ENGENDERING NATIONAL SECURITY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE THROUGH NATIONAL IDENTITY AND INTEGRATION

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ABSTRACT

All African nations are often said to be unintegrated and that their main problem to political development, stability, good governance and national securityis the integration of their peoples and a creation of the sense of national identity in them. This lack of national integration caused by the absence of national identity now poses the problems of corruption, instability, and insecurity which challenge the very existence of the Nigerian state. And the inability of the Nigerian government to address these challenges portrays the country as a failed state before the international community. This paper examines the concepts of national integration and national identity as they relate to the Nigerian state; the problems posed by it absence to the Nigerian state and what should be done to solve these problems if the Nigerian state is to remain united, strong, secure and democratic.

Keywords: *national identity; national integration; vertical identification; horizontal identification; national question;*

INTRODUCTION

Integration following Parson's (1956) analysis involves the creation of society to solidarity and institutionalization of patterns of social interaction; ensuring that rules and regulations that define the patterns of interaction and the means of achieving desired goals are accorded their legitimacy within the social system or a society.There are certain implications that characterise societal integration. Firstly, the question of societal solidarity and the existence of normative framework which presupposes in turn the existence of shared cognitive orientation in the process of social interaction. Put in other words, in every society, for effective societal integration to be achieved, people must be aware of, or share knowledge of both their historical past and culture which makes it possible for them to adapt to, and manipulate the situation, and also plan for the future.

Shared cognitive orientation more or less define the parameter of social interaction by making acceptable, norms and the sanctioning of deviant behaviour meaningful. This means that when people engage in social interaction, they can more or less anticipate the consequences of their actions. In Nigeria, this normative framework is seemingly absent as well as shared cognitive orientation. Making societal integration an up-hill task. This paper examines to what extent the absence of these factors have adversely affected the Nigerian state and what should be done to redress this problem.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The various ethno-religious conflicts that have bedevilled Nigeria, the unending militant and terrorist activities in all geo-political zones in the country are said to have been caused by the absence of national identity and integration. So also is the prolonged terrorist insurgency by the Boko Haram group against the rest of the nation being blamed on the absence of national identity on the part of the citizens and the leaders of the country. If the citizens have cultivated a sense of national identity and are proud to be Nigerians the terrorists would have been defeated and expunged out of the country. And if the nation is integrated, the war on terror would have been over for a very long time. These assertions by Nigerian therefore lead to the examination of the concepts: "national integration" and "national identity" – their meanings, and what causes their presence or absence within a polity; the problems associated with them; and ways of creating and preserving national identity and integration in Nigeria to enhance unity and good governance in the country.

NATIONAL INTEGRATION

According to Weiner (1965), integration refers to the process of bringing together culturally and socially discrete groups into a single territorial unit and the establishment of a national identity. Integration as used in this context assumes the existence of an ethnically plural society in which each group is characterised by its own language, religion, arts, and other self-conscious cultural qualities. National integration therefore refers specifically to the problem of creating a sense of territorial nationality, which overshadows or eliminates subordinate parochial loyalties.

Secondly, Weiner (1965) sees the concept as establishing a national central authority over sub-ordinate political units or regions, which may or may not coincide with distinct cultural or social groups. Thus, it has to do with the subjective feelings which individuals belonging to different political units have towards the nation. National integration therefore refers to the objective control which the central authority has over the entire territory under its claim of jurisdiction.

Thirdly, the concept refers to the problem of linking the people (the ruled) with the government (the rulers). What is implied here is the existence of gap between the government and the people. This gap could be shown in the form of disparity in aspirations and values between the ruling elites and the masses. This of course leads to the disintegration of the society if this gap cannot be peacefully bridged by the ruling elites. An instance is where Nigerians are asking for more fuel for their vehicles while the minister recommends bicycle for them as means of transportation.

Fourthly, the concept is used to show the minimum value consensus necessary to maintain a social order. These may be values concerning justice, equity, the desirability of economic development as a goal, the sharing of common history and symbols, and in general, an agreement as to what constitutes desirable and undesirable social ends. The value may also centre on means, that is, on the instrumentalities and procedures for the achievement of goals and for resolving conflicts. Here, the problem is with the legal norms, the legitimacy of the constitutional framework, and the means by which it should operate. It centres on desirable and undesirable conduct.

Finally, there is the need of an integrated behaviour among the people of the political system or the capacity of the people to organise for a common purpose. But a cooperative behaviour cannot be possible in a social system if certain sections of the system feel marginalised or are actually marginalised by the rest or by some groups.

NATIONAL IDENTITY

National identity refers to the felling of attachment an individual has to his or her country, its government and people. It is the individual's identification with the political system. It is a feeling of not being

marginalised in the scheme of things. A sense of national identity starts with the individual asking himself questions and answering them. These questions are:

1. What is my nation?
2. What kind of naton is it?
3. Do I really belong to it?
4. How deep or ambiguious is this sense of belonging?

According to Verba (1968), national identity has to do with the peoples' belief that they really are members of a particular society, that is, the extent to which they consider themselves as members of the nation-state. National identity does not really deal merely with the individual's physical location of himself in a particular place, but includes self identity – a psychological attachment. It is only when one lives within a state and has the feeling or sense of belonging to it that one can rightly say that one has a sense of national identity.

Verba (1965) distinguished two kinds of identity in his discussion on of national identity.

1. Vertical identification which deals with the individdual's esnse of attachment to his political unit – the country, the state, local government, the village, and the governments at these levels; and for the symbols of the government or the state.

2. Horizontal identificationwhich deals with the individual's sense of intergration and identification withother people who inhabit the political system. It deals with the extent to which the individuals identify with each other as members of the same society; and also the extent to which they have trust and confidence in their fellow citizens.

Some cultures and groups have much more favourable view of some cultures than others. The limit of trust and confidence in fellow citizens also sets limits to the extent one can interact freely with others and build confident political relationships. Hostilities to those outside ones group signifies that inter-group conflicts exist in the system as has been the case with Nigeria today. Each group has been on the other group's throat. Though it is possible for one to have a different view of another group quite different from his own group's view about that group.

CAUSES OF LACK OF NATIONAL IDENTITY AND INTEGRATION

In most African nations and indeed Nigeria, lack of national identity is caused by ethnic and cultural differences. Ethnic and cultural differences were not taken into consideration during the scramble for Africa and the partitioning of Africa by the western powers that colonised Africa. This has made most ethnic groups not to submit themselves to be ruled by men of other tribes, races or religion because they believe that doing so implies submitting to oppression, degradation and exclusion from the moral community as inferior groups or persons whose opinions, attitudes and values do not count.

In places where politics involves a high level of antagonism among groups with opposing political views as Nigeria, there is the likelihood that there would be very bad impression of trust worthiness of individuals when they are considered in political terms. President Obasanjo's civil administration in Nigeria created doubts in the minds of Nigerians, especially when he wanted a third term in office. He was no longer, the "OBASANJO: THE PRESIDENT WE CAN TRUST" as one of his campaign slogans exhibited. This distrust grew in magnitude with his selection of the late President Ya'radua as his successor amidst the cry of foul play by the entire northern population and elites. This distrust also manifested in the reluctance of the northern elements within the corridors of power to make public, the health conditions of the late President Y'adua, and to allow President Y'adua's deputy Dr.Goodluck Jonathan to take over the mantle of leadership in Nigeria in the absence of the President. So also was the ex-president Goodluck Ebele Jonathan's ambition to run for a second time as the presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

Sense of confidence in others is very important for the maintenance of stable political system. Unless individuals trust their fellow citizens, irrespective of their ethnic group affiliation and or religion, they would be unwilling to hand over political power to their opponents. The Northern Region in Nigeria regretted having done that –allowing the power base of the nation to shift to the Western Region and to the South-South Regions of the country. Thus, they stood solidly behind President Muhammadu Buhari's All Peoples Congress (APC) in the last presidential election in Nigeria, though the Peoples Democratic Party in Nigeria had outlived its usefulness in Nigeria as a political party – a critical reason for its loss of the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria.

When there is a sense of trust and confidence among the people, they would engage in peaceful competition with those of opposing political views and allow the alternation of power among competing groups and elites. Unless the dangers of such competition and alternation of power is too great for the ruling group to bear. This was in fact one of the reasons why the annulment of the June 12,1993 Presidential election in Nigeria by General Ibrahim Babangida military administration; and the northern opposition to Chief Obasanjo's and Dr.Goodluck Jonathan's third tenure bids in Nigeria; and the exclusion of the Ibos from the mainstream of Nigerian politics since after the Nigerian civil war made the Ibos the target of every ethno-religious conflict in the Northern Region.

A sense of confidence in others is very important because if there is general lack of confidence and trust in the ruler and non-identification with the government of the day, the rulers will have to get obedience to their wishes by force even if such force is destabilizing. When this happens in a state, it would be very difficult if not impossible to develop a sense of identification or national identity.

THE IMPACTS OF THE ABSENCE OF NATIONAL IDENTITY AND INTEGRATION ON NATIONAL SECURITY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

In Nigeria the formation of a sense of national identity has been an up-hill task because it involves the alteration of primordial loyalties and rapid development of political consciousness among a politically unconscious people. Often this alteration creates ethnic cleavages between the various ethnic groups. This leads to national symbols to vie with local or tribal symbols. This also leads to divided loyalties and loyalty to sub-national units becomes primary. This problem becomes acute when national boundaries are defined by ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural boundaries as is the case with Nigerians and all other African nations.

Since the creation of this sense of national identity is being championed by the ruling elites of the various groups in the country, the sense of national identity by the members of the various groups becomes bi-focal (Verba, 1968).
1. It focuses on the personality of the charismatic leaders;
2. It focuses on emotionally charged symbols

And when these happen, the sense of national identity thus created is fragile, rejected on the onset, and fades when the symbols and personalities are no longer there. Personality crises result from the vacum thus created by the exit of the personalities. In Nigeria, since colonial days till date, this sense of national identity has been more or less focused on the personalities of the ruling elites of the various ethnic groups as they serve more or less as symbols of national unity and integration.

Finally the call for the development of a sense of national identity creates a feeling of lack of self-confidence or self-esteem on the people that have not developed it because:

1. They are uncertain of their national boundaries – who are part of them and who are not. They ask themselves the question: "are we members of the same society? "Why don"t they do like us?"

2. They do not comprehend the meaning of national identity as such they ask themselves the questions: "What do they want from us ?" "Why must we abandone our old ways of doing things?" "Why must we cooperate with them?""Have they been cooperating with us?" "We can get along alone, why can't they stay on their own and leave us alone?"

3. The people do not know the scope of their identity hence they ask the questions: "What is expected of us?" "What shall we get in return?" "For how long will it last?" "What shall we do if we are not comfortable in this arrangement?" "To what extent shall we agree to be one?"

It is because the various ethnic groups in Nigeria do not have ready and convincing answers to these questions that the nation is still unintegrated and parts of the questions have come to the fore in the forms of:

1. Application of the Sharia law in some states
2. Terrorist insurgencies
3. The cry for resource control by some states
4. The call for sovereign national conference by various ethnic nationalities in the country.
5. The secessionist tendencies in some parts of the country.

There is the need for the citizens of the country to have a sense of national identity or a sense of belonging and a feeling of attachment to the nation for the following reasons:

a. Without this feeling of belonging to the nation, it would be extremely difficult for the government to effectively rule the country, maintain its authority and apply rules and regulations within the country.
b. The legitimacy of the regime would be questioned by some of the people and groups.
c. The citizens of the country cannot unite for a common purpose, face a common enemy or solve a national problem collectively. This is why the Boko Haram insurgency has lasted longer than necessary.
d. The citizens of the country cannot embark on planned and coordinated development programmes in the country because the citizens do not see themselves as a people with a common goal and destiny.
e. Ethnic sentiments are strong in the country because of the lack of national identity. There is always the tedndency for local groups to assert their local independence and exhibit secessionst tendencies as has been the case with the eastern states of the country – the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB); and the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MASOP); the Boko Haram in the north and the Odua State movement in the west.
f. As national identity is lacking, the attempts by the ruling groups toestablish a strong central government often provokes ethnic sentiments that call to question the legitimacy and authority of the government
g. The absence of national identity weakens the governmental structures and institutions thereby creating national crises and political intsability.
h. Lack of national identity has caused some governments in the country (federal, state and local) to be detached from the people, acting by themselves and for themselves. Thus government has become an avenue for personal enrichment because the people do not give the necessary supports to it, or question the rationale for certainnational policies and actions.
i. It is only when people have a sense of belonging to a nation that the survival of the political system is possible. It is only then that the country can survive any type of crisis.
j. A sense of national identity restrains the emergence of totalitarian regimes because everyone is interested in the affairs of the state and the methods of their conduct.

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WAYS OF CREATING AND PRESERVING NATIONAL INTEGRATION AND IDENTITY IN NIGERIA

For Nigeria to be integrated to the extent that the citizens would have a sense of national identity, the federal government should take very seriously the call by the various ethnic groups for the convocation of a genuine sovereign national conference and implement the recommendations of the conference. This conference among other things will fashion out a new geopolitical arithmetic formulae for the nation and usher in true federalism in the country.

The conference would also allow the various ethnic nationalities to voice out their hopes, aspirations and fears in the corporate existence of Nigeria and agree on how all the ethnic nationalities will co-exist peacefully and have the true feelings and sense of national identity. The sovereign national conference will also discuss the "national question". The cries for resource control by the various ethnic nationalities goes to buttress the need for the discussion of the national question by the various ethnic groups in the country. It is believed that the problems, injustices and inequity associated with revenue allocation can be solved through the discussion of the national question.

The vast majority of the citizens of this country have always reduced the national question to contradictions and antagonism between the various ethnic nationalities in the country. In order words, they see the national question in terms of inter-ethnic hostilities only. But the national question is far bigger and more complex than this. The national question is big complex of political, economic, ideological, legal and other problems that arise during a people's struggle for liberation and for favourable internal and external conditions for further development; and also in the course of establishing equal, friendly relations between peoples.

The national question is always subordinate to the main problem of the socio-economic development of the society, and has a different content and significance at various stages of a peoples' development. As Ismagilova(1978) pointed out, the national question includes the abolition of all forms of ethnic oppression and ethnic inequality. It involves the establishment of real equality, friendship, and fraternal cooperation between peoples. This must be discussed to bring about equity and justice in the allocation of the nation's resources to create the sense of belonging on the peoples of the country and to foster national integration.

It is only when the various groups and peoples in the country are involved in the formulation of governmental policies and their implementation, get a fair share of the nation's resources, and are not considered as peoples whose values, opinions and feelings do not matter in the country that they can cultivate the necessary sense of belonging and identity with their fellow citizens and the governments at all levels; and work in unity toward the building of a united and strong nation-state in which all will be proud to belong.

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