

Historicizing Ethnic Politics and its Impact on Nation Building and Nationalism in Nigeria in the 21st Century

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Abstract

In 1960, when the country gained independence from colonial Britain, analysts had predicted rapid development especially as it relates to national integration, economic sufficiency and viable leadership role at the regional and sub regional level. It was indeed this hope (coupled with the abundance of human and natural resources) that earned the country the name Giant of Africa. However, almost fifty two years after, it is clear that Nigeria is far from attaining the much expected goal, as the country is still wrapped up in series of crises ranging from ethnic agitation for local autonomy, group struggle for self determination/self government, plundering of the nation's treasury by a few individual to outright attempt by militia groups (claiming to represent the various ethnic nationalities) to eliminate other groups by use of force and other weapons of destruction (this started with kidnapping and vandalization of pipelines and cables in the Niger Delta area with the most recent revolving around the activities of the Boko Haram group in the northern part of the country). All these have led to scholars questioning the genuineness of the supposed unity with which the country fought and gained independence, while some others have simply described it as symptoms of failed state. The argument therefore is that although it is believed in most quarters that there was actually a united force which agitated for independence, but the ethnic politics which the major actors played in the course of the struggle as well as their activities immediately after independence is impacting on nation building and nationalism in post colonial Nigeria. Even after independence (especially periods when the country seems to be faced with issues that threatened her national unity, various government both military and civilian have introduced programs and policies meant to instill civic nationalism in Nigeria. Some of these examples includes state creation efforts which were partly meant to break ethnic hegemony; the National Youth Services Corps scheme meant to foster national unity and integration after the civil war; the introduction and practice of Multi-party system which was meant to break ethnic politics as well as the two party system of the military administration in the 1980's, which also focused on attaining political party unification in Nigeria. These and many other wonderful programs and policies have been introduced by governments in Nigeria, yet they all failed middle way achieving party unification, national unity/integration and instilling civic nationalism in Nigeria. This paper employing the historical methodology and quantitative analysis is thus an attempt at historicizing ethnic politics in the struggle for independence, deeply examine how and why the various programs and policies of the government since independence (with particular reference to the National Youth Services Corps scheme and the political party system have failed to work as well as instill civic nationalism in Nigeria, its impact on nation building and nationalism in the 21st Century Nigeria and the way forward.

Keywords: Nigeria, Ethnic Politics, Nationalism

Introduction

The political history of Nigeria (as in the case of most African countries) especially since the attainment of independence has been dotted here and there with serious problems of unity and, foremost among these, is the unification of peoples into a common nationality and nationalism, in which there is a sense of collective citizenship. It is therefore not surprising that apart from the problem of corruption (which the various administrations has wrapped themselves in, since 1960), the leadership is also largely confronted with problems of integrating and stabilizing the Nigeria society, creating national symbols and institutions; achieving legitimacy for the state; as well as the monumental task of organizing the human and natural resources of the country to suit the goals of development¹. Analysts have summed up the situation thus;

In Nigeria today there exist cultural cleavages, not only between tribes, but also between the rural communities, oriented towards traditional values and ways of life, and the urban elements who are oriented towards modern national values. This manifest a kind of political dualism in which national politics tend, by and large, to be the monopoly of urban influenced and Western educated elite. This modern leadership group claim to speak and act in the 'national interest! But what is usually lacking, in their support, is a national network of rural elite who function in the leadership roles and who, while rooted in the rural areas, are primarily oriented towards the centre and towards economics, social and political' development².

¹ Kukah M.H (1998), Politics of Good Governance : Challenges for Africa Today in Oyedele E (ed), Africa: National Unity, Stability and Development. Yakubu Gowon Centre and Sibon Books Ibadan. Pp 93-6

² Jalingo A.U (2008), The Relevance of Parliamentary System of Government to Nigeria's Quest for Democracy in Jega A

Historicizing the above analysis, Jalingo A (2008), wrote

The existence and/or continuance of historical and cultural differences, at times, intensified by uneven economic and social development often following tribal divide - and aided by past colonial policies (like the policy of indirect rule) which were not contributive to nation building constitute another future of the non-integrating character of the Nigerian society. Some of the most critical political tensions are those arising out of ethnic parochialism, compounded by differences of socio-economic status occurring along communal lines. Also there exist a carryover into the new Nigerian society many traditional attitudes, values and allegiances, which make Nigerians' from different parts of the country to have very crude opinion of each other. For instances Yoruba call Hausa: Gambari and Ibo are Kobo-Kobo; and conversely, Ibo call Yoruba Ngwati and Hausa are Onye Hausa; whereas Hausa call Ibo Nyamuri, etc. (None of these names is complimentary). While not all features of traditionalism pose obstacle to national unification -,and modernization, nonetheless, traditionalism remains a central element in contemporary Nigerian politics¹.

Conceptual Clarification: Space, Time and Ideology

For a meaningful of our focus, there is the need for a graphic and analytical understanding of some of the concepts as used in this paper. Defining the term Ethnic politics is not as easy as one would ordinarily think, this is because to fully understand this, some related concepts like 'ethnic group' and 'ethnicity' need to be defined. According to scholars, the term ethnic group best suit the description of an informal interest group whose members are distinct from the members of other ethnic groups within the larger society because they share kinship, religious and linguistics ties (ethnic group consists of those who are themselves alike by virtue of their common ancestry, language and culture, and who are so regarded by others). In the light of this, ethnic groups can be best as social formations, which are distinguished by the communal character of their boundaries². It is therefore not surprising that scholars have therefore emphasized that the most important or crucial variable in ethnic identity is language³. It is therefore, ethnic loyalty or ethnicism which usually involves a degree of obligation and is often accompanied by a rejective attitude towards those regarded as outsiders (that is, members of other ethnic group), that justifies the use of term such as Yoruba calling Hausa, Gambari and Igbo, Kobo-Kobo; and conversely, Ibo call Yoruba Ngwati, oye-ofenmanu and Hausa are oyen beribe; whereas Hausa call Ibo Nyamuri, etc⁴.

In a more general term, nationalism has a broad meaning ranging from being the defining ideology of political movements seeking some form of autonomy or independent statehood; of groups striving to achieve or to improve their cultural, political, social and economic rights within a given state; of protest movements on the part of communities threatened by either state policies or by other social groups; to the core ideology employed by the state to galvanize public support for its policies or to reaffirm its legitimacy. In its historical context, nationalism represents an ideological movement aimed at attaining and maintaining the identity, unity (through social cohesion) and autonomy (through national self-determination) of a "nation," or a peoples united under a "national" banner. In other words, it is the most potent ideology in nation state building and consolidation⁵.

Institutionalizing Ethnic/Sectional Politics: The Imperialist Collaborators

While the nationalists and people of Nigeria, were struggling to get liberated from the claws of colonialism, the colonialists were also busy institutionalizing ethnic /sectional politics in the country by promoted one ethnic/sectional group over the other. Although, this has been denied over the years by scholars⁶, but a recent a recent British Broadcasting Corporation radio documentary and other documents on the events leading up to the independence of Nigeria, Britain's former colony, charged the British government with interference in the

and Wakili H (ed), The Question of Democracy: Direct or Representative? Centre for Democratic Research and Training, Bayero University, Kano. Pp 63-64

¹ Ibid

² Cohen A (1974). Urban Ethnicity. London. Taristock Publications Ltd. Crawford Y (1993). The Politics of Cultural Pluralism. London. The University of Wisconsin Press. Nnoli O (1978). Ethnic Politics in Nigeria. Enugu. Fourth Dimension Publishing Co. Ltd.

³ Ibid, see also Richmond, Anthony H. 1988. Immigration and Ethnic Conflict. Macmillan Press, pp. 170-171, Lawson, Stephanie. 1992. "The Politics of Authenticity: Ethnonationalist Conflict and the State." Paper presented for the 14th General Conference of IPRA, Kyoto, Japan, 27-31 July.

⁴ Jalingo A.U (2008), The Relevance of Parliamentary System...Op.cit.

⁵ Smith, Anthony D. 1991. National Identity. Penguin Books, pp. 74-76, Breuilly, John. 1982. Nationalism and the State. New York: St. Martin's Press, Hobsbawm, Eric. 1991. "The Perils of the New Nationalism." The Nation (4 November), p. 555, Mayall, James. 1990. Nationalism and International Society. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press..

⁶ Abba Alkassum (2005), The Rigging of Nigeria History. Centre for Democratic Development Research and Training, Hanwa, P.M.B.1077, Zaria, Nigeria. ceddert@skannet.com.ng; www.ceddert.com

election to ensure the result was in line with its interests¹. These sources cited two files held in the British National archives covering the period leading up to independence in 1960 that to this day remain closed to the public and will remain closed for another 50 years². This manipulation was confirmed by Professor David Anderson, Director of the African Studies Centre at Oxford University, who revealed thus;

In almost every single colony the British attempted to manipulate the result to their advantage.... I would be surprised if they had not done so.... Nigeria's Northern region constituted three quarters of the land mass of the country and had roughly half the population. Professor Anderson explained that the North, with its Islamist culture, was very conservative and had enjoyed a close relationship with its British colonial rulers. The British had ruled through the emirs...The British government was concerned that the result of independence might lead to partition. They regarded the Northern region as a bulwark against opposition.... British analysts at the time thought that West Africa as a whole with its high levels of poverty was highly vulnerable to communism. The politics of the North was dominated by the Northern Peoples' Congress Party (NPC). Britain was aware that the NPC would be unable to rule an independent Nigeria by itself and would need the support of a major party in the East or West. The politics of the North was dominated by the Northern Peoples' Congress Party (NPC). Britain was aware that the NPC would be unable to rule an independent Nigeria by itself and would need the support of a major party in the East or West. This is why, he (Smith, Mr. Harold Smith, a former British colonial Labour Officer posted to Lagos in 1955-1960) had been ordered (by the governor general Sir James Robertson, whom. Smith described as "a thug and he had a terrible reputation)... to help the party of Dr Azikiwe (Zik), in the East, the NCNC. He explained: "They had to fix Zik of course, there was stuff they have got him for that could send him to prison ... [they] forced him to do a deal with the North"³.

From the memoirs of Robertson, (Sir James Robertson was the then governor general. who died in 1983), it was further revealed that in the elections that took place in 1959 to choose the government that would rule after independence, before the result was known there were rumours that the NCNC in the East and the so-called Action Group in the West were considering a coalition and would be able to form a majority in the House of Representatives. The document also contained the fact that he (Robertson) thought this might result in the North leaving the federation. Part of his role was to appoint as prime minister whoever he thought best able to command a majority in the House of Representatives. He invited Abukakr Tafawa Balewa, the Northern leader, to form a government even before the result of the election was known. He did so without consulting the secretary of state in the British government. Thomson also explains how the British carried out a census in Nigeria in the years leading to independence and were accused of overestimating the numbers in the North to give them a higher representation in the parliament. Professor Anderson agrees it was certainly in the interests of Britain to have done that⁴. It was thus not surprising that the colonial government had to employ special people who came to do this job. These "special people" were a different breed; these were the ex-SOE [British Secret Service outfit set up during the Second World War] and MI6⁵. This position brings out graphically the position earlier advanced by Anyadele (1966), when he argued that The polarization of the territories that became Nigeria actually began with the country's creation and administration as two separate colonies, namely Northern Nigeria and Southern Nigeria. A somewhat romantic interest in the North, especially in the Sokoto Caliphate and its institutions (an interest which was not unrelated to British objectives) seems to have induced the colonial administrators in the North to treat that colony as special. Thus every effort was made to advance its territorial and political interest vis-à-vis those of the south. The North was also to become a proto type "native" state operating its own indigenous institutions, while being protected from all external influences especially Christian proselytizing and educational enterprises. Even residents immigrants from southern Nigeria were to be restricted to the sabongari of foreigners' quarters⁶. The above activities in the view of scholars, built the foundation for manipulation, institutionalization of violence and ethnic/religious politics in Nigeria especially the northern region. It has been summarized (when specific reference to Kaduna) thus;

The event was historic because it temporarily closed the door to what has been one of the worst

¹ TELL Magazine (2005), "How Britain Rigged Elections, Census for the North - Former Colonial Officer." March 7th 2005; TELL Magazine(2005)"Exclusive Interview: The British Expected Nigeria to Break Up - Harold Smith, Former Colonial Officer", 21st March;

² Mason Barry (2007), Britain and Zik :Britain rigged election before Nigerian independence BBC documentary, 9 August 2007

³ Mason B...Op.cit.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ayadele, E.A (1966), The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842-1914: A Political and Social Analysis. Longman, London; see also Akinola, G.A,(2009), Leadership and the Postcolonial Nigerian Predicament. A publication of the Department of History, University of Ibadan. Monograph Series No.1

shows of selfishness by an unproductive and selfish cabal who have deployed religion to hide their greed. From the creation of Kaduna State the Northern ruling class, by policy seemed to have erected an invisible sign that read: No Christians Need Apply to enter what would later be called Kashim Ibrahim House or represent the State at the highest levels. Despite the fact that all states were opened to Christian military officers, it was only Kaduna and perhaps Sokoto states that were never governed by non-Muslims. This policy of exclusion against non-Muslims turned Kaduna State into a political Mecca and laid the foundation for the unnecessary and sad religious tensions that have continued to dog the state¹.

The route to Independence and Signpost to Anarchy: Laying Faulty Foundation

The route to the attainment of the nation's independence was a tough one, in which various actors and factors came into play. The role of these actors and factors affected the way independence was attained and why it was achieved at a particular time, this has thus played important role in sociopolitical future of the nation. While some actors saw the independence struggle as that which should be attained through a complete and total shaking off of all symbols of colonialism others argued the other way. This was first expressed in the disagreement between the earliest 20th century nationalists² For instance available historical documents revealed that both Henry Carr and Herbert Macaulay saw the struggle towards independence from opposite view and ended up fighting amongst themselves. A fierce hatred existed between Henry Carr and Herbert Macaulay and the political troubles of Lagos were largely due to the antipathy between them. Carr believed that the best way to secure a better life for Lagosians was by working with and through the colonial government. He had risen through the colonial service to occupy the highest position held by an African; the post of Resident (commissioner) for the Colony. He was a successfully assimilated African (the ideal common to many of the modern elite of his day), who believed that it was right for the African to be as European as possible. Carr declared himself and people like him "not Europeanized natives, but men transformed (transfigured) into Europeans". Therefore, he argued, blacks who, like himself, came from a certain class ought to be allowed to go on leave to England, just as their white counterparts did, "for health reasons". Macaulay disagreed. He found expression in his idea of nationhood, in his recognition of the customs of the people, their institutions and their land. The government's assault on native rights and Macaulay's defense of them were the main causes of neo-traditional nationalism, without which, political nationalism would have been considerably delayed. In the course of the squabble Henry Carr was quoted to have stated thus

Lagos was led by a little clique of ambitious and vainglorious men led by an evil genius who owned a sensationalist newspaper (the Lagos Daily News)". ...Among all the human monsters with whom we have been brought into contact, none has displayed the devilish ingenuity of this man". Macaulay was a "desperate enemy of society; my hatred will only finish with my life". Macaulay was, in Carr's opinion, a disquieting factor in the public peace and should be banished "as a crooked mind and a dangerous fool³.

In retaliation Herbert Macaulay's came out with what has been described as malicious account, in a pamphlet published in 1924 entitled "Henry Carr must go". In this work, Herbert Macaulay described Carr as "a disappointed and disgruntled parvenu", whose one passion was to clamour for promotion. He further argued claimed that Carr's father was Amuwo Carr, a liberated Saro emigrant, popularly known as Daddy Shope, who deserted his wife Rebecca Carr, "a devout Christian woman" to settle in Abeokuta as a happy polygamist. Carr replied that the pamphlet was "nothing but the ravings of a lunatic... (of) a mind coarse, of gross perception, and with a disastrous lack of delicacy"⁴. All these marked the beginning of national struggle which along the line began to breed contempt for one another, a situation which continue up to the eve of independence.

Later in the northern part of the country occurred, another crises, which further widened the gap and relationship between the southern part of the country and the north. The Kano riot of 1953 refers to the serious riot, which broke out in the ancient city of Kano, located in Northern Nigeria, on May 1, 1953. The nature of the riot was clashes between Northerners and Southerners made up of mainly the Yorubas and the Ibos. The riot that lasted for four days claimed many lives of the Southerners and Northerners and many others were wounded. The remote cause of the riot was the strained relationship between the Northern and Southern political leaders over the issue of self-government in 1956. This strained relationship started with a 1953 motion for self-government for Nigeria in 1956 tabled in the House of Representatives by a member of the Action Group (AG) Chief Anthony Enahoro. The Northerners did not accept the motion. The leader of the Northern People's Congress

¹ Kukah M.H (2012), Homily at the Burial Mass of late Governor Patrick Ibrahim Yakowa, Governor of Kaduna State Fadan Kagoma, Kaduna, 20th December 2012 .

² Nigeria @ 52: The Good, The Bad, The Beautiful, The Ugly. – Politics. <http://www.nairaland.com/1062509/nigeria-52-good-bad-beautiful>

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

(NPC) and the Saraduna of Sokoto, Alhaji Ahmadu Bello in a counter-motion replaced in the year 1956 with the phrase "as soon as practicable". Another Northern member of the House moved a motion for adjournment, a motion viewed which Southern members of AG and NCNC viewed as a delay tactics¹. All the AG and NCNC members in the house walked out as a result of the adjournment motion. When the Northern delegates left the House, they were confronted by hostile crowds in Lagos who insulted, jeered and called them all sorts of names. Members of the Northern delegation were embittered and in their "Eight Point Program" in the Northern Regional Legislative House, they sought for secession. The last straw that broke the camel's back was the tour by a delegation of the AG and NCNC led by Chief S.L. Akintola. That tour which was aimed at campaigning for self-government acted as the immediate cause of the Kano riot. It sparked off a chain of disorder that culminated in the riot. The riot took place at Sabon Gari an area predominantly occupied by southern Nigerians. The situation was further aggravated by the 1952/53 census exercise, which gave advantage to one region over the others, as well as the counter census exercise of 1962/63². In reaction Awolowo posited that Nigeria is only a geographical expression to which life was given by the diabolical amalgamation of 1914 and that amalgamation will ever remain the most painful injury a British Government inflicted on Southern Nigeria³.

Manifestation of Tribal Politics versus Ethnicity

From what has been described as laying of faulty foundation in the country's political history above (especially the pre independence activities especially the actions and utterances of some of the Founding Fathers), it was not surprising that the country emerged an independent state with tribalised sentiments and allegiance. Giving a critical and graphical picture of this situation, it has been summarized thus;

in the pre-independence era and immediate post-independence period, the parties were more or less ethnic based. The most popular party in the 1950s and 1960s was the NCNC which started as the foremost nationalist party but later became identified largely with the Igbo people of the South East, even though it had a substantial following in the South West. The Action Group emerged as a Yoruba ethnic organisation, Egbe Omo Oduduwa and therefore was conceived ab initio as a Yoruba party. The major party from the North was the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) which even declined the initial suggestion to change its name to Nigerian Peoples Congress (from the activities of the NPC, emerged groups like Taron Masun Zumunta, Kano Youth Association, Non Muslim League and Jamiyar Mutanen Arewa⁴). Thus, the three principal parties anchored themselves in the then three regions and among the major ethnic group in each region. Between 1979 and 1983, the NPP was by and large a reincarnation of the NCNC, UPN manifested in the image of the Action Group and the NPN replaced the NPC. The GNPP represented the independent minded Bornu Youth Movement of the old North Eastern zone of Nigeria. The other significant party was the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) which was basically a Kano-based movement, the home of NEPU (Northern Elements Progressive Union) of 1950-1960s, and led by the nationalist, Mallam Aminu Kano⁵.

In line with the above Yime Sen (2010), posited thus,

Prior to assessing the performance of Nigeria in terms of development since 1960, from the perspective of challenges and prospects, there are still some important historical milestones to note: Nigeria gained independence in 1960 and became a republic in 1963. At birth, Nigeria was imbued with certain structural imbalances. The first post-colonial general elections were organized in 1964 and due to the turbulence surrounding those elections, largely in the opposition Tiv area of central Nigeria and the Yoruba area in the west, the military intervened in a coup d'état in 1966 in which the Prime Minister, Tafawa Balewa, from northern Nigeria, the northern premier Ahmadu Bello, the western premier, Samuel Ladoke Akintola, and several political leaders and military officers were killed. The ethnically and regionally skewed killings by mainly Igbo-speaking officers, would attract a counter coup in the same year and the killing of the Igbo-speaking Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces and Head of State, Aguiyi Ironsi, to be replaced by Yakubu Gowon, a minority, from central Nigeria. The social turmoil and violence accompanying all these developments, led to the secessionist attempt by the eastern region to declare the state of Biafra and a resultant civil war of

¹ It has been argued that this was further reflected in a prominent northern politician saying that " what kind of trouble have we let ourselves in for, by associating with these southern people. Lord Lugard and his amalgamation is not for us. We shall set up our own and cease to have anything more to do with the southern people".

² Oyediran O (ed), (1979), Nigeria Government and Politics under Military Rule, 1966-1979. Macmillan Press, London.

³ Zik: A Selection from the speeches of Nnamdi Azikiwe Published by The Syndics of the Cambridge University Press New York, 1961: Pp189-190

⁴ Kukah M.H (1993), Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria. Spectrum Books Ibadan

⁵ Amucheazi E (2008), Party System and Party Politics, in Oyovbaire S (ed), Governance and Politics in Nigeria: The IBB and OBJ Years. Spectrum Books Ibadan.

30 months that claimed about one million lives. This development could be interpreted as a macabre culmination of ethnic and regional political rivalries, essentially driven by the elite, eager to manipulate social differences for personal gain¹.

The summary of the wrangling and battering between the various political parties and ethnic/tribal group and the future of the country is reflected in the argument by Francois Duvalier, then President of Haiti, who on March 22, 1969, observed that Federal Nigeria has never since her independence shown the distinctive mark of a united nation. It has been impossible for her to silence tribal rivalries –to achieve that mixture of ethnic /cultural blend required to forge National Unity².

Politics of uniting the Nation: Programs and Policies (Examples of the NYSC and Two Party System)

However at the end of the Civil War and the declaration of the No Victor, No Vanquish Philosophy, the Federal Government decided to put in place programs that will cement the already fragile ties among the various groups in the country. It was in line with this that the Gowon Administration came up with the National Youth Service Corps Program.

National Youth Service Corps

The NYSC scheme was created in a bid to reconstruct, reconcile and rebuild the country after the Nigerian Civil war. The unfortunate antecedents in our national history gave impetus to the establishment of the National Youth Service Corps by decree No.24 of 22nd May 1973 which stated that the "***NYSC is being established with a view to the proper encouragement and development of common ties among the youths of Nigeria and the promotion of national unity***". This is well captured in the National Youth Service Corps Act establishing the scheme which states as follows;

An Act to establish the National Youth Service Corps, specify the objectives of the Corps and the conditions of service for corp members under the Corps;

1. Establishment and objectives of the National Youth Service Corps

(1) There is hereby established a scheme to be known as the National Youth Service Corps (in this Act referred to as "the service corps").

(2) The service corps shall with a view to—

(a) the proper encouragement and development of common ties among the Nigerian youths;

(b) the promotion of national unity; and (c) the development of the Nigerian youth and Nigeria into a great and dynamic economy, be charged with the functions as pertain to the objectives of the service corps set out in subsection (3) of this section.

(3) The objectives of the service corps shall be to—

(a) inculcate discipline in Nigerian youths by instilling in them a tradition of industry at work, and, of patriotic and loyal service to Nigeria in any situation they may find themselves;

(b) raise the moral tone of the Nigerian youths by giving them the opportunity to learn about higher ideals of national achievement, social and cultural improvement; (c) develop in the Nigerian youths the attitudes of mind, acquired through shared experience and suitable training, which will make them more amenable to mobilisation in the national interest; (d) enable Nigerian youths acquire the spirit of self reliance by encouraging them to develop skills for self employment; (e) contribute to the accelerated growth of the national economy; (f) develop common ties among the Nigerian youths and promote national unity and integration; (g) remove prejudices, eliminate ignorance and confirm at first hand the many similarities among Nigerians of all ethnic groups; and (h) develop a sense of corporate existence and common destiny of the people of Nigeria.

(4) In order to achieve the objectives in subsection (3) of this section, the service corps shall ensure— (a) the equitable distribution of members of the service corps and the effective utilisation of their skills in areas of national needs; (b) that as far as possible, Nigerian youths are assigned to jobs in States other than their States of origin; (c) that such group of Nigerian youths assigned to work together is representative of Nigeria as far as possible; (d) that the Nigerian youths are exposed to the modes of living of the people in different parts of Nigeria; (e) that the Nigerian youths are encouraged to eschew religious intolerance by accommodating religious differences; (f) that members of the service corps are encouraged to seek at the end of their one year national service, career employment all over Nigeria, thus, promoting the free movement of labour; (g) that employers are induced partly through their experience with members of the service corps to employ more readily and on a permanent basis, qualified Nigerians, irrespective of their States of origin³.

¹ Yime S (2010), Challenges and Prospects of Nigeria's Development at 50; Golden Jubilee Symposium Paper at Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada, 30 September 2010.

² Oscar Onwudiwe; 2011; The North and the continued Existence of Nigeria. Retrieved from <http://www.elombah.com>, on 20/07/2011

³ Laws of the Federation., CHAPTER N84, NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE CORPS ACT, An Act to establish the National Youth Service Corps, specify the objectives of the Corps and the conditions of service for corp members under the Corps.

In line with the above, Sule Z (2010) argued that as a developing country, Nigeria is further plagued by the problems attendant upon a condition of under development, namely; poverty, mass illiteracy, acute shortage of high skilled manpower (coupled with most uneven distribution of the skilled people that are available), woefully inadequate socioeconomic infrastructural facilities, housing. Water and sewage facilities, road, healthcare services, and effective communication system. Faced with these almost intractable problems, which were further compounded by the burden of reconstruction after the civil war, the government and people of Nigeria set for the country, fresh goals, and objectives aimed at establishing Nigeria as:

- (a) a united, strong and self reliant nation;
- (b) a great and dynamic economy;
- (c) a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens; and
- (d) a free and democratic society¹.

In summary, Otwin M (1990), wrote thus;

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) is an organisation set up by the Nigerian government to involve the country's graduates in the development of the country. There is no military conscription in Nigeria, but since 1973 graduates of universities and later Polytechnics have been required to take part in the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) program for one year.[1] This is known as national service year. "Corp" members are posted to cities far from their city of origin. They are expected to mix with people of other tribes, social and family backgrounds, to learn the culture of the indigenes in the place they are posted to. This action is aimed to bring about unity in the country and to help youths appreciate other ethnic groups. There is an "Orientation" period of approximately three weeks spent in a camp away from family and friends. There is also a "passing out ceremony" at the end of the year and primary assignment followed by one month of vacation. The program has also helped entry level jobs for a lot of Nigerian youth. An NYSC forum dedicated to the NYSC members was recently built to bridge the gap amongst members serving across Nigeria and also an avenue for corporers to share job information and career resources as well as getting loans from the National Directorate Of Employment².

However, over the years, the program has become target of those who feel disenchanting by happenings in the country, so much so that corps members are attacked, raped, maimed and killed. This is graphically illustrated in the account of Chinyere Ugomma Eze-Nliam, who served under the scheme. Chinyere Ugomma Eze-Nliam wrote

Determined to experience as much as I could of my host state, I canvassed the length and breadth of Benue from Adikpo London (gist had it that the first man to ever travel overseas presumably London was from Adikpo in Kwande LGA), to Vandeikya, Katsina Ala, Zakibiam, Okpoga in Okpokwu LGA, Konshisha, Ogbadibo, Gboko, Oturkpo and a host of other places. As part of my community development scheme, I joined the dance and drama group. I learnt to dance and sing Tiv and Idoma music (A very laudable feat I must add for the flexibility required to twist to those Tiv dances can only be suitably compared to the elasticity of a rubber). I made so many lifelong friends. Then calamity fell³.

The author continued

The Tivs, militant in nature and their nearest neighbours the Jukuns from Taraba State fell out over land and territorial boundaries (What else could they be fighting over? Space Technology?). It was a bloody combat that took many lives and rendered many more homeless, limbless and hopeless. The dreaded MOPOL and the Nigerian Army waded in and a dusk to dawn curfew was imposed. Youth corporers were advised to wear their NYSC Khaki uniforms at all times in order not to be mistaken as Tiv or Jukun by any raging mob from either side. The few times we ran into the mobs (comprised mostly of jobless youths), we escaped their wrath for the mere fact that we were "Obasanjo's pickin" as corporers were popularly called. No one laid a finger on any corper and the ones who dared got banged up a little for their trouble. Fast forward ten years later. The scene can rightly be likened to the chaotic Middle East or Armageddon whichever that is more ferocious. Bombs, machetes, guns and every imaginable small and light armed weapon were unleashed on the unsuspecting civil society as a result of

[1993 No. 51.] [16th June, 1993]

¹ Sule Zainab (2010), The NYSC History: Personal CDS. <http://anambracorporers.pishondesigns.org/history.html>

² Marenin, Otwin (1990). "Implementing Deployment Policies in the National Youth Service Corps of Nigeria". *Comparative Political Studies* (London: SAGE Publishers) 22 (4): 397-436. doi:10.1177/0010414090022004002. <http://cps.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/22/4/397>. Retrieved 25 February 2009.

³ Eze-Nliam, C. U (2012) NYSC: National Youth Service Corps Or National Youth Slaughtering Corps? Sahara Reporters. <http://saharareporters.com/article/nysc-national-youth-service-corps-or-national-youth-slaughtering-corps-0>. Posted: July 4, 2012 - 23:45

an election that didn't quite go as planned. Several corpors, some of whom acted as returning officers were burnt alive trapped in a police station. Since then, violence on corpors has been the order of day¹.

The situation as described above, replayed itself in the nation's history when the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) in 2011 confirmed that the nine serving corps members (CMs), all young men, were killed by rioters in Bauchi State following the April 16, 2011 presidential election. The particulars of the deceased are represented thus:

s/no	Name	State of Origin	Area of Specialization
1	Teidi Tosin Olawale	Osun	BSc Computer Science
2	Nkwazema Anslem C	Imo	HNDElectrical Electronic Engineering
3	Okpokiri Obinna Michael	Abia	BSc Environmental Management
4	Adoweï Elliot	Bayelsa	BSc Computer Science
5	Adewunmi Seun Paul	Ekiti	BSc, Social Sciences
6	Adeniji Kehinde Jehleel	Osun	BSc Banking & Finance
7	Gbenjo Ebenezer Ayotunde	Osun	BSc, Education Economics
8	Ukeoma Ikechukwu Chibuzor	Imo	BSc Medical Microbiology
9	Akoyi Ibrahim Sule	Kogi	HND Business Administration

The situation has become so disturbing that youths are no longer interested in the program and have even asked for the scrapping of the program. The picture was recently given thus;

In an expression of heightened concern over the growing insecurity in the country, especially in the north, about 20,000 corps members posted to the northern states have besieged the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) headquarters in Abuja, to seek redeployment....This scenario played out as prospective 2011 batch 'B' corps members waiting to be sworn in across the country after registration refused serving in the north for fear of their safety, especially now that the Boko Haram sect has continued to unleash mayhem on security agencies across the northern states. it was also learnt that about 95,000 corps members were posted across the country for their orientation. ...at the NYSC headquarters, scores of prospective corps members from the south posted to states like Kano, Borno, Yobe, Bauchi and Gombe were seen loitering, waiting to get the attention of the management of the scheme for re-deployment to states in the south. Some NYSC members ... said they were seeking redeployment because of security threat, citing the Boko Haram's unchecked depredations as example².

On the other hand, individuals and tribal groups have openly condemned the continuous practices of the scheme. This condemnation came mostly in response to the utterance by the governor of Bauchi state, which was argued to be immature. The governor was said to have reacted to the killing of the corps members thus;

*They (corps members) were destined to experience what they experienced. Nobody can run away from destiny. When they were serving me, they were the happiest in Nigeria. "Immediately I handed them over to INEC, it was the responsibility of INEC to protect them. **They were not the only ones affected. My own house was burnt; they almost lynched my first son. It is part of their destiny. I was also attacked as a corps member in Ibadan in 1979³.***

In response a pan-Yoruba organisation, the Action Committee for Restoration of Oodua Sovereignty, enjoined fresh graduates of Yoruba extraction to henceforth reject postings to Northern states for their national service. The group hinged the advice on the killings of non-native corps members during the post-election violence in the North. The group made its stance clear, in its declaration, in which it stated thus;

...the problem with Nigeria was that it has continued to be run as a unitary state in a multi-ethnic polity. ...Rather than allow the various nations making up the country to manage their affairs in their political units with a union government to coordinate affairs on mutually agreed matters, everyone is coerced into a huge prison bearing the pretentious label of one Nigeria. The above anomaly is the source and cause of mayhem and brigandage afflicting our elections and it is also the major explanation for our inability to develop economically either in parts or as a whole. The violent intervals in the Hausa-Fulani parts of Northern Nigeria in the wake of the presidential elections rather than being the results of illiteracy, unemployment and drug addiction as some would like to make out, are to be explained by desperation for control of the central levers of

¹ Ibid

² SAMUEL ARUWAN, JOHN OBA, DAUDA MBAYA, TONY AMOKEODO, and AHURAKA ISAH (2011), Boko Haram: NYSC Members Besiege Hqtrs For Redeployment. LEADERSHIP, Thu, 07/07/2011

³ List Of Corp Members Killed In Bauchi As Released By Nysc: Slain Corps Members to Get National Burial. <http://www.nairaland.com/nigeria/topic-656765.0.html#msg8229689>

power by the ruling class of the North with the active support of the Northern masses¹.

The above was followed by the evacuation of Corps Members by state government and people as released by International Society For Civil Liberties (ISCL) and the Rule of Law below;

That the authorities of the Nigeria's State Security Services at the SSS Senior Staff Development Centre in Bauchi State commendably rescued hundreds of "Corpors" and non-"Corpors" including those from Anambra State and quartered them at the Development(Training) Center.... That the evacuation or rescue mission actually took place and the exercise was done on April 25, 2011, a day before the governorship and houses of assembly poll..... That Abia State's evacuation contingent first arrived in Bauchi State and successfully evacuated her citizen-"Corpors", followed by Anambra State, then Rivers and Osun States That the Government and People of Anambra State sent 25 Mitsubishi Buses, that is to say 15 buses from the State-owned "ANIDS" Buses and 10 hired commercial buses, to Bauchi State for the evacuation mission.... That over 350 people including 252 "corpors" from Anambra State, as well as some people from Benue, Enugu and Ebonyi States, were successfully rescued and brought home....That while the Benue people were discharged in Benue State, those from Enugu and Ebonyi States who supposed to be discharged at Obolo-afor and Ninth Mile, Enugu State were brought to Awka for safety because of the late arrival of the contingent².

Even before the NYSC Program started experiencing difficulties, the program had not been able to achieve of cementing national unity, as most of the participants even at the orientation camps still remained glued to their religious and ethnic affiliations. It is therefore not surprising that one find religious umbrellas like National Association of Catholic Corps-Members, Muslim Corps-Members Association, Anglican Corps-Members, National Association of Christian Corps-Members among others. In most cases, at assumption of the orientation program, the participants are welcomed by their various ethnic/ tribal associations. This is not healthy enough for the type of unity the program aim at achieving.

Two Party System

In a situation of the picture created above, (especially when considered in the line of the existence and presence of many groups (or even whole geographical unit) which do not accept the basic legitimacy of the state itself), it is quite difficult for any country or group to achieve consensus as presently observed in the Nigeria system. The situation is such that each group tries as much as possible to adopt extra legal or extra constitutional means in order to achieve their objectives, while in most cases are selfish, because efforts are geared towards jeopardizing the existence of the state in their opposition to the government. The end result is that there is little, if any, national patriotism; fragile consensus and disagreements in areas of public policies, access to public offices and the competition for private accumulation. Worse more, each competitor does not see himself as an individual but as a representative of his own community and thus making the competition for political offices to look more like tribal rivalry, which leads to ethnic conflicts and eventual civil strife both at the national level and tribal leading to the idea for the protection of regional or traditional interest³. This was the situation in the years after independence.

Available documents on the modus operandi of the political parties both before and after independence shows clearly that the formation and activities of these parties have more of diversify people than unity them. Amucheazi (2008) argued that in the First Republic, the United Peoples Progressive Alliance (UPGA) was formed between the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) and the Action Group (AG), while the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) allied with Nigerian National with Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), a break- away faction of the Action Group to form Nigerian National Alliance (NNA). These were mere coalitions or alliances, and none of the collaborative parties gave up its identity. The scholar continued thus;

In the 1979-1983 period, the Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP) allied with the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) to form the federal government, and the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) and a few other parties came together to form the opposition. But these alliances did not grow or coalesce into single parties; rather they disintegrated soon after. In fact it is the intra-party and intra-coalition crises of the earlier period that brought down the country by 1966 and led to the Civil War (1967-1970). Equally, the multiparty system has not hitherto worked satisfactorily in Nigeria. Parties in the pre-independence period and in the post-independence Republics were more or less

¹ Olalekan Adetayo (2011), YOUTH CORPERS TO REJECT SERVING IN NORTHERN NIGERIA. Punch newspapers. Thursday, May 12, 2011

² Bauchi Corpers' Evacuation Lies: ISCL Says Omoyele Sowore/SaharaReporters, Lied About Anambra-Corpers Evacuation Report, Accused SR, As Agent Of Action Congress Of Nigeria (ACN)- written by Republic Report New York, Thursday, May 12, 2011 12:16 AM

³ Jalingo..Op.cit.

ethnically and regionally based. They formed coalitions to take over power, as we mentioned above, which soon after, collapsed and plunged the country into chaos. In Western Europe where multipartism has survived over years, the success has been attributed to the pluralistic nature of the society. Groups with overlapping interests are at the same time very intimately involved with the political parties and governments, and, accordingly, cleavages of any type were not pronounced. In any case, state power is not as pervasive as in developing countries and cannot be wantonly abused. It is necessary therefore to understand IEB's initiative in political engineering with the formation of the party system based on two political parties¹.

Thus Analysts are of the view that (unlike the multi-competitive party system, which paved the way for the registration of multi registered political parties), the military in the third republic, used the two-party system, to entrench the return to civil rule – a move which was later truncated. According to the administration of Gen. Ibrahim Babangida (rtd) and learning from the lessons of the multi party Nigeria of the 1960's, the administration, in experimenting with the two-party system, (through its 17-member political bureau led by Prof. Sylvanus Cookey), had proposed the limitation of political parties to two, to ensure that, "Nigeria's future politics would be based on principles and not ethnicity. Membership of the two political parties must also be open to every Nigerian irrespective of place of origin, sex, religion or ethnic grouping." This was well experimented, such that at the two parties—the Social Democratic Party and the National Republican Convention competed for the control of the Presidency. The SDP won the election, which has been adjudged the freest and fairest in the country's democratic history². In support of the practices, Olufemi Owoade (2011) wrote;

In 1979, which marked the era of the Second Republic in Nigeria, the country paraded 5 political parties: Nigeria Peoples Party (NPN) which presented Alhaji Shehu Shagari as the presidential candidate; Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) which presented Chief Obafemi Awolowo; National Peoples Party (NPP) presented Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe; Great Nigeria Peoples Party (GNPP) presented Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim. These political parties were used as a show of ethnicism. This account for the domination of Western States by Chief Obafemi Awolowo of UPN who won elections in all the Western States, the Southerners voted en masse for Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe while majority of the Northerners went for Alhaji Shehu Shagari of NPN who later won the general election and became the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The inclusion of Dr. Tunji Braithwaite of Nigeria Advanced Party (NAP) in 1983 election did not make any meaningful change as every Nigerian had already pitched his political tent with one Political Party or the other and this justifies the motive behind the inability of NAP to win even a WARD in that election³.

Recounting the success of the practice, the author continued

During the SDP and NRC era, every Nigerian had the option of belonging to either of the two political parties. Though, it was funded and founded by the Federal Government, she spent lesser amount of money compared with the huge amount being spent on 59 Political Parties of today. It brought healthy competition between the two political parties. Each Party controlled a sizeable number of states and opposition was tough. It also united the country. It was not ethnical in nature: Despite the fact that Bashorun M.K.O. Abiola was a Yoruba man, both Igbo and Hausa men and women voted for him. The election gave an interesting insight. Again, for the first ever in the political history of Nigeria, SDP produced a Muslim-Muslim ticket: Bashorun M.K.O. Abiola, the presidential flag bearer of the Party was a Muslim and his running mate, Alhaji Babagana Kingibe was also a Muslim. Despite this, The Muslims and the Christians including the Northerners overlooked this and voted for Bashorun M.K.O. Abiola, the acclaimed winner of the election who later died in detention on the 8th June, 1997. His death brought chaos to the nation but gives us a DEMOCRACY DAY which is a celebrated yearly till today⁴.

Thus, it was generally argued that the IBB parties were conceived and made to function as democratic institutions so as to nurture democracy in Nigeria. This was because the government gave the impression that it deliberately disallowed special privileges or conditions that would make for undue privileges among the party chieftains in particular. In this way, all members of the party were supposed to be "equal founders and equal joiners" of the party. As a way of nurturing the culture of voting, the military government created an agency known as Mass Mobilisation for Social and Economic Recovery (MAMSER), which was saddled with the

¹ Amucheazi E (2008), Party System and Party Politics...Op.cit.57-60

² Kemi Obasola (2010), Party System: Dilemma Of A Nation. NBF News, May 18. <http://www.nigerianbestforum.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2010/05>.

³ Olufemi Owoade (2010), Two-Party or Multi-Party System: Which Way Nigeria? www.elombah.com/index.php?...two-party...party-system...nigeria Published on Wednesday, 23 June 2010 00:51

⁴ Ibid

responsibility of enlightening the citizenry on the importance of voting. Citizens awareness of democratic principle was at the heart of MAMSER. This was done through political awareness rallies, public/community lectures, musical messages, radio advertisement and discussions, touring drama troupes, visits to primary and secondary schools, development of special curricula for schools and specialized programs¹. Also the voting system in use then, "Option A4", by which voters queued behind the candidate or his picture further strengthened the democratic tendencies of the party. In fact the modus operandi of the system was described as such created to give equal rights and opportunities to all Nigerians to participate in the political process irrespective of their religion, tribal affiliation, professional endeavors, geopolitical background and wealth².

The Military Government and Returning the Country to Chaos: Nigeria since 1993.

Although when the Military Government of Ibrahim Babangida, came up with the two party system, the idea was criticized by most analysts and historians, who did not trust the administration which was noted for not sticking to the timetable it produced for previous elections³, describing the two political parties, SDP and NRC as mere outfits of the military government, Babangida's clubs, Babangida Babes⁴. For instance, while Gani Fawehinmi described the parties thus;

First of all, you know that the political parties, they are all Babangida's clubs. Clubs! They are of inferior status to parastatals and statutory bodies. They are his clubs. They are Babangida Babes . So, he decides what to do to them any time, and since they are his babes, football Babes, he plays the way he want⁵.

Chief Anthony Enahoro gave his picture in this term;

It is a tragedy. Some of the names I see taking part in this charade. I think it is a tragedy that people of that status allow one man to be fooling all of them⁶

While The African Guardian magazine described it thus;

...the news is that speculations have become ripe all over the country that there is more than a passing linkage between their relationships with President Babangida and their presidential bid... Another view, against the background of doubts over Babangida's willingness to hand over, is that Tofa's and Abiola's relationship with the military president as well as the manner of their entry into the race, suggest that they may be willing tools for further extension of the transition programme should they become candidates of their parties⁷.

However, as the experiment unfolded and some ray of light and hope began to emerge, the people began to give the necessary support to the administration and her transition program. In what seemed as a sudden turn around, the military annulled the election, while in defense of his action, General Babangida in a statement at his meeting with the state governors in Abuja on June 29, 1993, was purportedly reported to have said that Chief M.K.O.Abiola though popularly elected to be president of Nigeria by the electorate, is unacceptable to some of the military⁸. This singular action was to return the country to anarchy, part of which is still felt in the nation's political circle till date.

According to Analysts and historians, this pitched the south against the north and the supposedly inherent antagonism between the Muslims and the Christians of Nigeria, as the act was described as another attempt by the northern part of the country, which had held political power for a long time to continually perpetuate itself in power. The immediate result of this was the ethicizing of the issue and the beginning of mass movement back home as was experienced in the 1960's shortly before the civil war. This situation was amply captured by most of the nation's daily. In the case of TSM Magazine, it reported this mass movement back home under the caption, *Exodus: Time to Go Home*⁹. The situation degenerated further when civil right organizations and other human right groups joined in the campaign. The government in a swift reaction, attacked any organization it perceived as enemy of the state, with specific reference to the Campaign for Democracy (CD) group. This was because the group was able to gain popularity, during which it was able to call for civil disobedience, through distribution of handbills, posters and other means of propaganda. In the city of Lagos and

¹ Bamgbose, J.A (2008), The Rise and Fall of the Two Party System: The Nigerian Example. Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences 5(8): 769-778, 2008. ISSN 1683-8831. Pp 773

² Ibid

³ Wale Akin-Aina (1993), The King's Horsemen? In The African Guardian "Abiola & Tofa: Are They Running For Babangida? March 22

⁴ Usman, Y.B and Abba, A; (2005), The Misrepresentation of Nigeria: The Fact and The Figures. Zaria, Centre for Democratic Development Research and Training.

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Wale Akin....O.cit. pp21

⁸ Usman, Y.B..Op.cit, see also The Tell Magazine, July 19, 1993. Pp26-27.

⁹ The TSM Magazine; (1993), "Exodus: Time To Go Home". August 8.Lagos.

most parts of southern Nigeria, offices, embassies, banks and shops/market places were placed under locks and keys, while the people took to the streets to protest and confront soldiers and policemen who were out to unleash terror on the people¹. In some other areas, the streets were completely deserted, while the uniform men continued the harassment of innocent citizens. This situation created panic nationwide especially among the non indigene in various parts of Nigeria. This was observed more among the northerners living in the Eastern part of the country, who began to migrate in their thousands. The situation was further compounded by newspaper reports which amplified the situation so much so that secret killings began to take place in different parts of the country. For example, within this period it was reported of Muslims who were living in the eastern part of the country moved back to the north, with 2500 of them fleeing from Delta state. Even within the northern cities, segregated settlements are springing up by the day. In the case of Zaria, *Wusasa* and the new *Zango* settlement known as Graceland, is considered dominated by non Hausa ethnic groups, while they avoid areas like *Tudun Wada* as much as possible². The effect of that event is still felt in Kaduna today, where especially in Kaduna main town, where the Muslims are found mostly occupying Kaduna North, while others (Christians and the moderate Muslims) occupy Kaduna South with the bridge as the artificial boundary³. The situation became even more serious when various sociopolitical groups who feel that they have been targeted for elimination or that a particular religious group has monopolized the power of violence started coming up with militia, while some others started coming out with ethnic slogans and songs out rightly calling for secession. For example immediately after the death of Abiola in 1998 and the killing in Jos, a Yoruba neo-traditional musician, Elewele sang thus

Awolowo ni funra wa. Lao gbeji ara wa ja .Awa o sunkunaare Nigeria mo. Ani ki kaluku ma lo nlore. Awolowo wolenlemeji ootoo. Won dabaru Ibo mo babalawo. Abiola tun wole won je o saare. Aseyinwa Aseyinbo won gbe pa Lewon to wa. Aasitun wa ko si panpe awon Gambari. Iro pata, leekan yi ko. Gbogbo ohun to ba ti gba la o fun. Ka maja ka maja suru si wa dago patapata. Ko ni da fun suru. Ko sigba ti orile ede yi. Oni fo si wewe

Translation

Awolowo said it all Yorubas would be forced to stake out their claims. We are not saying a Yoruba man should govern Nigeria. Let us go our separate ways. Awolowo won elections twice. The votes were overturned. Abiola also won, he was not allowed to rule. In the end, they murdered him. Hausas should no longer deceive us. Whatever it takes, we shall give it. We are asked to be patient, to hell with patience. In the end, we will all go our separate ways⁴.

The position of Elewele, was later reechoed in what was to become the national anthem of the Oduua People's Congress (OPC), in which they made it clear that they were disenchanted with the state, particularly with the denial of their mandate as represented in the personality of Bashorun M.K.O, Abiola. The Oduua People's Congress (OPC), thus displayed and sang her anthem with reckless abundance thus;

Ile ya ile ya o omo odua ileya. Ti a ko ba mo ibi anre, Nje ko ye ka pada sile .E jawo lapon ti oyo .Ka lo gbomi ila kana. Ile ya, ile ya o,Omo odua ile ya

Translation

Time to go back home, Oduduwa's children. If we can't see the way forward, ought we not to go back home? Forsake the apon soup (foreign soup) that refuses to draw. And let's go for okro soup. Time to retreat home, children of oduduwa. Let's go back home⁵.

The Role of Ethnic Politics and Religion in the drift of the Nigerian State and failure of Programs and Policies:

One fact that cannot be denied in the failure of the state and programs of the government is the role of ethnicity and religion. Although this became clear in the nation's political terrain from the late 1960's, but its manifestation in decision making at state levels, took it to alarming height. This is with specific reference to what Kukah described as "Praise the Lord and Allahu Akbar saga" in the Kaduna as well as the design of some architectural monuments which bear the symbol of a particular religion as against the other⁶. The climax of all

¹ Bamigboye, A...Op.cit, 773

² This new settlement is dominated by most retired Christians who are not indigenes and is located just behind the Nigeria College of Aviation Technology Zaria.

³ Akubor, E.O (2012) *Ethno Religious Conflict in Northern Nigeria since 1999 and Its Implication for National Unity in Ajala, A.S (ed), The State, Nationalism and Politics: Challenges of Nation Building in Nigeria (1960-2009)*, Rudiger Koppe Verlag. Koln, Germany. Pp371-382

⁴ Akinyele, R.T. 2001, *Ethnic Militancy and National Stability in Nigeria: A Case Study of the Oduua People's Congress*, African Affairs, 100 (2001) p. 623-649.

⁵ Babawale T. (ed); 2003, *Urban Violence, Ethnic Militias and the Challenges of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria*. Lagos, Malthouse .

⁶ Kukah M. H...Op.cit, pp 164, 190-191.

these was the annulment of the 1993 election. This was because immediately the June 12 election which was acclaimed to have been won by Abiola, the popular Yoruba business mogul was annulled and he was thrown into jail, 'ethnicization' began to re-manifest not just in the formation of politic parties/ party politics/ electoral politics but also through a civil cum military outfits known as ethnic militias. In there operations, not only do these militias and separatist movements challenge the authority of the Nigerian state, they also detracts from it the loyalty and obedience that should accrue to it from her citizens. Thus the Nigerian citizens are torn between loyalty to the Nigerian State and loyalty to the in-group movements manifesting today as ethnic militias. Forced to choose between the two, loyalty to the primordial group supersedes loyalty to the Nigerian state¹. Scholars have opined that as a result of this, the loyalty to the state from the people has become artificial, with each group waiting for any slight opportunity to from it and with time threatens to secede².

The plan by each group to either perpetuate disloyalty to the state, carry out punitive measure on others as well as perfect the secession threat, is left in the hands of her youth /militant wing, whose emergence have become a daily occurrence, representing the interest of their ethnic /religious groups. For instance the Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC) representing the interests of the Yoruba ethnic group emerged during the June 12 political impasse and threatened to secede when Chief Moshood Abiola, (a Yoruba) was denied his mandate as the winner of the 1993 presidential election. Immediately, other groups began to emerge as in the case of the Movement For the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP),Ijaw National Council,(INC),Movement for the Survival of Ijaw Ethnic Nationality (MOSIEN),Egbesu Youths also threatened to secede if they were not allowed to control the resources in their area or get larger share of the oil revenue; and likewise the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) representing the Igbo Nation want the state of Biafra because of feeling of exclusion from the socio-economic and political mainstream of the Nigerian state. All these gingered the evolution of the Arewa Peoples Congress (APC) representing the interest of the North, which scholars have blamed for the political turmoil in the country³.

Closely related to the operation of the politic militia is the emergence of other groups as the Jama'atu Ahliss-Sunnah Lidda'awati Wal Jihad also known as Boko Haram (Western education is a sin), a Salafist Muslim sect, that became jihadist in 2009. It is known to be against Western education and forbids one working in any government establishment. The modus operandi of the group indicates a sort of link and training with the al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb in northern Africa as well as some established relationship with the al Shabaab in Somalia. Investigations have revealed that the operation of the group targets the minorities in and around the northern states. This became clear when after series of attacks on places of worships especially belonging to Christians; the group issued an ultimatum ordering all Christians and non indigenes to leave that part of the country. The situation has become so bad that the group is dreaded to be capable of doing anything to destabilize the nation. This is reflected in the position of the International Society for Civil Liberties & the Rule of Law, thus;

Therefore, the recent air crashes in Nigeria, particularly those of March 14 and December 15, 2012, and possibly, that of June1, 2012, may most likely be the handiwork of compromised and radicalized elements within the country's security forces, indoctrinated and brainwashed in the art of sectional and religious fundamentalism by their local sponsors and foreign technical partners. Already, jubilations are taking place in all Muslim communities in northern parts of the country and beyond, thereby attesting to this position of ours. The malicious elements under reference may have thrown to the wind and compromised their professional/ law enforcement oath of honour, code of ethics, code of conduct and canons of policing /law enforcement ethics, and settled radically for their opposites under religious fundamentalist ethical dilemmas. In other words, to them, it is sectional/religious interest first and national interest and national security second. These methods of killing highly placed Nigerians "under clean job or perfect crime" circumstances may also have been brought about by the reported "technical partnership" between Nigeria's armed Islamists and the advanced groups of same in the Northern part of Africa such as Algeria and Somalia. If this is true, then Nigeria's top political class citizens and leading vocal voices on socio-political issues including human rights, particularly non-Muslims and moderate Muslims are dangerously endangered except God divinely decrees otherwise⁴.

¹ Obianyo Nkolika E,(2007), CITIZENSHIP AND ETHNIC MILITIA POLITICS IN NIGERIA-MARGINALIZATION OR IDENTITY QUESTION? -THE CASE OF MASSOB. Paper presented at the 3rd Global Conference on Pluralism Inclusion and Citizenship, at Salzburg,Austria November 18-19th 2007

² Ibid

³ Ibid

⁴ Emeka Umeagbalasi (2012), Religious/Political Fundamentalism & Failed Security & Investigative Intelligences Killed Patrick Yokowa, Haruna John & Others. International Society for Civil Liberties & the Rule of Law Info@intersociety-ng.org

Nigeria at a Crossroad:

As it is today (especially when seen in the light of the rising waves of ethnic militancy and the activities of the Boko Haram sect) there is no doubt that what presently constitute the Federal Republic of Nigeria, has faced, and is continually facing, direct and explicit challenges to its survival, from domestic and external forces hostile to its corporate existence. This is evident from the fact that these forces (which is on the increase) are taking advantage of the various crises arising from the particular problems of nation – building, which the country has, by always calling into question the very basis of its corporate existence. Instead of addressing each of these problems and crises and their specific nature and actual root causes, they have, insisted that the best way to deal with them is to dismantle the Nigeria entity, or turn it into a loose confederation of autonomous states. This is clear from the number of bomb factories that have been found in different parts of the country in the past one or two year, some of these areas include Kogi, Gombe, Zaria, Kaduna, Bauchi among others. There is also the challenge of heightened insecurity in so many parts of the country. There are serious cases of kidnappings, religious and ethnic crises, politically motivated killings, the importation and distribution of light weapons to political thugs, bombings and the threats of more bombings and a general climate of fear and insecurity¹. Kukah M(2012) summarized the country's situation since her attainment of independence in 1960 thus;

How did it happen that the return of democracy in Nigeria has been marked with so much violence? There are many reasons but I imagine that they must be connected to the legacy of our past. In Nigeria, military rule glorified violence and lawlessness. The philosophy behind a coup is not different from armed robbery. For, by the power of a gun, a man has the ability to make what is yours his without negotiation. Gradually, the military therefore sanctified violence and since they did not do much to deliver on goods and services, ordinary citizens were compelled to take to the gun either to defend themselves or to enforce their will. ..The Biafran soldiers at the end of the war. ..threw away their guns and struggled into their civilian clothing's, the youth in the village appeared, took the guns and took to the streets. Thus armed, they took to the streets and recycled as armed robbers!...Vigilante groups emerged with sophistication to settle community squabbles and gradually, these same young men and women realised what they could do with a loaded gun. From the Abacha years, small arms became a big business in Nigeria. Sadly, the government did not do much to set up a programme for the retrieval of these small arms. Local blacksmiths began to enjoy massive patronage and with time, every community began to raise its army to defend itself and its territory from foreign incursions. These vigilante youths would later become the enforcers for the political class, recycling as thugs and ballot box snatchers. Thus armed, when news of the return to power began to filter in, the South West responded by calling for Power shift. The prospects of the return to civilian rule was greeted with an upsurge of militant groups who, armed with small weapons embarked on a reign of terror. The Odua Peoples' Congress, OPC, emerged in Lagos. On the South eastern and South South flank were the Bakassi Boys, the Egbesu Boys and The Movement for the Actualisation of Sovereign State of Biafra, MASSOB completed the pack. Years of military violence on the polity were now bearing fruit. After almost ten years of intermittent violence, the Niger Delta would later boil over. The rest is history...²

On the emergence of religious militancy, the scholar argued;

Now, with Boko Haram on our doorsteps, we have now come full circle. Sadly, although they are also a reaction to the inefficiency and violence of the Nigerian state, more than any other situation, this group has posed the worst threat to national unity. This is not the place to take on the issues of Boko Haram, but in whatever way and manner we see the case, what we have on our doorsteps are the fruits of years and years of degradation by the Nigerian state, years and years of unconscious sanctification of the gun. Clearly, Boko Haram is the failure of governance and it is a symptom of what happens when the architecture of state are weighed down and destroyed by corruption and inefficiency. A weak state leaves itself open to these dangers. The essence of politics is the building of elite consensus which provides the framework for peace and stability. The political class believed that Boko Haram was a religious problem and when the violence broke out, the federal government resorted to a military solution. For a country coming out of a legacy of military rule and violence, this was not the right option. Gradually, the military has dug its heel in and there is now little room for political negotiation and maneuver. Whatever happens, the problems will only be resolved by political trade offs....Perhaps we can make a proposition. Now that the big three, the Igbos, Yorubas and Hausa-Fulani have all contributed to our pool of blood and violence, and no one can claim any level of innocence, can we now settle down to discuss the prospect of a non violent future for Nigeria? This is a great possibility

¹ Okoye F (2010), The Nigerian Bar Association in the Electoral Process. Paper presented at the Centre for Faith and Interreligious Affairs, Kaduna.

² Kukah, M.H (2012), Nigeria as an Emerging Democracy: The Dilemma and the Promise. keynote address delivered at the Annual General Conference of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Abuja, Nigeria on the 27th August. Pp 5-8

because, first, the minorities of the South-South have been adequately compensated especially as we daily hear stories of erstwhile militants turning into billionaires now. The Minorities of the Middle Belt unfortunately or fortunately do not have the culturally homogenous and cohesive capacity to inflict injury on anyone. They did their part for one united Nigeria. So, truly, we are set for a new dawn. The challenge is how to bring that about....Faced with the challenges of nation building, Nigeria did not choose the path of statesmanship, courage and resilience. Rather than follow through the roundtable discussions in Aburi, Ghana in 1966, clarify the issues and seek accommodation, we resorted to states creation as a solution to the problem of national unity. After slicing the nation into states, we then began came up with the mantra that; to keep Nigeria one is a task that must be done! Even when we fought a war with no winners no vanquished, rather than return to the barracks and use politics to create consensus and rebuild our nation, the military stayed on, corrupted politics and destroyed the foundations of the unity it had preached and fought a war to protect. Thus the mantra, to keep Nigeria one was replaced with, To your tents o Israel!¹

Conclusion and the way forward

Since Nigeria came into existence, as an independent, sovereign, nation-state, dating back to the first day of October 1960, when the Union Jack was lowered for the Green-White-Green it has faced these challenges, almost every few years, including the secessionist challenge, which plunged the country into three years of Civil War in 1967 – 1970 , the Maitaisine religious killing of the early 1980’s, coups and counter coups since independence, the abortive Orkar Coup of 22nd April 1990, in the course of which, an announcement was made of the dismemberment of the country by the excision of seven states from it. The country, however, survived these and other serious challenges to its existence. The geographical, demographic, economic , cultural and political parameters, and the domestic and external forces, which sustain and support its corporate existence, prevailed despite the fact that there are deliberate attempts by certain actors employing different factors to attain the dismemberment saga. It is therefore not surprising that at the end of 2012, The Washington based National Intelligence Council (NIC) in its Global Trends report of December 2012 “predicts” that 15 countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East will become “failed states” by 2030, due to their “potential for conflict and environmental ills”. The list of countries in the December 2012 NIC report includes Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Chad, Niger, Nigeria, Mali, Kenya, Burundi, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Somalia, DR Congo, Malawi, Haiti, Yemen.

Table I: **The list of countries in the December 2012 NIC report**

Rank	2008	2030
1	Burundi	Somalia
2	Yemen	Burundi
3	Somalia	Yemen
4	Afghanistan	Uganda
5	Uganda	Afghanistan
6	Malawi	Malawi
7	Dem. Rep. of Congo	Dem. Rep. of Congo
8	Kenya	Kenya
9	Haiti	Nigeria
10	Ethiopia	Niger
11	Bangladesh	Pakistan
12	Pakistan	Chad
13	Nigeria	Haiti
14	Niger	Ethiopia
15	Chad	Bangladesh

Source: *Sandia National Laboratories*

There is the tendency for most of us to see this as one of those usually European propaganda, but it must be taken more seriously, as indicators even from within the country are already pointers to this fact.

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¹ Kukah...Ibid

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