ETHNIC CONFLICT: A CHALLENGE TO INCLUSIVE SOCIO- POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The extent to which ethnic nationalities are able to effectively manage the interplay of ethnic differences determines to what extent a multi-ethnic nation develops without crisis. Historically Nigeria has come a long way from multi-ethnic entity with political differences and background to the amalgamation of 1914 till the present structure of thirty-six states. Ethnicity, no doubt has contributed immensely to ethnic conflicts in Nigeria because of long standing revulsion or resentments towards ethnic groups different from one's own or fear of domination which can as well lead ethnic groups to resort to violence as a means to protect and preserve the existing ethnic groups. ethnicity in Nigeria, is a product inequality among the various ethnic groups orchestrated by a long period of colonialism; a period which witnessed the ascendancy of three major ethnic groups to the socio-political domination of other ethnic groups and a period when the three major ethnic groups were used as a pedestal for the distribution of socio-political goods, resulting in the inability of other ethnic groups to access these socio-political goods. Considering the relationship between ethnicity and development; socio-political exclusion is not only ethically dangerous to development but also economically unproductive. Hence, there is a need for the adoption of inclusive governance to manage ethnicity in Nigeria. Notwithstanding, ethnic conflict still persists and an attempt will be made in this study to identify the reasons.

Keywords; Ethnic Conflicts, Ethnic Nationalities, Ethnicity, Violence and Development

Introduction

The International Day of Peace which was established by a United Nations resolution in 1982, and marked every year on September 21, is a global event whose activities are significant in highlighting the worldwide efforts toward conflict resolution and peace building. However this day is more relevant to the continent of Africa where most conflicts have taken place, with some running for decades, and seem to have defied every proffered solution. Therefore, from the perspective of socio-political and economic instability, Africa is seen as a drifting continent.

Since independence in 1960, Nigeria has witnessed a period of unforeseen sociopolitical and economic instability as well as bloodshed. This is partly due to the petty- bourgeois origins of Nigerian nationalism and the politicization of ethnicity in the polity. Like the national formations on the Indian subcontinent, the political formation of Nigeria came into being alongside several contextual socio-economic and political factors; the fear of domination, economic exploitation, social and sometimes religious discrimination

The amalgamation in effect, produced two Nigeria with different social, political, economic and cultural backgrounds and development within the country. Some of the independent nation-states, kingdoms and communities that were thus combined included Kanem Bornu, the Sokoto caliphate, all in the present day Northern Nigeria; the city states of the Niger-Delta; the largely decentralized Igbo-speaking people of the South East; the old Benin Empire as well as the Yoruba Empire of Oyo, which had once been one of the most powerful states on the West African Coast. What the imperial government thought to be advantageous to them; today has come to be a major problem for the socio-political development of Nigeria. In other words, its artificial origin, coupled with other socio-political and economic factors, bequeathed it with a number of fundamental problems, which have turned to be the challenge of her socio-political and economic development.

With the adoption of Richard's constitution in 1946, Nigeria was divided into three unequal regions (North, West and East). The Mid-Western Region was created in 1964.Political parties were thus, formed and maintained throughout the colonial era on regional and ethnic basis. Then, urban centres were formed, culminating the dispersal of people of the three major ethnic groups into different areas in the country, hence the question of exclusivism rocking the unity of the country today.

During the colonial era Nigerians only spoke with one voice perhaps to fight the common enemy "colonialism", with each ethnic group having a different agenda which surfaced after the flag of independence was raised in 1960. Competitive elections and Africanization of the bureaucracy began to make ethnicity increasingly important as the basis for political support and access to higher levels of state in Nigeria after independence. Nigeria today is beset with strings of socio-political problems which stem from the lop-sided nature of the political divisions in the country, the uneven socioeconomic development and the type of federal system and the spirit in which it operates.

Post-independence Nigeria was turbulent and was marked by a succession of sociopolitical crises, as parties and ethnic groups violently struggled for political power and resources of the centre; embroiling the institutions of the state in a battle against each other. Due to the lack of tolerance among politicians (ethnic groups) and their unwillingness to abide by the rule of fair play in governance, political instability engulfed the newly independent state of Nigeria. Thus; the first phase of government under the leadership of the then Head of State, Nnamdi Azikiwe and Prime Minister, Tafawa Balewa was prematurely brought to an abrupt end in 1966 when the military assumed control through a coup widely regarded as ethnically motivated. The first military government headed by late General Aguiyi Ironsi who ethnically belongs to the Igbo ethnic group was soon brought to an end six months later through a coup by Northern officers. The second coup was seen as revenge resulting in the death of Aguiyi Ironsi and some southern officers.

Ethnicity therefore, assumed an added dimension and the forces that it generated plunged the country, first, into the secession of the East, and then, the bitter civil war of 1967-1 970 that engulfed the country when Colonel Ojukwu tried to carve the State of Biafra out of the former Eastern Region of Nigeria. Military governance came briefly to an end in 1979 to give room for a civilian government with constitutional provision for the American presidential system of government. In 1984 the military under Gen. Buhari (1984-1 985) again came into power. For another period of 15 years Nigeria witnessed the military governments of Gen. Babangida (1985-1993) Gen. Sanni Abacha (1993-1997) Gen. Abubakar Abdusalami (1997-1999) as well as a brief period of Interim National Government headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan (August-November 1993). Of course this period (1985-1999) witnessed the process of subdividing the country into smaller units all in an attempt to curtail ethnic conflicts.

When Nigeria's socio-political and economic failure is examined, it becomes evident that ethnic conflict is central to its current developmental syndrome. It seems to thrive in uncompromising and confrontational social and political environments. The endless images of this are irreconcilable differences and struggles between groups over access to socio-political and economic power and the opportunities that go with them. It is a negative force that is utterly destructive to civil society and consensus building. It negates socio-political development, undermines a country's economic stability and flouts the rule of law. Glickman (1995) however links ethnicity to political processes. He points out that despite the persistent ethnic conflicts in the politics of African states – including Nigeria – significant liberalization and democratization leading to socio-political development is possible. In other words it can be a required ingredient for the realization of socio-political and economic integration if it is properly appropriated.

The problem of ethnicity as it emerged under the auspices of colonialism ensured that Nigerians had no control over the central power and often were kept divided into administrative districts. The colonization of Nigeria ensured that people of diverse culture were brought together to form one country. Most of these were not properly integrated into their new states. The implication of this is that the Nigeria state was unable to create an overlapping national interest which would have disregarded parochial and group interests even after many years of independence, hence the instrumentality of colonialism to ethnic conflict in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, the colonialists provided the urban setting which constitutes the cradle of contemporary ethnicity. The British colonialist, while pretending to carry out a mission of uniting the warring ethnic groups consciously and systematically separated the various Nigerian people thereby creating an atmosphere of social-political and economic conflict. According to the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) on behalf of United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in 2000 found that ethnicity is the strongest type of identity among urban Nigerians. Almost half of all Nigerians (48.2%) choose to tag themselves with an ethnic identity. In other words ethnic conflict is more pronounced in the urban areas.

Paper Problem
Inequalities (socio-economic) among the various ethnic groups as orchestrated by a long period of colonial administration (1860-1960) have made Nigeria a cynosure of ethnic conflicts. The central issue is that the social formation of Nigeria which is basically ethnically heterogeneous and by implication a multi-cultural society may result in a high potentiality for lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion and fear and in addition a high tendency towards violent confrontation for various socio-political reasons.
Ethnic conflict has arisen out of this context of mutual fear and suspicion over distribution of socio-political and economic goods and lack of cordiality. Thus the inability of every ethnic group to access socio-political and economic goods continues to impact negatively on the force of national integration and cohesion. It is a product of the long history of unequal access to power, resources and opportunities among the different ethnic groups in the country. Thus the demands of such a challenge are exacting.

Significantly, this context has led to open confrontation and conflict because the stressful condition of the body polity raised questions that challenge the very basis on which the political community – modern Nigeria – is organized. This prompts the question, 'is ethnicity in Nigeria an invention of the people or of colonialism?' What raises this question is the fact that the various ethnic groups that constitute the pre- Nigeria state once co-existed socially and economically, hence the question of whether ethnicity is a social construct or a natural order?

Ethnic Incompatibility of States
The Nigerian federation, which started with 3 regions created by Richard's constitution in 1946, today can boast of 36 states and different ethnic groups within these states are still agitating for creation of their own states. Osaghae (1994:85) described Nigeria as a "disaggregative par excellence"; that is, a federation that started with a unitary system (considering its extreme centralization of social, political and economic resources Nigeria is still considered a unitary state) disaggregated into states. Arguably, the Nigerian federation is yet to determine the number of states suitable for the polity. For this reason, Nigeria can be described as a cell that is capable of dividing itself. However, state creation in Nigeria as an instrument of ethnic conflict management has not solved the problem of ethnicity.

However the above submission has not taken away the reason for which states were created in Nigeria. State creation no doubt, has helped to correct the regional imbalance in the federation. Psychologically it has had a positive impact on the people which are the reason why there are still conflicts within these states. Generally the belief is that states have become the major means through which the various ethnic groups articulate their grievances and it is through states that groups share in the proverbial national

cake, which takes the form of socio-economic and political opportunities that come through these states. However, the people who benefit from this state largesse are a small proportion of the populace, political leaders in particular. This is why politicians see state creation as more important than national integration and socio-political development and the reason for which people still agitate for state creation.

The socio-economic and political factors that explain whether states within the ambit of the Nigeria federation are at risk is not only their ethnic characteristics but also the conditions that favours conflict within these states. These include poverty, which is seen as the symbol or mark of a non-viability state, religion and most importantly the incompatibility of the ethnic groups that constitutes states socially and economically. It has been argued that a greater degree of ethnic diversity by itself make a country more prone to conflicts. In other words an ethnically divided state to be precise is more open to ethnic tension or antagonism with a debilitating implication on a sustainable sociopolitical development.

During the process of creating states, the ethnic composition of the people was not taken into consideration. As a result, ethnic groups were pitched against each other which accounts for why some ethnic groups within these states are still agitating for their own state. In Nigeria today, the only state that seems natural is Ekiti, which is linguistically, culturally and socially homogeneous. Other states are dominated by one group or the other. For example Ondo state in the South West is a multi-linguistic and multi-cultural state; the Ijaws are different in terms of language and culture from the Ondos, Owos, Akokos and Akure etc Within the Akokos there are more than 4 linguistically different groups.

In Delta state, basically there are Delta Igbo and Delta Urhobo who have always been in conflict over the allocation of socio-economic resources. In Kwara state there are people who should have been part of the Ekiti state. In fact they constitute a local government in the state. The same situation can be found in the North Central state of Plateau and Nasarawa where there are Birom, Angas, Yergam and the Hausas. In Benue there are Tiv, Idoma, Abakpa, Igede, Akweya etc. This is not to say that the creation of states is not a means to an end but the argument is that it sets the various ethno-linguistically different people against each other. In essence, the creation of states culminated in the emergence of 'majority' minority groups (Mustapha, 2003), where a number of ethnic minorities were brought together in a state thus creating conflict even among the minorities. This justifies the assertion of Gazar (cited in Ojo 2009) that marrying federalism and ethnicity suggests one similar solution to the problem of a state containing a number of ethnic groups with different languages cultures and religions. In his own contribution Mustapha (2006) posits that state creation in Nigeria has not curbed ethno-regionalism but has instead, restructured it and that it has made the states a rallying point for the three major ethnic groups.

Simply put regionalism under this system meant that a region (West, East or North) existed only for its citizens as all non-citizens were discriminated against virtually in all spheres of socio-political and economic life. Within the regions, the ethnic majorities (Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo) never give the ethnic minorities the chance to enjoy socio-political and economic rights like the majority. Although they belonged to the regions as well as to the federation, the minorities could never hope to rule both in the regions and at the centre. The implication of this is that if the institutions of a state favour one ethnic group among its citizenry, the only members of that group will feel themselves fully a part of the life of the state. True citizenship equality, therefore, is only realizable in a state that is based on civic peoplehood observed Levine (2013). Hence, their agitation for separate states, and more so foremost advocates of a strong federal system which, they reckoned could chunk the oppression of the majority-dominated regions.

Therefore it is not surprising that during colonial administration the anti-colonial political struggle in Nigeria was couched in the language of citizenship. Ethnic expressions gained meaning as the independent movements sought to mobilize the rural population in the liberation struggle. There are three major political parties in the era of decolonization; the Northern Peoples Congress the Action Group and the National Council for Nigerian Citizens; these political parties reflected ethnic configurations in their origin and character. Arguably the interaction of the twin-factors of the colonial antecedent and the direction of state policy combined to shape the nature of the post-colonial identity of Nigeria.

What the above portends is that post-colonial politics was destined to be ethnic because the mainstream of the nationalists mediated the link between the people and the post-colonial state through political ethnicities. For example when the country returned to civil rule 1979, all the political parties were ethnically inclined in their policies and programs, the states became separatist in character, placing primary emphasis on the welfare

of their citizens against non-citizens. In the West where the Unity Party of Nigeria controlled five states – old Oyo, Ondo, Bendel, Ogun and Lagos – non-citizens were excluded from enjoying the party's free education programme while, in many of the states, discriminatory fees were introduced for indigenes and non-indigenes (Osaghae, 1990). As it was in the regions, it became increasingly difficult for people to get employed in states other than their own and, where they got, they were in some cases given contract appointments.

Significantly the colonial policy of indirect rule under the native authority system which divided African society into two namely civic and native (ethnic) formed the basis for the creation of ethnic citizenship. The bifurcated native of African society created by colonial policy of divide and rule and the fact that ethnic identity formed the basis of a person's participation in the colonial society helped to create and sustain ethnic citizenship. This makes conflict resolution difficult and citizenship within the nation almost unmanageable. More importantly, the British Indirect Rule froze and conserved each group culturally and technically following the triumph of colonialism in 1900. Colonialism prevented mostly inter-regional co-operation between each group in regard to inter-group and cross-cultural leadership, hence, no mechanism for the making of socio-political development existed, these factors lead to the category of ethnicity based on inter-ethnic group rivalry. As matters turned out, ethnicity nurtures communal violence and ethno-religious conflicts in the country. Thus ethnic citizenship has its theoretical roots in cultural citizenship, and practically in colonial policy of divide and rule with each possessing a duality that is seemingly contradictory, universal citizenship emphasizing equality before the law, and cultural specificity which emphasizes socially constructed differences that can be used to claim distinct socio-political and economic rights. In post-colonial Nigeria the forces of regionalism loomed larger than ever, producing in their wake, the series of events such as political cynicism and regionalism, exacerbated by the North having greater influence than the West and East combined. There were strikes, and political instability in the West. In January 1966 there was a coup headed by officers of Eastern origin, followed by another coup staged by the Northern officers, which eventually led to the collapse of the First Republic and the subsequent civil war. In an attempt to ensure peace and stability as well as national unity the forces of regionalism was destroyed by dividing the country into states. As explained earlier in this work though regionalism seems to have been destroyed with states creation but what has emerged today is as much force as regionalism had, and, in some cases, with greater force. In a broad-spectrum however, the emergence of states is as similar as regionalism this is because the states always ensure the full protection of their socio-political and economic interests, serving only their citizens. As before, non-citizens are discriminated against and denied citizenship rights even though they – citizen of other ethnic group –perform duties required of them. This is the present threat to citizenship in Nigeria as well as socio-political development. Citizenship principles as it applies to most states (ethnic groups in Nigeria) do not accord citizen equal rights in the state. This is because it also tends to exclude those who have not been endowed with full citizens' rights. The people that come under this category are often referred to as settlers or non-indigenes; as the case in Nigeria system. The categorization of citizenship on this paradigm is enhanced by status of birth (the law of blood), law of place, and naturalization Kazah-Toure (cited in Lenshie and Johnson, 2012). The unequal treatment of ethnic groups on certain basis of identity is central to citizenship question. Citizenship question in Nigeria is a contested outcome of individual and group struggles for rights to participate and enjoy socio-economic and political welfare that would significantly enhance development.

As urban centres developed and opportunities for education, white collar jobs, business and other commercial enterprises developed, but largely because of the transformation of the economy marked by increasing competition for economic resources and its benefits, an indigeneity complex involving a *"son of the soil"* syndrome developed (Osaghae, 1990). The Yoruba of the West will say *"Omo wa ni"*. The major aim was to protect the interests and claims of indigenes to their homelands against all non-indigenes who were denied the basic socio-political and economic rights, notwithstanding the fact that they also contributed so much as the indigenes did in terms of their duties to the communities. During the colonial era in the Northern Nigeria Sabongaris were created for non-citizens, to differentiate them from citizens. This has extended to the South even in post-colonial era, where the Hausas leaves and trade majorly in Sabongari markets.

Conclusion
Ethnicity in Nigeria, no doubt, has been a significant challenge to the socio-political development of the country; not because the phenomenon is in itself dangerous but that the tendency is for political leaders to

manipulate it. Thus, the functionality of ethnicity can either be negative or positive. Ethnicity can be problematic if not managed properly and at the same time, a highly rewarding phenomenon if well managed, which means that ethnicity will continue to remain a force to be reckoned with notwithstanding the strategic mechanisms adopted to diffuse its flame.

Arguably, one can reason that ethnicity can be a powerful force for national development where its potentiality is fully recognized and judiciously exploited. This brings us to the realization that every ethnic group in the country; notwithstanding size, has its own strength and weaknesses. It is the responsibility of the political leaders to discover and mobilize the strength of each ethnic group in the polity for the sociopolitical and economic development of the country. Furthermore, development may not be accomplished without conflict since conflict to some extent exposes the inherent cohesion of every ethnic group and their socio-economic and political needs. Sometimes ethnic conflicts suggest a means through which the problem of sociopolitical inequality could be resolved. Change, they say, is inevitable if development is going to take place, therefore, the country must arm itself with the right socio-political and economic tools for it to achieve the desired goals. Ethnicity in Nigeria should be seen as an additional variable when its potential is recognized and developed as well. As Chien (1982) has put it; it is the responsibility of those involved in the administration of a multi ethnic state to mobilize the socio-political and economic strengths of each ethnic group as leverage to resource-input towards the realization of the goals of sociopolitical and economic development.

This study has demonstrated that the colonial government did not take the diverse nature of the pre-colonial ethnic groups in Nigeria into consideration, while trying to have administrative (socio-political and economic) ease of flow. One can thus conclude that the challenges that ethnicity poses to the sustainability of Nigerian socio-political integration had its roots in the colonial administrative system carried to the post-colonial period along with self-inflicted ethnic motivated socio-political and economic policies of Nigeria political leaders. The result of all this is ethnic conflict over the allocation of distributive socio-political and economic goods.

This study has also demonstrated that the tripodal satisfaction of the three major ethnic groups, which has led Nigerians till the present to assume that the only people that matter in Nigeria are the Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo; is significant to ethnic conflict in Nigeria. Put differently the struggle for socio-economic and political goods to revolve around the tripartite ethnic groups and thus making every other ethnic group in the polity feel dominated, not only at national level but also within the states of the federation. The inequality in socio-economic development among geographic units in Nigeria is disquieting and has resulted in dissension among geographic units of the same state due to the imbalance in socio-economic development. Therefore the increasing insecurity and indeterminacy of existence that faces the various ethnic groups particularly the minority ethnic groups one way or the other is linked to conflicts over the allocation of resources. In essence the determination of resource distribution based on the three main ethnic and geographic groups in Nigeria – the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo – have been one of the reasons why the problem of ethnicity has remained intractable.

Where one or two ethnic groups are getting more "attention" in terms of the allocation of distributive socio-political and economic goods, perhaps as a result of their hegemonic control of the central government, there will always be conflict. Nigeria, definitely, is a multi-ethnic (which make the country a multi linguistic state) and a multi religious state. What this implies is that the deeper the level of ethnic cleavages; the lower the level of socio-political and economic trusts which invariably translates to socio-political and economic underdevelopments within the polity. In other words, the need to build trust among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized.

However ethnic conflict notwithstanding, the various socio-political and integrative mechanisms such as decentralized governance, the federal character principle, power sharing, human rights and the adoption of multi-party democratic system to manage ethnic conflict have become part of the Nigerian polity. This is as a result of the consistent maintenance of a highly centralized socio-political and economic system which has placed the tripartite ethnic groups in a vantage position. In addition, the incompatibility of ethnic groups within the states in terms of language, culture and even political awareness, weak and corrupt socio-political and economic institutions, the systemic exclusion of the majority minority ethnic groups from laying claim to the Nigerian state through the construction of the Nigerian political system around the

three major ethnic groups, the complexity of socio-political and economic differences of the ethnic groups in the polity as well as systemic discriminatory and exclusive policies motivated by ethnic consciousness in the name of indigenship make ethnicity in Nigeria polity a significant feature in competition for scarce distributive socio-economic and political goods.

Nevertheless ethnic differences in Nigeria can still be maximized to enhance sociopolitical and economic development which means that ethnicity can be deconstructed and reconstructed, to borrow the words of Osifo (2009) in a way that will encompass all ethnic groups through which a more stable polity can be obtained and taking into consideration the complicated nature of ethnicity in the country. A multifaceted sociopolitical and economic approach is needed. In essence it is possible to approach the challenges of ethnicity from many perspectives. Thus, for the Nigerian State to move forward, calls for the reconstruction of the polity, where every ethnic group will be included and see the task of nation building more important and above ethnic loyalty. The recommendations in the following section will go a long way in supporting this.

The Way Forward
From an understanding of ethnic composition of Nigeria, there should be different methods through which the ethnic groups in Nigeria can be composed into states (provinces). Considering the dynamic distribution of ethnic groups in Nigeria prior to the state creation experiment that gave birth to the current 36 states, there were majority and minority ethnic groups within the polity. This indicates that the ethnic composition of Nigeria raises more question than answers. Consequently, consideration should be given to the diversity and the homogeneity of each state to be created, in terms ethnic group, size, and economic viability. The religious factor is also crucial. Furthermore, consideration must be given to the fact that there are many different socio-political and economic challenges that are peculiar to each ethnic group as well as each ethnic group's interests politically and economically.

The suggestion therefore is that the creation of states (province) should be done in a way that will make each state a uni-ethnic group instead of the present multi-ethnic ones. Nigeria can take a cue from India's experiment when its former 29 states were reconstituted into 14 states in 1956 with each state having the same language as well as equal socio-political and economic status. It will help resolve the question of citizenship and indigeneship which poses more challenges for the unity and sociopolitical integration of the country.

Regional imbalances and overall national development in Nigeria, has been perpetuated in the country over time. The result has been the prevailing and unwarranted uneven distribution of socio-political and economic resources and benefits of development; the brunt of which have been bored by the minorities. What this translates to mean is that decades after independence Nigeria has fell short of evolving a strong mechanism to mediate and reconcile a series of conflicts and contradictions that arose from the nation's constellation of economic, socio-political and ethnic forces on one hand. On the other hand the socio-political and economic distributive mechanism of federal character has been used by the political class to serve ethnic interest at the expense of national development and national integration. What the nation is witnessing has been inter-ethnic competition and winner takes all politics. The tripod theory of power which has subsisted in Nigeria since the First Republic seems to have encouraged unhealthy rivalry among the three major ethnic groups, Not withstanding the fragmentation of the country into smaller states. The major ethnic groups particularly the Hausa-Fulani used federal might to concentrate federal expenditure in their region. Put in another word the ethnic group with political power use the opportunity of having federal power to mobilize and divert federal revenues, infra-structures, industries, public work projects and federal patronage to their ethnic home land.

It is no longer news that the reconstruction of the old 3 regions into the present day 36 states provides leverage for fierce competition for socio-economic and political goods, the resultant effect of which is ethnic conflict. To some extent, the discriminatory attitude of the majority ethnic group against the minority ethnic group within these states is a product of what Osaghae (1994) described as the centre-inspired competition that underpins these cleavages. Hence, there is the need for basic information on each ethnic group at least before any decision is taken. This may, eventually throw light on the ethnic situation in the country, as well help to avoid ethnic conflict.

The search for a balanced and sustainable state (politically, economically and socially) can end in reconstructing the country, taking into consideration it's the ethnic composition. One basic fact that has greatly undermined Nigeria's socio-political and economic stability is its structural imbalance even after the fragmentation of the country into its current 36 states (with 774 local government areas) and the subsequent division of the states into 6 geo-political zones for the purpose of administration and distribution of socio-political goods, but the fact remains that within these zones lie powerful majority ethnic groups , making it difficult to diffuse the flames of ethnic conflict in Nigeria.

Therefore the major ethnic groups of the Hausa-Fulani in the North can be divided into three, the Yoruba of the West as one and the Igbo as one taking into consideration language, culture and religion. The remaining major-minority groups can be reconstructed into a number of homogeneous separate states. For example the ethnic groups in the present Benue, Plateau (excluding the Hausa ethnic groups which are expected to join the Hausa of the North) and the Igalas from the present Kogi state can become one state (province) considering the religious factor. The same can be done to the Ijaw in Ondo state, Edo, Dellta Urhobo, Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa-Ibom and Cross Rivers in the Southern part of the country taking into consideration religious affinity and language. This of course should be in form of well-grounded provincial governance like that of South Africa.

Where there are ethnic cleavages there should be a political system that unequivocally allows adequate representation of every ethnic group; thus replacing the current electoral system of First-Past-The-Post System used in the country with the Proportional Representative System. It's been argued by scholars that there cannot be a perfect electoral system. Every electoral system has its flaws and peculiar problems. One can argue that what makes an electoral system a perfect one for a state depends on what the populace intends to achieve (politically, socially and economically) through the adopted electoral system. In other words, the primary goal behind the adoption of an electoral system should of a necessity be whether the product of such system will enhance the sustainability of the country's socio-political system. Whichever type of electoral system is adopted should be seen as a means to an end (socio-political stability).

Based on the discussion above, one can advance here that Proportional Representation seems to be the best option for Nigeria. The reason is that it will give an accurate translation of votes into parliamentary seats to use Gerard Newman's (2006) words. Every political party big or small would be represented as well. It is important to develop an integrative socio-political system/frame-work that will explicitly recognise the participatory role of every ethnic group. It is also important to note that differences are important to socio-political development; this will reinforce the fact that ethnocentric and exclusionary socio-political policies are alien to socio-political development.

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