



## Cracks in the Wall of Socio-Political Integration in Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

Cracks in this paper refer to those inhibiting factors against the achievement of socio-political integration in Nigeria. Integration at the level of religious, ethnic, social, cultural and other vital structural forms has so much in store for the economic transformation and all round development of the country, but the various stakeholders in the polity had at one time or the other played the discordant music of division as they deem fit their primordial cleavages. Invariably, this has led to serious intractable chaos and persistent violent crises that spelt only doom for the expected unity among the various ethnic and religious groups in the country. This has created cracks in Nigeria wall of socio-political integration, these cracks are many but a few relevant ones are actually discussed in this paper such as, corruption, ethnicity, religious extremism and insecurity, through which the seeds of division and disharmony had been sown in the country. The paper concludes that the lack of “we” feeling and the concomitant altruistic predispositions has led to indignation, deep mistrust and fear that has driven in a wedge of division. Insecurity in Nigeria socio-political environment has brought about distractions and paucity of investment that can bring about rapid socio-economic development. It is only imperative; therefore, that Nigeria enhances her security and intelligence organization to contain the myriad of challenges and threats facing her. Peace and unity are very sacrosanct to the attainment of meaningful transformation and change in Nigeria.

Keyword: Nigeria, Integration, Ethnic, Religious, Cultural

“if rapid political progress is to be made in Nigeria, it is high time we were realistic in tackling its constitutional problems. Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression. There are no ‘Nigerians’ in the same sense as there are ‘English’, ‘Welsh’, or ‘French’. The word ‘Nigerian’ is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not.” [Awolowo, 1947]

“...suffice it to say that putting all considerations to test, political, economic as well as social, the basis for unity is not there...” [Gowon, 2004]

### INTRODUCTION

A crack on the wall gives way for lizards’ entrance, so goes a popular saying in Yoruba language. In Nigeria there are so many cracks on the wall of socio-cultural and political integration endeavours, some of which are political struggle for supremacy between the three major ethnic groups, bad governance by the ruling class and primordial ethno-religious sentiments. Nigerians prefer to talk about those things that divide them rather than those that unite them. No one from any ethnic group sees himself first as a Nigerian rather, he sees himself as a member of a particular ethnic group before being a Nigerian, likewise others from the various ethnic groups in the entity. This is because nationalism and patriotism has not been properly ingrained in the spirit of any Nigerian. A nation is born where members feel committed and altruistic. Nigeria as it stands today is still a conglomeration of ethnic nationalities where primordial loyalty of most of the people transcends that of the collectivity. That is why, it is not uncommon, to hear people say Nigeria is not worth dying for, because they believe that Nigeria has not built them so they owed her nothing.

In addition, is the fact that the peoples of Nigeria were not consulted before they were welded together in 1914 by the colonial administration, this had driven a wedge of chaos and acrimony into the expected unity of the nation, but the intelligible questions one is bound to ask again are what has



happened to Nigeria since then and why couldn't Nigerians forged ahead in terms of unity? Why are they perpetually divided? Why couldn't the centre hold since then?

Right away from this amalgam of southern and northern protectorates in 1914, the British government clandestinely devoted all efforts to developing the country into a unitary state. This is conspicuously impossible; the people are different in so many ways, their culture, religion, language and in other parameters of life which is suggestive of a federal structure of governance.

During one of the constitutional conferences in London, according to David-West (2012) in an interview with The Nation's Correspondence, Zik went to Sarauwa and told him, "Let's forget our differences and work together. Sarauwa told Zik, "No, I don't agree with you. We should not forget our differences. It is in realizing those differences that we can work together. I'm a Northerner, you're an Easterner. I'm a Moslem, you're a Christian." He listed the differences. To me, that was a fantastic philosophy. The north was then not enthusiastic to be independent. Look at the catch in the interaction between Zik and Sarauwa. Zik never went to Sarauwa with Awolowo. If Zik had gone to Sarauwa with Awolowo, and if both Zik and Awolowo were telling Sarauwa this, I would have said there was hope for one Nigeria. But Zik went to Sarauwa alone as the premier of the Eastern Region concluded, David-West.

The effect has been subtle disunity and sometimes resulting into high level intolerance that gives room to violent crimes. This has adversely affected the achievement of national peace and high level insecurity. The nation has inadvertently become an amphitheatre for kidnapping, politically motivated assassination, armed robbery and violence caused by ethnic and religious militias, human and drug trafficking. In a recent study by CLEEN a Lagos based NGO, 47% of Nigerians were said to have been victims of one crime or another within the past three years. The organization maintained that corruption which is another threat to national peace has risen during the same period [Alemika, 2010]. So many Nigerians have died as a result of violence particularly in the Niger Delta region and the North of the country. As it is at present the country has been rendered unsafe and risky for investment opportunities, human rights of the greater majority are constrained because of fear, while the right to peaceful assembly and association cannot be exercised. The right to freedom of movement with the perennial and reckless killings can no longer be guaranteed. In fact, life has become very unbearable as the sanctity of life is no more sacrosanct to militants, hoodlums and the belligerent religious and ethnic bigots. The lacklustre attitude of the government to arrest the situation simply shows lack of concerted efforts and internal capacity to unveil the suspected perpetrators and sponsors of bombs detonated across the country.

The various negative tendencies such as corruption, poverty, unemployment and other socio-economic problems have dangerously placed Nigeria on the precipice as typified by the rising wave of violence in every parts of the country. Corruption has dangerously emasculated Nigeria's progress, poverty and unemployment have pushed citizens to the brink, fuelling and compounding socio-conflicts and inter and intra-communal crises. Persistent insecurity has generated panic and anxiety, the social and physical infrastructure are far from meeting the need of the nation, and the country appears to be at the eyes of the storm.

### **UNITARISM VERSUS FEDERALISM PRACTICES IN NIGERIA**

Nigeria with a vast land mass is made up of so many ethnic nationalities with diverse background; hence it could hardly survive under a unitary government which the colonialist introduced under Governor Arthur Richard [Opeyemi, 2012]. At the various consultative forums especially the Ibadan general conference of January 1950, preparatory to the promulgation of the Macpherson Constitution of 1951, the question on the structure of Nigeria was pointedly asked and discussed. "do we wish to see a fully centralized system with all legislative and executive power concentrated at the centre, or do we wish to develop a federal system under which each region of the country would exercise a measure of internal autonomy?" It was only 1954, following the crises generated by the motion for self government by Anthony Enahoro in 1953 and the constitutional conferences that resulted from them – London Conference of 1953 and Lagos Conference of 1954 – that the inevitability of a federation or federalism finally dawned on Nigerians.



There is no denying the fact that the federal arrangement bequeathed to Nigeria by both the Littleton Constitution of 1954 and Independent Constitution of 1960 was a real compromise between the centrifugal and centripetal forces that inhabited the disparate regions of Nigeria. The founding fathers like Nnamdi Azikwe, Obafemi Awolowo, and Ahmadu Bello settled for a full fledged federation as the basis of Nigeria political experience as a nation in 1954 when the federal Republic of Nigeria was born. Regrettably enough today Nigeria seems to be a federation only in name, as all powers appear to be concentrated at the centre.

The imbalance existing among the three major power brokers in Nigeria, the Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo, contributed to the tragic developments that threatened and still continue to jeopardize the existence of Nigeria. It is a known fact from empirical stand point that where there is divergence of language and of nationality particularly of language a unitary constitution is always a source of bitterness and hostility on the part of linguistic or national minority groups. On the other hand, as soon as a Federal constitution is introduced, in which each linguistic or national group is recognized and accorded regional autonomy, any bitterness and hostility against the constitutional arrangement, as such, disappears. If the linguistic or national groups concerned are backward or too weak vis a vis the majority group or groups, their bitterness or hostility may be dormant or suppressed. But as soon as they become enlightened and politically conscious and or courageous leadership emerges amongst them, the bitterness and hostilities come into the open, and remain sustained with all possible venom and rancour, until home rule is achieved.

The late sage Awolowo found out after an empirical study of the working of constitutions of virtually all the countries of the world that, in any multilingual or multinational society, which is identifiable by its distinct territory, the only viable form of government is federalism. The Niger Delta militancy from about 2003-2008 was a direct confirmation that you can oppress and impose a unitary system on a weak minority, but when they wake up from their slumber, then comes the unending and unrelenting struggle until something concrete is achieved in their favour.

From colonial days and even till the present time Nigerians from all works of life are openly questioning whether Nigeria should remain as one indivisible entity or to discard the colonial borders and break apart into several separate states. Ethnic and religious prejudices have found fertile ground in the country, where there is neither a national consensus nor a binding ideology. It is sad that despite the experience of Nigeria as a nation from independence till now some politicians still enjoy causing political violence when they lose elections. The entire system is so corrupt; this is so because the country promotes the culture of impunity. People indulge in vices, and when found culpable, they get away with ease. The corruption is not limited to government institutions and departments; the private sector is equally affected. This has made it difficult for the anticorruption agencies to function effectively.

## **THE NATIONAL QUESTION**

The National Question seeks to address how we can peacefully co-exist in one country or state, Nigeria. What are (or is) the best socio-political models (or model) for this envisaged social contract within the backdrop of the reality of ethnic heterogeneity or plurality. There is no question that preponderant majority of Nigerians want to be together under one indivisible Nigeria, but the question is how? This in short, is the kernel of the national question.

The constitution is the fundamental document of the state (or nation) in which are enshrined the basic principles and laws of the state (or nation). It is supreme. In Nigeria's history of exploring models of governance and co-existence a number of constitutions have been tried since Independence on October 1, 1960: 1963, 1979, 1989, 1995, and 1999. This works out to be one constitution every eight years on the average. Some have suggested that the instability of our constitutions is because they are not the "peoples' constitution" (whatever this means). Do we all gather in a "polis" to fashion out the so-called "peoples' constitution"?



The 1979 Constitution is acclaimed by Constitution Scholars and Jurists both within and outside the country. In fact, the 1999 Constitution is a virtual carbon copy of the 1979 Constitution. And this was not an imposition by the military. It was the general consensus of opinion of Nigerians at home and abroad arrived at through public hearings, seminars, workshops, and conferences (Reference page A855 of the 1999 Constitution). For the 1979 Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) fifty dignitaries, cutting across all sections of the country were assembled under the chairmanship of a legal colossus Chief F.R.A. Williams, SAN (QC). The list included such notables (among many) as, Alhaji Abdul Razaq, Chief Richard Akinjide, Chief Bola Ige, Alhaji Aminu Kano, Alhaji. S. M. Liberty (Attorney General, Bornu State), Dr K. O. Mbadiwe, Professor Ben Nwabueze (Expert in Constitutional Law), Dr Pius Okigbo, Alhaji Femi Okunu, Alhaji Ahmed Talib." Incidentally, Chief Obafemi Awolowo declined to serve on the CDC. Still on the National Question, we have experimented with Parliamentary System; then later Presidential System. By far the most popularly articulated debate on how to address the National Question is on the National Conference -- Sovereign National Conference controversy.

### **INSECURITY PROBLEM IN NIGERIA**

Insecurity has become a perennial problem in contemporary Nigeria; there is high level insecurity to lives and property as a result of the crises of armed robbery, terrorism in the name of *Boko Haram*. Hardly can anyone move freely in Nigeria particularly in the north without being apprehensive of the problem of the terrorist group called *Boko Haram* in the local language. Police stations, schools, churches have been subjected to serious attacks, as such public buildings have been callously bombed including the occupants of such buildings. So many lives and inestimable valuables have been lost through the attacks of the religious bigots in Nigeria.

#### **Terrorism**

Terrorists mainly in the north of the country have pursued fanatically the agenda of mayhem, mass murder, division and separatism to the extent that a part of Borno State had been taken over by the insurgents, who seemed determined to establish control and authority over parts of the nation and to progressively overwhelm the rest of the country. Bomb explosions and sporadic gunshots had continued to endanger the polity and threaten the corporate existence of Nigeria. In addition communal clashes, tribal hostilities, kidnapping, religious bigotry and post-election violence had stagnated and retarded socio-economic activities and developmental process in the country. In Nigeria, the persistent structural violence, which is expressed in social deprivation, social inequality, high level poverty arising from unemployment and mass illiteracy and ignorance, constitute unbearable conditions that pose a serious threat to security and development. Thus, fear, suffering, instability and disunity are inevitable consequences from violence and a state of insecurity.



### Scene of Boko Haram's suicide bomb attack on Police Force Headquarters in Abuja

In the struggle for power and political supremacy, politicians exercise no restraint in aggravating the socio-religious and ethnic cleavages, which characterise the geo-politics of the Nigerian state. It should not be forgotten that the second Jos crisis of November, 2008 was also ignited by a botched chairmanship election in Jos north local government. Looking critically at other side of these crises particularly from the problems experienced in Kaduna and Plateau States, the indigene/settlers dichotomy that created lots of skirmishes that led to loss of lives and properties are yet to be addressed properly by the Nigerian state. Many ethnic groups in these conflict areas see the other ethnic groups as foreigners who should not enjoy full rights of bonafide residents.

Perhaps the greatest and predominant security challenge in Nigeria today is terrorism or terrorism related. The *Jarna'atu Ahlis Sunnah Ladda'awatih wal- Jihad*, a religious based Islamic fundamentalist group, popularly known as Boko-Haram is the harbinger of terrorism in Nigeria today. The sect, which is predominately based in the' North Eastern part of the country, has an ideology that is averse to western education and anything it represents. The sect also seeks an enthronement of Islamic (Sharia) government in the whole of Northern Nigeria. Adherents of Boko Haram attack government institutions, such as the police, and military through armed attacks, suicide bombing or improvised explosive device [IED].

Notable attacks carried out by the sect with concomitant loss of lives and property include: the Mogadishu Barracks bombing in Abuja in December 2010, the Police Headquarters in Abuja in June 2011, and the UN bombing in Abuja in August 2011 to mention a few. The sect seeks to erode the credibility and legitimacy of the government by making it appear incapable of protecting lives and property of the citizenry. Mr. President's strategy for dealing with the Boko Haram threat is based on a multi-dimensional approach involving all elements of national power. While security forces operations dominate the media headlines, government has also embarked on other activities spanning across legal reforms, de-radicalization program and strategic public communications.

Additionally, the Federal Government, in conjunction with State Governments, is making efforts to tackle the issue of unemployment in the affected states as joblessness has been identified as one of the drivers of terrorism in the country. The Boko Haram has international links with other terrorist groups such as the Al-Qaeda in the Magherb (AQIM), Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and al-Shabab in Somalia. The sect has been getting tremendous support from these groups. The participation of Nigeria forces in the Malian crisis is bound to open another flank of vulnerability to the Nigerian interest



worldwide because the Malian terrorists have vowed to retaliate against any country that participates in the operation.

They have demonstrated capability by taking people of different countries hostage. The recent incident at the Algeria's oil and gas facility is instructive. It thus behoves Nigeria to take additional security measures to protect her interest worldwide and also heighten security at KPs and VPs within the country.

### **Niger Delta Militancy**

At the peak of the militancy in the Niger Delta, crude oil production which is the mainstay of the country went as low as 700,000 bpd against over 2million bpd; this has adversely affected Nigeria's economy as the revenue accruable from oil dwindled. However, with the granting of amnesty to the Niger Delta militants, threats posed by the militants to oil production and oil facilities have virtually disappeared. However, there are still some residual threats being posed by those claiming to be remnants of the Niger Delta militants seeking to benefit from the Federal Government Amnesty Program. They seek to be included in the third phase of the Amnesty Program. On a number of times they disrupted peace and tranquility in Abuja and other cities in the Niger Delta. The security challenges in the Niger Delta area may not be solely attributed to the remnants of the Niger Delta militants, as the government has commenced moves to inaugurate the third phase of the Amnesty Program. It is suspected that criminal gangs may be responsible, in their effort to make a living from all sorts of illegal activities in the Niger Delta.

### **Kidnapping**

Kidnapping started initially as part of methods used by Niger Delta militants to attract attention of oil companies and the government to their struggle for resource control. However, with the Federal Government Amnesty Program in place, Niger Delta militants have abandoned the crime but criminal elements, especially in the South-Eastern part of the country, have adopted the kidnapping strategy, believing that kidnapping is a less risky and more lucrative venture than armed robbery.

Currently, cases of kidnapping that are concentrated and frequent in the South-East, have gradually spread to other parts of the country and the phenomenon is now regarded as one of the main security challenges confronting the country. Prominent Nigerians, Religious leader's lawmakers and traditional rulers have fallen victims. Kidnapping gives the impression that lives of oil workers, prominent citizens and ordinary Nigerians are not safe and consequently portrays Nigeria as insecure, with attendant consequences.

### **Armed Robbery**

Armed robbery has been a long standing security issue in Nigeria, especially after the 1967-70 Civil War, when arms became widely available in the country. For a very long time it was the number one security challenge confronting the nation until the Niger Delta militancy and later Boko Haram activities pushed the 'problem to the back burner. It has persisted despite many efforts to tackle the root causes of this particular security challenge. It is generally believed that youth unemployment, and the culture of get-rich-quick based on greed, which pervades our society today are responsible. Proliferation of small arms, light weapons as well as inadequate policing of our borders and maritime environment are other inducing factors.

### **Corruption**

Corruption has systematically grounded and demeaned the developmental efforts of Nigeria as a nation state; the problem is rather pervasive to the point of becoming a normative standard in both government and private institutions. People are no longer ashamed to demand for gratification before the job they are paid for is done. Unashamedly the police collect bribes from both the accused and the litigants alike for some favors. Scholars have likened all these as indicators of a failed state. Rotberg in his argument, says, failed "states have unparalleled economic opportunity, but only for a privileged



few. Those who are close to the ruling oligarchy grow richer while the less-fortunate brethren starve” [Rotberg, 2002:89]. In three consecutive surveys by the transparency International since 1999, Nigeria was rated either as the most corrupt or second most corrupt nation. Nigeria image has been tainted by corruption.

According to [Ajayi and Owumi, 2013] corruption flourishes in failed states often on an unusually destructive scale. Petty or lubricating corruption is widespread. Levels of venal corruption escalate, especially kick backs on anything that can be put out to bid, including medical supplies, textbooks, bridges; unnecessarily wasteful construction projects solely for the rents they will generate, licenses for existing and non-existing activities, the appropriating by the ruling class of all kinds of private entrepreneurial endeavors, and general extortion. Corrupt ruling elites invest their gains overseas, not at home. A few build numerous palaces or lavish residences with state funds. Military officers always benefit from these corrupt regimes and feed ravenously from the same illicit troughs as their civilian counterparts [Rotberg, 2002:89].

Several hundreds of billion dollars had been got from the sale of crude petroleum during the past three decades or so, in Nigeria, but there is absolutely nothing to show for the accrued income. The successive rulers stole and wasted the national wealth through corruption. To sustain the corruption; repression and co-optation of opposition were widely pursued by the civil and military regimes. Corruption flourishes in Nigeria, not because of inadequacy of law but because of the weaknesses and failures of the Nigerian state, where the basis of accumulation among the nation’s rulers is corruption. No wonder then, the rising spate of ethnic criminal violence, insecurity, exploitation of the vulnerability and deprivation of the less privilege citizens, violent ethnic militias/vigilantes, cult violence, economic sabotage and religious intolerance in Nigeria. Viewing Nigeria precarious condition, Justice Aguda in a press interview in 1994 said inter alia “everything is wrong with Nigeria” [Ajayi and Owumi, 2013].

Ihonvbere [2003] posits that the continuing crisis of power and governance, the inability to construct hegemony or national project and depriving socio-economic crisis are all precipitates of state failure even state exclusion in certain spheres. He went further by saying: The State-Nigeria-has never been able to build an appreciable degree of confidence among Nigerians, ensure some discipline within the ranks of the State elites, manage the economy in the interest of the people or construct the much needed platforms of inclusion, tolerance, and participation. As well, the state has been captured and privatized by a tiny fraction of the elite that use public institutions and resource to terrorize non-bourgeois communities, abuse human rights, and loot public funds and mortgage the future of the citizenry.

Perceived as wicked, aloof, insensitive, corrupt and distant force, Nigerians relate to the State as an enemy. It is seen as an enemy that must, as opportunity warrants, be subverted, avoided, cheated, dismantled and destroyed if the interests of the majority of the citizenry are to be guaranteed [Ihonvbere, 2003]. The overall result of all this is not only the erosion of democratic values but also the subversion of the national project and intensification of conflicts. Ihonvbere, lamented, that at the eve of the twenty-first century, Nigeria has no national hero [es], hardly enjoys stability, no national identity, and the rate at which the youth abandon the country for foreign lands remains alarming. He stressed that at all levels, economic, political, social and ideological, even spiritual, the State and its custodians have failed woefully.

Since political independence in October 1960, this has been the sad experience of Nigerians. The condition of marginalized nationalities in Nigeria comes from these patterns as indicated and expressed above. Invariably the intrigues and nuances of subversions of national integration have conjointly destroyed the enviable fabrics of unity among the diverse peoples of Nigeria [Ajayi and Owumi, 2013].



## CONCLUSION

This paper has tried to examine some key factors like ethnicity, religion, insecurity, terrorism, corruption and the recurring national question among others, as inhibiting forces against the achievement of socio-political integration in Nigeria. It was found out that some long drawn cracks existed on the socio-political wall of integration in Nigeria, some of which are political struggle for supremacy between the three major ethnic groups, bad governance by the ruling class and primordial ethno-religious sentiments.

It was discovered that the intractable and persistent wrangling among the constituent ethnic groups will always frustrate the architecture of unity and integration both at social and political levels. There is therefore no doubt also that when there is lack of commitment to the general course of the nation, it will always result into abandonment of collective conscience in favour of primordial proclivity, which portends bad omen for nationhood.

There is need for all the constituent parts of Nigeria to come together on a round table talk to spell and map out in great details strategies of how to foster unity despite their diversity. A lot has to be done in terms of education and economic development of the nation to move the masses away from being a ready recruit for heinous crimes in the name of religion or politics that will always drive in a wedge of division among us. The Government has a major role to play in this respect in order to stem the tide of religious and ethnic crises. The paper has indicated very unambiguously the need for Government at all levels to pursue meaningful development projects and programs based on fairness and equity, which are in tandem with the realities of our economy.

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