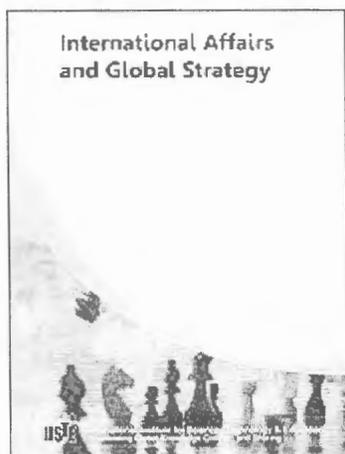


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## Ethnic/ Religious Insurgencies and Nation-Building In Nigeria

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### Abstract

Over the last decade, the activities of ethnic/religious insurgent groups have permeated the Nigerian nation, bringing into question the essence of survival of the Nigeria project. This ranges from the activities of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Niger Delta Volunteer Force, the indigene/settler crisis in many states, and the Boko Haram saga in the North-East region. Several factors ranging from economic, political and cultural marginalization, widening social inequalities, lack of basic infrastructure and exclusion have been cited as reasons for these insurgencies in order to attract attention from the national government and the international world. It is the contention in this paper that employing tactics of violence and killings against innocent individuals, communities and armed conflict within the state creates long-term devastating consequences than the short-term goal of attracting attention to whatever genuine demands any group may hold. The paper further argues that insurgency results from leadership failure, lack of accountability, political exclusion and marginalization which create conditions where the most vulnerable, particularly women and children, are more at the risk of hunger, malnutrition, susceptibility to illnesses and death. Furthermore, countries in conflict suffer disruptions in livelihoods, infrastructure, schools, markets, assets, nutrition, health and loss of resources required for food production and distribution, including national development. The end result is that instead of the country advancing in building sustainable development, the perpetration of conflict and violence causes the country to suffer long-lasting losses, including losses to food production and societal advancement. The paper concludes with the recommendation that employing constructive non-violent dialogue and demanding accountability from leadership in all spheres of life and authority will go a long way in addressing socioeconomic challenges faced in the country. It will also galvanize our collective drive, energies and resources in generating more secure livelihoods for the population currently mired in poverty, hunger and insecurity.

**Keywords:** Insurgency, Nation-building, livelihoods, development, governance.

### INTRODUCTION

Good governance has been recognized over the past two decades as a major policy consideration that makes a critical difference to development and poverty reduction in most developing countries (Egharevba and Chiazor, 2013; UN, 1998) Where governance is weak or deficient it is difficult to imagine how equitable development can take place and where there is wide inequity the chances that some sections of the society will be left to live in poverty and misery are enormous. Since the 1980s, the issue of poor governance has been a major cause of poverty and underdevelopment in majority of countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The World Bank (1989:60-61) declared that 'a crisis of governance' underlay 'the litany of Africa's development problems.' This fact was further corroborated by Hyden et al. (1992:5) who opined that: "African crisis is identified and perceived as governance crisis." Besides, in a well cited quote, Kofi Annan noted that, 'good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development (UN 1998). Paradoxically, while many African countries including Nigeria are endowed with rich natural resources that could be transformed into better living conditions for the populace, yet majority of their citizens live in poverty and misery, lacking the capacity to do things they would want to do in life (Sen, 1999). Good governance is credited for responsiveness to the needs of the wider population especially the poor and vulnerable groups who normally benefit from pro-poor policies and programmes of the state. Good governance therefore entails the process of translating societal demands into choices, resulting in policy formulation and implementation through applying the principles of accountability, transparency, participation and predictability. In the context of human development, the UNDP (2002) conceived good governance as "...democratic governance", meaning respect for human rights, public participation in decision making, accountability, poverty reduction, responsiveness, equal treatment, inclusiveness, fairness, impartiality, absence of any discriminatory practices as well as preserving the needs of future generations. In sum, good governance is perhaps seen as the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development (UN 1998).

When these values are eroded or absent in a country's push for development with respect to the management of a country's affairs and resources at all levels, questions often are raised about the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to establish social and economic development; the manner in which the power/authority is exercised; the process by which public institutions conduct public affairs; including the

capacity of government to design, formulate, shape and implement public policies, discharge functions and provide goods and services (World Bank, 1989:61; 1994:14; 2007a; UNDP 2007:2-3;128; Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi 2009:5). It also brings to fore the traditions by which power or authority in a country is used; the processes, institutions and mechanism through which citizens and social groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, mediate their differences, assess the role of political authorities in establishing the enabling environment in which economic operators function and in determining the distribution of benefits as well as the nature of relationships between the ruler and the ruled (OECD, 1995:14). These concerns raised become evident when different social groups in society feels short-changed, dominated, marginalized or discriminated against in accessing the benefits that power or authority provides which ultimately engenders the creation of socioeconomic and political divisions along class, ethnic, religious or regional lines which in turn heightened tensions, mistrust, conflicts that ultimately threaten national unity and development. The more these conditions permeate a given society the more it undermines the push for collective nationalism and common vision which create an atmosphere in which social groups become more self-conscious, politically oriented, assertive and ultimately define themselves as ethnic groups with a sense of solidarity of consciousness characterized by congruity with their own values, symbols, myths, customs, symbols, birth and blood, beliefs, common ancestry/enemies and historical attachment to a particular territory (Horowitz, 1985; Ake, 2000:92-93). These various social groups begin to position themselves with the resolve to push for political power with the result that in most polyethnic countries in Africa such as Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Togo, Kenya, Ghana, Code d' Voire, ethnic competition tended to characterized the peoples socioeconomic and political relations, thus making the quest for power intense and prone to all sort of lawlessness and violence.

Conflicts between ethnic groups and within them are not inevitable nor are they eternal. They arises out of specific historical and material forces and situations; are moulded by particular and unique circumstances, and are constructed to serve certain interests by idealists and ideologues, visionaries and opportunists, political leaders and 'ethnic power brokers' of various kinds (Stavenhagen 1994:2; Ake, 2000:95). Prior to the attainment of independence and beyond, the policy of indirect rule which the British adopted for running Nigeria had already set the stage for regionalization of nationalist leadership when the main administrative and political units of Nigeria were made to coincide with the spatial locations of the major nationalities of Nigeria, the Yoruba, Ibo and Hausa-Fulani. This regionalization got firmer when the colonial government decided to devolve power to the regions in the 1954 constitution. This situation set the stage for the nature that Nigerian political system took before independence and beyond, characterized by varying centrifugal forces such as the widespread anxiety about domination, marginalization and subjugation which clearly undermined the Nigerian project and the quest for nation-building (Minorities Commission, 1959:2). In the events following independence, such as the declaration of the state of emergency in the West, the crisis arising from 1962/63 and 1963/64 census, the general election into the House of Representative and the elections to the Western House of Assembly in January and October 1965, it was obvious that the Nigerian political system had broken down due to the rise in the solidarity of ethnic consciousness driven by material and historical forces (Lieberman and Singh, 2009). By now the political crisis had become so deep that the viability of Nigeria began to look doubtful and it did not help matters that this crisis was presented to the popular consciousness as a struggle over ethnic domination.

The result that followed was a military coup in January 1966, a counter coup in July of the same year and eventual bloody civil war in 1967 that lasted 30 months. Since then, political ethnicity had permeated the governance process just as the era of military rule had consistently undermined the state building project. Military rule did nothing to curb ethnic consciousness but its conflictual manifestations, and only to a limited extent. It ruled Nigeria like a unitary state and exacerbated the fears of domination partly because it was generally perceived as lacking objectivity, a replay of the problem which the Minorities Commission has identified as the bane of political integration and democratic political stability in Nigeria. Besides, the coercive ecumenicism of military rule and its arbitrary power alienated people from the state and drove them to traditional solidarities. It also could not mediate pluralism but rather accentuated the divisive potentialities of social pluralism given its failure to comprehend the need for negotiated consensus. This condition increased the premium on power as well as the motivation of subordinate groups and classes to overturn the prevailing political order. For it led to strong demand for democratization amid strong antipathies for military rule. The antipathy of Nigerians to military rule became so strong and the objectives of ending military rule so compelling that the Nigerian people became more united; attention shifted from religious, nationalist and ethnic solidarity. Particularly interesting to note is the dialectics of military rule in first giving impetus to ethnic consciousness and then helping to create the conditions for transcending it. This dialectic was also demonstrated in the 1993 presidential elections when the citizenry voted against the National Republican Convention (NRC), the party reputedly preferred by the military and the conservative wing of the political class in alliance with it. It is these foregoing issues therefore that provide the necessity for interrogating the issue of ethnic/religious insurgencies

that has reared its ugly head in the nation's polity since the return to civilian rule in 1999 and its consequences for nation-building in Nigeria. This is significant as state or nation building cannot be wished or imposed, but a product of conscious statecraft built by exemplary men and women with vision and resolve. Above all, it is about building a common sense of purpose, shared destiny and collective belonging and community. To address these issues raised, the paper will be organized into five sections. Following the introduction, section two addresses itself with the concept of ethnic and religious insurgency as well as highlighting the factors that trigger its occurrence in societies. Section three focuses on analyzing the concept of nation-building and the obstacle to its sustenance. Section four provides the theoretical anchor for understanding insurgencies in societies as well as the analysis of its effects on the nation-building project for the Nigerian nation. Section five ends with the conclusions.

### **ETHNIC/ RELIGIOUS INSURGENCY IN NIGERIA**

Since independence, religious and ethnic rhetoric has leveraged claims to political representation and opportunities. This often degenerates into fierce zero-sum conflicts leading to ethnic violence and political disintegration. This concern was raised by Lancaster (1991:158) that:

...political divisions would increasingly fall along ethnic or regional lines, heightening tensions and, ultimately threatened national unity. The volcano of ethnic or clan strife remains dormant throughout much of sub-Saharan Africa. It could erupt- as it has in recent years in Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Somalia, and Sudan-should ethnicity become the leading factor in the struggle for power.

Corruption and incompetent leadership have added another wrinkle, preventing the equitable distribution of resources and opportunities and making the politics of religious and ethnic exclusivity more appealing. Mismanagement of national resources and misrule by multi-ethnic and multi-religious coalitions of successive rulers have impoverished and denied opportunities to majority of Nigerians. As a result, religious rhetoric blaming members of other ethnic/religious communities and proposals for religious reform as a solution to society's ills have found purchase among the masses. This genuine, if misplaced, quest for a religious utopia has given some opportunistic political gladiators an excuse to curry legitimacy through politicized appeals to piety and religious fervor.

Modern Nigeria emerged through the merging of two British colonial protectorates or territories in 1914. The amalgamation was an act of colonial convenience and made little or no sense to the sensibility of the Nigerian people since the policies adopted to turn the Nigerian project into reality were self defeating as it engender centrifugal tendencies where the colonial state relied heavily on hostile force to subjugate the indigenous people which drove them to traditional solidarity groups such as ethnic or national groups. These solidarity groups became centres of resistance and means of self actualization against the colonizer's integrative policies and acculturation as well as network for survival which provided their members a rudimentary social welfare system, thus making them the primary focus of political allegiance rather than the state. The amalgamation has often been invoked by Nigerians as the foundation of the rancorous relationship between the two regions of Nigeria. The Northern region, now broken into several states and three geopolitical blocs, is largely Muslim. It was the center of a precolonial Islamic empire called the Sokoto Caliphate, and its Muslim populations, especially those whose ancestors had been part of the caliphate, generally look to the Middle East and the wider Muslim world for solidarity and sociopolitical example. The Southern part, an ethnically diverse region containing many states and three geopolitical units, is largely Christian. The major sociopolitical influences there are Western and traditional African culture. The regionalization got firmer when the British colonial government decided to devolve power to the regions, following the 1954 Constitution, which was often described as the 'regionalist constitution'. This event set in place the process of regionalization and the rise of political ethnicity which the political elite have harped on in their quest for control of state power. These differences have been a source of political disagreements and suspicions between the two regions since colonial times. To add to this cauldron, each of the two regions contains ethnic and religious minorities who harbour grievances against ethnic and religious majorities they see as hegemonic oppressors. These grievances are sometimes expressed through bitter political complaints/conflicts; intense and lawless competition, sectarian crises and violent insurgencies stoked by political elites who use it to maintain the status quo and defend its power through spreading the belief that the ethnic group is collectively in power (give examples of such violent insurgencies).

It is interesting to note that while Nigeria was being ethnicized in this way, it was nonetheless possible to forge a country-wide solidarity to struggle against colonialism. Indeed, the traditionalization of modernity under colonialism contributed directly to the provenance and strength of the nationalist movement. One can already begin to see how ethnic consciousness and political ethnicity wax and wane. At one historical juncture, a

national solidarity holds in the face of policies which were encouraging ethnic political identities. At another, political ethnicity grows strong and defeat national outlook. It is useful to explore this dialectics of ethnic consciousness by looking at the responses of colonial policies to nationalist pressures, responses which effectively defined the path to independence. By the British policy of indirect rule adopted in Nigeria, the stage was already set for the regionalization of nationalist leadership when the main administrative and political units were made to coincide with the spatial locations of the major nationalities. This was the context of the rising tide of ethnonationalism which marked Nigeria's march to independence and beyond. For instance, between 1947 and 1959 Nigerian nationalist leaders from different regional, ethnic, and religious communities came together in a series of conferences and parliaments to negotiate the transition to self-rule and to map out a common future. During these interactions and in the first few years after independence in 1960, the jarring effects of arbitrary colonial unification manifested as seemingly irreconcilable differences of aspirations, priorities, and visions. So deep were these religious and ethnic antagonisms that one Northern Nigerian Muslim nationalist leader declared Nigeria "the mistake of 1914" while a prominent Southern Nigerian Christian nationalist figure called Nigeria "a mere geographic expression." This politics degenerated into a rather lawless struggle which exposed the structural weakness of the Nigerian state which lacked autonomy and capacity to rise above the conflicts and struggles among particularistic interests. Here, the state is largely privatized, alien, remote, uncaring and oppressive for majority of the citizens. This is because in the context of nation-states in Nigeria, political competition is ultimately about the control of power and an instrument for serving the self centred interests of the elite.

The desperate advancement of ethnic/religious solutions to socioeconomic and political problems have deepened social fissures and spawned extremist and violent insurgencies such as the ongoing Boko Haram Islamist terrorist campaign, which has killed and maimed Christians and Muslims alike. This seed of extremist and violent insurgencies was sown through the British colonial system of Indirect Rule, a divide and rule system that required sharp ethno-religious differentiation among Nigerians, making religion and ethnicity the preeminent markers of identity and pushed exclusionary identity politics into the political arena and thus serves as a means of accessing political and economic resources. Since colonial times and post-independent period, ethnic/religious differences and animosities have exacerbated political crises and have been implicated in major national conflicts such as the Nigerian civil war, the Jos crisis to mention but a few.

Insurgency on the other hand, is an armed rebellion against a constituted authority. It is a technology of military conflict characterized by small, lightly armed bands practicing guerrilla warfare. As a form of warfare insurgency can be harnessed to diverse political agendas, motivations, and grievances. Conceptually, insurgency can be defined as "an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict (US Department of Defense, 2007:263). More broadly, it is "an organized protracted political-military struggle designed to weaken the control and legitimacy of an established government, occupying power or other political authority while increasing insurgent control (Department of the Army and US Marine Corps, 2006:1). In other word, the common denominator for most insurgent groups is their objective of gaining control of a population or a particular territory, including its resources. This objective differentiates insurgent groups from purely terrorist organizations. Although, terrorist organizations with revolutionary aspirations seem to meet the criterion of insurgent groups, they are not the same as Bard O'Neill (1990:3) clearly distinguishes the two phenomena by including an overtly political component in his definition of insurgency:

A struggle between a nonruling group and the ruling authorities in which the nonruling group consciously uses political resources (e.g., organizational expertise, propaganda, and demonstrations) and violence to destroy, reformulate, or sustain the basis of legitimacy of one or more aspects of politics.

Thus, insurgencies combine violence with political programs in pursuit of revolutionary purposes in a way that terrorism cannot duplicate. Terrorists may pursue political, even revolutionary goals, but their violence replaces rather than complements a political program. Typically, insurgents organize their forces in military fashion as squads, platoons, and companies. Terrorist units are usually smaller and comprised of isolated teams not organized into a formal military chain of command. Insurgent forces are often more overt in nature as well, especially in the sanctuaries or zones, which they dominate. Terrorist organizations, which tend towards extreme secrecy and compartmented cells to facilitate security, seldom replicate an insurgency's political structure. One characteristic that does not serve to distinguish terrorism from insurgency is the use of terror tactics. Terrorists and insurgents may employ exactly the same methods, and utilize force or the threat thereof to coerce their target audiences and further the organizational agenda. Both groups may threaten, injure, or kill civilians or

government employees by using an array of similar means. Thus, the use of terror in and of itself does not equate to terrorism, the former is merely a tactical tool of the latter (Thomas, 1996).

The fundamental fact about insurgency is that insurgents are weak relative to the government they are fighting, at least at the start of operations. If government forces knew who the rebels were and how to find them, they would be fairly easily destroyed or captured. The numerical weakness of the insurgents implies that, to survive, the rebels must be able to hide from government forces. They need arms and material, money to buy them, or smugglable goods to trade for them. They need a supply of recruits to the insurgent way of life, and they may also need information and instruction in the practical details of running an insurgency. Most important for the prospects of a nascent insurgency, however, are the government's police and military capabilities and the reach of the government institutions into rural areas. Insurgents are better able to survive and prosper if the government and military they oppose are relatively weak-badly financed, organizationally inept, corrupt, politically divided and poorly informed about goings-on at the local level. Insurgency arises as a result of systemic failure and pathology in which key elites and organizations develop a vested interest in sustaining the conflict to achieve self-centred interests. Insurgency emerges when a group decides that the gap between their political expectations and the opportunities afforded them is unacceptable and can only be remedied by force. Insurgencies grow out of gap resulting from the failure of the state to provide security and protection against internal and external threats, and preserve sovereignty over territory; lack capacity to provide the citizens the basic needs of survival such as water, electricity, food and public health, education, communication and a working economic system, which may lead to loss of public confidence and ultimately political upheaval and lack of political legitimacy.

Contemporary insurgency has a different strategic context, structure and dynamics than its forebears. Because of globalization, the dynamics of contemporary insurgency are more like a violent and competitive market than war in the traditional sense where clear and discrete combatants seek strategic victory. Insurgency like war is and always will be the use of violence for political purposes. Insurgency tends to be nested in complex conflicts associated with state weakness or failure. It also involves what can be called third forces (armed groups which affect the outcome, such as militias) and fourth forces (unarmed groups which affect the outcome, such as international media). Thus, complex internal conflicts, especially one involving insurgency, will generate other adverse effects: the destabilization of regions, resource flows and markets; the blossoming of transnational crime, humanitarian disasters; transnational terrorism; and so forth (Metz, 2007).

Insurgency also combines continuity and change, an enduring essence and a shifting nature. Its essence is protracted, asymmetric violence; political, legal and ethnic ambiguity; and the use of complex terrain, psychological warfare and political mobilization. Contemporary insurgency, then, is simply one of the many manifestations of declining state control and systemic weakness. It co-exists with many others, most importantly the rise of militias, powerful criminal gangs and syndicates, informal economies, the collapse of state services, humanitarian crises or disasters, crises of identity and transnational terrorism. This means insurgency is no longer a "stand alone" conflict; it is 'nested' with deeper and broader struggles. It is still about power, but it is also about economics, services and social identity.

As such, identity question, therefore, plays a critical part in the emergence of ethnic/religious insurgencies in most societies particularly in Nigeria. Identity may be defined as a combination of socio-cultural characteristics which individuals share, or are presumed to share, with others on the basis of which one group may be distinguished from others. Identity has a combination of ethnic, religious, gender, class and other layers all of which refer to the same person either in self definition or as defined by others. Identity in this sense is based on traits which makes individuals members of a group; such traits also provide responses to the question, "who am I?" (Alubo, 2009). Thus, people who might see themselves as different may be seen by others as "one of them", and used as a key factor in identity politics. Identity is also about meanings in relations to social existence. In its multi-layered nature, there is the tendency for some layers to dominate in particular circumstances. Depending on the circumstance, the crucial layer may spell inclusion, exclusion and violence. It is in this sense that Mohamed Kuna was right in arguing that identity has both objective and subjective components:

An identity is a distinguishing label that objectively exists, is subjectively felt, and enables its bearers to experience individually and collectively a sense of solidarity. As a label, it can be assumed by, or imposed on bearers. It is also a prism by which objects, people, and collectivities are sorted, organized, mapped and ordered into meaningful and understandable units. Identities are socially constructed, dynamic and multi-faceted. Subjectively,

identification with a category is simultaneously a definition of self, so that groups come to identify themselves as ethnic, religious, occupational, national and other terms. Objectively, individuals do not identify in general, but do so in relation to others' definition of themselves and the boundaries implied in such definitions (Kuna, 2004:33).

The complex and often contentious nature of the concept makes identity politics a natural outcome. Identity politics is used here to denote the process of categorizing and de-categorizing people (ethnic, religious, gender, etc) into groups on the bases of shared and presumed similarities. More often than not, such similarities may be based on assumptions and stereotypes rather than actual traits, attributes or characteristics. There is thus a regular sense of "in their character" or, in the more popular Nigerian pigeon English, "na dem-dem or na one of them", even when differences between people being pigeon holed into one group are striking. Such categorizing and de-categorizing has become the basis for a range of issues related to rights, opportunities, privileges and entitlements. Identity politics is a basis for determining who is in and who is out (Alubo, 2003) and hence there are contestations and struggle to maintain the status-quo by those favoured and for change by those left out in the cold.

Identity in its ethnic and religious forms is central to the citizenship and nation building question in Nigeria because it is the basis for inclusion and exclusion. The issue becomes much more crucial because, as in most of Africa, citizenship is tied to group rights and thus, inextricably linked with identity. In effect, identity is a form in which the citizenship and the indigene/settler questions are posed and practically experienced, especially in relation to material and political position issues. Citizenship here is defined as a relationship between the individual and the state in relation to mutual rights, duties and obligations. Citizenship is also a form of participation in the running of the state and society, and in this sense an agency and subject. A citizen as spelt out in the 1999 constitution is one:

- Born in Nigeria before the date of independence either of whose parents or any of grandparents belong to a community indigenous to Nigeria. Provided a person shall not become a citizen of Nigeria by virtue of this section if neither of his parents nor any of his grandparents was born in Nigeria.
- Every person born in Nigeria after the date of independence either of whose parents or any of grandparents is a citizen of Nigeria.
- Every person born outside Nigeria either of whose parents is a citizen of Nigeria (Chapter 3, section 1).
- There are also provisions for naturalization and for foreigners to apply for Nigerian citizenship.

The challenge with the issue of citizenship rights and privileges in Nigeria has to do with the translation of its provisions in the day-to-day lives of the people. Part of this complication is the division of Nigerian citizens into indigene and settler categorization or classification. As used in local parlance, an indigene is synonymous with native, autochthon and "son/daughter- of the soil", and refers to ascribed identity of being born in a particular location into a specific ethnic group considered to have a "homeland" within the locality. To be an indigene of a place therefore means that the ethnic group can point to a territory as "native land" where such native land is in a local council or state. This position is more concisely expressed by Sam Egwu who asserts that "Indigeneity" of a state is conferred on a person whose parents or grandparents were members of a community indigenous to a particular state (Egwu, 2003:37; 209). Thus Nigerians, who have their ethnic genealogy elsewhere, even if they were born in a particular state or lived all their lives there, are regarded as "settlers" (Alubo, 2006; Ibrahim 2006). A settler is regarded as a stranger, a sojourner who may have been born in a location but is regarded as a bird of passage who would ultimately go "home". In the Nigerian experience, being an indigene or a settler is a permanent identity, as there is no provision for the latter to convert to the former. The classification of Nigerians into indigenes and settlers creates problems because it is a basis for citizenship rights, entitlements and access to opportunities. Nigerians' daily experiences are replete with tales of denial, exclusion and discrimination of some groups on one hand, and access, inclusion and a sense of belonging by other groups on the other in such issues as employment, admissions into schools, scholarships, political elections and appointments.

In daily encounters, identity and its politics are the bases of contestations for inclusions in opportunities and rights as are available to others. Many of these contestations result in violence. In such conflicts, holders of particular identities as defined by the attackers are singled out for liquidation, forced to relocate and their properties torched. The collective nature of the violence is perhaps serving to strengthen geo-political solidarity. This is further heightened given the near absence of material benefits attached to Nigerian citizenship. This gap is filled by ethnic and religious development associations and thus serving to reinforce divisions. The rise in geo-

ethnic movements also serves to weaken national integration as the first priority of various associations such as the Afenifere is the Yoruba, the Ohaneze is the Ndigbo and the Arewa Consultative Forum is the Hausa-Fulani. Similar geopolitical associations exist from the Middle Belt minorities as well as for oil bearing Niger Delta Region. These geo-political movements were preceded by identity construction and reconstruction which provided the bases for further divisions into majorities and minorities and people give their loyalties to these social formations rather than the state. This division becomes evident each time state and local council creation exercises are carried out in the country. However, the creation of states and local councils has not in themselves, solved the problems of a sense of belonging and integration, nor have they allayed the fears of domination (Alubo, 2004). Instead, these exercises create additional theatres for contestations, as new majorities and minorities are created in the process. The exclusions and denial of rights and opportunities on the basis of identity has resulted in many cases of violence, especially since the return of civil rule in 1999. Identity conflicts have also been experienced in Ife-Modakeke, Umulerei Aguleri and virtually all over the country.

#### **NATION BUILDING AND STATE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

The concern for nation building as a policy to promote State building in societies with multiple ethnic and religious cleavages is critical in an African continent characterized by issues of underdevelopment, political instability, conflict, insurgencies and human development challenges (Miguel, 2004:326; Collier, 2009). Thus an internally driven, dynamic and developing process of democratic governance would underpin successful nation building, state construction and development in Nigeria and other African countries. Lack of democratic governance, conflict and underdevelopment therefore has continuously weakened nation building, undermined State construction and subverted socioeconomic development which continually undermine the people's well-being and degrade human condition in most States in the African continent (Andebrhan, 2010). The existence of violent conflicts have had a dreadful impact on the most vulnerable members of society, especially women and children, with children making up half of all civilian war casualties (Food 4 Africa, 2009). Half of the people in sub-Saharan Africa live on less than a dollar a day, while 33 percent of the continent's people suffer from malnutrition (Food 4 Africa, 2009:1). An estimated 20,000 Africans die every day due to extreme poverty manifested in chronic food shortages, malnutrition, and hunger. Hundreds of millions of people in large parts of Africa are locked in a daily struggle for survival, competing for increasingly scarce resources to eke out the food, water and energy needed to sustain life at the margins of death. It is in the light of this concern that it is important to interrogate what nation building is and how it contributes to national development, what are the factors that constitute nation building as well as the challenges associated with it.

To begin, nation building is all about promoting the collective well-being of the people through meeting their needs, interests and aspirations (Agbese et al. 2007:4). Its hallmarks would be the pursuit of liberty, social justice, progress and prosperity for the people by government and its institutions. Nation building is therefore a product of conscious statecraft built by men and women with vision and doggedness, and not mere wishful thinking. Nation building is always a work in progress; a dynamic process in constant need of nurturing and re-invention. Nation building is about building a common sense of purpose, a sense of shared destiny, a collective imagination of belonging (Gambari, 2008). In today's world, skills, industriousness, productivity and competitiveness are the determinant factors of national greatness and not the size of its population or the abundance of its natural resources. Thus, the real wealth of a nation is its people and their capacity to engender productivity, creativity and industriousness.

Nation building has many important aspects. Firstly, it is about building a political entity which corresponds to a given territory based on some generally accepted norms, rules, and values, and a common citizenship. Secondly, it is about building institutions which symbolize the political entity- institutions such as the bureaucracy, an economy, the judiciary, universities, civil service and civil society organizations. Thirdly, the quality of leadership anchored on transparency, accountability and openness is critical to building a viable and prosperous nation. Since the 1960s in Africa when most nations including Nigeria had their independence, the matter of nation-building has taken precedence over all other tasks, including economic development (Zolberg, 1967:461). Most of the policies on national integration have always centred on such issues as changing of state name, capital city or currency, postage stamps, land nationalization, identity cards, military conscription and national service etc whose effects on national formation has been considered subtle rather than unimportant (Billig, 1995; Alapiki, 2005). Similarly, Young (2004) previously noted how innumerable rituals of state drummed the national idea into the public consciousness: national holidays, national anthems, daily flag-raising ceremonies at all administrative headquarters. However, an examination of the implementation of these nation building policies by various governments in promoting national integration and its effects on national development has been varied. Studies have shown that many of these nation-building policies were merely seen as smokescreen to advance the interests of the government in power; for other societies it led to more conflict than integration, (Moore, 1984:173; Potts, 1985). Similarly, some other studies have revealed that nation- building policy such as

land nationalization has led to more increasing inequalities as locals saw their land increasingly occupied by migrants which eventually contributed to the outbreak of violent “son of the soil” conflict as was the case in Rwanda, Somalia, Central Africa (Green, 2010). Also, in communities where oil is extracted such as in the Niger Delta, conflict has often arisen with the national government and multi-national corporations over local complaints that the community does not adequately reap the benefit of such resources or suffers excessively from the degradation of the natural environment. In all, inter-regional inequalities, intense competition for political power by the elite, weak states, politics of repression, exclusion, marginalization, widespread mismanagement, rampant corruption and democratic governance deficits provoke discontent at the centre which ultimately breeds resistance, violence and civil wars on the periphery. All these forces undermine nation-building, undercut state construction, hinder national development and vitiate state fragility.

Therefore, nation-building is the most common form of collective identity formation with a view to legitimizing public power within a given territory. This is an essentially indigenous process which often not only projects a meaningful future but also draws on existing traditions, institutions, and customs, redefining them as national characteristics in order to support the nation’s claim to sovereignty and uniqueness. A successful nation-building process produces a cultural projection of a nation containing a certain set of assumptions, values and beliefs which can function as the legitimizing foundation of a state structure. This has happened essentially in societies with substantial elements of social modernity. Among the elements which distinguish such societies from pre-modern ones, are; an open system of stratification allowing and encouraging social mobility, the state as an impersonal form of government, the pursuit of economic growth and a cultural system establishing collective meaning and identity for all envisaged members of society (Greenfeld, 2004).

Nation failure on the other hand, occurs when in a particular state nationhood no longer provides the foundation for accepting public power. In other words, the cultural projection of a nation is no longer convincing to many; there is no consensus on the cultural traditions, customs, symbols, rituals and the historical experiences- there is no ‘usable past’. Nation failure thus describes a process in which the requirements of normal politics, the social substratum essential for the acceptance of majority and redistribution decisions disappear. Nation failure exists when the underlying willingness of the population to accept rules, decisions and measures adopted by a common government is altered. A situation like this can likely descend into violence and civil war. Here, the individual communities may define themselves by the shared religion, class, language, or ethnicity, different to that of the other communities. The key essence here is that once this condition sets in, individual and mutually exclusive nationalisms replace the former common identity. Then militant and violent community leaders, often termed as ‘elites’, might create an atmosphere of fear in which war in the name of national self-defense appears to a significant part of the affected population to be not only reasonable, but perhaps, even the only solution. The collapse of Yugoslavia and the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina in particular, are examples of what can happen in such a case. Along these characteristics irreconcilable dissensions can emerge that make it unlikely if not impossible that government decisions will be adhered to by the populace.

Thus a critical component required for the attainment of nation-building would be the inculcation of the spirit of nationalism which is a vital ingredient in the drive for national development and nationhood. Nationalism therefore entails loyalty or devotion to a nation. It is synonymous with patriotism which must reflect wholly in the attitude that members of a nation have about their national identity, including the attainment and sustenance of self-determination (Stanford Encyclopedia, 2010). Equally related to the discourse of nationalism is the issue of ideology which is a set of doctrines or beliefs that form the basis of a political, economic or social system (Rodney, 2007:437). As a body of ideas it should reflect the social needs and aspirations of an individual, group, class or culture. Ideology must be anchored on ethics and powered by moral considerations otherwise it becomes unfocussed, shifty, irrelevant, undetermined, self-serving, unproductive and dehumanizing. At the political level, the ethics and moral considerations of equity, justice, compassion, truth, respect and care for humanity must be the guiding principle for the survival of the state. Hence in the context of modern-day nationhood, the concept of nation-building should necessarily incorporate a form of revolutionary ideals (marked departure from the old absolutism of rulers and subjects or maintenance of status-quo ante bellum) to a new ideology of cooperation, integration and partnership as the art of statehood between the leader and the led such that the governors and the governed are seen as partners in the national project of governance and societal development.

Relating this to the Nigerian context, it is obvious that since independence, Nigeria and its people have been struggling with different approaches to build the country and set it on the path of political, cultural, social and economic advancement. Over time the country has tried different political systems, implemented numerous economic measures, adopted various educational policies and evolved variety of transformation efforts to facilitate the process of nation building. Yet, Nigeria has remained a nation seized by the drawbacks of

development in the form of increasing poverty, conflict, corruption, poor governance, materialism, weak institutions, political misbehaviour, general indiscipline and infrastructural weaknesses, among others (Pate, 2013). The growth and development level of the nation have continuously failed to correlate with the quantum of resources allegedly expended over the years. Arguably, the very slow progress being experienced in the country's nation-building process can be related to factors mentioned above including disregard for ethics and morality in governance, leadership impunity, disrespect for agreements, bureaucratic dishonesty and self-centred attitudes. Such unethical behaviour and negative values have exerted serious consequences on the country's reputation in the committee of nations. Consequently, fifty-four years after independence, the country is still far from the point where trust and confidence amongst and between the people of Nigeria define and drive relationships and interactions at all levels in the country. It is the light of the foregoing that we must begin to interrogate the role of the state in nation-building and development. This is where leadership and governance are centred and institutions are built to drive the vision, values and objectives of nation-building and development.

The state or government represents the organized embodiment of political processes within society- the means by which decisions are made and social life is directed and regulated (Goldstone, 2000). The state arises in human societies because of the need to provide a credible threat to force the creation of public goods. Such threat requires that the state organize and monopolize the use of organized coercion which is legitimate. According to Weber (1921, 1946), the essence of the state or government is that it "claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force" within its boundaries. As such, the ability to exercise political power rests, in part, on the beliefs of those subject to that power. Authority therefore exists where there is willing compliance of a group of people to the directive of the superior. The state therefore represents the system for the organization of power, and politics creates the platform where persons strive for the exercise of political power either as a means in serving other aims, ideal or egoistic, or as power for its own sake. Political power here represents power exercised within a group which occupies a relatively well defined territory by a person or sets of persons responsible for the maintaining the order and integrity of the group as a community and whose commands are supported by the use of legitimate force.

Thus, without a collective good such as security of persons or property against harmful actions by other group members, people will not be able to remain within the group. As such, the primary function of the state is to preserve internal order, make life predictable and secure. The state also exists to provide the collective good of external security and all other goods which its members could not individually provide for themselves, such as basic infrastructure, healthcare, education etc. In other words, the state is responsible for providing for the common defense, insure domestic tranquility, establish justice and promote the general welfare of the people it governs. However, the greatest of all social dilemmas with respect to the state lies in whether those who control the means of coercion or domination (power) will act in their own interests rather than for the public good particularly in the way economic goods and services are distributed and used. It is within this context that one can begin to understand how the failure of the state to perform its statutory functions to its citizenry can trigger off incidences of unrest, rebellion, violence, insurgencies and most time civil wars.

State failure occurs when public institutions fail to deliver positive political goods to citizens on a scale likely to undermine the legitimacy and existence of the state (Rotberg, 2003:1). State failure exist in respect to wide range of political goods of which the most important ones are the provision of security, a legal system to adjudicate disputes, provision of economic and communication infrastructures, the supply of some form of welfare policies and increasing opportunities for participation in the political process. The degree to which individual states are capable of delivering those political goods significantly influence their relative strength, weakness or failure. There is a great variety of causes of state failure. In addition to those already mentioned; economic underdevelopment, failures made by the former colonial powers in general and the drawing of arbitrary post-colonial borders in particular, lack of democracy, misgovernment, widespread poverty, problematic economic policies and programmes instituted by the IMF and the World Bank (Crocker, 2003).

In the same vein, a number of indicators for state weakness potentially leading to state failure have been identified: disharmony between communities, inability to control borders and the entirety of the territory, a growth of criminal violence, corrupt institutions and a decaying infrastructure. State weakness does not necessarily mean under-performance in all those categories. A number of states appear to be strong in terms of government institutions and control of territory while failing to deliver political goods, especially public services to their citizens, such as North Korea, pre-war Iraq and most countries in sub-Saharan Africa. In such countries, however, the state structure consists largely of the coercive structure, such that the state is likely to collapse together with its coercive structure. Therefore, the structure of the African States from colonial times as well as the nature and conduct of its operations by the national political elites during the post-colonial period can be

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fingered as mainly responsible for fuelling and exacerbating issues of violence, unrest, militancy and incidences of insurgencies in most societies in Africa that ultimately undermine the nation-building process.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND ANALYSIS**

Thus, the sources of conflict in Africa reflect the diversity of the different histories, geographical conditions, different stages of economic development, different set of public policies, different patterns of internal and international interaction that characterized each country (Anan, 1998). Some sources are purely internal; some reflects the dynamics of the particular subregion, and some have important international dimensions. Despite these differences the sources of conflicts are linked by a number of common themes and experiences. The first source of the conflict arises from the historical legacies of the colonial powers that partitioned Africa into territorial units following the Berlin conference of 1884-85. Kingdoms, states and communities in Africa were arbitrary divided, unrelated areas and peoples were just as arbitrary joined together as in the case of Nigeria.

Following the attainment of independence in the 1960s, most of the newly independent African States like Nigeria inherited those colonial boundaries, together with the challenge that legacy posed to their territorial integrity and attempts to achieve national unity. The challenge was compounded by the fact that the framework of colonial laws and institutions which some new States inherited had been designed to exploit local divisions, not to overcome them (Ibid). Too often, however, the necessary building of national unity was pursued through the heavy centralization of political and economic power and the suppression of political pluralism which has consistently undermine the forging of genuine national identity from among disparate and often competing communities. This structure created the platform for the existence of political monopolies which often led to corruption, nepotism, complacency and the abuse of power by the elites in government.

Similarly, the character of the commercial relations instituted by colonialism also created long-term distortions in the political economy of Africa, such that transportation networks and related physical infrastructure were designed to satisfy the needs of trade with the metropolitan country, not to support the balance growth of an indigenous economy (Wallerstein, 1990). In addition to frequently imposing unfavourable terms of trade, economic activities that were strongly skewed towards extractive industries and primary commodities for export stimulated little demand for steady and widespread improvements in the skills and educational levels of the workforce. The consequences of this pattern of production and exchange spilled over into the post independent State. As political competition was not rooted in viable national economic systems, in many instances, the prevailing structure of incentives favoured capturing the institutional remnants of the colonial economy for factional advantage.

Looking beyond the challenge of colonial legacy, the real cause(s) of conflict in Africa, and Nigeria to be specific that has snowballed into issues of insecurity, unrest between and amongst communities over land, settler and indigene crisis, militancy, insurgencies and more recently terrorism lies in the nature of political power, together with the real and perceived consequences of capturing and maintaining power by the elites. It is frequently the case that political victory assumes a winner-takes-all form with respect to wealth and resources, patronage and the prestige and prerogatives of office. This phenomenon often result to communal sense of advantage or disadvantage which is heightened in many cases by reliance on centralized and highly personalized forms of governance. Where there is insufficient accountability of leaders, lack of transparency in regimes, inadequate checks and balances, non-adherence to the rule of law, absence of peaceful means to change or replacement of leaders, or lack of respect for human rights, political control becomes excessively competitive and the stakes become dangerously high. This situation is exacerbated when the state is the major provider of employment, social services and welfare; and political parties are largely either regionally or ethnically based. In such circumstances, the multi-ethnic character of most African States makes conflicts even more likely, leading to an often violent politicization of ethnicity. In extreme cases, rival communities may perceive that their security, perhaps their very survival, can be ensured only through control of the State power. Conflict in such cases becomes virtually inevitable.

Consequently, other interests external to Africa through the activities of transnational corporations who compete for oil and other precious resources in Africa continue to play a large and sometimes decisive role, both in suppressing conflict and in sustaining it. Foreign interventions are not limited, however, to sources beyond Africa. Neighbouring state, inevitably affected by conflicts taking place within other States, may also have significant interests, not all of them necessarily benign. While African peacekeeping and mediation efforts have become more prominent in recent years, the role that African governments play in supporting, sometimes even instigating, conflicts in neighbouring countries must be clearly acknowledged. Also, there is the need to take cognizance of those who profit from chaos and lack of accountability and who may have little or no interest in stopping a conflict and much interest in prolonging it. Very high on the list of those who profit from conflict in

Africa are international arms merchants as well as the protagonists of the conflicts themselves. For instance, in Liberia, the control and exploitation of diamonds, timber and other raw materials was one of the principal objectives of the warring factions. The same can be said of Angola, where protracted difficulties in the peace process owed much to the importance of control over the exploitation of the country's lucrative diamond fields. Control over these resources financed the various factions and gave them the means to sustain the conflict. Clearly, many of the protagonists had a strong financial interest in seeing the conflict prolonged.

Furthermore, studies and available evidences have showed that ethnicity and religious differences are not the reasons for the perpetuation of insecurity, unrest, violence and conflicts in the country; rather these tools are manipulated by the political elites not to advance political consciousness but to exploit the naivety of the people in their quest to secure political power (Ake, 2000). The political class or elites in government have consistently failed to manage the affairs of the nations and its resources in terms of providing the people with better living conditions. They have also failed to adequately address the key fundamental issues that permeate the Nigerian State which include matters such as revenue allocation, fiscal federalism, devolution of power, minority rights, the conditions of tenure of public offices, the form of government, balance of power between the three levels of government. Today, there is a general consensus among development scholars, policy makers and development institutions and organizations that the root cause of the country's development predicament lie squarely at the foot of bad leadership which result from lack of capacity to rise to the responsibility of effectively managing the nation's resources and affairs at all levels (Achebe, 1984; ECA, 2012). Also, available statistics have shown that since Nigeria's return to civilian rule in 1999, the country has not fared better in the UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) ranking, such that over 70 percent of the population live below the poverty line, infant/child and maternal mortality is one of the highest in the world behind China and India, more than 10.5 million of children are out of school, unemployment is over 20 percent and life expectancy less than 52 years ( UNDP, 2010; NBS, 2013; UNICEF, 2010).

Also, a cursory look at the Ibrahim Index of African Governance ranking for African Nations, Nigeria was rated as one of the worst governed countries in Africa as she was rated 45.8 percent as against the African average of 51.5 percent, with 37<sup>th</sup> position out of 52 in the overall governance scale (IIAG, 2014; The Punch Newspaper, 2014). The country also scored lower than the regional average for West Africa which stands at 52.2 percent and ranked 12<sup>th</sup> out of 15 countries in the region. Besides, Nigeria also received dismal ratings in such categories as safety and the rule of law where it is ranked 44<sup>th</sup> with 38.1 percent, 32<sup>nd</sup> in the rule of law with 41.0 percent and 30<sup>th</sup> in accountability with 36.6 percent. The country got the lowest rating in personal security where it is ranked 49<sup>th</sup> with 16.5 percent and second lowest in national security where it is ranked 48<sup>th</sup> with 58.2 percent. All these data go to buttress the obvious reality that where good governance is absence, it breeds ground for propagation and perpetuation of anti-social vices, including other act of criminality such as kidnapping, ritual killings, violent protests, insurgency and terrorism which tend to result from struggle for incorporation, from marginalization, domination and exclusion. Thus, violence, unrests, insurgencies and criminal activities thrives mostly in a deeply flawed States with serious social inequalities, repression and massive corruption.

## CONCLUSION

From the foregoing analysis, it is clear that the critical factor needed to attain successful nation building in Nigeria is responsible leadership anchored on the pursuit of a democratic development project. While it is acknowledged that complex internal conflicts; especially will generate other adverse effects such as the destabilization of regions, destruction of lives and properties, blossoming of transnational crimes, humanitarian disasters and transnational terrorism as it is happening in the North East of Nigeria, the solution to resolving this issue lies in the collective resolve of the Nigerian people to look beyond the parochial interests of ethnicity and religion, and seek for the entrenchment of a truly democratic State where the rule of law, equal opportunity, accountability of power is fully enforced and implemented to the letter. There is also the need to create genuine structures of social inclusion for all Nigerians irrespective of age, sex, religion or ethnicity; a developmental State and leadership that will engender a common spirit of civic citizenship backed by the guarantee of basic citizenship rights by the State. Besides, tackling poverty in the country, the State should create avenues for ordinary citizens to earn a decent living which will go a long way to address the question of ethnic political mobilization.

A social contract of sorts between the state and the citizens should emphasize the reciprocity between the actions of the State and the responsibilities of the citizenry. Also, there is an urgent demand for the state to muster the right political will to make laws that stipulate stiff penalty for individuals, groups and organizations with underline philosophy that preaches division and hatred amongst the various groups that constitute the Nigerian nation either on the platform of religion or ethnicity. Besides, the sponsors of these sinister bodies must be fished out and severely dealt so as to send a strong message to others who would want to toe such lines in the

future. Furthermore, Nigerians must come to the realization that using violence to resolve whatever grievances they may have against the state and other persons or groups will only make us worse off as lives that are wasted cannot be recovered and properties destroyed will take a long time to rebuild. Therefore, there is the need for all Nigerians irrespective of their ethnic or religious leanings to seek non-violent measures and other alternative conflict resolution mechanism to resolve whatever ill-feelings they may have against the state and the political leaders at all levels.

This study remains an ongoing conversation in Nigeria and provides plenty of room for future research using quantitative approaches to test the constructs of ethnicity, religious insurgency and nation building in Nigeria.

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