

POLITICS OF ETHNICITY AND TRIBALISM IN NIGERIA: AN IMPEDEMENT TO ACHIEVING NATIONAL OBJECTIVES

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Abstract

It is very clear in Nigeria that the politics and human nature has been characterized by ethnicity and tribalism which hampered the human development. There is high level of sentiments and discrimination in Nigeria political environment, tribal issues against others, religious and riots among others. The objectives of Nigeria are not reflecting its objectives that says a united and self-reliant nation, a free and democratic society and a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens. These issues of ethnicity and tribalism are seriously seen during elections of public officers, political appointment, resource allocation, award of contracts and siting of important projects in various States in Nigeria. This paper examine the concepts of ethnicity, tribalism and politics, the paper explained the causes of politics of ethnicity and tribalism in Nigeria such as Election manipulation, Unbalanced political appointment, Natural resources and unequal State. The effects of ethnicity and tribalism on achieving national objectives like: statism, religious instability, political war among others. The paper also highlights ways to achieve National objectives such as free and fair election in a democratic society, creating a God fearing citizens and free and compulsory education. The paper concluded that ethnic politics has posed a lot of challenges towards achieving National objectives, therefore all policies that unity us together need to be active and functional, Nigeria government needs to introduce true federalism if we must achieved the National objectives.

Keywords: Politics, Ethnicity, Tribalism and National Objectives

Explanation of Concepts

Mezieobi (2014) sees ethnicity as principally a social phenomenon as it is noted in a people's persistent cultural ways of life particularly their shared long traditions which binds them together as a group ie, mother tongue, common ancestry, religion, beliefs and costumes, which has been existing for a long time in a particular group of people.

Tribalism is the state of being organized by, or advocating for, tribes or tribal lifestyles. Human evolution has primarily occurred in small hunter-gatherer groups, as opposed to in larger and more recently settled agricultural societies or civilizations. With a negative connotation and in a political context, tribalism can also mean discriminatory behavior or attitudes towards out-groups, based on in-group loyalty.

Okeke (2002) defines politics as a healthy enterprise in which man lives for the betterment of his society. This implies that politics deals with one form, organization and administration of governmental affairs.

Introduction

Almost all general issues in Nigeria are caused based on ethnic and tribal sentiment. Nigeria has been tribally motivated even in political parties like Action Group (AG) for the Yoruba, Northern People Congress (NPC) Social Democratic Party (SDP) which were formed during military regime, Northern Element Progressive (NEPU) and the National Republican Convention (NRC) all these parties were formulated and function on group of ethnicity and tribal. The political parties later toed the path of ethnicity; NRC was dominated by the North while the SDP was dominated by the South all this group found it difficult to agree even till tomorrow, some see themselves as born to rule Hausa and Yoruba while Igbo's are among the minor majority. Since (1960), Nigeria independent to (2022) Hausa and Yoruba has been in power yet we claim one Nigeria. The tribal consciousness destroyed the political parties structure and National objectives, some unvisionary leaders who are from major ethnic group will keep on dominating the power especially (presidential seat).

Nigeria politics originated from the colonial politics of the British which favours only the Northern, the tradition, structure and believes of these different ethnic are not the same. This unequal impact of colonial destroyed the unity of Nigeria citizen's without doing so in the North thereby alienating the Northern part of Nigeria by this singular act. Northern and Southern part have never seen themselves as people belonging or created to be in one country. Ethnicity is very dangerous factors that have hampered Nigeria in achieving it objectives particularly a free and democratic society, a just and egalitarian society and a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens of Nigeria: these national objectives needs to reflect in all aspects of governance.

Mezieobi (2014) observed that since independent all these ethnics has been fighting against one another Yoruba against Igbo, Ibibio against Hausa, Muslim against Christians among others. Kano riot of (1993) and (2007) riots between Muslim and Christians many lives were lost and properties destroyed. The Nigeria citizens needs to change their attitude and views towards power.

The National objectives are as the following:

- a. A free and democratic society
- b. A just and egalitarian society
- c. A united and self-reliant nation
- d. A great and dynamic national economy
- e. A land full of bright opportunities for all citizens

Causes of Politics of Ethnicity and Tribalism in Nigeria

In a developing country like Nigeria they may be undergoing different stages of individual and group causes. Asalu (2010) identified the following as major causes of politics of ethnicity and tribalism.

1. Election manipulation
 2. Unbalanced political appointment
 3. Religion/Power
 4. Natural Resources
 5. Unequal State
 6. Allocation Distribution
 7. Employment Opportunities
- 1) **Election Manipulation:** This implies that we don't have generally accepted election result, during general election some hire people from another country to come and vote against a candidate that is not from ethnic group or religious background, election rigging, falsification of result to favour one tribe or another, by so doing visionary leaders will no longer emerge and that is why Nigeria citizens are corrupt. Oguji (2006).
 - 2) **Unbalanced Political Appointment:** In Nigerian today the Northerners dominate the key offices of the Federation, even in the Ministry, Commission etc. the Hausa's, Yoruba's still dictate for this country. The National Assemble cannot even call the president back in order, the political structure is characterized by divide and rule system. Ukeje (2014) assert that in politics the most populated group will keep on dominating and controlling the minor and smaller group. The appointments of public officers are not equal. Northerners and Yoruba have the largest number of those occupying one office or another. This discrimination activity is seriously increasing on daily bases.
 - 3) **Natural Resources:** Nigeria is naturally blessed with natural endowment especially the South East zone of the country. In Enugu we have coal, crude oil, limestone, diamond etc while in the North we have groundnut, mazi, yam, water etc all this resources need to be exploited for human consumption. All this resources if not properly shared among members it will cause serious problem in that particular zone.
 - 4) **Unequal State:** In Nigeria community we share boundaries with each other state despite the background but Northerners occupied and dominate more than fourteen (14) state speaking Hausa languages; Yoruba's equally occupied over ten (10) state's speaking Yoruba while Igbo only occupied five (5) state that is why till tomorrow Igbo's will keep agitating for Biafaria. There is need to have equal state among each region by so doing we will be achieving one or

two National objectives which is a just and egalitarian society, a free and democratic society and land full of bright opportunities for all citizens. Okeke (2021).

- 5) **Allocation Distribution:** In Nigeria today allocation, are not equally shared between the states and local government there is high disparities among some state received more than the other despite having much natural resources from that state examples are Sokoto, Kano, River, Abuja etc always get higher than most of the oil producing state in Nigeria. Nwike (2021) observed that the allocation distribution has been hampering governance because some state that does not sell beer still receive vat on such commodity, they equally received high allocation from the proceeds of oil because of tribalism in Nigeria.

Effects of Ethnicity and Tribalism on Achieving National Objectives

Oketa (2001) says that all Nigerian citizens comes from one of the many ethnic groups or other, which he/she holds on very tenacious to the ethnic/tribal origin and cultural heritage. In Nigeria we have more than 389 ethnic groups with different background and culture. Some groups sees their own as superior than others. Obiekezie (2006) outlined the effects of politics of ethnicity and tribalism on achieving National objectives.

1. **Statism:** There unwholesome practice led to discrimination and disunity in security a land full of bright opportunities to all Nigerian citizens, free and democratic society. The undue activities attached to state of origin, local government, wards and clans people find it difficult to integrate with each other. This keeps on destroying our heritage as a Nation.
2. **Religious Instability:** Nigeria has many religions which are not generally accepted by citizens examples are the Christian Religion, Muslim, African Traditional religion (ATF) and paganism. There is always misunderstanding between Christian and muslim the riots of 1993 and 2007 cartoon of Muhammad, which led to killing and destruction of properties in Nigeria by this act. The citizens who are visionary may no longer have interest in politics and making us to still be where we are till dates. We do not have one general accepted religion in Nigeria even (1999) constitution gives rooms for freedom of worship and association in Nigeria, thereby hindering National objectives of a great and dynamic National economy and a just and egalitarian society.
3. **Political War and Instability:** Nigeria is not practicing democracy, before now we had over eight (8) military heads and more than six (5) civilian leaders since independence non of them tried to unit Nigeria citizens together because we share the same National symbols like Coat of Arm, National Anthem, Flags etc but we are not practicing oneness in our political behavior also numerous political parties in Nigeria each parties always present different manifesto but at end it will bring in disagreement. There is war against (PDP), (APC), (APGA), (YPP) etc non is seen as generally accepted political party rather some parties like APC are seen as Hausa party, APGA as Igbo party while ADC as Yoruba party. The citizens keep on striving to make sure their regional party wins the election especially during general election in Nigeria.
4. **Conflict over Allocation of Resources:** There is huge ethnic/tribal sentiment in allocating the natural resources in the country. The ethnic useful tool for securing greater access to the limited resources in Nigeria, it increases ethnic conflict developing of various state and town. Some groups always received greater control and share of the nation's resources because of the population and dominance in government.

Possible Measures to Achieved National Objectives

Ubah (2004) stated that no nation will achieved development if their objectives are not reflective in their power and allocation sharing among each zone, free and fair election in a democratic society creating God fearing citizens, checkmating public servant and political office holders, free and compulsory education, and federal character quota system and functional constitution. Nigeria government needs to harmonize above mentioned means in order to achieve it National objectives in general as a one country.

- **Free and Fair Election in a Democratic Society:** Free and fair election is obtainable if democracy is the desire of citizens. To achieve National objectives democratic rule established as a conduct of progress and unity according our National symbols. It gives room for responsive to the popular will of the citizen. Nigeria electoral history has showed us with many evidence of manipulated elections results.

- **Creating a God Fearing Citizens/Environment:** Ugwu (2010) observes that it is inadequate fear of God and respect for man that leads many people to do such atrocious and inhuman deeds as embezzlements of public funds, discriminations among other ethnic groups, despotism and all forms of wickedness, creating God fearing people will always maintain and inculcate in citizen's the right norms and good custom of the people. Therefore, religions institutions have a vital role to play in achieving National objectives Anozie (2014).
- **Checkmating Public Servants and Political Office Holders:** There urgent needs to check activities of those who still consider people base on tribal consideration in terms of admission, political appointment, contract and employment. If anti-corruption commissions are to meet with demands of citizens expectations EFCC, ICPC should be faithful in discharging of their duty Ezegebe (2012).
- **Free and Compulsory Education:** Nigeria education is very expensive for common people to afford. One functions of education is to reshape the beline and thinking of people, it serve as a tools that unlocked all dead career, free and compulsory education at all levels needs to be activated in all the governmental programmes.
- **Federal Character/Quota System:** These implies that all citizens who are qualify should be given equal opportunities, equal representative in all commission of federation. Power needs to rotate among various region in structural format to enable all citizens have say in governance.

Conclusion

It is obvious that politics of ethnicity and tribalism in Nigeria has hindered this Nation from achieving it national objectives. The continuous deceit and flagrant abuse of the fundamental human rights of Nigeria citizens holds nothing but bleakness and uncertainties to the physical and psychological well being of the citizens. Ethnic politics has posed a lot of challenge towards achieving plans of government; it has made mockery of efforts of our leaders to entrench cooperation and national development. Therefore, all the policies that unity us together needs to be active and functional. Nigeria government needs to introduce true federalism if we must achieved the national objectives.

Recommendation

It is very pertinent to make the following recommendations in order to eradicate politics of ethnicity and tribalism in Nigeria, Ukeje (2022) made the following recommendations:

1. Education in Nigeria should be made compulsory and free to all citizens at all level.
2. Equal access should be given to all citizens seeking for admission, employment, political appointment, and government contracts.
3. Quota system needs to be active and encouraged.
4. Laws or decrees should be promulgated to discourage politics of ethnicity and tribalism in Nigeria.
5. Both government, non-governmental agencies like civil society, religious groups, titled personalities, parents and guidance should have a role to play in the fight against it.

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