Ethnic Politics and the Challenges of Nation Building in Nigeria
Fourth Republic

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Abstract

This paper presents the impact of ethno-religious conflicts on nation building in Nigeria. The multi-ethnic structure of Nigeria has preempted numerous conflicts that often arise as a result of the quest for power between and among ethnic bigots as well as religious fanatics. The multi-faceted ethnic structure of Nigeria which was abruptly amalgamated in 1914 without proper unification gave rise to the crisis in the quest for power as well as the scramble for resource control. Such crisis has always been to the detriment of harmonious national integration which is very pt for any developmental agenda. The paper sourced its data from the secondary sources which include academic journals, newspapers, textbooks, internet sources magazines while the relative deprivation theory was adopted as a tool for analysis. The paper based on the foregoing found out that ethnicity or ethnic politics has affected nation building in Nigeria through the various violence and conflicts that have erupted based on ethnic sentiments. It therefore, recommends that, in a multi-ethnic nation like Nigeria, a credible and responsible national centre is imperative where different ethnic groups across the nation should have their representative for dialogue and sense of belonging would be accorded to each regardless of the population. Secondly, there should be an establishment that would respond promptly to the demands of the diverse groups for the purpose of ensuring adequate integration among ethnic groups in the country.

Keywords: Ethnicity, Politics, Nation Building, Crisis, Development, Religion.

Introduction

Since the return to democratic rule in 1999, Nigeria has witnessed several ethnic crises which must have bred from the multi-ethnic structure of Nigeria since the 1914 amalgamation of the Southern and Northern protectorate. Nigeria is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-linguistic society made up of people of diverse cultures and traditions, and differing background of political, social and economic organizations. Idang (2005), notes that the area lord Lugard hurriedly welded together in 1914 into a polity, called Nigeria, was a conglomeration of about 250 ethnic groups that were linguistically and ethnically fragmented. He further observed that before the area covered by Nigeria came in contact with the Europeans, it had within its orbit 30 odd ethnic groups including the Hausa/ Fulani dominating the Northern parts, the Tiv, Igala, Idoma and Ebira dominating the middle belt,
the Yoruba in the West and the Igbo and the Delta tribes, occupying the East. Also, out of the reign emerged various states, kingdoms and empires including the Borno Empire and the Sokoto Caliphate to the North, the Yoruba kingdoms, the Benin Empire and the city-states of the delta zone to the south. There we also the segmentary or state-less societies among the Tiv and Igbo whose basis of political organization was the village level with individualism emphasized in their social relations. Though the entities were to the certain extent politically independent of each other and at times at were with one another they do not doubt had commercial interactions with networks of trade routes connecting them in the four cardinal regions (Ajayi, 2014).

Given her heterogeneous nature, Nigeria is obviously one of the crisis-ridden parts of sub-Saharan Africa. The country is made up of diverse ethnic groupings which were brought together for administrative convenience by the British colonialists (Ademoyega, 1981; Kuna, 2005; Porter, 2011; Salawu, Mohammed & Mohammed, 2005). The aftermath of this amalgamation which was devoid of unification is the problem which ethnicity has on nation-building. Ethnicity had posed and continues to pose serious challenges to the survival of many countries composed of amalgamated ethnic groupings in Africa. As a result, their efforts towards achieving national integration continue to be an exercise in futility.

Any attempt at understanding the continuing and seemingly endless nation-building strategies in Nigeria cannot be exonerated from the issue of ethnicity most especially in Nigeria’s fourth republic. The nature, character, structure and composition of the state are very important and central to the nature of the relationship that exists within it. If it is unstable, hegemonic and illegitimate contraption, there is often the tendency of instability and chaos arising from the unhealthy rivalry that will always be built within it. On the other hand, if it evolved on the platform of consensus and fair play, there is the tendency for it to have a serene domestic politics. The Nigerian situation is such that boycotted the due course of legitimization at the formation and this posits serious consequences for its stability at the present moment (Adeyemi, 2006). The genesis of the problem of ethnicity in most African countries is traceable to the era of colonialism and its “divide and rule” strategy. The policy of divide and rule was put in place to purposely weaken the nationalistic aspiration and struggle of the Africans against colonial oppression.

The problem of ethnicity is consciously being invoked in situations where the strategies that are adjudged to be more effective than other cleavage-based strategies fail to work out (Nnoli, 1993). It can, therefore, be argued convincingly that, ethnic consciousness and intolerance continue to impede the nation-building process in Nigeria, as every action and inaction of government is given ethnic as well as religious colouration. The experience in Nigeria since the re-democratization in May 1999 shows that ethnicity has eaten deep into the woodworks of our national unity and cohesion” (Adamu, 2001). Thus, as the shadow of ethnic intolerance lengthens, the shadow of understanding among the various ethnic groups is growing shorter. “Over the years, the phenomena of ethnicity have led to incessant recurrence of ethnic conflicts, which have given birth to many ethnic militias” (Salawu, 2010: 345).

Ethnicity in Nigeria has become major boundaries that create divisions among people. Ethnicity has also become potent tools for mobilization and manipulation in the country, hence the use of ethnic sentiments, nepotism and tribalism in virtually all spheres of Nigeria’s life. It has been so manipulated that virtually all institutions in the public and private sectors have been polarized along ethnic and most often religious lines. Civil servants, community
and social workers are most victims of intimidation and oppression in their places of work. Survival and job security are strongly based on who is of the same ethnic group and religion with the chief executive or the employer. These are ideologies that do not promote peaceful and harmonious co-existence among Nigerians. Our ethnic and religious values should have been a force that will encourage Nigerians to appreciate the great benefits derivable from working together as Nigerians in honesty and for a better future irrespective of our ethnic and religious differences. The issue of identity politics could equally be said to have equally continued to linger, this may be attributable to the perceived marginalization of one ethnic group, religion or language by the government.

Nation building policies which have been adopted in the country have failed as solutions to the problems of national integration is obvious, not only in the increase in the antagonistic relationship between ethnic groupings and religious bodies but also in the daily outbreak of conflicts which are ethnicity motivated. The growing trends of ethnic intolerance and the attendant conflicts in Nigeria do not only constitute a major threat to the corporate existence of the country but are also working against democracy and its sustainability. Therefore, this study argues that nation-building continues to be hampered and distorted in Nigeria due to the fact that sectional, regional and tribal interests rather than national interests are promoted. Altogether, extant literature hardly explicates the real picture which ethnicity paints on nation building in Nigeria. This study, therefore, will make an attempt at addressing such lacuna.

Conceptual Explanations

Ethnicity

Ethnicity is a major driver of political choice in Nigeria and much Nigerian political science is devoted to analysing this phenomenon. According to Chazan (1992:106), ethnicity denotes the complexity of human existence and behaviour and defies simplistic definition. It signifies perceptions of common origins, historical memories, identity and common ties between people. It has its foundations in memories of past experiences and common aspirations, values, norms and expectations. Nnoli (1995:6), further observed that ethnic-group access to state power or the lack of it is an important element in ethnic politics, especially if minority groups are denied access to power and resources based on the small(er) size of their population (even in contexts where they contribute more to national wealth), and that this is likely to lead to increased ethnic consciousness. He opined that in Africa, access to state power is important for the various ethnic groups because of the extensive intervention of the African state in the political and socioeconomic spheres.

Anugwom (2000:64), sees ethnicity as arising from a situation where a group of people, no matter how small, with different cultural and linguistic attributes from those of its neighbours, use this as the basis for solidarity and interaction with others. In his view, the socio-cultural consciousness and solidarity of the group play an important role in the interaction with other groups, especially in terms of competition for power and resource allocation within the nation-state.

Nation Building

Nation building is the conscious governmental policies geared towards inculcating a uniform consciousness among its diverse people, with their cultural, historical, linguistic and
territorial diversities, with the ultimate aim of evolving a common identity. Nigeria, like some other countries that are plagued by specific incompatibility problems, has since colonial period embarked on a nation-building project. Some nation-building policies (Centralization policy with Unification Decree 34 of 1966, National Youth Service Corps, Formation of Political Parties with national coverage, Unity Schools, Federal Character Principle, Relocation of Federal Capital etc) have been adopted to assuage the negative practices that obstruct harmonious coexistence among various ethno-religious groups in the country. It is saddening, however, that despite the fact that much efforts and resources have been directed towards this project, little has been achieved. This is because, this task of building a nation out of a multiplicity of nations within the context of Nigeria is besieged by a variety of problems. Prominent among these problems are the ones relating to the ethno-religious diversity of the country with its attendant destructive antagonism and ceaseless crises (Obadare, 2004).

Theoretical Explanations
The study adopts as its theoretical construct Relative Deprivation theory. The Relative Deprivation Theory was propounded by Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, & Sears (1939), as a way of linking the political and economic inequalities that exist in societies to incidences of rebellions and insurrections. The theory which is usually liked to the frustration-aggression theory formulated by the same authors argues that frustration arises when the expectations of members of a society or a particular group are not met by the political and economic benefits that they derive from the services provided by the State. The collective frustration of the people as a result of the deprivation which they believe they suffer results in violent expressions by those affected (Dollard et al, 1939:52, Davies, 1962:44, Feierabend and Feierabend, 1966:89).

In the context of our present study, the rise of various ethnic militia groups that have violently attacked other groups and institutions of government in Nigeria can be traced to the feelings of marginalization in terms of allocation of resources as well as control of power by the members of those ethnic groups. This had found very eloquent expression through the formation of many ethnic militia groups such as OPC, APC, MASSOB, IYC, IPOB, NDA, etc, which had fought the Nigerian state on various points of perceived marginalization, and some had even metamorphosed to separatist movements with the belief that the nation as presently constituted cannot provide the enabling platform for their interests to be effectively accommodated.

Ethnic, religious and linguistic identities sometimes serve as the parameter for allocation of resources and control of political power, including appointments to public offices. This, in utter disregard for the legally accepted framework put in place through the federal character principle, which was established to ensure that no single group is dominated or marginalized. However, sometimes the members of the elite manipulate the implementation of the federal character principle resulting in lopsidedness in such allocations. Some members of the elite, who feel short-changed by other elites in terms of direct access to state resources mobilize uneducated and unemployed young men who they arm to unleash mayhem on members of other ethnic and religious groups on the wrong notion that it is the members of such ethnic groups that are the cause of their economic woes. There is this impression that if the members of the other religious or ethnic groups were not in the same society with them, then they would not suffer any form deprivation.
The relevance of this theory to the study cannot be farfetched. Going by the insignia in the Nigerian coat of arm which read, “Unity and Faith, Peace and Progress” it is very glaring that the unity of Nigeria cannot be guaranteed if there is no faith in one another, such faith cannot be expressed when there is a continuous clamor for one united and indivisible nation on the lips without having it to reflect on the everyday life. This faith is usually lost in a country that deprives its citizen's various necessities of lives just on the basis of ethnic sentiments, religion, nepotism and tribalism. People continually lose faith in the country just because they cannot get employed after school because of the region they come from and because of the federal character and the quota system, when the people are denied admissions into higher institutions of learning just because they are of a particular race and ethnic nationality. People begin to have the feeling of relative deprivation and they resort to their ethnic build upon the grounds that it will only become a safe abode for them to express themselves and gain things they should which have been deprived them in a nation which they happen to belong to. This resort to ethnic sentiments, tribalism and all forms of discriminatory sentiments causes the nation-building project to be frustrated.

Challenges to Nation Building

Ethnicity/Tribalism

One of the obstacles to resolve before building a nation is the problem posed by tribalism (Vail, 1989) or ethnicity. In Africa, the tribe is still very important as the social organization closest to the people. Through the policy of indirect rule Britain, France and other imperial powers created and preserved these tribes. This nevertheless posed a big threat to the peace and unity of African countries. After independence, the issue of tribalism or ethnicity was considered archaic, unchanging, and a major obstacle towards modernization by the new elite class. In this vein, the elite sought to exorcise tribalism in an improper manner oblivious to the fact that most Africans derive the sense of security from the ethnic group. The three years of civil war that raged in Nigeria stemmed all efforts to integrating various ethnic groups into a united entity and unleashed unnecessary killings of civilians.

Religious Extremism

The second hurdle to scale through is the effect of increasing religious extremism which often results in killings. Religious differences alone do not invoke ethnic killing because ethnic groups of different faith can live together without the problem. However, wherever religion is politicized or used as an instrument by elites to mobilize local supporters for a particular cause, the effect is always devastating. For African leaders, this poses a big challenge to nation-building. In Nigeria and Sudan, for example, the religious difference between the Christian South and Muslim North sparked a gruesome conflict that overlapped into ethnic, regional and even economic divide. The 1967-1970 Biafra-Nigerian ethnic conflict was given a religious blend that easily identified the Christian Igbos as responsible for the backwardness of the northern Muslims.

Poverty and Economic Stagnation

Thirdly, the newly independent states also faced the challenges of combating poverty and economic stagnation. Lack of adequate food production and development infrastructures increased poverty and even caused resource competition and killings among different groups. The craze to modernize and be like France, Britain, or Germany, inspired the drive among the new states of Africa towards industrialization and building of “white elephant” steel projects.
and even car assembling plants (Roland and Atmore, 2005: 326-7). This strategic mistake led to the neglect of agriculture that is supposed to be the backbone of any growing economy. Myopically, these African states have followed without consideration the foot-steps of the colonial state that neglected food production in the rural areas in favour of export crops. Furthermore, the lack of enthusiasm in agricultural production could be attributed to unstable market prices for commodities in international markets, which did not favour the states. In addition, the combination of lack of land reform programme and technical backwardness of rural dwellers contributed to low agricultural development. The new leaders were faced with the need for more food production as a means to feeding the growing population and workers in the industrial sectors.

Ethno-Religious Conflict and Nation Building
It is not hyperbolic to express that ethnic and religious questions are the major challenges facing nation building and national integration in Nigeria. The experiences in the in the country have indicated that the growing intolerance among various ethnic and religious groups in the country have some negative effects on the quest for national unity and cohesion. This is again best seen if one realizes that nation building and national integration can only be achieved in a just and an egalitarian setting, and in a land of equal opportunities for all citizens. These are virtues on which lasting integration is built. Also, socio-political pluralism and diversity require an environment in which citizens engage with one another and with public institutions in a free and open manner. The limited availability or non-existence of these avenues leads to a situation where, as observed by Akindele, Olaopa & Salaam (2009: 370), “people became disenchanted with democracy and revert to undemocratic sometimes violent) means to vent out their frustration”. This development greatly retards the nation-building progress. Thus, nation building which manifests in social equity demands that citizens endure, tolerate, create and maintain supportive political culture devoid of mutual distrust and suspicion he experiences in Nigeria, however, betrays this expectation.

Ethnic bigotry and religious fanaticism continue to obstruct the movement of the country towards integration. Momoh (2009: 66), holds that the outlook on national identity is the fast giving way to ethnic and religious identities (Pentecostal fundamentalism and political Sharia). It is incorrect to say that religion is being manipulated in Nigeria, rather religion is instrumentalized. That is why it is possible to talk about the politicisation of ethnicity and ethnicization of politics in Nigeria. As a result of this, the rulers find it easy and cheap to mobilize ethnic and religious sentiments in the pursuit of power and resources. This “opportunistic use of identities” (Salawu, 2009: 194), has ended up in the politicization of ethnicity and religion to the detriment of national unity. Salawu’s rendition will also suffice here: In Nigeria, it is interesting to know that ethnicity and religious bigotry has become a fulcrum of various forms of nationalism ranging from assertion to language, cultural autonomy and religious superiority to demand for local political autonomy and self-determination.

All these sometimes lead to some forms of contextual discrimination of members of one ethnic and religious group against another on the basis of differentiated systems of socio-cultural symbols and religion. Therefore, in a multi-ethnic and religiously diverse society like Nigeria, with some forms of contextual discrimination, relationships between people may be characterized by lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion and fear as it is the case among the ethnic and religious group in Nigeria. In fact, this mutual suspicion and lack of cordiality among the various ethnic components explains why ethno-religious conflicts have become a
permanent feature of Nigeria as a nation as far back as the 1980s to date (Salawu, 2010: 346). Consequently, ethno-religious intolerance and its resultant conflicts continue to threaten peace, unity, and stability of Nigeria.

The country’s national unity is, therefore, being systematically eroded. Contest for political offices has been reduced to a primitive struggle among the ethnic and religious groups. Tribal and religious loyalty is stronger in the country than national loyalty as Nigerians see themselves first and foremost as Yorubas, Hausas, Fulanis, Kanuris; Igbo, Ijaw, Kalabaris, Ibibos, Igbo, Tivs etc before accepting themselves as Nigerians. Candidates for elective offices are fielded and backed by ethnic and religious groups in order to bring political gains to their ethnic groups and religious bodies. In employment, admissions into schools, distribution of social amenities and in social relationships, ethno-religious affiliations and attachments are very strong and conspicuously manifest. All these weaken the unity base of the country, as attachment of a Nigerian first and foremost to his/her ethnic group prior to the nation is a bane to Nigeria’s national unity, national consciousness, nation building and socio-political integration (Jekayinfa, 2002).

Thus, “nothing in the Nigeria’s political history captures her problem of national integration more than the chequered fortune of tribe in her vocabulary” (Achebe, 1983: 1). Ethnicity and religion in the country function as tools of disintegration, for the perpetration of violence, fuelling ethnoreligious consciousness and solidarity, acquisition of political power and socio-economic gains, massive killings and the wanton destruction of life and property. This negative exploit of ethnicity and religion had devastated the ground for building a nation. The ethnoreligious plural nature of Nigeria has, thus, not been for the best of the country as it has been the basis for many conflicts. Due to its ethnic and religious diversity and the inherent intolerance, the country has witnessed the most disturbing and unprecedented upsurge of ethno-religious conflicts. Ethno-religious intolerance has therefore remained a constant threat to peace in Nigeria and has continued to threaten the continuing existence and cohabitation of the different ethnic nationalities in the country. This precarious situation is aggravated by the disintegrative posture of the Nigerian political elite who exploit ethnicity and religion for their selfish ends.

The fanning of ethno-religious intolerance and the consequent conflicts by elite who exploit this to seek and consolidate power do constitute a hindrance to nation-building. This disintegrative role of the Nigerian elite in the nation-building project has some ethno-religious underpinning. The elite, first and foremost, come from one ethnic and belong to one religion or the other. And by reason of their access to power and national resources, they tend to have unlimited opportunities to several strategies of manipulating the local citizenry in such areas as appointments and elections. Most often, the elite are known for whipping up ethnic sentiments from the local populace when they are seeking loyalty or support in order to attain or retain position of power and authority. The controversial letter from former President Obasanjo to the then President Jonathan buttressed this. In the letter, the ex-President advised that the political elite “must move away from advertently or inadvertently dividing the country along weak seams of North-South and Christian-Moslem” (Leadership, December 12, 2013: 1). He also accused the then President (Goodluck Jonathan) of clannishness and divisiveness. In his words: President, the most important quality for your present position is your being a Nigerian. Whatever else you may be besides being a Nigerian is only secondary for this purpose. And if majority of Nigerians who voted had not cast their votes for you, you could not have been there. For you to allow yourself to be “possessed”, so
to say, to the exclusion of most of the rest of Nigerians as an “Ijaw man” is a mistake that should never have been allowed to happen. Yes, you have to be born in one part of Nigeria to be a Nigerian if not naturalized but the Nigerian President must be above ethnic factionalism. To allow or tacitly encourage people of “Ijaw nation” to throw insults on other Nigerians from other parts of the country and threaten fire and brimstone to protect your interest as an Ijaw man is myopic and you are not openly quieting them is even more unfortunate (Leadership, December 12, 2013: 6).

This captures the nature and character of Nigerian political elite. Goodluck Jonathan, due to his yet-to-be-openly-declared 2015 re-election ambition, has been accused severally of deliberately advancing and promoting the interest of Niger Delta in general and that of Ijaw nation in particular. This point is buttressed by the intimidating utterances of the ex-militants of Niger Delta and some prominent figures in the geopolitical zone that, 2015 is a must for Goodluck Jonathan without which the country will be plunged into indescribable circumstance. Although, Jonathan, in his reply refuted this, as he re-affirmed his commitment to Nigerian unity “as any patriot can be” (Guardian, December 23, 2013: 13), he nevertheless attested to the pursuit of personal and sectional interest by the political elite. According to him, very central to the problems bedevilling political parties and the entire polity “is the unbridled jostling and positioning for personal or group advantages ahead of the 2015 general elections”. Consequently, “the bitterness, anger, mistrust, fear and deep suspicion” characterizing the polity “flow from this singular factor” (Guardian, December 23, 2013: 13). An unfortunate outcome of this scenario is that, openness, merit, efficiency, and general acceptability, which form the underlying principles of the emergence of national leaders, are sacrificed on the altar of ethnoreligious chauvinism. As a result, Nigeria fails to have a real national President, rather tribalists and ethnic bigots continue to sail the ship of the country. However, in such a situation, the ship of the country cannot be allowed to sail freely in the ocean of integration as ethnoreligious sentiments becloud well navigate reasoning and judgment of the sailing captains.

Ethnicity and Nation-Building in Nigeria
Ethnicity as a relational product is quintessentially adversarial. Two reasons are responsible. The first, as observed by Fumagalli (2007), though in a different context but very applicable to African social systems by its peculiar nature of state-formation, is that millions of citizens found themselves, almost overnight, in the new condition being labelled or viewed as a minority. However, the tag ‘minority’ denotes the presence of some sorts of critical competitions in which the former is delicately pitched against a majority other with a leverage of number among other factors. Multi-ethnic states are consequently in a flux of nagging competitions. This is quite particular to African states where there is heavy dependence on public resources for virtually every form of sustenance, more so that the private sector is less developed. A major blunder committed by early post-independence leaders in their state-building effort is that the state is paternalistically conceived. The state became an omniprovider of an overwhelming plethora of services, many of which could have been efficiently provided by the private sector. Access to the state’s (finite) resource base is thus crucial to the competing groups. This explains why the attempt to privatize certain public utilities, infrastructures and services has met with stiff public resistance, whereas most African states are already overwhelmed and incapable of further services. As Teshome (2007), has observed, ethnicity could be the basis for the unequal treatment of people and it may be the cause of ethnocentrism and prejudices against members of other ethnic groups. The second, which derives from the first, is a function of several factors. The fact that the
(African) state is in a constant scenario of political competitions is an indication of the economic fact that the resources available for allocation are also never surplus. It is indeed the scarcity of resources that inevitably necessitates if not aggravates the politics of (its) allocation.

The stakes of politics are too high. Politics extends beyond mere governmental organisation and operation of the state and its institutions. Politics is critical and determinative of people’s fate or fortune in life. Without an iota of doubt, it’s a functional determination of who prospers or perishes, who lives or dies, who is favoured or marginalized and who is famed or defamed. Politics could be used to engender development and underdevelopment, depending on who is at the winning end of the power play. The politics of allocation essentially is about competing to get some scarce benefits from the government. Such include health, wealth, scholarships and education, public utilities, infrastructural facilities, loans and grants, livelihoods, fame, respect, land, resource control, security, contracts, import license, influence, skills, and e.t.c. How much that one could get is a critical function of where one belongs in the endgame of politics? Two classical definitions of politics are succinct here. Politics for Harold Lasswell, though bitterly and in the ordinariness, is about who gets what, when and how. A technical interpretation of that is David Easton’s definition that politics is the authoritative allocation of value. Thus, a synergetic fusion of the two, that politics is the authoritative determination of who gets what, when and how, brings forth a crucial case of fate determination.

The critical reason why people or groups struggle for governmental power is that it is essentially at the decision end of politics of allocation. Therefore, intergroup competitions for the authoritative allocation of value in multiethnic states are inevitable and vicious. They are usually the root cause of inter-ethnic civil uprisings. Nnoli (1978) has thus rightly argued that it is not inter-ethnic contact between groups that breeds conflicts; rather it is the extent of competing claims that are associated with the economic and political problems of modern nation-states. However and notwithstanding the status of resource availability in terms of scarcity or surplusage, the politics of allocation may become the vulturous politics of enrichment to the group(s) with the upper hand in the interplay of power politics, whereby greater opportunities for amassing wealth are effective, deliberately and greedily cornered by the dominant group(s). The history and politics of revenue allocation in Nigeria clearly depicted this scenario. At Independence when Nigeria’s economy relied solely on agricultural exports, the revenue sharing formula based on the principle of derivation was adopted. By this principle, federal revenues were distributed to the federating units based on the total or some proportion of certain taxes assumed to have been paid by the citizens of the units. Two of Nigeria’s three units then, the Western and Northern Regions (also with two dominant ethnic stocks – Yoruba and Hausa-Fulani) tremendously got enriched under this principle through their exportation of cocoa and groundnuts (then in very high demand in the international market) and other cash crops. The Eastern Region was then less endowed and thus profited less comparatively.

Shortly after, oil was discovered in stupendous commercial quantity in the Eastern Region. The in-streaming petrodollars soon and far outstripped total revenues from agro-expports prompting thereby the successful agitation by the same two chagrined regions for Nigeria to adopt a new revenue-sharing formula that is either based on the principle of need or the principle of even development/national interest. Revenue allocation here is either based on the size of the population in an area, or on the basis of public expenditure deemed to be in the
best interest of the nation as a whole. The two former regions still profited significantly in this new arrangement as they contained major population centres of the country. And that is in addition to the fact that the political and bureaucratic elites from these regions are also some of the most influential in the authoritative allocation of values and the determination of deeming issues of national interest. The politics of allocation is jealously ridiculous in Nigeria that even a non-oil state would temptingly agitate for similar federal oil-related compensations to oil-producing states, for instance, to cater for environmental oil spillages, or at least would create spurious excuses to partake of similar federal largesse. Geo-political zones that are unable to benefit from certain largesse may agitate to discourage its allocation to the needy zones.

It is thus not far-fetched why ethnic groupings and group politics are fundamental and diehard in many states, particularly in multi-ethnic and post-colonial situations. The stakes of politics are better obtained by belonging to an ethnic group than as an individual or as a member of some other ethnic group. In essence, thus, ethnic relations cannot but be innately adversarial in group contentions for scarce resources, and even for crucial subsistence. Quite remarkably, there is the scholastic consensus that ethnicity and ethnic nationalism is critical to state-making as both generate solidarity and garner popular participation of people in politics, yet, ethnicity, by its adversarial nature, is contraindicated to the concept of nation-building. The aim of this paper again is not to get involved in the debate on the theories and conceptualizations of nation-building as it is also a normative issue. Rather and as earlier posited, this work would adopt preferably the idea that nation-building refers to the efforts of post-colonial states towards nurturing the former colonial territories into viable and coherent modern national entities. Essentially thus, nation-building critically aims at the forging or framing of a national identity and the unification of peoples within the state in order to attain significant forms of stability and endurance, which will, in turn, ensure its prosperous viability.

Nation-building includes the deliberate creation of national paraphernalia and symbols of unity such as national flag, national anthem, national day and national investments/holdings, etc. At a deeper level, national identity needed to be deliberately constructed by moulding different groups into a nation, especially since colonialism had used divide and rule tactics to maintain its domination (Wikipedia, 2013). Nation-building involves the intricate inclusion of all groups, towards fostering social cohesion and harmony as against the exclusivity and rancorous nature of ethnicity. The opening phrase of the first Nigerian national anthem, ‘Nigeria, we hail thee, our own dear native land, though tribes and tongues may differ, in brotherhood we stand’, is a pointer to this. The initial effort at nation-building in Nigeria thus aimed at forging a brotherhood, vis-à-vis, a nationhood of the diverse ethnic, organised in unity for a common purpose within the state. In other words, social harmony is a critical ingredient of nation-building. However, the attainment of social harmony may of essence be antithetical to the adversarial nature of inter-ethnic politics in post-colonial states where every ethnic group is most tendentiously hostile to non-members.

**Ethnic Politics and Challenges of National Development/Integration in Nigeria**

Ethnic politics have constituted a major block in the cog-wheel of development in pre and post-independence Nigeria. Fifty-five years after independence, Nigeria is still confronted with the challenge of how to deal with her problem of ethnic politics. This problem of ethnic politics has retarded Nigeria from having national leaders who are ready to serve with passion and commitment other than those who are sentimental and tribalised. Politics of ethnicity has
made it difficult for Nigeria to have the right leaders in its political journey of over fifty-four years of independence, except, for a very few of her leaders who have demonstrated total commitment to the nation’s development. Ethnic politics has been the clog in the wheel of political advancement of the nation such that, there has never been a leader with a national outlook that has emerged in Nigeria. The election of candidates so far has been based on where the candidate came from rather than on the right candidate for the election (Umezinwa, 2012).

The idea of ethnic politics was not limited to the central leaders alone, but also among component states and various ethnic groups within the same state. For example, in Kogi state, the dominant ethnic group has been dominating the political leadership of the state since 1999. Benue is also another state that has a similar case where Tiv the dominant ethnic group has been at the helm of political activities of the state. These so-called leaders are without the interest of the nation at heart. They emerged in the political limelight through ethnic sentiments, but end up in disappointing their so-called ethnic groups; this is evident in almost all parts of the world where none of the ethnic nations is developed. One expects that owing to the way many of these politicians came to power via ethnic sympathy, they would satisfy ethnic groups that supported them to power, but as soon as they emerge, they neglect their people. Many of them who are in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) refused to go back to see their people at home again (Adeleke and Charles, 2015:65).

After electioneering campaign has come and gone, these politicians who used ethnic and tribal sentiments to appeal to people by pointing out at the peculiar needs of these people will never be ready to listen to them anymore. Immediately after they won the positions, these supporters will be looked upon as ‘noise-makers’ while they use heavy armed security personnel to draw a line of demarcation between them and the electorate (supporters). The issue of the federal character is another political arrangement that is a troubling political advancement of this nation. Although, the motive behind the enshrinement of the principle is to enhance equality and fairness among the component ethnic groups in Nigeria, with a view to bringing a sense of belonging to different citizens of Nigeria as well as to prevent fears of domination of one region or ethnic group over the others. The plausibility of the principle notwithstanding brings about the reigning of mediocrity into the governmental activities in the name of equity and fairness among the component units. Given the fact that merit has been overruled as a criterion for serving the nation, it is not surprising that all manners of people have been appointed to hold public offices in which they neither have the training nor experience.

Thus, in a situation like this, there is no way any progress could be achieved in the nation-building and advancement (Umezinwa, 2012). Umezinwa further posits that ethnic politics and rivalry also leads to the emergence of an incompetent president. Similarly, ethnic politics has also created an avenue where corrupt leaders are being supported by their ethnic groups instead of the citizens to vehemently reject corrupt leaders and condemn their activities; they do support them due to ethnicity, thereby making these leaders continue in a corrupt manner with impunity. Corruption without mincing words has been undermining Nigeria’s political development. It has permeated all levels of government in Nigeria while ethnic groups of the corrupt politicians are always defending them. The consequence of corruption on Nigerians is devastating. For instance, despite the enormous oil and gas deposit in Nigeria, the nation remains poor with over 90 million Nigerians living in abject poverty. Since the discovery of oil in large quantity in Nigeria, the nation has earned over $300 billion from oil exports (Ribadu, 2004 Arowosaiye and Kulliyyah, 2009). Corruption has cost Nigeria her whooping
sum of £20 billion which has been stolen since independence by past leaders of the country. The money stolen could have made Nigeria six times better than Western Europe where many Nigerians are now running (Ribadu, 2009).

The resultant effects of ethnic politics were aptly summed by Babangida (2002), cited in Adeleke and Charles, (2015), as follows: Wastage of enormous human and material resources in ethnically inspired violence, encounters, clashes and even battles, heightening of fragility of the economy and political process, threat to security of life and property and disinvestment of local and foreign components with continuous capital flight and loss of confidence in the economy; and increasing gaps in social relationship among ethnic nationalities including structural suspicions and hate for one another. Ethnic nationalism is equally responsible for an uprising of ethnic militias across the country.

Conclusion
The study has clearly shown that Nigeria is currently sitting on the keg of gunpowder. It brings to fore that Nigeria is a state on the brink of disintegration going by the recent event across the nation if nothing is done urgently to subvert the potential consequences of such situation. The study was a deliberate attempt at examining the extent to which ethnicity affects nation building in Nigeria. The study found out that ethnicity or ethnic politics has affected nation building in Nigeria through the various violence and conflicts that have erupted based on ethnic sentiments. Federalism that is meant to put in place and harness the benefit of a cordial co-existence among the diverse ethnic groups within Nigerian federation has been subverted. Nigeria’s pluralistic nature has made her susceptible to conflicts arising from the pursuit of divergent interests. The unabated struggle from the various ethnic groups for a political position with a view to controlling economic wealth and other resources of the nation is invariably a threat to the sustenance of peaceful co-existence, a political development which is detrimental to nation building.

Recommendations
The study makes the following recommendation;
First, in a multi-ethnic nation like Nigeria, a credible and responsible national centre is imperative where different ethnic groups across the nation should have their representative for dialogue and sense of belonging would be accorded to each regardless of the population. Second, there should be an establishment that would respond promptly to the demands of the diverse groups for the purpose of ensuring adequate integration among ethnic groups in the country. There is the need for the emergence of a class of visionary leaders that will be able to situate Nigerian citizens at the centre stage of socio-economic and political projects. Nigerians leaders at all levels must be honest, transparent and accountable for the conduct of governance. They must also be educated and re-oriented as they have been accused of causing most of the socio-political and ethno-religious conflicts experienced in the country since independence.

References
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