

# National Integration and Challenges of Nation Building in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** Nigeria is a heterogeneous entity with diverse ethnic and cultural affinity, the invasion of British colony among various ethnic nationalities was independent at its own pace. The Nigeria state opted for a stable multi-ethnic nation but the complex nature anchored on ethnic diversity, uneven distribution of resources without accountability due to institutional arrangements and quest for leadership baton has relegated national integration to the background. The paper examines integration and nation building to autocracy, inclusive, exclusive and approaches to democratic principle. The apparatus of democratic institution has not promoted stability in the multi-ethnic nation of Nigeria, national integration can only be achieved if government institution with the backbone of federal character principle, national boundary commission, revenue mobilization and fiscal commission takes pride of its place. The challenges of national integration can be tackled when the constitutional democracy inculcate tolerance among one another to enhance national development.

**Keywords:** national integration, politics, democracy and representation.

## Introduction

The political independence of 1960 clamour for stability in a secular state of Nigeria, but the parochial hegemony from various sects and the aggressive quest for national cake has put national integration in a tight corner. The British colony struggled for national integration to ensure a viable democratic-state, but the problem is still on the nature of our ethnic configuration (Nwankwo, 1992). Nigeria is a postgraduate of political instability, coup d'états, threats for secession, and outbreaks of ethnic and sectarian violence (Maier, 2000). Evidently, all these have not disintegrated Nigeria as a sovereign state, but presently with the situation on ground the foundation of the nation is shaking and quaking. The institutions like federal character commission, national boundary commission; national orientation agency, National Youth Service Corps among others that could have serve as avenue to promote national integration proves abortive. The frequent crisis experience in Nigeria is a manifest of minority question, religious conflicts, ethnic politics and struggle for resource control; this gave rise to sectarian militia and pressure groups in the entire geo-political zone for national cake. The passion in various ethnic groups is that the social matrix is disjointed with chorus of session; this has led to restructuring or sovereign national conference (SNG) on several occasions. The ethno-religious and communal conflicts globally contend that self-government reduce conflict, while undemocratic process escalate the level of conflicts (Kynlicks, 1999).

The political liberation in the democratic process gave rise for unusual form of expression but the joy of democracy embrace negotiation in resolving conflicts (Babawale, 2000). The military governance addresses the extreme and extra-ordinary violent aggression, discipline and hierarchy oriented to law and order while democracy values, freedom, equality, diversity, contradictions and competitions, persuasion, negotiation and nation building (Ake cited in Kukah, 2000). The objective of this paper is to analyze the effect of national integration and challenges of nation building in Nigerian citizens.

## Clarification of Concepts

### National Integration

Many scholars conceptualize national integration as a plural society where component parts are reasonably contempt in the polity vis-à-vis equity and justice in resource allocation and access to equal opportunities (fifty-fifty equity share of national cake). Nigerians cannot foster peace and unity on a faulty foundation of political marginalization in all the regions. National integration is a cultural phenomenon tied to the development of a state, the foundation of Nigeria state was bread and buttered on British ambit with the motive of oneness but problem of consensus brought numerous political problems that pitched one ethnic group against another. National integration in post-colonial era is an effort for all the political enclave to foster peace and unity (Mamdani, 1996, Anderson, 1991). According to Duverger (1976), national integration is a process for unifying a society that tends to make

harmonious entity based on the order of its members for harmonious relationship. Jacob and Tenue (1964) assert that national integration is the relationship of a community among people within the same political entity, a state of mind or disposition to coalesce, act together for mutual programmes. Morrison et al. (1972) state that national integration is a process by which members of a social system (citizen) develop linkages and location so that the boundaries of the system persist over time and sub-systems become less consequential to affect behavior. In this process members of the social system develop an escalating sequence of contact, cooperation, consensus and communality. In Nigeria, national integration is a specific problem that creates sense of territorial nationality to eliminate subordinate parochial loyalties. It is presumed as an ethnic plural society in which every group is characterized by its own language or other self-conscious cultural qualities. National integration discontinues the tensions on horizontal plane for creating a homogeneous progressive reduction of cultural and regional territorial political community (Bamiseye, 2003). Similarly, Etzioni (1965) argued that a community is bound to be cohesive if it controls the means of violence, decision making capable to affect the allocation of resources and this focus on political identification of its citizenry. The concept of national integration has not clarified what the end product would look like and how one would recognize an integrated polity. The cohesive norms denote that an integrated political federal unit is irrelevant to integration (Neuman, 1967). Karl et al. (1966) define national integration as the attainment of a community sense within a territorial institution that is strong enough to assure a dependable expectation of peaceful community. Deutsch et al. (1966) describe the sense of community belief on part of individuals or group to agree on one-point, common problems can be resolved on the process of peaceful change, in this context change means resolving problems without resorting to large scale physical force. However, in national integration, it is not a question of being right but a matter of agreeing in a defined concept of rigorous testing. Iweriebor (1990) argue that the criterion for national integration involve stable leadership, transport and communication networks, national education, pedagogical nationalism and civil society. Suberu (1999) describe functional public policy on national unity on one hand and broad political ideology shaped on integration on the other hand. These policies have been conceived as contradictory, ineffective, counter-productive and repressive, even when the policy is well-intentioned in its entirety. Nigeria is a threshold of political stage-managed crisis of national unity; the institution has not support democratic values. the approach has been on party patronage on the basis of ethnic and tribal chauvinism, lopsided religious appointment and exclusion of aspirants from the opposition parties (Joseph, 1991). In Nigeria, the political process is always conquest for political power where the winner takes it all and the loser with zero-sum game stands at ease. The approach of nation building is where the elected leaders operate all-inclusive in the government institutions, instead of the leaders to work in tandem to stabilize democracy the result is always instability and chaos in a plural state.

### **Nation Building**

Nation building has also been given a plethora of definitions, in the words of Ndolo, (2005), nation building is the process of political socialization of the people to become good citizens to enhance political order to help citizens have a stake in the worth for fighting for the interest of the nation. Erundu and Obasi (2000) argue that nation building is a process of mobilizing available resources human, material and financial for socio-economic and political developments of a nation state. For instance, Ilo (2011) argue that nation building is a project that involves the psycho-social reconstruction of individuals to infuse the people who differ widely in language and shared identity. Nwolise cited in Ilo, (2011) argues that progressive transformation of the environment and increase in the quality of things that enhance good life in the socio-economic aspect of national life. Nzongola (1987), conceived that nation building establish national identity to transcend ethnic, regional and other particularistic ties. It promotes national integration through exchange and cultural integration by all segments of the population and develop national culture through educational and cultural activities. This concept was shared by Nwabughuogu (2014), as the process of developing national consciousness among individuals and groups to cultivate a sense of love for a given nation and to accept this commitment to a nation-state. He further contends that nation building involves the creation of favorable environment that will sustain the sense of love developed by individuals and group of a nation-state. However, nation-building normally involve the creation of impressive elements of organization (political, social and economic) that characterize a modern state like good roads, water supply, educational and health facilities, efficient communication, job opportunities amongst others make citizens develop love for their country. Similarly, Elaigwu (2011), argues that the process of nation building does not involve the transfer of commitment and loyalty' from parochial levels of ethnic groups to larger political units like Nigeria. It widens the horizons of identity on parochial units to large units such as the state. He classifies nation building in two dimensions: The vertical dimension is closely linked with general acceptance of the legitimacy of the state not merely because of its coercive powers. In such state, the people see the government as the status symbol of their political community. While the horizontal dimension incorporates other members of the civil society equal members of a corporate nation. This confers some sense of belonging and loyalty to the political community. In sum, nation building is the crave for nationhood, statehood, and selfhood i.e. a political community where the members will have inalienable access to the good things of life on equal basis and where there is harmonious living, intermingling of cultures and co-existence of inhabitants.

### **The Evolution of National Integration in Nigeria**

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The problem of national integration in Nigeria is not different from other nation colonized in Africa but because the continent was a victim of industrial revolution in Europe mid-19<sup>th</sup> century expand their mercantilist interest to Africa. This was on the heels of slave trade which Europe purported in African as major sources of trade. The abolition of slave trade makes way to legitimate trade on agricultural products and other raw materials to feed their industries at home. The periphery partition Africa in areas of influence among European powers during the era of effective occupation without resorting to people's culture, religion and language. Many ethnic nationalities were merged to one political entity as a sovereign nation without anything in common by European to liberate many African states evolved. The emergence of African states has been national integration at the point of decolonization, the nationalist movements was overwhelmed by primordial sentiments to their ethnic backgrounds. There has been perpetual subversion among the elite of these ethnic nations to contest for power as life and death. In Nigeria, the process of decolonization was not spared; the emergence of Northern People's Congress (NPC) with the motto "one north, one people, one destiny" was declared on distrust in the National council for Nigeria and Cameroon predominantly by Igbo elite, the formation of Egba omo oduduwa an offshoot of Action Group was the political platform of Yorubas. This was a case in many other Africa countries like Congo, Sudan, Algeria; Ghana amongst others. The elite groomed by the colonial masters accept modernity as development and displayed unbridled enthusiasm in importing western value institutions, technology, manpower and policies. They failed to institute an indigenous and independent economic base, consequently, the transition from colonialism to independence impact little economic sense because the vestiges of the colonial economy were intact and transferred to the post-colonial era.

In 1899 the British revoked Charter of the Royal Niger Company; the 1914 process bring several ethnic, linguistic, cultural groups and communities together to attain different levels of economic and political development. These strategies produce state structure subservience to imperialism with metropolitan interest (Ekekwe, 1986). This state structure lay emphasize on integration which encouraged specialized regional production to meet the needs of the metropolitan economy. Shively (2003) states that Nigeria like other colonies was not constructed for internal cohesion, but administrative convenience of the British. The state assumed the status of a supreme institution capable of intervening in three regions of North, East and West. The ruling class met a structure without modification; they use state paraphernalia to accumulate surplus without going through the process of producing surplus. The contradiction institutionalized ethnic leadership with political outlook (Nnoli, 1979). Ake (1981) observed that the indigenous leaders in political offices has little economic base, this contradiction between economic and political power becomes a source of interest as rulers use it to have political power and create economic base to consolidate their economic power. The violence spread rural-urban migration and anarchy eroded with legitimacy and this led to the first military coup of 1966. The collapse of 1st Republic was inability of the elite to integrate its citizen, the Northern People's Congress (NPC) lack legitimacy in the west and this could not restore social order within the region. The Nigeria National Democratic Party that won elections in the west was legitimate in the area due to the way they won and lost elections. The Deputy leader of NNDP and Deputy Premier of the western region state before the elections that whether the electorate voted for the NNDP or not that they will win (Dudley, 1998). This was in operation above members of the civil society and raises legitimacy crises for state to create gullies among citizens and their leaders.

### **Theoretical Framework:**

This framework adopted for this paper is national and social integration as propounded in 1950s, 1960s by Karl Deutsch, Charles Tilly and Reinhard Bendix. The theory described the process to establish modern nation-state distinct from various traditional states like feudal, dynastic, church states and empires. Friedrich (1963), states that integration as architectural metaphor involves the existence of conscious acting agents like architects, engineers, carpenters amongst others. The political scientists used it to cover unconscious strategies initiated by state leaders to unplanned societal changes to enhance national integration. Rokkan's model and Smith (1986) assert that integration has analytically aspects as follows:

- a) Economic and cultural unification of elite
- b) The larger sectors of the masses in system through conscription in army and compulsory schools. The bourgeois mass media that create channel of contact between the elites and periphery generate widespread feelings of identity with political system at large.
- c) The phase that brought people to active participation in political system.
- d) The state expands public welfare services established while nationwide policies for equal economic conditions were designed. In Nigeria, the process commenced with western civilization to national integration as a modern state.

Nigeria federalism claims to be secular state enmeshed in religious upheavals by adopting sharia in some northern parts of the country. The management of a federal system in a multi-ethnic Nigerian is like a prescription of the chemist than crudity of alchemist (Ilesanmi, 2001, Otubanjo, 1986). Managing federal system is delicate balancing that requires flexibility and rigidity in operating the unambiguous principles. The power sharing, privileges and liabilities must follow agreed principles; the problem inhibiting national integration in Nigeria is the absence of self-sufficient, political and ideological commitment to the concept of

federalism. A federal state that is unable to resolve equity formula on revenue sharing has no status to be a state ((Frank, 1986, Ayoade and Osaghae, 1984, Friedrich, 1963).

### **Federal Character Principle and National Integration in Nigeria**

Consequently, it has been ascertained that federal character principle in section 14(3) of 1979 & 16 (3) of 1999 is the epiphany in Nigeria's troubled federal theology aimed at redressing historical imbalance and integrates the country. The attempt was to balance the ethnic groups to create a virile and united nation; the exercise has turned out to be a mere substitute for substance (Osuntokun, 2000). The intent of this concept carries unchallengeable national integration mandate to re-examine the application of federal character principle. It gives equal weight to opposite principles as the concept of irreducibility, no Nigerian should feel aggrieved or excluded on the grounds of his/her place of origin, sex religion or ethnic group, it has to be ethnic equation in the main institution of the state. The federal character principle has got it right but pushed irreducible principle aside. The principle of irreducibility has shown signs of head on collusion with the co-principle of irrespective. Nigerians are discriminated against on account of ethnicity in education and economic spheres. This does not make loyalty to Nigeria state to bring the much needed integration (Jinadu, 2007). The federal character is a doctrine of emancipated elite in civil services, armed forces and business circles. This has little relevance to national integration problems of Nigeria as practiced in second republic (1979-1983) of Shagari regime, Abacha regime and present 4<sup>th</sup> republic, the principle focusses on the dominance of ruling class through patronage (ISS Roundtable, 2002). The constitutional provision of federal character and zoning system within the confine of political parties appoint trusted prebendals, clients hang on strategic offices who in turn manipulated their powers to allocate contracts, import license, access bank loans, and fertilizers. The control of state power at the centre was by the ruling class this enhanced leverage through patron-client alliance that cut across ethno-regional and religious cleavages, but appropriated federal character principle to ensure hegemony at all levels (Leadership, 2008). Nigeria successive governments expose the limitations of federal character principle mechanism to enhance national integration and participatory democracy in plural societies. The weakness of federal character as practiced in Nigeria enthrone mediocrity at the expense of meritocracy in the aegis of equal representation and national unity; this allows ethno-regional patrons and clients to exploit state resources without contributing to nation building. The focus on regional and ethnic representation exacerbates differentiation instead of mutual trust, accommodation and national integration (Onimejisin 2005). Although federal character principle is a mechanism to address Nigeria's national question arising from the British colonial policies of divide and rule and even development. The political class that inherits power since independence manipulates state power through ethno-regional, religious and sectarian cleavages for its selfish ends. The federal character achieves the aim of integration on the values of the elite, this has kept the territory together with the present structure and provides support for central authority, this has succeeded in widening the elite gap because the consensus value necessary for national integration is poor (Alabi, 2004).

Ojo (1999) and Popoola (2002) argued that the chronic bane of federal character principle in Nigeria invade the integrity and standards of public bureaucracy such that other government institutions require safeguards from the ravage of politics. The result has not promote national loyalty but inertia, and alienation from states and communities that suffered federal character discrimination become resentful from the body politics. Ojo (1999) assert that competent people are disqualified on the altar of statism and other spurious criteria cannot erect unity of the nation. The federal character principle has exacerbated division among Nigerians rather than uniting them, President Obasanjo administration lack institutional arrangement to improve the position of marginalized ethnic groups despite calls for decentralization, Yar'adua and Jonathan government did not deviate from the approach of nepotism and favoritism, all this has failed to resolve ethnic diversity for national integration (Ogunbanjo and Ayandiji, 2001). The concept of federal character principle has done more harm than good to the fragile unity of Nigeria; it has rob peter to pay paul but automatically this settling payment cannot unite peter and paul.

### **The Politics of Inclusion and National Integration in Nigeria**

Most institutions in Nigeria by progressive military governments have pursued inclusionary approach to national integration. In 1967, Gowon creates a balanced federal arrangement by creating twelve states, boundary adjustment continues on Murtala and Obasanjo era. In 1976, more 19 states were created with 301 local government councils, the three-regional arrangement did not represent the contending ethnic groups with boundary adjustment. The Gowon regime watered the principle of derivation formula for horizontal revenue allocation and reduced the proportion of DPA allocated to states on derivation (Enahoro, 2002). The fiscal centralization continued in Murtala/Obasanjo era, the 1977-1978 Aboyade committee recommends that all federal revenue in a single account of 60% allocation to central government, 30% to state government and 10% to local council (Suberu, 1999). This recommendation was rejected but later incorporated in 1979 constitution to strengthen exclusive power of federal tier among other tier of government. In ethnic representation and resource distribution, the record that pursued the exclusionary approach was mixed; but Balewa government took a bold step in 1963 to adjust the federal structure by carving out mid-west from the western region. The restructuring did not balance; this was an attempt by Hausa-Fulani oligarchy to weaken the Yoruba in western region.

The Mid-west region was the abode of southern minorities believed to be on the influence of Yorubas. It is important to excise them on the Yoruba mainstream politics to whittle down the political strength of Yoruba nation. However, the national boundary commission failed to address the hegemonic position of the northern region because Balewa boundary adjustment ignored the grievances of the minorities in northern and eastern regions. The spirit of federal character principle for National Party of Nigeria (NPN) under Shagari in 1979 devised structural arrangements to make second republic more representatives on ethnic diversity in Article 21 of the NPN constitution, zoning system was used by the party in recognition of the need for adequate geographical spread (Iweriebor, 1990, Nwankwo, 1992).

### **Concluding Remarks**

Nigerians needs political restructuring especially in revenue sharing, extensive decentralization of power to reduce much power concentrated at the centre. There is need for a different governance approach that guarantee groups' rights recognizing heterogeneity of the polity. Sustainable democracy will embrace national integration on the marble of equity and justice; it is difficult to reform democratization without arresting internal democracy. Regular constitutional review has failed to address the structural imbalance in Nigeria, since the inception of the administration on May 29, President Obasanjo and late Yar'adua persist and kept deaf ears on call for sovereign national conference. The presidential committee on 1999 constitution has the interest for decentralizing and protecting the minority rights is null and void. Commitment to curb corruption: The march to national integration came with unaccountability and transparency, poor state of economy, infrastructural decay and electoral malpractice. National integration in Nigeria should focus on institutions allergic to equal representation on sectional groups to promote political culture that inculcates tolerance and inclusion as a mechanism for power shift in a decentralized state.

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