

Governance and Crisis of National Integration in Nigeria: A Systemic Analysis.

Chibuike E. MADUBUEGWU¹ and Chinedu A. MADUEKWE²

¹Department of Political Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka NIGERIA

²Department of Political Science, Lund University, Lund SWEDEN

Abstract

The Nigeria nation-state is bleeding profusely and grasping for breath. This metaphoric reality underscored the dilemma of African most populous country plagued with myriad crises of national unity. In reference to this factuality, this paper examined the woes of a nation-state challenged by failures of governance. The methodology of this discourse is a causal design which illuminates the import of secondary sources and non-participant observational method of data collection where the embellished data and observed events were textually analyzed. Hence, Systems Theory was applied to establish the crisis of national integration in Nigeria is a function of governance failures which emanate from institutional deficiencies and dysfunctionalities. Subsequently, the findings of the discourse revealed enormous events of centrifugal crisis exacerbated by failures of governance. Hence, the paper recommends for inclusive and participatory governance driven by precedents of openness, fairness and rule of law, and call for national rebirth which were among the fundamentals to mitigate crisis of national integration in Nigeria.

Keywords: Governance, National Integration, Nationhood and National Unity.

Introduction

In a generic sense, governance is fundamental for social engineering and advancement. This assertion is in credence to the fact that governance represents the viable index to assess the dynamics and trends of national development. Although, indicators and variables of governance assessment may vary in form and significance, however, the importance of its process, values and effects illuminate in the plights and expectations of the masses. This indication has over the decades, resonated concerns of scholars and practitioners on the essence of governance in the realization of “the will of modern state”.

Basically, one of the desired expectations of modern plural state is the reasonable scale of sense of nationhood and cohesion among its cleavage components. Hence, the realities of social relation and interaction among its diverse nationalities over power, resources and privileges susceptibly breed suspicions, conflicts and restiveness. Thus, governance inextricably becomes expedient for inclusiveness, equity and fairness in the allocation of dividends of power, resources and privileges. This is premised on the fact that national integration is imperative for meaningful development.

However, this lofty ideal is an illusion in Nigeria which is currently in fanatic search for national identity. In this vein, Oluwatosin (2017) opined that Nigeria is sitting on a 'keg of gun powder' given the wave of incessant crises in the country, which are mostly of ethno-religious composition. Ethnic identity, and loyalty, which is the main description of ethnic nationalism in the first republic hold sway, and is still deeply rooted in Nigeria. The various ethnic configurations in the country are suspicious and bias towards one another. This is therefore a big blow on the collective responsibility effort for the defence of the sovereignty of the country. Perhaps, this national identity crisis may stem from the challenges of governance.

In instructive sense, the social, economic and political indicators of state development are the function of viability of governance. This is sometimes referred to as quality of governance. Accordingly, Mullier (2017) remarked that the quality of a country's governance, is the degree to which its institutions (such as parliament) and processes (such as elections) are transparent i.e. not susceptible to corruption, and accountable to the people, allowing them to participate in decisions that affect their lives. It is also the degree to which the private sector and organizations of civil society are free and able to participate. "Good" or "democratic" governance exists when the authority of the Government is based on the will of the people and is responsive to them. It is when open, democratic institutions allow full participation in political affairs and when human rights protection guarantees the right to speak, assemble and dissent. And it is when Government and Governmental institutions are pro-poor, promoting the sustainable human development of all citizens. Today the quality of governance is attracting more and more attention within and among countries. The number of democratic regimes continues to rise and good governance has become an important criterion for a country's credibility and respect on the international stage. Yet even as good governance takes hold, challenges to it also emerge. The greatest threats to good governance today come from corruption, violence and poverty, all of which undermine transparency, security, participation and fundamental freedoms.

Emphatically, Nigeria nation-state in successive decades has been grappling with enormous challenges of governance, deficiencies of state institutions and socio-economic recessive realities. Currently, the situation has taken a dramatic twist portending strident threat to sovereign existence and unity of a fledging multi-ethnic nation-state, Nigeria. Today, secessionist agitations overwhelms as seen in insurrectional restiveness in the southern regions of Nigeria. These centrifugal tendencies are further deteriorated by divisive regional alliance among the political elite of the South against what was seen as threat to its people and territories culminating in the emergence of regional security outfits which undoubtedly diminished the essence of federal enforcement agencies. In the Eastern region, the agitation for secession by Indigenous People of Biafra, IPOB has taken a more frightening dimension with the intermittent killing of federal security agents, burning of police stations and attacks on federal government establishments. In the West, the euphoria for regional republic and freedom from Nigeria federation has been entrenched in incessant youth civil disobedience protest and, the scum of Fulani nuisance and fatalities across the Middle-Belt region had also alarmed Nigerians on the doubtful existence of the country in the next decade.

Basically, the narrative of the preceding analysis therefore raised these questions; is the quality of governance responsible for crisis of national integration in Nigeria? And, what are the fundamental governance measures to stem the tides of crisis of national integration in Nigeria? These questions formed the thrust of this discourse as streamlined in five sections: this introduction, conceptual discourse and theoretical discourse, crisis of national integration in systemic failures of governance, and conclusion and recommendations.

Conceptual Discourse

Governance is a multi-disciplinary concept replete in varied forms of conceptualizations and interpretations among scholars, specialized global agencies and practitioners. However, these divergent definitions don't underline the ambiguity of the concept, *governance* but illuminate its enriching perspectives as crucial social reality for the existence and survival of the state.

Accordingly, Hufty, (2012) established that governance has become one of the most widely used words in policy debates. It has been everywhere for some time already: in the publications of international and bilateral development aid organisations, in the discourse of decision-makers, and many other places. Yet, it is also one of the most fuzzy concepts currently in use. It occurs in very general discourses as well as in specialised domains, referring sometimes to theoretical approaches and sometimes to ideological stances. For most people, this is confusing. The term may have a rather precise meaning in neo-institutional economics, but from the point of view of developing countries, especially in Africa, Asia, and South America, it clearly connotes a set of 'recipes' concerning structural adjustment and constraints imposed by Western institutions, and is thus heavily laden with values.

Beyond the polemics of the concept, Kaumannet *al*, (2012) conceptualized governance as the process and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised. Specifically, governance is: (a) The process by which government are selected, held accountable, monitored and replaced. (b) The capacity of government to manage resources efficiently and to formulate, implement and enforce sound policies and regulations. (c) The respect for the institutions that govern economic and social institutions among them.

In the conception of Kaumannet *al*, governance underscored the imperatives of public enthusiasm in governance, viability of government in state administration and essence of laws and precedents. Succinctly, Report on Governance for Sustainable Human Development (1997) defined governance as the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises mechanism, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences.

Report of UNDP explicitly underlines the obligatory importance of governance involving the government and the masses. And, from this obligatory perspective, Nnoli (2003) conceptualized governance as social engagement between the rulers and the ruled in a society. It is based on that understanding that government cannot carry out its functions without using or depending on the ruled in one form or another. Hence, UNDP Report and Nnoli's views therefore established the fact that governance is a social contract

of synergized responsibilities where authority is exercised and obligations elicited in the realization of the “wills of the state”.

Beside these conceptualizations, Report of European Commission (2009) highlights the pivotal indices of governance as seen below: (a) In essence, governance is about rules, interest, resources and power. (b) In principles, governance is about participation, inclusion, transparency and accountability. (c) Governance encompasses several themes or governmental cluster obvious under the following: (i) Support to democratization (ii). Promotion and protection of human rights (iii). Reinforcement of the rule of law and administration of justice (iv). Enhancement of the role of the civil society. (v). Public administration reform, management of public finances and civil service reform.(vi). Decentralization and local government.

Basically, the indices of governance highlighted by Report of European Commission (2009) are reflective fundamental qualities of good governance. To this end, what does good governance entails? Accordingly, Bauer (2018) opined that good governance has certain qualities to it. It promotes equity, participation, pluralism, transparency, accountability and the rule of law. And it is effective, efficient, responsive and sustainable over the long run. Governance must be rooted in these principles to move society toward greater human development through poverty eradication, environmental protection and regeneration, gender equality and sustainable livelihoods. In practice, these principles translate into certain tangible things, such as: free, fair and frequent elections; a representative legislature that makes laws and provides oversight; and an independent judiciary that interprets laws. They also translate into the guarantee of human rights and the rule of law, and transparent and accountable institutions. When it makes sense, good governance also decentralizes authority and resources to local governments to give citizens a greater role in governance. Again, good governance ensures that civil society plays an active role in setting priorities and making the needs of the most vulnerable people in society known. In summary, governance is good if it supports a society in which people can expand their choices in the way they live; promotes freedom from poverty, deprivation, fear and violence; and sustains the environment and women’s advancement.

In same vein, Okeke (2010) cited by Okafor and Madubuegwu (2015) enumerates the indices of good governance to include: (a) Accountability (b) Inclusiveness (c) Observance of rule of law and due process (d) Effective institutions (e) Purposeful leadership (f) Security and order. Similarly, Awah (2013) defined good governance as the kind of governance that adheres to the following characteristics: (a) It is participatory by allowing the masses to be part of the decision making process. (b) It is consensus orientated as it seeks for broad consensus in society rather than permitting minority view to override all other views. (c) It is accountable since leadership at national or local government level as well as in the private and public spheres will have to answer to the masses. (d) It is transparent in that decisions are taken and enforced in a manner that conforms to the rules and regulations of a given community.

However, these lucid conceptualizations of governance (as elucidated above) emphasized more on ideals and roles but limited in the context, structure and process of governance. As related to ‘context perspective’, governance may be classified as state governance, rural governance, corporate governance and global governance defining its

environmental significance in pursuit of its respective goals and targets. As related to 'structure perspective', governance varies in legal framework, cluster of institutional responsibilities and organizational context. For instance, there are disparities in structures between state governance, corporate governance and global governance.

The third perspective is 'process of governance' which essentially showed peculiarities of decision-making processes as defined by laws and precedents across contexts and structures of governance. From these reflective indications, governance is further conceptualized; (a) As context which defines the nature, peculiarity and significance of goals and targets at the level of state, corporate and global process of engagement. (b) As structures institutionalized to perform expedient roles in public and corporate interests. (c) As process initiated to facilitate formulation and implementation of decisions (in form of policies, legislations) in realization of public expectations for development and safety or corporate expectations for profits.

Pertinently, Okeke and Awah's definitions of good governance evinced the importance of inclusiveness, participation and consensus which are critical elements of national integration. Apparently, national integration is also susceptible to polemics of conceptualizations. In explicit sense, national integration is interfacing term embellishing in two concepts, *nation and integration*. In this regard, nation is a term which denotes homogeneous territory of people who share common ancestral background, speak the same language, express and enjoy reasonable sense of cohesion and solidarity. The plurality of these nations is often referred as nationalities as seen in over 300 ethnic nationalities spreading across the North and South of Nigeria federation. On the other hand, integration represents unification or bringing together what are distinct and peculiar. What is national integration?

To begin with myriad of conceptualizations, Osahon (2013) defined national integration as striking a balance between cultural relations in a multi-ethnic diverse polity as well as sensitizing the citizenry for peace education, cultural accommodation, developing attitudes and values for collective national existence. Invariably, national integration is the process of uniting different people from all ethnic group, religion and works of life into a single whole; this will bring about peace, stability, prosperity and performance. National integration is the awareness of a common identity amongst the citizens of a country. This means that though we belong to different tribes, religions, states and culture, we recognise the fact that we all are one and must live in unity (Peter, 2014:36). Also Philip, *e tal* (1984) cited in Ojo (2009) maintained that national integration is a relationship of community among people within the same political entity. It is a state of mind or disposition to be cohesive, to act together, to be committed to mutual programme. Ojo (2009) went further to state the relationship between national cohesion, national integration, national unity and nation-building. To this extent, Elaigwu (1990) cited in Odeh (2011), remarked that national integration is determined by, "the degree to which members and groups in a plural society adapt to the demands of national existence while coexisting harmoniously". In same vein, Arisa (2011) asserts that national integration is a form of social nurturing; it is a process of uniting various groups in the society through a common identity by putting aside major differences but at the same time not ignoring the original identity of each group.

The foregoing definitions of national integration underline three critical variables. First, national integration is expedient in multi-ethnic state. Secondly, it is awareness and persuasion in sense of commonness and community among ethnic-diverse people and, thirdly, it is critical for national unity. However, Tijani (2005) and Peter (2014) agreed that Nigeria is still disintegrated because of ethnic and religious differences. Nigeria is still battling with crisis of disunity and disintegration.

Beyond the symbolism of motive, essence and failures of national integration, the foregoing scholarly submissions is limited in forms and process of national integration in deference to the realities and expectations of Nigerian state. Suffice to indicate that national integration reflects in variety of dimensions in response to the dynamics and challenges of a nation-state. In this regard, national integration may reflect in form of political, economic, social and cultural integration. Political integration ensures inclusive process and avenue for the representation and participation of all integrating nationalities in organs of national governance and institutions of the state. Economic integration provides inclusive avenue for integrating units of the federation to participate, compete and explore opportunities on precedence of equity and fairness for purpose of growth, industrialization and development. Social integration is healthy relation and interaction among the ethnic nationalities in the expression of rights and privileges in isolation of ethnic-profiling, suspicion, hate speech, discrimination, victimization etc. Cultural integration is therefore acculturating events organized to recognize sense of nationhood as a precursor of nation-building. Most importantly, the process of national integration is significant in realizing its philosophy and ideals. The genuine process of national integration begins with the state through legislations, policies, advocacy, events and practices to ensure inclusive participation and safeguard civil liberty to create sense of patriotism, national prestige and confidence among the citizens irrespective of their regional, ethnic and religious inclinations. However, this task of unification is not an exclusive role for the output structures (legislature, executive and judiciary) of the political system but can be effectively carried out in synergy with other non-state institutions like the educational, media, religious, traditional etc.

Theoretical Discourse

To theorize the process of governance in the dynamics and trends of national integration of a developing plural economy, such as Nigeria is instructive in bridging the gap between conceptual and empirical imperatives. Hence, systems theory is applied to scientifically analyze, interpret, predict and generalize the affinity between governance and national integration in a cleavage-driven nation-state.

Systems framework represents one of the logical outcomes of behaviouralism in social sciences nay political science. Its methodological foundation is traced to General Systems theory in natural sciences. Accordingly, Hara Das and Choudhury (1997) recalled that the concept of General System theory can be traced back to the natural sciences in the writings of Ludwig Von Bertalanfy, a biologist in the 1920's. Ever since then the General Systems analysis have been of considerably important. After the Second World War, a number of writers in various disciplines began to write about the need for unification of sciences– a concept which lay at the root of general systems theory. They made search for a body of

concepts leading to unity of organisation to studies undertaken in various disciplines. Therefore, a general system theory could emerge which might keep each discipline to understand its problems better. This line of thinking gained momentum by the mid-fifties.

Succinctly, Madubuegwu and Okafor (2017) indicated that the imperative of systems theoretical perspective in political analysis is underlined in the affinity between political science and other social science disciplines (interdisciplinary research) as exemplified in David's Easton's political system framework, Gabriel Almond's structural functionalism and respective theories of Harold Lasswell and Samuel Huntington. A system is a basic concept of systems theory. Therefore, what is a system? In this regard, Gauba (2003) embellished Dahl's definition of system as a collection of elements that interact in some way with one another. Also, Madubuegwu and Okafor (2017) conceived it as a set of interrelated parts. In a broad sense, Terhamba (2013) highlight the following attributes of a system can be identified: (a) A system is composed of a set of units that are interrelated and identical. A system consists of units, which are sufficiently alike to form a set and these parts must be sufficiently inter-dependent in such way that a change in one causes a change in the other. (b) Each of these parts performs important functions, which sustains the system and ensures its survival. (c) The units of the system operate within the boundary and this boundary is what makes out the transactions within the system and between the system and its environment. (d) A system shows a structure, which is a pattern of relationship made up of component units. This relationship too is subject to adjustment as results of the changing state of inter-units transaction. For example, if one part of the system is affected the other parts are also affected and therefore there is a tendency for other parts to adjust. (e) A system has a goal towards which it works. The commonest being self-preservation or resistance.

In reference to Terhamba's description of system, Madubuegwu and Okafor (2017) outlined the following basic assumptions: (a) A whole (that is system) made up of various units, parts or sub-systems. (b) Each sub system is further divided into units. (c) Functions and boundaries define the distinctiveness of these units or sub-systems of the system. (d) A network of relation and communication among the units which express the interrelationship and cohesion of the system. (e) The dysfunctionality or disarticulation of a particular unit or sub-system affects other units or sub-system depends on the nature and trends of the relation existing between units or sub-systems. (f) The cohesion and disintegration of the system depend on the nature and trends of the relation existing between units or sub-systems.

Arguably, system framework like other scientific theories is vulnerable to limitations. Hence, Hara Das and Choudhury (1997) stressed that the systems approach is broad framework for political analysis to take note of the complex psychological aspects of the interaction of function. The question concerning pattern, maintenance, stability, regulation, can be studied by utilizing this approach. It is however very difficult to study political aspects of such matters as perception, expectation, and formation or cognition etc through this approach. The systems analysis beside its limitations is empirically relevant to the logic and analysis of this discourse.

To underscore the theoretical relevance of systems framework in this discourse, it is argued that state governance is a sub-system of structures and roles designed to respond

optimally to plights and expectations of Nigeria system. Subsequently, national integration is a fundamental task of governance in a multi-ethnic system known as Nigeria. Again, it is assumed that failure of governance may be responsible for crisis of national integration in credence to logics of systems framework, "the effects of disarticulated sub-system or sub units". Logically, the inadequacies of governance may inextricably create sense of alienation, suspicion and distrust among the citizens from diverse background. An unpleasant situation that adversely affect the equilibrium and persistence of the whole system, the Nigerian nation-state.

More precisely, the crises of governance and national integration further lend credence to failure of institutional roles and synergized responsibilities of critical sub-system or institutions entrust with exclusive task for inclusive administration, citizen's advocacy, participatory avenues etc. In other words, the failure of exclusive and synergized responsibilities in Nigeria state contributed enormously to the inadequacies of national integration which undermines development and elicits turmoil of disunity. The systems theory therefore established that crisis of national integration is a function of governance failure which emanate from institutional deficiencies and dysfunctional roles. Hence, challenges of governance and crisis of national integration revolves tremendously in the dynamics of systemic failures. In this view, the palliative measures to bolster capacity of state governance can be efficiently approached from a systemic diagnosis of exclusive and synergized responsibilities of the state and non-state institutions for national integration.

Crisis of National Integration in Systemic Failures of Governance in Nigeria

Basically, modern African states are embroiled in challenges of political leadership and crisis of national integration. This unpleasant scenario is a function of historical trajectories as Mazrui (1982) embellished that Africa is caught between the birth of her modern nationalism and the quest for nationhood. Her nationalism is a reality that played a part in ending territorial colonialism but nationhood itself is ambition rather than a reality. The agonies of Africa in the second half of the twentieth century have ultimately derived from the pains of intermediary between nationalism and nationhood. A basic dialectic to understand in Africa is that while the greatest friend of Africa nationalism is race-consciousness and the greatest enemy of African nationhood is ethnic consciousness. Modern African nationalism was born and prospered under the stimulation of racial solidarity and shared blackness. On the other hand, the struggle for viable modern nations within Africa is considerably hampered by acute ethnic cleavages of separating Bantu from Nilotes, Igbo from Hausa and the like.

In affinity of Mazrui's view to the peculiar dilemma of Nigeria state, Nnoli (2010) opined that the task of nation-building is the process of ensuring that the entire population of the state is its citizens and that each one of them is loyal and committed to the state. The greatest constraint on this process has been the history of the Nigerian state, particularly the inability to fully and properly interpret it and do something about it. The colonial origin of the state underlines its goal, to hold down conquered people. Under the circumstance, the colonial state structure was authoritarian and anti-democratic. It was characterized by domination, oppression or repression, exploitation, injustice and illegitimacy. Consequently, it attracted no loyalty or commitment.

Perhaps, Nnoli's view captured the historic trajectory of the current realities of post-colonial Nigerian state. Accordingly, Nwokedi and Ngwu (2018) assert that under the current democratic dispensation, aided in huge measure by the crises of rising expectations, the tensions between nationhood and state-building have become even more pronounced. This has resulted in the spate of ethno-nationalist conflagrations that have engulfed the country for the most part of this dispensation. In essence, the increasing neglect of several ethnic and minority groups and the failure to resolve the national question in which equality of power and resource distribution have been central to have been the cursor of ethnic conflicts since 1999. In other words, it is argued that that the primary reason for the increasing ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria has to do with the accusation and allegation of neglect, oppression, domination, exploitation, victimization, discrimination, marginalization of the state against its people (Salawu, 2010:348). This unpleasant situation invariably led to the emergence of the Odua People's Congress (OPC), a socio-cultural militant group of the Yoruba people, the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger-Delta (MEND), among others (Obi, 2000:78). Similarly, and even more recently, the Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awatiwal-Jihad (aka Boko Haram) and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) have been added to the fray with far more adverse consequences for the peace and stability of the Nigerian state than had hitherto been the case; both, for differing reasons, ostensibly target the corporate existence of the Nigerian state (Nwokedi and Ngwu, 2018:9).

Recently, the nightmare of national integration in Nigeria was bemoaned in the keynote speech of Ifeanyi Okowa, Governor of Nigeria's Delta State, at 2021 annual lecture and symposium organized by Ripples Center for Delta and Investigative Journalism, RCDIJ; "At no time in the chequered history of our beloved country have we been as divided as we are today or witnessed such magnitude of mistrust of ourselves and of our nation. On the other hand, our history shows that about the same time and beyond, Nigeria generally battled with the issues of mutual distrust, suspicion, prejudices with various ethnic nationalities locked in battles for supremacy or minority rights. The early attempts to break up Nigeria derived from the above issues. It is, therefore, fair to say that, since her creation, Nigeria has been searching for ways and means to forge a common identity. The unity schools, the federal character principle and quota system, enshrined in the constitution since 1979, and the National Youth Service Corps Scheme are some initiatives that were introduced to elicit better understanding, foster cooperation, engender sense of belonging and create sense of oneness among the component parts of the federation. Despite the above initiatives and legislations, a huge trust deficit and sharp divisiveness still prevails in the Nigerian polity as seen in various agitations from different parts of the country and manifestation of lack of trust in the system".

These unpleasant situations embellished by Okowa are ostensibly induced by the following centrifugal tendencies: 1. *Fulani Herdsmen Menace*. Otokpa (2021) remarked that Nigeria is at cross roads, delicately on tenterhooks as non-state actors spread fear, violence and terror across the land of over 205 million people of diverse tongues, cultures, religion, and world views. Emboldened by the official silence, non-committal or encouragement, a gang of bandits parading as herdsmen roams the country from North to Middle Belt to the

South. As they move with herds of cattle, they overran farmlands, sack villages, maim and kill indigenes and rename communities and forest reserves forcefully occupied.

This situation has taken an alarming height in recent time with incessant jihadist invasion, killings, abductions and occupation of indigenous communities in North and across Southern states where a state governor in Middle Belt region narrowly escaped death from AK-47 wielding Fulani herders. In the South East, rape incidences in farm lands and killings thrive unabatedly as the state enforcement agencies remained cynical inactive to stem the tides. Painfully, these incidences of bloodletting are often audaciously defended by Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria, MACBAN and inflammatory comments by Fulani Nationality Movement, FUMAN.

As Agbo (2020) documents that the President of Fulani Nationality Movement, Badu, Salisu Ahmadu in a press statement claimed that the Fulani own the whole Nigeria from the North to Atlantic as seen in this statement.; “We have said it over and over that Nigeria is the only inheritance we have in Africa and anywhere in the world. The land belongs to us from Sokoto to the banks of the Atlantic Ocean. This was the destiny bestowed on Uthman Dan Fodio, which would have been fulfilled since 1816 if not for obstruction of the great assignment by the British. It is no longer time to play ostrich.... our men are waiting, we are eager to fight, we are boiling with the zeal to actualize our dream; enough of double dealing and ambivalence by Fulani political leaders who unfortunately think that the Fulani can only take back what belongs to us through appeasement..”

The suspicious and divisive relation between Fulani ethnic nationality and other nationalities was further heightened by Federal government’s attempt to establish Cattle Colonies/ Rural Grazing Scheme, RUGA under National Livestock Transformation Programme for the herdsmen across the country which was stoutly resisted by the southern people and governments. Acknowledging the widespread and apparent reluctance of the federal enforcement agencies to check the onslaught of these armed herders occasioned with increasing killings, governments in the South massively enact into law the popular “Anti-Open grazing bill” amid threats from Miyetti Allah. Accordingly, Olayinka (2021), documents that the 12-point communiqué of Southern Governor’s Forum, SGF which became known as Asaba Declaration reads, “ the Southern Governors’ Forum meeting critically evaluated the security situation in the country, the implications for southern Nigeria, and proffered an immediate solution so as to keep the region safe and safety of its citizens. While affirming their commitment to the unity of Nigeria based on equity and peaceful co-existence, the governors raised the issue of open grazing which they said had opened the window for “armed herders, criminals and bandits” to invade the southern part of the country and create a severe security challenge to the extent that citizens can no longer live their normal lives, including pursuing various economic activities. This, they asserted, has threatened food supply and general security. They therefore resolved that “open grazing of cattle be banned across Southern Nigeria” and urged states in the south to enact anti-open grazing laws. They appealed to the Federal Government to support willing states to develop alternative and modern livestock management systems.

2. *Abuse of the Federal Character Principle.* Accordingly, Madubuegwu (2017) embellished that the federal principle is premised to ensure national integration and consciousness, promote patriotism, and prevent dominance of few ethnic nationalities in political governance, bureaucratic structures and administration of the country in bid to entrench social justice and sense of belonging.

In reference to the current adverse reality, it is stressed that President Muhammadu Buhari's divisive style of governance is further tearing the country apart. His unparalleled inclination to clannishness, sectionalism, insensitivity, and unbridled nepotism in the pattern of appointments and recruitments into public institutions, in flagrant breach of the Federal Character principle enshrined in Section 14 (4) in the 1999 Constitution have constituted to put peace, unity, and national cohesion under intense pressure. That is why Nigerians insist that the country must return to the negotiation table for the nationalities to iron out divisive issues assailing their common existence. For instance, a situation whereby the country's security architecture is virtually in the hands of a section of the country and of a particular religion while almost all key government parastatals are headed by persons from the President's part of the country and of his religion (Islam) does not promote unity and much needed sense of oneness and egalitarianism (Igiebor, *e tal* : 2020:26).

3. *Proliferation of Regional Security Mechanisms.* The fatalities and deaths precipitated by armed Fulani herdsmen created avenue for the emergence of Amotekun in southwestern states and Eastern Security Network in southeastern states. Hence, the abysmal reluctance and failure of the federal enforcement agencies (Nigeria Police Force, Nigeria Security Civil Defense Corps and Department of State Security Service) to arrest and prosecute armed herders raping, maiming and killing in their host communities led to these regional security mechanisms. Again, Okowa (2021) remarked that the emergence of zonal security outfits and ethnic militias is an apparent indication that the federal security agencies have become either-ill-equipped, poorly funded or incapable to protect all citizens and increasing number of non-governmental organisations to ensure safety. In a similar perspective, Igiebor, *e tal* (2020) argued that the apparent collapse of security in the country has driven the different geo-political zones to resort to self-help by forming state or regional security outfits like the Western Nigeria Security Network, known as *Operation Amotekun* by South-west geo-political zone. Before the launch of Amotekun, no fewer than 23 states had established local security outfits like Civilian Joint Task Force, CJTF, in the Northeast to augment efforts of security agencies. Also, the Fulani herdsmen hitherto known for their smiles and simplicity, turned to Ak47- marauding monsters. In the southeast, they entered farms and consciously harvested people's crops and fed to their cows. They killed, raped and robbed in their wake. These activities inflamed IPOB to form the Eastern Security Network, ESN to defend Southeast against the rampaging herdsmen attacks. When faced with herdsmen attacks, the victim said that the federal government – controlled security agencies spurned their grief and protected the Fulani herdsmen. The Southeast governors became impotent figure head or chief security officers of their states. Governor David Umahi of Ebonyi State's defection from PDP to the ruling APC, did not save his Ebonyi people from massacre by herdsmen. The northern flank of Enugu were taken over by herdsmen and villagers massacred in their farms. In Anambra, the herdsmen

made incursions from the northern border with Kogi state, killing, raping and robbing. Abia and Imo states did not fare better as farmers were visited with strange violence. In the midst of this conundrum, IPOB came to judgment. They were said to have put their lives on the line in defence of farmers. They entered forests forcefully taken over by the herdsmen, and flushed them out. So IPOB's ESN become heroes; liberators and filled the vacuum of security personnel.

4. Euphoria and Quest for Self-Determination The Nigeria nation-state is currently plagued in torrents of separatist's call for referendum and self-determination. Most recently, separatist agenda is vigorously promoted in the South west with call for Oduduwa Republic from Nigeria federation. The quest for self-determination against Nigerian state culminated in mass protest and civil disobedience where thousands of Yoruba youths marched in major streets of Ibadan, Lagos, Akure, Abeokuta calling for the liberation of the Oduduwa descendents from the domination and oppression of the Fulani-Caliphate in guise of Nigeria state. The overwhelming influence of Indigenous People of Biafra has virtually usurped the sovereignty of state governments in Eastern Nigeria, particularly the Southeast. For instance in protest for the unconditional release of its leader, Nnamdi Kanu who is currently facing treasonable trail instituted against him by the federal government, Monday stay-at-home directive was issued beginning from August 4th till date, to further lend more regional value to the demand. South easterners amid fear obeyed the IPOB directive in view of closure of Markets, Banks, public institutions despite repeated threat and plea by the state governors in the region. Also, the Eastern Security Network in collaboration with Forest Guards in recent months has successfully confronted the armed herders in forest farm lands in the East. In addition, Aminu, et al (2021) documents that the federal government accused the Eastern Security Network of being responsible for burning down government facilities, killing of police officers and other security agents. This is in addition to the burning of private residences including the touching of the house of the Imo State Governor, Chief Hope Uzodinma in his Awo Omamma community. The allegation by the federal government and its agencies in alliance with state government in the Zone, led to the killing of Igbo youths in the melee that followed. Several youths branded members of IPOB or ESN have been mowed down by security agents in rather controversial circumstances. While the government claimed to have killed IPOB members, and commanders of ESN, allegation of extrajudicial killings are rife, with many saying that the security agents are killing, maiming and destroying at the their whim. We had expected that the arrest and detention of the IPOB leader, Nnamdi Kanu, by the government would have bought some sanity to the zones. But it appears things are not improving. The number of security agencies on the roads, searching, frisking and harassing innocent citizens in the name of looking for IPOB/ESN members has not abetted.

5. Call for Nigerian President of Southern Extraction The Southern Governors Forum, SGF at Lagos in July, 2021 issued a six-point communiqué that reflected on issues of national importance. Remarkably, the governors irrespective of party affiliations unanimously resolved that power must shift to the South perhaps calling for Nigerian President of Southern extraction. This call was also part of the resolutions of Southern Governors' Forum recently in month of September, 2021 at Enugu. Beside the resonance call for

Southern President in 2023, the Enugu meeting rejected 3 percent and supported 5 percent share of the oil revenue to the host communities, rejected the ownership structure of Nigeria National Petroleum Company Limited, NNPC, advocated for full operationalization of regional security outfits, backed the collection of Value Added Tax, VAT etc. However, SGF's insistence on Nigerian President of Southern extraction was faulted by Northern Governors' Forum, NGF. In this vein, Lateef (2021), writes that the SGF reiterated their earlier position that the next President of Nigeria must come from Southern part of Nigeria in line with politics of equity, justice and fairness. These renaissance moves by the southern governors no doubt created anxious moments for different stakeholders in the Nigerian project, particularly the northern governors and other northern elite groups that view the position of the southern governors as direct affront on the north, which may turn out as ultimate losers should the southern governors have their way. The new verve of the southern governors has however not found comfort with their own northern counterparts, who have called their own meetings to discuss and reject the resolutions of the Southern Governors Forum, especially as it concerned zoning the presidency to the south, the banning of open grazing, and the collection of VAT by states. The Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria, MACBAN, the umbrella body of Fulani cattle owners, whose activities had incensed a lot of the tension in the country, also weighed in. It described the resolutions of the Southern Governors meeting as confused and mischievous and that it amounted to "a call for secession". The Northern Governors' Forum led by Plateau State Governor, Simon Lalong, counters their southern counterparts on the issue of zoning the Presidency, the northern governors insisted that by its numerical strength, it is only the North that can decide where the Presidency will go in 2023.

These issues and realities as intense and divisive reflect the institutional failures which resonates the first earlier question, is quality of governance responsible for crisis of national integration in Nigeria? To this extent, Atiku (2020) argued that governance is a serious business; people must be prepared for leadership. Politics is supposed to be public service, but when actors use power for personal material aggrandizement, the ordinary citizens become disconnected from democracy. People lose interest to vote because they are convinced their votes won't count. Rigging elections produce leaders that don't feel accountable because they don't come to power by fair means. In a legal perspective to challenges of Nigeria governance, Nwankwo, and Udeobasi (2017) assert that the 1999 Nigerian constitution provides the yardstick for measuring good governance. Section 14(1) stated that Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be a state based on the principles of democracy and social justice. This is further strengthened in Section 16 (1 and 2) of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution. Section 16 (1) a, b, c and d, provided that the state shall, within the context of the ideals and objectives for which provisions are made in the constitution harness the resources of the nation and promote national prosperity and an efficient, dynamic and self-reliant economy. It further states that Section 16(2) states that, the state shall direct its policy towards the promotion of a planned and balanced economic development; that the material resources of the nation are harnessed and distributed as best as possible to serve the common good; that the economic system is not operated in such a manner as to permit the concentration of wealth or the means of production and exchange in the hands of few

individuals or of a group; and that suitable and adequate shelter, suitable and adequate food, reasonable national minimum living wage, old age care and pensions, and unemployment, sick benefits and welfare of the disabled are provided for all citizens. However this has remained a mirage.

Subsequently, the illusion of functional governance in response to the expectations of national integration in Nigeria is articulated below: (a) The challenges of national unity are derived from general discontent with the quality of governance, frustration and disappointment of the citizenry who feel betrayed by those they elected into power and anger, raw anger, at the deplorable state of the nation. (b) Bad governance at different level of government is a major contributory factor to disunity in the country. Bad governance is what results when; (c) a state, "based on the principles of democracy and social justice" (as Nigeria is described in Section 14 (1) of the 1999 Constitution as amended) fails to uphold in all its operation, "the principles of democracy and social justice".(d) When a Government fail to fulfill its "primary purpose" which according to Section 14(2) (b) of the 1999 Constitution is to provide the security and welfare of the people. (e) Ethnicity or tribalism and nepotism in governance. (f) Lop-sidedness in power sharing (marginalization of some sections of the country). (g) Corruption and lack of accountability. (h) Lack of political will is another factor responsible for current disunity in the country. The absence of the "political will" to devise a constitution that will support true federalism in view of the fact that 1999 constitution (as amended) centralizes political and economic powers in the federal government and emasculates the states by denying them powers to secure their own territories and control of their natural resources for development of their territories and people. (i). The disenchantment and alienation of the teaming population of youths is another disuniting factor. They feel hard done by the current climate of hopelessness, massive unemployment, insecurity of lives and property, poor quality disruption ridden- education system, inaccessibility to quality health care, rising cost of living and a ruling class living extravagantly in the face of the widening gulf between the rich and the poor. (j) Finally, another cause of disunity is growing lack of faith in the electoral process which has resulted in massive apathy and self-disenfranchisement prevalent during elections. People feel their vote do not count and have, therefore sunk into disillusionment, resentment and resignation (Okowa, 2021:5).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The ripple effects of dysfunctional governance at every level of social engagement have continued to militate against the expectations of social justice, equity and fairness which remain the core values of national integration. The discourse begins with introductory analysis and depth conceptual explication on governance and national integration. It adopted and applied systems behavioural theory to argue that the crisis of national integration is a function of governance failures which emanate from institutional inadequacies. Furthermore, the discourse illustratively established the nexus between challenges of political leadership and national unity in Nigeria.

Accordingly, the discourse articulated basic recommendations designed in two perspectives in credence to the second question, *what are the fundamental governance measures to stem the tides of crisis of national integration in Nigeria?* In response to this

question, the two perspectives obvious as fundamentals and imperatives are outlined below:

The fundamentals: (a) The elite in Nigerian government at every tier of political authority should know that *governance* is very instrumental in achieving sense of nationhood in a heterogeneous Nigerian state. In other words, governance should be structured and streamlined in manner that reinforces the core values of participation, inclusiveness, openness, fairness and rule of law in the conduct and dispositions of government. (b) The importance of adherence to the provisions of the Constitution of Federal Republic remains pivotal for national integration. The elite in Nigerian government at every layer of governance should be reminded that the primary purpose of government is safety of lives and properties of Nigerians. And, no Nigerian should be unjustly treated or discriminated against because of his or her background and, most importantly, the affairs of governance should not be conducted in a way that promote sectional interest and domination against the national interest. (c) The elite in Nigerian government at every structure of jurisdiction should be reminded that governance premised on principles of constitutionalism, rule of law, sense of responsibility and accountability elicits public trust, confidence and support. Public confidence and support (not partisan or mobilized) support is key to the image of government and reinforces its capacity to respond efficiently to state plights and expectations.

The imperatives: (a) The collaboration between the Federal government and Nigerian Governors Forum, NGF should be strengthened on divisive issues of national importance such as security, grazing routes, value added tax etc. These issues can be effectively managed through strengthened relations guided on sense of responsibility, national consciousness, fairness and constitutionalism. (b) The Federal government should show more commitment to tackle myriad of insecurity challenges and curtail the fatalities of herders-farmers crisis. This has become imperative to national survival. (c) There is need for Federal Character Commission to conduct its affairs in accordance to its statutory mandate and provisions of the constitution. This can only be realized when the federal government showed reasonable disposition to ensure that regions and ethnic nationalities are adequately represented in national institutions of Nigeria. (d) The call for secessions or separatist agenda can be amicably resolved through sincerity and dialogue. The elite in national organs of governance should be sincere to acknowledge the fact that 'things have fallen apart and the centre can no longer hold'. And, this acknowledgement should be preceded by genuine process to address these problems and call for regional conservation to strengthen national unity. (e) The Federal Police should be properly funded and equipped with modern kits of enforcement to perform its statutory duties optimally. (f) On the issue of the call for Nigeria President of Southern extraction, the elite in government of Southern states should be honest to acknowledge the fact that the Constitution of Federal Republic did not make provision for zonal presidency or rotational presidency between the North and South however the position of the Nigerian president is negotiated. Hence, the politics of who contest or become Nigerian President is facilitated by regional bargaining and alliance. In other words, the political elite in the South should refrain for further insistence on 'Nigeria President of Southern extraction' but rather explore plausible ways to bargain and gain the support of the elite in government of Northern states in the

interests of equity, fairness and national unity. (g) The National Orientation Agency should wake from statutory slumber. The federal enlightenment agency should be adequately funded to perform its statutory and constitutional responsibilities. This is an era for national reconciliation and rebirth. (h) Finally, Nigeria is currently facing myriad challenges threatening its existence as a nation-state. These problems can be effectively managed and mitigated through plausible governance measures for national integration.

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Biographical Note

Chibuike Emmanuel MADUBUEGWU is a doctoral candidate specializing in Government at Department of Political Science, Nnamdi Azikwe University, Awka NIGERIA. Email: totlechi@gmail.com

Chinedu Augustine MADUEKWE is a Postgraduate student, specializing in Welfare Policies and Management at Department of Political Science, Lund University, Lund SWEDEN. Email: maduekwechinedu2404@gmail.com