly structured.

### **Colonial Legacy and Ethnic Rivalry in Nigeria**

Retrospective analysis of the Nigerian state would not be adequately presented without mentioning the colonists' factor. For a century or more, prior to the advent of British-colonial administration in Nigeria, ethnic groups subsequently welded together, had existed independently with the exception of the Hausa ethnic group that was earlier conquered by the Fulani migrated jihadists. What we know today as Hausa states in the part of northern Nigeria fell to the Fulani jihadist movement originated from Sudan. In his profound research, Obumselu, (2000: p.9) states that:

There were fourteen Hausa provinces which comprised; Daura, Kano, Zaria, Gobir, Katsina, Rono and Biram (the Hausa Bakwai or legitimate seven states); Zamfara, Kebbi, Nupe, Gwari, Gauri, Ilorin Yoruba and Kwararafa (the banza Bakwai or illegitimate seven which developed to the south and west of the original group). Each state had its own traditions and legends of origin and at varying degrees had embraced or come under the influence of Islam. It has been said that it would be strictly incorrect to refer to these Hausa states as if they belong to the same ethnic group. They were people who spoke the Hausa language and adopted the Hausa mode of dress and life generally.

About 19<sup>th</sup> century, Fulani had been perceived as a predominantly race in Sudan. However, the Sudanese origin cannot be very certain or identifiable. But obviously, during the 16<sup>th</sup> century various attempts to subjugate and conquer, there were riotous political adventure of the Fulani people from the region now called Senegal approaching the East via Messina and equally targeted the Hausa states, advancing against Chad, Adamawa and beyond.

Looking at the nature of Fulani people, the presumed violent tendency of the

18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries started from Sudanese land to launch series of jihadism which can be traced as synonymous with Islam, materialized into political wars, northern Nigeria was not spared from this development. The Hausa people were not consistent in revolting and rejecting the Fulani political subjugation, domiciled in religion. Eventually, the line of cleavage between the Hausa and Fulani became unavoidably obscure with the later providing energy and strategy for socio-economic and political conquest. The Fulani invaders pushed the frontiers of Islam southward, emasculating in varying proportions numerous pagan tribes. The purported religious renaissance *inter alia* snowballed into political war of conquest. As a result of this development, and in order to sustain the tempo, the invaders employed military attacking tactics mostly described today as terrorism contrary to the supposed preaching the message of Islam.

Obumsele, (2000:, p.11) captured this succinctly when he notes that:

The ancient Kanuri kingdom of Bornu with its capital near Lake Chad and itself Moslem, threw back the Fulani invaders. The holy man of Bornu, El-Kanemi, taunted Shehu Usman Dan Fodio with having turned a war of religion into one of conquest and with attacking his co-religionists. El-Kanemi frankly admitted that some of his chiefs had relapsed into heathenism, that the Alkalis or Moslem judges sometimes took bribes and that women went unveiled; but he argued that this was not sufficient excuse for war. This opposition from Bornu, as was later seen, took the pattern and the spread of atrocities in the 1966 Igbo pogrom. Bello in his defense of his father's action justified it mainly on the ground of proselytism. Said he: .... And the second reason for our jihad was that they were heathens, the people of Hausa. A further reason for the war was that we sought to aid truth against falsehood and to strengthen Islam. For us to make war on the heathen from the beginning, if one has the power is declared a duty.

In a related development, the beginning of this century ushered in the British colonial-administration in northern Nigeria. Strategically, the project or ambition of conquest was gravely replicated by the British Colonists. The first governor-general of northern Nigeria, Fredrick Lugard admitted in one of his reports that, the Fulani acquired its current position through conquest and does not see any wrong if the same conquest (injustice) is extended by British authority (Obumsele,2000). Lugard, through superior force brought down the seemingly Fulani's hegemony and installed his even though suzerainty was considered as indirect rule was adopted in ruling the people. The emirs were allowed some measures of independence in dealing with

their people so long the British interests should be protected above other considerations.

The 1914 amalgamation of the northern and southern Nigeria necessitated the large population of Easterners residing at the northern part of Nigeria, working in public and private sectors against the backdrop that most northerners were not eligible since they did not possess the minimum technical or academic qualification to fill the vacant positions. Ikenegbu, (2001) notes that though the Easterners were in such large number working in northern Nigeria, they were not fully integrated into the mainstream of life in the society as citizens of Nigeria; the Easterners enjoyed privileged pariah class status which is traceable to the resolve to have in running the economy of the north because the Northerners considered it a taboo to imbibe western education and modernity that could have offered them the opportunity to be trained in various field. Despite this discrimination or discriminatory policy (pariah; separating the Easterners away from the rest of the society in fear of communicating or sharing ideas), the Easterners had higher standard of living than their hosts which attracted envy. Due to religious belief towards modern education, the northern Moslems were ineligible, warranting the colonial administrators to prefer Easterners in terms of recruitment because they were handicapped.

Apparently, the amalgamation of north and south took effect in 1914 yet writ by Lagos Legislative Council was neither binding nor acceptable in northern Nigeria affairs. The British colonial administrator had the prerogative to handle those issues concerning the north until the introduction of the 1946 Richard's Constitution. With this development still, southerners generally were restricted to (sabon gari in Hausa language) meaning strangers quarters. Northerners and southerners especially the non-Moslems were not allowed to live side by side in the same area, community or jurisdiction. The cultural, social and religious differences were officially and ordinarily magnified, excavating to a dangerous proportion, those die existing ethnic mentalities. Beclouded in the spirit of nationalism, concrete efforts were made since 1950s by southerners to bridge the gap perceived in religion, culture and political life between the north and south, but were discouraged, dented and blackmailed by northern leaders who equally framed up the intention as anti-north (Akpuna, 2010).

Without fear of contradiction, Akpotor (2001) and Okoye (2013) unanimously agree that Nigeria is a creation of the British colonists under the guise of colonialism; in pursuit of this agenda, there was outright exclusion of mutual participation between rulers and indigenous stakeholders known as ethnic nationalities. Prior to the amalgamation, colonialism actually took off in 1861 when Lagos became a colony of British government with the effective colonization of Nigeria; Northern and Southern colonies beginning in 1900 (Chukwu, 2014). However, Nigeria can be said to be ruled by proclamation from 1900 – 1946 when the semblance of elective / representative government commenced. The Richard's constitution carved out three regions from north and south; east, west and north with the regional headquarters in Enugu, Ibadan and Kaduna respectively. The same constitution made provision for a Central Legislature sitting in Lagos for the country cum Regional Houses of Assembly operating in the three regions. But Madiebo

(1980) queried the sincerity of Richard's constitution in dividing the south, by carving out; east and west, leaving the north as a whole. To him, this was a bad political arrangement giving the north undue advantage over the south. The colonial powers decided to have the north as a single united region opposing the southern region that was divided for easier manipulation. Hence, most of the decisions from northern politicians during the constitutional conferences in London were reached through consensus. In the south, because the east and west had already begun to see each other as separate entity, there was no longer the spirit of southern solidarity. In a nutshell, divide and rule option was adopted for the south to hinder mutual cooperation and cohesion amongst ethnic groups therein.

The constitutional development of Nigerian state was spearheaded by the colonists; nevertheless, they did not consider the nature and environment of the nations/ societies forcefully amalgamated under the pretense of modern administrative alternative, hugely demonstrated through noninvolvement of the ethnic nationalities in the constitutional making process. Out of frustration, Dr Azikiwe led a delegation to London, protested the ugly development seen as a deliberate attempt to sideline the indigenous people of Nigeria from active participation. But the British Secretary of State, Mr. Creech Jones, turned down the petition of the Nigerian delegation by merely advising them to return to Nigeria and cooperate with the British authority in ensuring the workability of the constitution. An encouraging development in line with yielding to the demands of the London delegation eventually ensued when on March 1948, the Governor, Sir John Macpherson in his maiden speech to the Legislative Council, advanced a critical observation concerning the intent of Richard's Constitution when he states in (Abia,1999: p.80) that:

Since my arrival in this country I have had time to see something of the constitutional system in practice... I proposed that if it is the wish of the council and of the country, constitutional changes should be made not at the end nine years but in the second three years period which will start at the beginning of 1950. Before any change is made, it is of utmost importance to allow adequate time for the expression of public opinion.

As a follow up, a committee was constituted whose duty was to ascertain the best option in which people of various ethnic groups would be actively involved in the constitutional issues having in mind the pending case of non-consultation and involvement of the people in drafting the Richard's Constitution. The committee recommended as well that interested groups should come up with memoranda on constitutional review to government. Most issues were slated to be discussed by the villages, district divisional authorities, provincial and regional authorities in order to ascertain their views in respect of the nature of the country they love to have. The most outstanding questions were; do we wish to have a fully centralized system with

all the legislative and executive power concentrated at the center, or a developed federal structure in which the regions of the country would exercise some measures of autonomy? Secondly, if a federal system is acceptable, shall we return to the existing regions with minor modifications of the existing regional boundaries or form regions based on many linguistic groups in Nigeria? The opinions collated in regards to the above questions at designated were submitted as recommendation to the legislative council. Subsequently, regional conferences were held at Enugu, Ibadan and Kaduna respectively. However, all the regions agreed on a federal system of government on the basis of simple adjustment; the eastern delegates stood for central and regional legislative in which the central legislature would delegate power or duty to carry out, the western delegates agreed for federalism based on ethnic consideration. The East and West harmonized for central legislature and executive with a majority of elected members. The North agreed with the elected, insisted that half of the membership should come from the North, (Abia, 1999).

The 1954 Lyttleton constitution finally brought the practice of the controversial federalism to Nigeria. The constitution though made provision for the sharing of governmental power between the central and regional or component governments. This was in the terms of recognition of the legislative lists. The first (exclusive) has to do with the powers of the central government. The concurrent discusses or enumerated those issues which both levels of government (central and regional) can act upon or exercise upon depending on the situation at a given period. The residual list deals with matters exclusively reserved for the regional government (Arukwe, 2006). In what appears as apt criticism, Abia,(1999) argues that the adoption of federalism in Nigeria during those critical periods did not fall in line or put into consideration, the heterogeneity, manifesting from the tribal composition of the country; in appraising multi religion, cultural and ethnic factors. Implying that confederation or regionalism remains the only viable alternative for the people of Nigeria in harnessing and protecting their peculiarities inherent in the country. In support of the argument aforementioned, Nnoli (2003) proposes a domestically model of federalism which would allow component regions to function as entities entirely free from the interference or control of the federal government. Coming from this articulation, the ethnic groups in Nigeria before and post-colonial Nigerian society remain divided people viewing their actions and inactions or conspiracy against policies that should encourage the unification of the country. Since the advent of federalism in Nigeria, firstly guided by Lyttleton Doctrine and subsequently adjusted by the military and her cohorts, the perversion of the rules and regulations prescribed by principles of federalism during the military dictatorship cum civil rule, in attempt to project ethnic interest does not encourage national integration. Obviously, military regimes were antithetical to the constitution, thereby promulgating decrees from time to time to suppress the general will of the people.

### **Nigerian Political Structure and Crisis of Political Instability**

The Nigerian political structure as ever constituted and agreed upon by the sectional oligarchy does not reflect the true nature of the existing ethnic groups.

Without the fear of committing fallacy, the colonial authority that brought various ethnic nationalities under the umbrella of a country (Nigeria) due to some reasons, created socio-political disequilibrium, compounding the situation by privileging section 's' propitiously above others. This took the dimension or similarity of the adage known as robbing Peter to pay Paul. To support the above discourse, Nnoli (1978) observes that Britain saw her nature and occupation in the life of Fulani. From the historical perspective, Britain was a conquering state, which the Fulani tribe shared in common with it. The comment credited to the first Governor General of Nigeria, Fredrick Lugard in Akpuna (2011) is a testimony to the view expressed above. It says that conquest is commonly practiced by the Fulani ruling class therefore nothing would be wrong if Britain conquers it along with those already under its hegemonic arrangement. The Fulani nonetheless, surrendered to the British superior power in the business of subjugation / dehumanization or post First and Second World War Germanic complex, eventually turned to an obedient servant to the colonial establishment in Nigeria. In the long run, both the Fulani and her conquered ethnic groups; vis-à-vis, Hausa and Kanuri were equally co-opted by the colonists are trusted / favourite agents in the project of colonialism. At that point, other ethnic groups with opposite disposition previously compelled into Nigerian state, through the instrumentality of imperialism that were not sharing socio-political similarities with Britain, were mistreated, oppressed and conspired against in the state's system.

The Nigerian/Biafran war ended with the military autocracy and usurpation of the country under unitary principles by unlawfully arrogating power to it, concentrating it at the centre, leaving the federating units (now states) ineffective, inconsequential and powerless to contribute meaningfully to national development. In corollary to the argument stated, Chukwu, (2014) affirms that the cardinal thrust upon any discussion over situation in Nigeria should focus on the terms of existence together as a country. According to Chukwu (2014:, p.15):

The federal system of government we practice in Nigeria is a fraud, where the federating states are not developing as they should and the geo-political zones are not recognized in the constitution as it ought to be considering the non-viability of most of the states. This sort of federalism obtained in Nigeria today, makes the producing areas underdeveloped and the non-producing areas developed in terms of allocation of resources, infrastructures and political power. Devolution of power from the centre to the components or federating units cannot be sidetracked; the centre should be less powerful with limited resources and responsibility. More allocations should be appropriated to the states' governments than the federal government and so much in the exclusive list

as such as power generation, police and prison should be the concern of the federating units. The federal government has less responsibilities and so many resources hence the unmitigated financial embezzlement in the high places.

In recent time, violent attacks on defenseless citizens in the southern states of Nigeria by the Fulani cattle owners has created serious tension in the land. This act of lawlessness and barbarism intensified since the assumption of office by Mohamed Buhari May 28 2015. The President had sent an executive bill (termed Grazing Reserve bill) to the National Assembly, in his calculation, to allow these cattle keepers / owners special rights to graze on publicly and privately owned lands. Nigeria is a capitalist state, thus, trespassing on the public or private properties is an unlawful act. Essentially, Mimiko, (2016: p.26) notes that:

The lopsided federal system we operate in Nigeria gives some ethnic groups the effrontery to commit offences punishable under the law without being prosecuted and punished in accordance with the law. The incessant attacks these days on innocent people within southern Nigeria by the Fulani herdsmen can be linked to the fact that a Fulani man is the President of the country. The perpetrators believe that their kinsman being the president and in charge of the executive branch of government which controls the police and army as well as other law enforcement agencies, bringing them to law for the crimes would be practically impossible. Else, since the high profile criminalities ranging from Kidnapping, rape, armed robbery to murder that had been reasonably traced to the Fulani herdsmen; no official step has been taken to stop the menace or convincing evidence that any of the criminals has been convicted. Simply because the prosecuting institution, court and the prison are answerable to the president who as a Fulani man would do every possibility to circumvent his outlawed people despite the allegation of criminality hanging on their neck, they remain unprosecuted. Apart from the fact that this is a challenge to the security and stability of Nigerian state, food security is equally threatened by the nefarious activities of the herdsmen.

Writing in the same vein, Nwankwo (2000) and Maduewesi (2002) argue that the place of political pluralism and multi-ethnic ideologies as abiding edifices of Nigeria's political system cannot be wished away. Hence, every institution, agency, parastatal or corporation be reconstruct to reflect in structure, composition and

distribution of control and service positions, the multi ethnic nature of the country. This approach has to be introduced at every sector of the society, socio-economic, political and religious sphere. The policy should equally serve as a check on the looting propensity of the Nigerian elites. With every ethnic group sufficiently represented in every structure, conspiracy against a particular ethnic group or ethnic primacy would be deterred.

Kayode (2016) pinpointed regrettably the audacious and impudent manner in which the President of Nigeria violated a section of the constitution on Federal Character. The offence is an impeachable act according to the source. Nigerian Constitution clearly states that the Federal Character policy which amounts to equitable distribution of governmental duties amongst the states, regions, geo-political zones and / or ethnic groups of the country must be adhered at every time irrespective of the party in power. We have perceived outright disobedience to this section of constitution since this administration came to power. The president has been accused of pursuing ethnic agenda and bent on shortchanging some regions in allocation of resources, offices and project of islamization of the country. Former President Goodluck Jonathan's kitchen cabinet was selected from the six geo-political zones in observance of the Federal Character policy. The Service Chiefs were also selected in conformity with the principles or approaches which would propel national integration. The judiciary was not left out either. The President who hails from the south was accused of favouring the north in terms appointments especially those offices that the constitution mandated him to use his discretion to appoint. Yet, he was fair and just to a reasonable extent (Okeruo, 2016).

Kayode, (2016: p.3) in response to the President's threat of further massacre and annihilation of Igbo Population that has been calling for separation from Nigerian state due to the supposed official and unofficial conspiracy against them, states as follows:

You bathed in the blood of Biafrans, you crushed their bones and stripped away their dignity and self respect just to keep Nigeria one. Now you say their children have no right to ask for self determination simply because you killed their fathers and mother during the war and shattered their dreams. Shame on you. If Nigeria was a normal country by now you would have been at the International Criminal Court (ICC) answering charges of genocide and crimes against humanity. If you want the Igbo or any other southern to stay and if you want Nigeria to remain one then treat us equal, offer our children and our people equal opportunities and a public apology and pay full compensation for all the atrocities that you, your people and forefathers have committed against the people of the Southern Nigeria over the last one hundred years. In addition to that you must



defeat, destroy and dismantle Boko Haram, decommission your Fulani militias and herdsmen and put a stop to the exclusion, threats to genocide, ethnic cleansing and mass murder of our people. It is after you have done all these that you can make an appeal to us for the continued unity of Nigeria. Outside of that, the Nigeria baby you are carrying and saying that you killed and died for during the civil war is already dead. It is only waiting to be buried.

Onwuaso (2016) sadly lamented that the South-East region of Nigeria has been unjustly shortchanged judging the manner military regimes allocated states and local government councils to major ethnic groups in the country. To him, Igbo nation was obviously cheated in the population census of 1962 which was supervised by the colonists due to the supposed cold relationship that existed between the ruling class and British colonial operators during the latter's insistence to dismantle the former's socio-political values. Ever since then, Nigerian government has capitalized on this injustice to deny Ndigbo their actual capacity in terms of economic resources and political power. Thus, sending negative signal to Igbo youths and posterity that there would be no protection for their socio-economic and political welfare in the Nigeria political system, consequently, there have been high incidences of agitation for restoration of the sovereign state of Biafra.

### **Conclusion**

The study indeed has carried out a critical investigation on the impacts of ethnicity or politics of tribal supremacy hindering the initiative of national integration which scholars appear to have unanimously agreed as eluding Nigeria since independence. It is however sufficiently agreeable and substantial considering the data collected and examined, that the current political structure in Nigeria is a legacy of the British colonial authority between 1900 and 1960.

We arrived at the finding that the Nigerian political structure is a reflection of colonial resolve to shortchange the region 's' that were at loggerhead with the British Colonists, especially the Igbo people of Eastern region that had an opposite political arrangement quite different from their erstwhile antagonists. We interrogated British pattern of colonial administration in Nigeria within the period mentioned, and observed that it was initiated and established in autocracy, deception, extortions, conquest, divide rule, anti-assimilation, ethnic cleansing and endless sabotage of equity and equality.

These developments led to the Nigeria / Biafra war cum the post-war intrigues and conspiracies ranging from the retention of hitherto the fraudulent and ill conceived lopsided political structure of the Nigerian state, glorification of the fiscal federalism which amounts to enriching few individuals from particular ethnic groups; whereas others are tactically shielded or check-mated from internationalizing their

businesses; (Ibeto group has been clamped down, while Dangote, Otedola, Adenuga for instance enjoy federal government import waiver and other exclusive privileges.) The post colonial Nigerian state is endemic in political lopsided structure which has provoked and institutionalized tribal inequality, elites' rivalry and unhealthy political subterfuge amongst politicians competing to rule the people and distribute public resources as they wish.

### **Recommendations**

Despite the stake truth that this subject-matter has gained currency over the years, with various submissions already delivered, we feel obliged to proffer workable approach to counter the institutional human error designed and adopted to hinder progress and unity in Nigerian state. Ethnic nationalities in Nigeria should as a matter of urgency give up and denounce the colonial heritage of ethnic hate, chauvinism, baseless superiority complex, divide rule, religious bigotry and cultural imposition. Stakeholders, to this end are the ethnic groups or tribes in Nigeria, ought to maintain cordial relationship with each other as a prelude for subsequent conclave on how to live together as a country or return to pre-colonial status, that though most ethnic groups in Nigeria have been clamouring for as the solution.

Every ethnic group in the current Nigerian state should submit a memoranda to the United Nations and United States for African affairs, detailed information about her tribe, containing data like; origin, historical background, cultural values, religion, mission in the present country known as Nigeria and obstacle or regrets in Nigeria. We here-in recommend equally that all the states in Nigeria should identify the number of ethnic groups existing there-in and submit same to ministry of interior for proper documentation. Interface should be going on amongst ethnic nations in Nigeria devoid of mutual suspicion and bitterness. We can still achieve a good country through a sincere dialogue or divide, yet remain friends.

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