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OBSTACLES TO NIGERIA'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE CRISIS OF ETHNO-RELIGIOUS POLITICS

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria has faced significant challenges, including the crisis of ethno-religious politics and barriers to sustainable development. These problems have impeded development and the country's attempts to achieve sustainable development. The nation has had a number of ethno-religious clashes in recent years, which have claimed lives and destroyed property. Political and ethno-religious issues frequently drive these disputes, creating a viciouscycle of bloodshed and instability. Nigeria also has a lot of obstacles to overcome in order to achieve sustainable development. The study took the time to look at the effects of colonialism and the emergence of ethno-religious politics in Nigeria, as well as the difficulties that politics and ethnicity, religion, and national development provide.

Keywords: Obstacles, Sustainable Development, Crisis, Ethno-religious Politics, Nigeria.

Introduction

Achebe pointed out that "nothing in Nigeria's political history captures her problem of national integration more graphically than the word "tribe" in her vocabulary" in the opening section of chapter two of his work, The Trouble with Nigeria (1984:5). This statement was made in the context of the opening section of the second chapter. Throughout the course of Nigeria's history, ethnicity and ethnic nationalism which is often referred to as tribalism in this context, have remained a persistent obstacle in the way of achieving national integration and sustainable development. "In Africa, where many different nationalities were forcibly brought together, without their consent, by Colonialism into the same country, or split between what emerged to be two or more hostile states, ethnicity has necessitated the exploitation of the differences amongst the differences among the nationalities, "engendered an inward-looking and chauvinistic attitude toward other people, particularly those who were considered to be in competing connections with one's own (Igwe, 2005).

According to Ojimba (2015), there has been little progress made in Nigeria since the country gained its independence in terms of developing and consolidating a sense of oneness among its numerous ethnic groups, which are sometimes antagonistic toward one another. According to Davis and Nwaiwu (2001), the majority of Nigerians still feel a stronger affection for their various ethnic groups than they do for the Nigerian nation. This is the case despite the fact that successive governments in Nigeria have made efforts to create a sense of national identity in their citizens. Because of the religious, ethnic, and political polarization that exists within Nigerian culture, the country's policies toward development have been badly influenced as a result from this. According to Machiavelli (1951), political elites have a propensity of exploiting ethnicity and religion as veritable instruments during electioneering campaigns in order to score a political point. They do this by making the end justify the means in order to achieve their political goals from the beginning. In the best case scenario, this circumstance has contributed to the widespread misunderstanding that politics is a dirty game. In the worst case scenario, it has produced an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust, which has ultimately led to political indifference.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria since independence has been polarized along ethnic and religious lines, especially when it comes to electing who becomes the head of state or president of the country. And this has also affected the drive towards achieving sustainable development in the country in the midst of the ethno-religious crisis situation that have befallen the country. The heightened polarization of ethno-religious politics in Nigeria have made it almost impossible for Nigeria to transcend from a developing nation to a developed nation, irrespective of the enormous human and natural resources that the country have been blessed with.

Beyond the setbacks in the past, the present Nigeria have continued to grabble along ethnic and religious lines in determining its leadership, and can be translated into why the country have always hinged its selection/election prospects on ethnic and religious grounds, rather than basking on competence and merit. And in the desperation of the elite political class to foist leaders on Nigerians based on ethnic and religious grounds, there have arisen lot of crisis situation that have further had negative effect on the country's quest to achieve sustainable development.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

1. Why is the elite political class hinging the selection process of Nigeria leaders on ethnic and religious sentiment?
2. How can Nigeria effect sustainable development in the face of ethno-religious political crisis?
3. What can be done to ameliorate the alarming rate of ethno-religious politics that have enveloped the country?

Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study is to examine the obstacles of Nigeria's sustainable development and crisis of ethno-religious politics. The specific objectives are:

1. To ascertain why Nigerian elite political class have hinged the selection process of Nigeria leaders on ethnic and religious sentiments.

2. To understand the effect of sustainable development in the face of ethno-religious crisis in Nigeria
3. To examine the possible solution and approach that can be adopted to solve the alarming rate of ethno-religious politics in Nigeria

Significance of the Study

The study is unique and important in many ways, as it will help to achieve the following:

1. It will help researchers in religious studies and political science to understand the reasons why Nigerian elite political class have hinged the selection process of Nigeria leaders on ethnic and religious sentiments.
2. It will help policy makers in Nigeria to understand the effect of sustainable development in the face of ethno-religious crisis in Nigeria
3. It will help researchers to be able to examine the possible solution and approach that can be adopted to solve the alarming rate of ethno-religious politics in Nigeria

Conceptual Analysis

Concept of Ethnicity

Different scholars and opinion leaders have varied interpretations of the concept of ethnicity, which is a phenomenon that is quite complicated. Ethnicity is a relatively recent notion, and it made its first appearance in the literature less than half a century ago, according to even a search through the literature, which has found that ethnicity in literature is quite young. An individual's ethnicity can be defined as "the manner in which the goals and interests of ethnic groups are pursued in relation to other groups," according to the Concise Oxford Dictionary. Someone may explain that ethnicity is the contextual discrimination that members of one ethnic group engage in against members of other ethnic groups in the process of competition for national resources. This would be a helpful way to start.

In the work of Osaghae (1992), the term "ethnicity" is used to describe a social formation that is founded on culturally particular practices, as well as a distinct collection of symbols and cosmology. A group of people who feel themselves to share common qualities that distinguish them from other collectivities within a society is referred to as having an ethnicity. This is a category of people who are recognized to be members of the same group by other people. Individuals create their own distinct cultural behaviors, and ethnic groups can be distinguished from one another based on factors such as religion, politics, occupation, or language. Because it is founded on distinctions in culture, ethnicity is a social phenomenon by its very definition. One of the most significant ways in which individuals envision themselves is through their ethnic culture, and culture and identity are inextricably linked to one another.

According to Osaghae (1995), ethnicity can be seen as a social construct that refers to the utilization of ethnic identity and distinctions for the purpose of gaining an advantage in circumstances including rivalry, conflict, and other forms of cooperation. The concept of ethnicity was first articulated by Despres (1975) as a mostly subjective process of status identification. To the extent that actors utilize their ethnic identities to categorize themselves and others for the purpose of interaction, ethnic groupings are created as a result of this phenomenon. Both the characteristics of gain and loss that occur during interaction and the components of meaning that are involved in the formation of identity are referred to as

ethnicity. The political and organizational aspects, in addition to the symbolic ones, are all a part of it in this way.

According to Omotola (2008), the process of democratization has resulted in a vicious cycle of intergroup disputes throughout the state. This circle has been fueled by the alteration of indigenous identities. Ojimba (2014) states that "political domination, economic exploitation, psychological oppression, and class manipulation" are all examples of ways in which ethnicity can exhibit its manifestations. There is also an expression of it in the dominance of religion.

Concept of Religion

Individuals have varying interpretations of what religion means to them. Egwu (2001) suggested that religion is a difficult subject of investigation, including attempts at its definition and conceptualization, because there is no consensus of view on its meaning. It is because of this that religion is a difficult subject of inquiry. Religion can therefore be defined in a variety of ways, and the definitions often differ from one academic to the next. In accordance with Adeniyi (1993), religion can be defined as a collection of truths, regulations, and rituals that facilitate the subordination of man to the transcendent deity. As a result, it may be deduced that religion is concerned with the standards and regulations that originated from God and that believers are obligated to adhere to.

On the other hand, Ejizu (1993) offers a different definition of religion. According to him, religion is the consciousness of man's intuition toward the sacred and ultimate truth, as well as the manifestation of such consciousness in everyday life. Many scholars such as Goody (1961) and Horton (1960) agree that the notion of „sacred" at once indicates the idea of the transcendent in the concept of religion and they both go further to underline the fact that the „sensuous religions" is a distinct type of experience that is essentially characterized by a feeling of mystery and awe. According to Ayinla (2003), religion can be defined as a specific system or group of systems in which doctrines, myths, rituals, sentiments, and other aspects that are similar to these are interrelated. According to the Oxford Learner's Dictionary, religion is defined as the belief in a superior human ruling power that is entitled to allegiance and adoration. This definition was provided by the dictionary itself.

In addition, it asserts that one is entitled to a specific religious and worshipping system that they have chosen for themselves. "Unified systems of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things" was the definition that E. Durkheim offered for religion, according to his own point of view. According to Connelly (1946), religion is defined by the sacred and the spiritual aspects of humanity. He asserts that the foundation of religion may be traced back to an attempt to describe and organize the beliefs, feelings, imaginations, and acts that emerge as a result of direct experience of the sacred and the spiritual. In the course of this endeavor's expansion in terms of its formulation and elaboration, it transforms into a process that generates meaning for itself on a consistent basis, both in terms of the experiences that it initially encountered and the responses that it continues to have. According to Glenn M. Vernon, a sociologist (1962), he defined it as…that part of culture composed of share beliefs and practices which not only identify or define the supernatural and the sacred and man's relationship thereto, but which also relate them to the known world in such a way that the group is provided with moral definitions as to what is good (in harmony with or approved by the supernatural) and what is bad (contrary to or out of harmony with the Supernatural).

Yinger, a different sociologist, defined religion as "a system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggles with these ultimate problems of human life." This definition was published in a book that was published in 1970 and has the title the Scientific Study of Religion. It is a manifestation of their resistance to give in to death, to give up in the face of frustration, and to permit animosity to rip apart their human companionship...The statement made by Yinger was that in order for men to be able to live harmoniously in this troubled and suffering world, they must some absolute ideals. He highlighted that science had been unable to solve human issues, and that religion is the only thing that can provide meaning in times of significant crises and uncertainties.

According to Ekwunife (1992), in his book Politics and Religious Intolerance, a theological definition of religion is as follows: religion is man's awareness and recognition of his dependent relationship on a transcendent Being-the Wholly Order, which is expressed in human society through beliefs, worship, and ethnical or moral behavior. In this instance, the Clergy acknowledged or appreciated man's understanding of a greater Being that was superior to him, which is the genesis of faith in religion. The lessons of experience have demonstrated that every religion, when it comes to politics, acts as a stimulant to the most fundamental issues that humans face.

Concept of Politics

A subfield of the social sciences is known as politics. Social science is an umbrella term that encompasses a variety of academic fields that investigate the myriad of activities that people engage in within the context of society as a whole. In the eyes of the ancient Greeks, politics referred to the process of organizing and administering the state. Greek philosophers were extremely concerned with the question of how to organize and run the state in such a way as to guarantee the freedom of the individual and the establishment of social justice. More than this is what politics means to us in Nigeria at the present time. In point of fact, the term "politics" is quite malleable. There are numerous academics who have defined politics in a variety of ways.

It was Harold Laswell, for instance, who provided the definition of politics as "who gets what, when, and how?His explanation continued by stating that politics is concerned with the study of power, as well as the study of influence and the effect of those who are influential. According to Omolayo and Arowolaju (1987), David Easter defined politics as the process by which values are handed down to the society in an authoritative manner. The fight to share power or to exert influence over the distribution process was what Weber understood politics to be. In human society, politics encompasses a vast range of topics. It's possible that this is the reason why Aristotle referred to man as "a political animal. "We are all members of the highest organization, which is referred to as the state.

Every state, including Nigeria, is characterized by the presence of people and groups of individuals who make competing claims over the distribution of limited resources. It is certain that disagreements may occur from time to time on the characteristics of these resources and the manner in which they would be distributed. This may be linked to the fact that the demand for the fundamental physiological needs of man is greater than the available resources that are intended to be allocated for a purpose, or that the resources that are intended for it are misused based on ethnicity and religious considerations. As an illustration, ninety percent of

the main political positions in the current administration, which is led by Tinubu, were assigned on the basis of religious or ethnic considerations. This has resulted in the cases of square pegs being placed in round holes becoming general knowledge. This has a detrimental impact on the socioeconomic and political development of the nation, and the spillover effects of this are a high rate of poverty, crime, unemployment, and diseases. A definition of politics that was provided by Hornby (2000) was "The Science and Art of Government. "The study of the terms, organization, and administration of a state or portion of a state, as well as the regulation of the state's relationship with other states, is the subject of this scientific discipline. One of the oldest social disciplines, politics is actually the second oldest social science after religion. The following are the three main concepts that govern politics:

1. It incorporates a state
2. It necessitates the establishment of relationships with other individuals in order to fulfill the boundless desires of each individual.
3. In order to make it competitive, it involves competing interest groups.

Politics was defined by Leshe (1970) as "...a sphere of purposeful behavior through which we seek to live better than we do now," while Markle (1967) characterized it from two different points of view. In a positive way, he stated, "Politics is a noble quest for good order and justice," while in a bad way, he stated, "Politics is a selfish grab for power, glory, and riches. ”Legitimate government, which is defined as an indispensable social organization that is developed in every society for the goal of enacting, codifying, and enforcing the laws and values of a specific society, can be thought of as either a science or an art with the purpose of ruling through legitimate government.

According to Uju (1987), the function of the government in Nigeria can be broken down into three distinct levels. These include the following: Firstly, the Executive Branch. It is the arm that is responsible for putting the policies that have been approved by the legislatures into action. This arm includes the Army, the Police, the Prisons, and the Civil Service. In the second place, the Legislative Arm is the body that is in charge of drafting laws for the nation. These include the House of Representatives of the several states as well as the National Assembly. The sole responsibility for interpreting legislation lies with the Judiciary, which is the third and final branch of the government.

Sustainable Development

The concept of sustainable development refers to the endeavors that are made to enhance the socio-economic and ecological status, as well as the utilization and processing of the environment or natural resources, with the objective of enhancing the quality of human life in a manner that does not compromise the requirements of future generations. During the 20th century, the World Conservation Strategy, which was issued by the World Conservation Union, was responsible for bringing the idea of sustainable development to the public's attention. The word grew more prominent and garnered more attention in the report of the Bruntland Commission, which was tasked by the United Nations General Assembly with the responsibility of proposing long-term environmental plans with the purpose of attaining sustainable development by the year 2000 and beyond (Sulaiman, 2002).

This study provides a comprehensive explanation of the phrase "sustainable development," including its meaning, nature, scope, aims, and techniques, among other things. According to

the majority of definitions that are provided for the term "development," it is understood to be a process that involves alterations in the social structure, attitude, and institutions, as well as the general acceleration of economic growth through the elimination of inequality and poverty. Going through the multifarious definitions of the concept, Mohammed (2002) identifies three important facts on it, namely:

1. Increasing the availability and widening the distribution of basic life sustenance, such as food, shelter, and protection;
2. Raising the level of living in addition to higher income, provision of jobs, better education, and greater attention to cultural and humanitarian values, all of which serve to enhance material well-being, but also to generate greater individual and national self-esteem, and;
3. Expanding the range of economic and social choice to individuals and nations by freeing them from servitude and dependence.

Based on the information presented above, a few indicators of progress have been established, all of which are without a doubt necessary for sustainable growth. According to Adedeji (1997), the Human Development Index (HDI) is a tool that may be utilized to assess the level of human development. The HDI is comprised of three components: income, education, and health standards. One of the most important factors that determines the level of development, according to Aliyu (1999), is the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which is the overall production of the economy. Other indicators of development that Mohammed (2002) identified include: an improved standard of living, which can be measured by the availability of decent housing, improved nutritional standards, and quality health care and education services for the majority of the population; a life expectancy that is primarily influenced by the standard of living, the availability of health services, the literacy level, and the income of the people. It is possible to draw the conclusion from this that it would be extremely difficult to achieve all of the indicated indices of progress in an environment that is experiencing a crisis. In the event that any of the ethno-religious conflicts occur, the health, education, and income of Nigerians are put in jeopardy and the situation is negatively impacted.

According to Dogarawa (2002), resources can be roughly categorized into four distinct categories: possessive resources, definite resources, acquirable resources, and common resources. According to him, common resources are resources that are shared by all nations, people, and tribes and that no one can prevent anybody from using them and that are available to everyone. A few examples of such resources include the atmosphere, the moonlight, the sunlight, the rain, the weather, the wild animals, the forest, and time. As the name suggests, definitive resources have terminal characteristics; hence, there is a requirement for consumption that is instantaneous, effective, and efficient. Lifespan, target, completion, and approach are some examples of these types of variables. Obtaining resources that can be acquired is necessary in order to go from one position to another. Skills, experiences, and orientation are some examples of such things. It is possible to acquire possessive resources through the exchange of customary rights and other legal forms of ownership. These resources can be utilized, neglected, sold, or transferred through the means of gifting or transfer of control. Examples of possessive resources include money, assets, technology, territory, and independence. The combination of these resources constitutes the components of development, the viability of which is primarily dependent on the efficient

utilization of these resources, and the underutilization and misuse of these resources could result in a significant loss and a catastrophic outcome.

In an environment of crisis and turmoil, none of these resources could be managed or even harnessed. This is the point that needs to be made. In a nutshell, this means that the only environment in which a faux development may be achieved is one in which religion is employed as a tool for vengeance. The finding of crude oil in Nigeria, in addition to the establishment of refinery firms, might be considered an element of development from a different perspective. On the other hand, this blessing has been put in jeopardy by a number of agitations, protests, and demonstrations that have been carried out by oil producing communities. These groups have felt that they have been duped in the formula for the distribution of the revenues from the resources.

Colonialism and the Origin of Ethno-Religious Politics in Nigeria

By the year 1900, it was believed that the region that is now known as Nigeria had been colonized. Furthermore, Anyanwu (2004) states that "the Colonial government pursued programs and policies that encouraged ethnic differences from the very beginning." In the beginning, the region was divided into two distinct protectorates: the northern protectorate and the southern protectorate. Richard's constitution allowed for the implementation of a number of administrative reforms in the year 1914.The colony, the Western Province, the Northern Province, and the Eastern Province are the four individual units that were created when the country was divided into four distinct units. Despite the fact that the Richard's constitution established the groundwork for federalism in terms of ethnic tolerance, it was more of a complicating element than a mitigating factor because it more or less authorized regionalism (Anyanwu, 2004).

There was a significant amount of ethnic diversity among the three regions of East, West, and North, and the colonial authorities did not make much of an effort to reduce this disparity. The McPherson Constitution of 1951, which revoked the Richard's Constitution, reaffirmed the concept of regionalism and granted the three regions a greater degree of governmental authority. As a result of this, the politics of ethnicity came into being, which in turn led to an increase in the level of mistrust and hostility that exists amongst different ethnic groups in Nigeria. In the northern region, the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) arose, which was dominated by the Hausa-Fulani. In the eastern region, the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) emerged, which was heavily influenced by the Igbo people. In the western region, the Action Group (AC) emerged, which was dominated by the Yoruba people. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe's dream of being elected into the Federal House was thwarted on the basis of tribal sentiment as a result of the fragmentation of political parties along tribal enclaves. This was due to the fact that he was an Igbo and not a Yoruba, and he was running for office in Lagos.

There was a widespread perception that political parties with an ethnic basis were a precursor to violence and mistrust. Section 222 (b) of the Constitution of 1999 stipulates that "the members of the association are open to every citizen of Nigeria regardless of his place of origin, circumstance of birth, sex, religion, or ethnic group." This provision was included in order to prevent this from happening and to support national integration. Additionally, the members of the executive committee or other governing body of the political party will be

deemed to reflect the federal character of Nigeria, as stated in section 223 (2b) of the aforementioned constitution.

The Challenge of Politics in National Development

Regarding the political system, Nigeria did not possess a robust institution that would have made it possible for the political system to confront the task of governance in a methodical manner. The achievement of a successful democratic experiment in a nation can be linked to the presence of a political party that enjoys substantial support from the general populace and leaders who have the welfare of the nation in mind. According to Achebe (1964), Nigeria had political parties that were constructed based on religions, and its leaders were both naive and self-centered. The United Progress Grand Alliance (UPGA) was formed by the National Council for Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) and Action Group (AG), NEPU, and UMBC. Two of the most important alliances for the elections in 1964 were the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA), which consisted of the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) and its client parties, the Nigerian Democratic Party (NDP), the National Democratic Congress (NDC), and the Military Working Democratic Front (MWDF).

In spite of the fact that the alliances appeared to be national and regional in nature, the two camps exhibited a constellation of forces that stood in opposition to one another. The NPC, whose primary objective was to strengthen Northern hegemony, was the NNA's largest and most influential organization. On the other hand, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) was a Southern coalition whose principal purpose was to put an end to hegemony. As a result of these pressures, Awoists, Zikists, and Sardaunas have been developed, and this pattern is still present today. The increasing use of violence was another characteristic that the party polities displayed, and it was this characteristic that had an impact on the efficient operation of democracy. For their part, the parties resorted to violent strategies, which occasionally included the elimination of opposition candidates by physical means. This was clearly demonstrated during the elections that took place in 1964, when opposition candidates were subjected to harassment, banned from campaigning, and even barred from filing out candidacy paperwork (Osaghae 1998).

From the time of independence till the present day, electoral violence has been a culture that has been of the highest quality. This new democratic experience began with the administration of President Obasanjo in 1999 and has continued until the administration of Ahmed Bola Tinubu. Aside from the use of violence, there is also a lack of presence of an electoral body that is both free and fair. The entire electoral umpire that was established by the leadership of this nation has been unable to achieve the goal of conducting an election that is both free and fair. There are two aspects that may be seen to be responsible for this incompetence: first, the President had the authority to choose who would serve as the chairman of the electoral commission. Given that he (the president) is the one who pays the piper (the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission), this consequently gives credibility to the sham that Nigeria has been using for all these years.

In the second place, the ethnicity issue is an additional cog in the wheel of advancement in terms of the nation's ability to achieve a free and fair election in which the electorates exercise their constitutional right through the use of the ballot. According to Eke, Dele Cole, and Olasanya (1969), it was came to light during the first Republic that the members of the

Electoral Commission considered themselves to be representatives of their respective regions, and that their primary responsibilities were to defend and safeguard the interests of their respective regions. "This was the first basis for ethnically focused politics in Nigeria, which had the effect of blowing the nation in the wrong direction to the detriment of the nation.

The Challenge of Ethnicity in Nigerian Development

Socially one finds heterogeneity prevailing for there are more than 250 ethnic groups that exist in Nigeria. Out of these, the predominant ones are the Hausa-Fulani, Ibos and the Yorubas. Each of these dominates a specific region of the country. The Hausa-Fulani dominates the northern parts, the Ibos dominate the Eastern part and the Yorubas inhabit the Western part. Among these three predominant groups, as well as the minorities hostilities have been rife as skirmishes of war are very much obvious .The roots of this hostility can be traced back to the colonial period when the British pursued the policy of divide and rule (Ademoyega,1981).

The Challenge of Religion in National Development

When the nation of Nigeria was first established, there were a number of distinct regions that were dominated by ethnic groups that adhered to a variety of different religions. In its most basic form, the most of the people who live in Northern Nigeria are made up of Hausa/Fulani and Muslims, whilst the majority of people who live in Southern Nigeria are Yoruba/Ibos and Christians. Christianity and Islam were the two primary religious bodies that held dominance in the socio-political stage of her national life. The Nigerian colonial ruler planted the seeds of strife between the two religions. When Kalu (2000) proposed that "meanwhile, a contrary wind blew in the north as the root of Islamic fundamentalism was sown," he painted a true picture of the scenario that was created by British imperialism. This scenario laid the foundation for suspicion and rivalry among the various ethnic nationalities and religious groups that existed in Nigeria.It was during the early days of independence that this genuine religion and political opposition to Christianity was cultivated.

At the beginning, the battle between Christianity and Islam was a component of the competition and progress that occurred in the region. Nigeria as a nation-state has "witnessed the most perturbing and unprecedented upsurge of...religious disturbance." This ethno-religious diversity has not been for the best interests of Nigeria because it has been the basis for numerous wars. Because of this, Nigeria has been a victim of religious disturbance. According to Anugwom and Oji (2003), in Nigeria, religious riots have continued to pose a persistent threat to the country's peace and have also continued to pose a threat to the continuous coexistence and habitation of the various ethnic nations that comprise the country. According to Okwueze (2003), the Maitasine religious riot that took place in Kano in 1980 is considered to be one of the most significant religious crises that anyone has ever witnessed in Nigeria on a vast and unsettling scale. Other incidents include those that occurred in JimetaYola in 1984, Gombe, which was once known as Bauchi State, in 1985, Ilorin in 1986, Bauchi town in 1991, Kano (1991), Zango-Kataf (1992), and in the year 2000, the Sharia riots that occurred in the northern states of Zanfara, Kaduna, and Kano, as well as the revenge attack that occurred in the eastern region.

Religious riots broke out for the very first time in the history of Nigeria in the cities of Aba, Umuahia, and Owerri (Anugwom and Oji: 2003) and Uyo in the state of Akwa Ibom. Other incidents included the bombing in Madalla in 2011, the bombing in Baga in 2015, and Abuja

in 2009.In Nigeria, religion serves as a tool for the commission of violent acts, the promotion of ethnic consciousness and solidarity, the acquisition of political power and socio-economic gains, the commission of massive killings, and the wanton destruction of lives and properties of individuals who are regarded as non-believers or who are loyal to other religions. Historically, this may be traced back to the animosity that existed between the two main religions, namely Christianity and Islam. This animosity had frequently led to the struggle for power and domination, as well as violent feuds and the wanton destruction of life and property. With the destructive force of a cataclysmic vortex, this theological insanity has obliterated the foundation for the socioeconomic growth of Nigeria in a sustainable manner.

Methodology

The study used adopting document analysis method of data collection and analysis. The methodology is an arm of the qualitative method of data collection and analysis, and it requires the review and analyzing of relevant literatures, media reports, academic journals, newspaper and magazine publications, and seminar presentations to gain additional insight in the obstacles of Nigeria sustainable development and crisis of ethno-religious politics

The Effects of Religion, Ethnicity and Politics on Socio-Economic Development of Nigeria

As it is the case in India, the United States of America, and China, the dictum of unity in diversity principles should be enforced in Nigeria due to the country's multi-ethno-religious and socio-cultural differences. The coordinated efforts that are anticipated from the public as well as the governments should be to implement these values. Akinade (2002), who was mentioned in Omilusi (2015), has voiced the researcher's concern, which can be summarized as follows: Nigerians are fervently wondering whether or not their nation should continue to be unified as a singleentity. While there are those who believe that Nigeria should seek a federal solution to its problems that is based on several autonomous areas, there are also those who want to completely do away with the colonial borders and begin the process of creating new states. The goal of secessionists has gained more weight and credibility as a result of the incendiary strife that has occurred between Christians and Muslims.

Many major religious leaders have taken positions that are directly aligned with political candidates, not necessarily at the national level but in many states. These positions have been taken by these figures. Mosques and churches have become campaign grounds in recent times, where politicians besiege them in search of "blessing" and clerics openly give directives to faithful to cast their votes for certain candidates. Some clerics have even gone so far as to invoke the wrath of God on followers who failed to heed their directive (Hamza et al, 2018). All of these events have occurred in recent times. While strategically employing religious fanaticism and favoritism to polarize the people and maintain unhealthy conflict in the country; the political elite in Nigeria have always exploited religion and ethnicity as a tool of exploitation to attain selfish socio-economic purposes.

This has been the case throughout the country's history. To this day, public officials continue to exploit public cash as a means of gaining political favors, which undermines the principles of democracy. As a result of the spillover effect, there has been an increase in the number of occurrences of kidnapping and assassinations that are being driven by political and religious ideologies across the country. Nigeria, on the other hand, is widely considered to be among the most religious nations in the world. Government officials, policymakers, and religious

leaders frequently use religion as a determining factor in determining who receives what, when, and how they receive it in public and private offices. Additionally, religion is a significant component in influencing the course that government policy will take.

According to Omilusi (2015), the intrigue and intricacies that typically go into this process, most of the time, lead to a compromise of public interests by the religious stakeholders and political gladiators, particularly after elections. This is especially true in situations when there is a lot of political competition. These political elites are the only source of values in the society, or they are the integrating force in the community, and without them, the community may not be able to function properly. It has been widely believed that the political elites in Nigeria pose the greatest danger to the continued existence of democracy in the country. There is a widespread perception that their sheer existence is a violation of democracy. Elites who have extraordinary access to important positions in society or who appear to exert control over critical and crucial policies disproportionate to their numbers can be understandably live contradictions of the concept of government by the people and for the people. This is because elites have the ability to use exceptional access to key positions in society. Given the current state of affairs in Nigeria, religion and ethnicity continue to be extremely helpful political instruments for the purpose of acquiring political power.

One thing that has been noted with great attention is that anytime a politician loses an election, they will also turn to playing the blame game. For example, they may say something like, "I lose the election because they don't want us to be there. "The ruling class and the government are clearly differentiated from one another, according to Ake (1996), which is quoted in Omilusi (2015);

> They are connected to one another, but they are also separate in a very particular way: In spite of the fact that the government is simply in office, the ruling class is in power. In particular, the legislative and administrative apparatus are under the jurisdiction of the government, which is the tiny group that is in charge of the primary institutions of the state. The ruling class is concentrated on power in all aspects, including political, cultural, religious, and economic power, which together comprise the political dominance that currently exists (Omilusi, 2015, p.31).

According to Duru (2012), the ruling class is comprised of all of the influential traditional leaders, the major religious leaders, the higher ranks of the coercive institutions such as the military, the police, and the judiciary, as well as international capital and the wealthy individuals who protect it from the dangers of totalitarianism. It is of equal importance to keep in mind that the Lord Lugard Amalgamation of 1914 marks yet another indelible and flawed basis upon which the Nigerian state was established, regardless of the socio-cultural, ethnic, and political backgrounds of the people involved. The emergency of three major political parties in the post-independence era was another politically motivated arrangement that caused division. The Northern People's Congress (NPC) was responsible for facilitating both the religious and political interests of the Northern region. Action Group was responsible for the political interests of Yorubas in the Western region.

The National Council for Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) was responsible for spearheading the interests of the Eastern region under the leadership of three major nationalists: Tafawa Balewa, Obafemi Awolowo, and Nnamdi Azikiwe in the 1964–1965 general elections. This political arrangement signaled another idea in the minds of many free thinkers and political analysts that, there is nothing particularly exceptional or remarkable about Nigerians' unity in variety as well as the prerequisite for national integration. This view was signaled by the fact that this political arrangement was made. There was no attempt made to find a long-term solution to Nigeria's most unresolved problem, which practically revolved around the question of integration, equity, justice, and fairness (Falola, 1990; Kukah, 1999; Kenny, 1996; Suberu, 2004; and Ilesanmi, 2001).

At the time of independence, the politicians' primary concentration was on gaining control of their respective regions and the central government. When Kastfelf (1994) admitted that religion has played and will continue to play a very sensitive and influential role in Nigerian politics, he provided evidence that religion is pervasive in Nigerian politics. This proves that religion is a significant factor in Nigerian politics. An example of a testimony that lends validity to the argument made above is the political reform conference that took place in 2005 under the leadership of Olusegun Obasanjo. The Muslims in the North threatened to embark on a jihad if Mr. President refuse to address what they called "the unfair religious representation and three major Islamic groups: the Jamaatil Nasril Islam (JNI), the Supreme Council for Sharia in Nigeria (SCSN), and the Nigeria Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) went to the extent of examining the composition of the executive committee of the Conference. According to their argument, out of the 393 delegates, there were 233 Christians and 160 Muslims.

Furthermore, they claimed that the appointment of Justice Niki Tobi and Reverend Father Matthew Hassan Kuka as Chairman and Secretary, respectively, was an invitation for a Jihad in Nigeria. According to Danjibo (2012), the voting pattern in Nigeria has been characterized by a correlation between ethnicity and religion ever since the general election that took place in 1964/65.The result of this unabated anti-democratic practice has, at best, resulted in killings that were motivated by politics and ethnicity, and by extension, it has increased suspicion and hostility among Nigeria's various ethnic nations. There is no other environment in which development may take place except one that is characterized by calm and tranquility. A significant number of steps have been taken backwards by the Nigerian state as a result of the ongoing hostilities that are caused by ethno-religious strife, which are avoidable. There has been an increase in the amount of ethnic agitation for self-determination as a consequence of these polarizing disputes.

The Oodua People's Congress (OPC) Ijaw, the Ogoni Survival Movements, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), and the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) are just a few examples of such movements. The foundation that Nigeria was built upon, as well as the apparent lack of commitment to addressing injustices that have a tendency to split us, has been the negative aspect of the situation. Given this, the efforts of many people who are passionate about peace to achieve national unity and peaceful coexistence have not been successful in achieving any positive results due to the interaction of politics, religion, and ethnicity. It is a well-known reality that the anticipated power in diversity, despite the immense people and material resources that are available in a nation that is home to more than 400 different ethnic

nationalities, has not been realized. This is mostly due to the persistent ethno-religious and politically motivated crises that have been occurring. Moreover, the perceptions that have been held for a long time and the words that are considered to be insulting among the major ethnic nations provide still another cause for concern in Nigeria.

Conclusion

When it comes to socioeconomic and political development, the unchecked interaction of religion, ethnicity, and politics in a country as diverse as Nigeria is in fact counterproductive. In order to achieve this goal, there must be a political will on the part of the government to establish its priorities in the appropriate manner by redefining the limitations of the three concepts in order to provide room for socioeconomic and political re-engineering processes. As exemplified by the Church-state approach to conflict management, the component portions of Nigeria's development should sustain moral principles, social fairness, and fear of God in order for the country to experience meaningful growth. The Nigerian government ought to provide support for the function that religion plays in the development of moral values, openness, fear of God, tolerance, and forgiveness. This would make it possible for the value system that has been in place up until this point to become institutionalized. These principles should be the article of faith of all religious institutions in Nigeria since they are essential for the development of democratic political systems and economic systems that are stable.

In a similar line, the National Assembly ought to draft a piece of legislation that disallows political appointments to be made on the basis of religious or ethnic considerations. When it comes to the selection of political office holders, there is an immediate and pressing need to prohibit the use of federal character and quota system arrangements. This is necessary in order to provide room for the competence and professionalism that are requirements for long-term economic growth and development. The Last but not the least, there is a requirement to minimize the influence of religious fanaticism, ethnic intolerance, and undemocratic tendencies among the political elite in Nigeria, just as it is the case in developed countries such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and Canada. This is the core value of tolerance and the Igbo philosophy of live-and-let-live.

Recommendations

Due to the heightened level of politically driven crisis caused by ethnicity and religion in Nigeria and the necessity to curb it, the following recommendations were proffered:

1. The terms "tribe" and "state of origin" should be removed from our lexicon and should not be utilized in matters of national importance, such as the selection of Nigerian nationals to positions of authority, employment, or the provision of other advantages.
2. There is an urgent requirement to investigate the problem in leadership. A concerted effort ought to be made to reject the concept of selecting a leader on the basis of his or her political affiliation, religious affiliation, or ethnic group. The opportunity to serve Nigeria, particularly at the highest seat—the presidency—should be extended to everyone who would serve to the best advantage and general good of Nigerians, regardless of the tribe, religion, or political affiliation of the individual to whom the opportunity is extended.

3. The leaders of religious organizations have a responsibility to provide their members with the appropriate attitude and to emphasize that religion seeks peace rather than violence.
4. When it comes to interacting with Nigerians, placing an emphasis on political parties as well as ethnicity or religion is not in the best interest of the nation.
5. It is imperative that those in positions of authority adopt actions that would result in the resolution of socioeconomic issues such as unemployment and poverty. An imbalance of power, an unequal distribution of resources, and the Niger Delta's search for justice in her God-given mineral resources are all issues that were brought to light.
6. Notwithstanding the fact that they have fought together for a powerful, indivisible, and united state of Nigeria, the many ethnic nationalities of Nigeria ought to put an end to their resentment and their shady history, and they ought to embrace themselves in love and live in harmony.
7. The people of Nigeria ought to view their pluralism, which includes a variety of religious, political, and ethnic affiliations, as a benefit. This would result in the country being a multi-cultural nation with a variety of potentialities to provide leadership to Africa, the third world, and the world in general.
8. The leadership of Nigeria ought to, as a matter of fairness, uphold their electoral pledge by putting into place electoral reforms that would enable Nigerians to enjoy free and fair elections, something they have been unable to do over the course of the past many decades.
9. In addition, it would be beneficial for the president to give his approval to the recommendation made by the electoral reform commission, which was led by Justice Uwais, about the removal of the prerogative and the right to designate the chairman of the electoral commission from the president of Nigeria.

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