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Ethnicity in Nigeria in Post Colonial Era and Implications for Reader-Centred Library Collections

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Abstract

The existing information and researches on the causes, challenges, and solution on ethnic issues in Nigeria's post colonial era holds some implications for creating a reader-centred library collection. This paper focuses on ethnicity in Nigeria and the challenges of integration and unity and its implications for reader-centred library collections. Nigeria is the most diverse in terms of ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious differences, just as it is the most populous in Africa. Nigeria embodies all the challenges which ethnic cleavages posed to post-colonial societies anywhere in the world. The article traces the causes, challenges and proffer solutions to ethnicity to post-colonial Era. The implications of this article for creating a reader-centred library collection were discussed in the context of these expositions. Equipped with the right information and research outputs, library staff can initiate reading programmes and services and a varied, appropriate and culturally inclusive collection that appeal to readers., Given Nigeria's ethnic cleavages, it is necessary to improve public library services for culturally diverse communities in Nigeria through a reader-centred approach.

Key words: Democratization, Ethnicity, Library Collection, Nigeria, Reader

Introduction

Nigeria as a nation is an aggregation of several nationalities and therefore, from time immemorial, even before the advent of colonial masters, ethnic identity have defined the scope of political intercourse in heterogeneous and pluralistic societies like Nigeria prior to the amalgamation of the entity nationality such as Ibo, Hausa, Yoruba, Nupe, Tiv, Urhobo, Itsekiri, Jukun, etc was on its way to nationhood independent of one another but dependent socio-economic wise, thereby creating a chain of inter-relationships among the people inhabiting Nigeria today (Ademola, 2000). Many of these are no more than small insignificant groups that are on the verge of losing their ethnic identities and being consumed by some of the larger groupings. Three of these larger groupings, Hausa-Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba, dominate socio-political life and between them alternate both political and economic control of the country. This by no means implies that other smaller groups, the so-called minorities, have no influence. Far from this supposition, they have considerable clout in many important socio-political spheres in the country. Many students of Nigerian politics like to point to the regional concentration of tribes and religion with the western parts of the country populated by Christians and Yoruba, the eastern part by Igbo and Christians, and the north by Muslim Hausa Fulani (Badmus, 2009). But the truth is that this is a simplistic portrayal of Nigeria's ethno religious boundaries. In reality, none of these regions or parts is ethno-religiously homogenous. For instance, although mostly populated by the Yoruba speaking people, the western parts of Nigeria are religiously pluralistic with elements of Christianity, Islam and traditional religions (Salamone, 1997). Similarly, in the northern parts of the country while the dominant lingua franca is Hausa, ethnic and religious diversity is highly pronounced with as many as over two hundred ethnic groups in the region (Mustapha, 2006). Thus, the diversity of Nigeria cuts across geographic boundaries.

The country is an agglomeration of hitherto autonomous and semi-autonomous kingdoms, sultanates, emirates, city-states, and even village republics (Mustapha, 2006). This disparate character was however cobbled together by the British colonizers through subterfuge, violent pacification and conquests. The end result of this colonial adventure became by October 1960 known as the independent republic of Nigeria. Even today, it is a subject of intense and heated debate especially among historians whether without this colonial influence, Nigeria as we know it today could have emerged. While this is a difficult question to answer it is really not difficult to see how some of those societies and communities were in the process of transformation before they were disrupted by the colonial masters. Dudley (1973) opines that an accurate description of the British role in the formation and emergence of the Nigerian state “would be that far from ‘creating’ Nigeria, the boundaries of that community were delimited by the colonial administration only after the gross patterns of the indigenous cultural geography had already been established”. Fage and Alabi (2003) subscribe to this argument that: “due to trade, inter-tribal marriages, the spread of Islam etc., many of the component ethnic groups in the country were already in close contact with one another and a measure of unity and integration was already crystallizing among them”. Oyovbaire (1984) however rejects the argument of Dudley, because:

Dudley did not provide evidence for the argument, for example, we are not told which culture was assimilating the others and of the structures and diffusion or exercise of power (if any) covering the Nigerian area. In any case, even if the growth of a latent community could be discerned at the beginning of this century, it is extremely difficult to argue for it or locate the structures of that community for the period before the 1880s... The point should be emphasised that until Britain had established and consolidated its structures of governance over the contemporary boundaries of the country from 1914, no ruler or set of rulers, social class or regime had any claims... over all the pre-colonial state-systems.

Ikime, (1999) balances this argument thus: “the Sokoto jihad had led to the establishment of a caliphate made up of fifteen emirates about half the present day Nigeria. By bringing together such a large area under one political unit, the jihad paved the way for the emergence of a greater Nigeria”. There is co-operation, harmony as well as peaceful interaction between them (Usman, 1979). Since colonial Nigeria is created to serve Britain (Maier, 2000), the political and security structures instituted by the colonizers were concordant with the British interest and not of the emerging Nigerian state (Ake, 1978).

By 1960 when Nigeria was proclaimed an independent republic, there was a sufficient basis to appreciate the heterogeneous nature of the country which made it imperative to adopt constitutional and other institutional arrangements to ensure inclusiveness while maintaining its corporate existence as a united republic. The most important of these steps taken and which more than any other, underscored the ethnic and religious dynamics of the country was the introduction of federalism and its adoption as a structural system of government (Osadolor, 2010). Through the decades since independence, it is remarkable to note that although the character of Nigeria’s federalism has undergone various forms of changes and alterations, probably to reflect new political circumstances, the basic federal character of the country remain essentially unchanged. Thus from the first republic when the country had a federal system of weak central government and powerful regional government, today we see a strong central government and weak federating units (Suberu, 2001).

In terms of political and economic distribution of values, few observations could be made here. The first important observation is that in order to accommodate Nigeria's diverse nature, the principle of federal character is introduced to guard against marginalization of some ethnic groups in all federal establishments while ensuring equitable representation (Suberu, 2001). Another

of the informal safeguard adopted was an informal form of elite consensus that allows power to rotate among the regions. Thus, since 1999 when the fourth republic was inaugurated, the office of the president has alternated between the so-called Muslim north and the so-called Christian south.

Notwithstanding these formal and informal arrangements, the country remains entangled in dangerous waves of ethno-religious and sectarian strife (Badmus, 2009). Beginning with the January 1966 Igbo executed military coup in which practically all those killed were top military and political leaders from the northern parts of the country, the Isaac Boro secession attempt, to the July 1966 counter coup in which officers mainly from the north avenged the January coup, to the violent civil war that lasted thirty months and cost nearly two million lives, the socio political history of Nigeria is full of sectarian antagonism, suspicion and violence. Today, some fifty years after independence, sectarian cleavages have remained very much part of the major challenges facing the progress, peace and stability of the country. So wide are the feelings of alienation, marginalization and antagonism among these ethnic groups that today calls for dismembering of Nigeria are never more louder and strident. Accusations and counter accusations, killings and reprisal killings have remained some of the hallmark of Nigerian state these last fifty years.

Ethnicity therefore has become a strong factor in the political life of Nigeria. Most often ethnic sentiments are used to replace merit and skills, such that round pegs are no longer found in round holes. This chauvinistic behavior affects the efficiency and productivity of Nigeria. Nonetheless, is fundamental to inquire where this, feeling of “we and they” notion came from. When did Nigerians start feelings that the other person does not belong to his enclave or he is better than the other group or ethnic? It seems ethnicity was a colonial heritage bequeathed to Nigeria at independence by the colonial masters. In effect, whatever damage ethnicity has generated in the process of governing

Nigeria it could be trace to colonial arrangement. The major objectives of this paper are to carefully trace the causes, challenges and proffer solution to ethnicity in post colonial era in Nigeria.

Ethnicity

The concept ethnicity and tribalism has always been a confused matter. Some scholars use the two concepts as though they carry the some meaning and strongly inseparable. However, it is pertinent to note that there is a difference between ethnicity and tribalism even though the difference is water-tight. Nnoli (1978) for instance sees ethnicity as a:

Social phenomenon associated with the identity of members of the largest possible competing communal groups (ethnic groups) seeking to protect and advance their interest in a political system. The relevant communal factor may be language, culture, race religion and/or common history. Ethnicity is only one of the phenomena associated with interactions among communal groups (ethnic groups). Others include trade, diplomacy, friendship enmity, corporation, self-abnegation and self extension. What is peculiar to ethnicity is that it involves demands by one group on other competing groups.

From the definition above by Nnoli, ethnicity exists where the communal groups comprise either of: language, culture, race, religion or common history. If we go by Nnoli's position, tribalism which has to do with a tribe is only an element that could constitute ethnicity hence ethnicity in this case is wider in context than tribalism. Ethnicity in the words of Nnoli above shows that it does not yet exist until a demand is made by one group to seek for advantage and benefits for its group relative to what another group is seemingly enjoying. In support of this argument of the difference between ethnicity and tribalism, Eteng (2004) says that: An ethnic group, however, is not necessarily

linguistically or culturally, homogeneous, insofar as it often subsumes sub-cultural, linguistic, dialectic occupational and class differences, depending on the prevailing level of socio-economic development and cultural differentiation. Similarly, according to Thomson (2000) a basic definition of ethnicity is a community of people who have the conviction that they have a common identity and common fate based on issues of origin, kinship, ties, traditions, cultural uniqueness, a shared history and possibly a shared language. In this sense, an ethnic group is much like the imagined community of the nation. Ethnicity, however, focuses more on sentiments of origin and descent, rather than the geographical considerations of a nation.

From the definition above, ethnicity obvious is a smaller community found within a larger society which of cause is the implication of Thomson "... imagined community of the nation". So, it has to do with a unique group behavior seeking for favor restrictive to its group members. Ethnicity involves the display of sentiments in bias to a special set of group one belongs to. In concord to the foregoing, Omu (1996) says that ethnicity applies to the consciousness of belonging to, identifying with, and being loyal to a social group distinguished by shared cultural traditions, a common language, in-group sentiment and self-identity.

On the whole, ethnicity has to do with a unique group with distinct and peculiar features which are sources of common ties on which the feeling of sentiment and emotion is being expressed in protest or support of an action taken against or in favor of such a group. In sum, ethnicity is the deliberate and consciousness of tracing of one's identity to a particular ethnic group and allowing such feeling to determine the way one relates with people and things, ethnicity creates the brackets of 'we' 'they' 'ours', 'theirs' feeling. Ethnicity makes it very difficult for different ethnic groups to agree on anything.

Post Colonial Era

Post Colonial Era refers to the historical period or state of affairs representing the aftermath of Western colonialism; the term can also be used to describe the concurrent project to reclaim and rethink the history and agency of people subordinated under various forms of imperialism. Post colonial era signals a possible future of overcoming colonialism, yet new forms of domination or subordination can come in the wake of such changes, including new forms of global empire. Post colonial era should not be confused with the claim that the world we live in now is actually devoid of colonialism. The term Post colonial era is also sometimes used to refer to the struggles of indigenous peoples in many parts of the world in the early 21st century. However, given the interpretation of the principles of self-determination and self-government within the international system, along with the minority status and vulnerability of those peoples even within decolonized states, the term is perhaps less apt.

The years between 1952 and 1966 brought changes in the political culture of Nigeria, transforming the three regions into three political entities. Thus, the struggle for independence was reduced to the quest for ethnic dominance. At this time, ethnic and sub-ethnic loyalties threatened the survival of both East and West while the North was divided religiously into Christianity and Islam. It was a period of politicized ethnicity and competition for resources, which worsened the relationship between ethnic groups. There was a high degree of corruption, nepotism and tribalism. The national interest was put aside while politicians used public money to build and maintain patronage networks. Since independence, the situation in Nigeria has been fraught with ethnic politics whereby the elite from different ethnic groups schemed to attract as many federal resources to their regions as possible, neglecting issues that could have united the country.

Causes of ethnicity cleavages in post colonial era of Nigeria

John Paden in his biography of the Late Ahmadu Bello, the first Premier of the Northern region narrated a conversation between the late Ahmadu Bello and Nnamdi Azikwe, Nigeria's first president, sometime after independence. Paden narrated that Azikwe approached Bello and said to him "let us forget our differences so that we can make Nigeria great". To this, Bello responded by saying "No, let us understand our differences: you are a Southerner and a Christian, and I am a Northerner and a Muslim. By understanding our differences we can make Nigeria great" (Paden, 1986). This exchange between the leaders of the two dominant political parties in the country after independence was instructive in two ways. First, it revealed the level of anxiety among the political class for the unity, progress, and development of the country. Secondly, it revealed in the strongest sense possible the challenges of diversity which the country contended with since its infancy, and which were crucial then, as they are today, towards forging the required tolerance and understanding necessary for nation-building, progress and development.

The first days of independence were in this regard crucial. The newly independent country faced quite a number of important challenges. At the domestic front, the challenges were mainly political and economic. There were the challenges of consolidating the gains of independence and launching the country on the pedestal of political stability and economic development. To achieve these, there was the need to address issues that were left unresolved by the departing colonial masters. The most important of these issues concerned finding a pragmatic and agreeable solution to the simmering minority problem in the Delta region. This problem that first came to the official attention of the colonial masters in the 1950s was not effectively addressed before independence (Badmus, 2009). Another important issue was designing a mechanism that would ensure equitable representation of the regions in all federal appointments. The third, and probably the most important issue was how

to bridge the wide educational gap between the predominantly Christian south and the predominantly Muslim northern parts of the country (Mustapha, 2006). Lagging behind in terms of educational development, the northern region appeared in the colonial days not particularly keen on independence out of fear of domination by the educationally more developed southern region. There were also issues related to the vast size and large population of the northern region that put it ahead of the two other regions in terms of federal constituencies. This gave it an edge in control of political power at the federal level.

Attempts were made at various times especially in the early days of the first republic to address some of these challenges. A fourth region, Mid-West, later created out of the Eastern and Western regions by the federal government in a move to allay the fears of the Delta minorities. Again, in its early days, there was an indication that a federal character was adopted as the guiding principle in all appointments into the federal service to ensure that none of the regions had more placements than the others (Suberu, 2001). This was meant to ensure equitable distribution of administrative and other career appointments in the federal public service.

Problems that could not however readily be addressed through formal institutional mechanisms especially fierce elite competition and rivalry were in effect responsible for most of the failure to build enduring institutions that would promote and sustain national integration (Nicholas & Ford, 2007). One dominant feature of all heterogeneous democracies in the post-colonial period was that politics were not issue-driven. Probably, this was because they were as yet to develop the necessary counter-balancing forces and institutions to ethnic and sectional politics. In any case, these societies pursued what could be described as ethnic and sectional-driven politics in which resort was always made to primordial sentiments to garner cheap political support. In this kind of political space, politics is not defined in terms of what people could get out of their leaders, but rather is seen as a vast field that is sharply divided and fitted

neatly into ethnic dichotomy of “us” against “them”. The “them” usually in this case defined as other rival ethnic groups in the polity. Nigeria, from its early days, was dodged by this kind of sectarian-view of politics where the political elites, with the exception of very few progressives, defined it as a struggle for dominance and hegemony between “them” and the “others”. Because of this dangerous competition for power among the political elites, politics soon went out of control and political interaction became characterized by friction and ethnic antagonism between the various ethnic groups constituting the federation (Mustapha, 2006).

January and July coup d'états of 1966

The low point of this transformation was the January 15, 1966 violent coup d'état in which killings of political and military leaders took clearly ethnic and regional lines. On 15th of January 1966, the country woke up to a martial music claiming that the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa led government had been overthrown by the armed forces of the federation. It later transpired that the coup was tribally inspired (Salamone, 1997). Practically the entire top political and military class from the northern region including the prime minister and the premier of the northern region, and some top political and military leaders from western region considered too close to the NPC led federal government, were either killed in front of their families or abducted and brutally gunned down by the plotters mostly from the eastern region. It also transpired that in the 15th January rampage in which senior military leaders were killed, none of the victims were Igbos from the eastern region. The government that emerged in the aftermath of the coup under Major General A. Ironsi, an Igbo officer from Eastern Nigeria, one of those officers who “miraculously” escaped the coup plotters, pursued policies and programs that further reinforced the view that the coup was designed and hatched as part of an ethnic agenda to cripple the north of its political and military leadership in the federation. The most notorious of those policies was the introduction of Decree 34 which centralized public

administration of the country (Salamone, 1997). In a country which practiced federalism, and with a region which was suspicious of the government, and even at the best of circumstances was suspicious of any move aimed at centralization owing to its backwardness in education, this decree triggered massive protests and backlash against the Igbo residents in the region.

Another problem that erupted at this time was the Niger-Delta secession and its declaration of independence under Isaac A. Boro. It has been already noted how the failure of the colonial government to address the minorities' problem left boiling beneath the political surface, anger, feelings of marginalization, and frustrations. The collapse of the first republic proved to be the linchpin that triggered the eruption of the Boro rebellion in 1966. Although it was promptly quashed by the military, repeated failure by successive administrations in the country led it to become one of those sore points betraying the huge cleavage of the Nigerian federation. By July 1966, Ironsi's failure to prosecute the plotters of the January coup, and the corresponding ascendance of Igbos in all top administrative and political positions in the country, led to a violent counter-coup organized by a section of the northern officers. In this counter-coup, Ironsi himself lost his life and scores of other military officers mostly Igbos were killed.

The civil war: 1967-1970 and beyond

On March 1967 the first shot was fired across the Niger Bridge heralding the commencement of an avoidable human catastrophe which is known in Nigerian history as the civil war. A month before that fateful day, the eastern region under the leadership of Colonel Ojukwu seceded from the Nigerian federation and declared itself the independent Republic of Biafra (De St. Jorre, 1975). The civil war lasted exactly thirty months and its cost in terms of human lives was estimated to be around two million (Diamond, 2007). The events that preceded the civil war have been given various interpretations. The most accurate however was that the conflict could have been avoided if not for the

ego and uncompromising stance of Odumegwu Ojukwu, the Igbo military governor of the eastern region, and later the rebel chief and leader of Biafra. At a time when national understanding and reconciliation was needed, Ojukwu assumed moral higher horse and refused to either accept the leadership of General Gowon or the twelve state structure proposed by the federal military government (Garba, 1982). It was true in the July counter-coup Igbos, his kinsmen, were killed, but it was also true that in the January coup, northerners were killed. The irony of the situation was that Ojukwu accepted the killings of January, even if unfortunate, but rejected the killings of his kinsmen in July as totally unwarranted and unjustified.

In any case what is clear is that a war was fought among Nigerians that lasted thirty months. The war, its causes, how it was fought, how it was ended, and the ensuing peace, has become a classic case study on the challenges of unity and integration posed by ethnic and sectarian cleavages in Africa. After the cessation of hostilities and the surrender of the Biafran forces in January 1970, the federal government in a remarkably magnanimous gesture declared a policy of “no victor, no vanquished”. Igbos who fled the country during the war were reinstated in their former positions, and abandoned properties were inventoried and compensations paid by the federal government. It is remarkable that less than a decade later, an Igbo was able to emerge a vice president of the country in a democratically conducted election.

From 1970 when the civil war ended to 1999 when the present fourth republic was inaugurated, Nigeria had contended with other low-key conflicts and crises that once again brought to the fore, the unresolved nature of ethnic cleavages in the country (Uwazurike, 1997). While many of these were low-key and basically had economic antecedents such as the Fulani-Sayawa crisis in Tafawa Balewa in 1988, the Zangon Kataf Hausa/Fulani-Kataf crisis of 1991. The fact remained that repeated failure by successive administrations in most cases to address structural and systemic injustices contributed more than any

other factor in fuelling these antagonisms. For example, the Niger-Delta crisis which assumed an international dimension in the 1990s under the Abacha regime could appropriately be considered as fuelled by struggle for economic and environmental justice before it became hijacked in the 2000s by criminal elements (Badmus, 2009). Between the end of the war, the collapse of the second and ill-fated third republics, and the restoration of democracy in 1999, the most serious of all the challenges to national unity however remained the June 12 saga (Uwazurike, 1997; Salamone, 1997). The annulment of the June 12 presidential elections won by Chief MKO Abiola by the Babangida military administration triggered a sectional backlash from the western part of Nigeria where Abiola hailed from. Suspecting that the annulment by Babangida, a northerner, was calculated to deprive the Yoruba their “turn” to enjoy the “national cake”, the Yoruba commenced systematic and organized campaigns aimed at undermining Nigerian unity and its peaceful co-existence. So virulent were the campaigns in those days that bombs and political assassinations were introduced for the first time into the political discourse of the country.

Democratization in 1999 and beyond

Often it is said that the British and other colonial powers paid little attention to ethnic and religious homogeneity when drawing the boundaries of new states in Africa; a situation which it is believed by many not only saw arbitrary boundaries but also fusion of different cultures, values, norms, and religions in incompatible agglomerations (Yoon, 2009). Ordinarily, these kinds of creations ought not to be problematic at all, for sufficient evidences do exist from other climes that have been able to accommodate these forces and forge the required national spirit. Problems, we note, begin with the kind of political institutions, political values, and political class that emerged after decolonization (Ake, 1978). The greatest culpability of colonialism in this regard however lies in the creation of a peculiar political class in Africa whose sole motive for pursuing power is political aggrandizement. This political class

has been wholly responsible nearly for all the woes that befall most African countries since independence. In Nigeria, the political class was at the center of truncating all efforts designed to forge national cohesion and progress.

The death of Abacha in June 1997 and that of Abiola a little later mercifully allowed for breath of fresh air in the political space. This meant that the country could move away from the belligerent posture of Abacha, and the difficulty of deciding what to do with Abiola's mandate, towards a new democratic transition program (Egwaikhide & Isumonah, 2001). Through some form of informal elite consensus that had served the country often well in difficult times, it was resolved that the presidency would go to the south west, the region from where Abiola hailed. This informal consensus, known in the Nigerian parlance as "power rotation" was intended to be a goodwill gesture of national reconciliation with the militant Yoruba who had since the annulment of June 12 assumed a rebellious posture towards the federation (Uwazurike, 1997). In this sense, all the candidates that contested for the office of the president were Yoruba with their running mates from other ethnic groups.

That was not enough to, however, calm the various ethnic groups who rightly or wrongly felt excluded from the "national cake". While the Yoruba were pacified with one of their "own" as president, other ethnic groups took up the belligerence. In fact, it appeared like ethnic and sectarian tendencies were waiting for the military to depart from the corridors of power before they exploded practically in all parts of the country. It could be said that unlike other climes where democracy comes with incentives for reconciliation and national healing such as South Africa, in Nigeria it opened the floodgates of sectarian conflicts, inter and intra-communal violence and counter-violence so much that it is believed that the lives lost to sectarian killings and violence since 1999 were greater than all the lives lost in all forms of sectarian conflicts before 1999 excepting the civil war (Badmus, 2009). Beginning with the south west where the infamous militant organization, OPC, went on a killing spree of

Hausa-Fulani traders residing there, to the Sharia riots in the north where both Muslims and Christians were maimed and killed, it appeared as if the country was on a match to self-destruction (Mustapha, 2006).

In the Niger-Delta region youths formed militant organizations and started destroying oil pipelines, disrupting production and supply, killing security personnel, and abducting expatriate oil workers in the region. In the north central part of the country, neighbors who have lived together for generations suddenly found reasons to kill each other (Badmus, 2009). Starting with the Tiv against the Jukuns to the most persisting in Plateau state where a dangerous dichotomy was created between the “indigenous” population and the “settlers”. Today, sectarian violence in Plateau state has remained one of the most endemic of all forms of ethnic cleavages in the country.

One other dimension to this cleavage though not really tribally-induced but has significance on the question of national unity of Nigeria are the Boko Haram activities since 2009. Boko Haram originally started as a peaceful, albeit with a literalist orientation, Islamic sect around 2002. Unprovoked violence that included massacres, rape, and destruction of their properties by federal security agencies, however, transformed them into the most deadly threat to Nigeria’s peace and unity today. Based in the north eastern part of Nigeria, the group espoused a puritanical version of Islam modeled on the *Wahabi* teachings and Taliban orientation. Part of their stated mission is to abolish all forms of western education, abrogation of the constitution and democracy. In a multi-religious country such as Nigeria where the constitution upholds the principle of secularism this no doubt is a dangerous mission (Sani, 2011). The greatest danger posed by the group, however, is in how it kills its perceived enemies and anyone who disagrees with its teachings whether Muslim or Christian (Stroehlein, 2012). In their attacks which usually relied on suicide bombings and targeted assassinations, they often make no distinction between a mosque and a church.

Other causes of ethnicity that need to be pointed here include the nature of the political elite and the national leadership (Badmus, 2009). While the former cares less about the unity of the country and more about its continuing relevance in the politics of the country, the inept and weak nature of the latter merely exacerbates the tense situation in the country today. No less dangerous is the belligerent attitude of the president's kinsmen who hails from Niger-Delta. Ever since the president assumed leadership, his kinsmen are behaving as if he is an ethnic president rather than a national president. This same cavalier attitude was evident among the Yoruba when Obasanjo was the president especially in his first term. Thus, the picture of Nigeria today can be presented as fractured than ever before in its political history. Already strident calls for sovereign national conference, a euphemism for dismembering the country, are getting louder and louder by the day. However, this should not be construed as meaning that there is no silver lining in the horizon. Far from that, there are indications that show that the mass of the people have started exhibiting the necessary awareness about the implications of ethnicity to their well-being. The most remarkable as well as recent was the oil subsidy protests in many parts of the country in January 2012. For once, it seems that Nigerians forgot about their ethnic and religious differences when they confronted the federal government over its decision to increase the price of fuel in the country. People from different religious and ethnic groups embraced each other and united in their opposition to the policy.

Challenges of ethnicity in post colonial era of Nigeria

The aggravation of ethnic identity after independence in Nigeria was due to the lopsided federal structure which eventually implicated on the violent ethno-political discontent prevalent during the post-colonial Nigeria. Indeed the incessant disenchantment and frustrations of the ethnic minority under the federal structure accounted for the Tiv riot 1962 1964 the secessionist campaign of Isaac Adako Boro and his Ijaw group. Other ethno-regional conflicts were

also expressed through the Census crisis of 1963/63, 1964 federal election, sectional military intervention and the counter coup of 1966. Rather than the lopsided structure of the Nigerian federalism to be restructured by addressing the minority question through the creation of sub-federal regional units, the crisis of the federation was deepened with unification decree leading to the attempted secessions of the Biafra republic and the eventual outbreak of 30 month civil war. The aftermath of the civil war was the relative period of peace and stability for the country in terms of ethnic conflict.

The stability was a measure of transformation of the federation into a horizontally balanced union. The dissolution of the four region into twelve state and nineteen respectively, the use of oil revenue to douse inter-group resource conflict through ethno-distributive measures, including (provision of infrastructure in the new state administrative capital and the expansion of the general distributive pool account (DPA) under the revenue allocation system) and innovative statutory mechanism of ethnic conflict accommodation (federal character principle and the interregional distribution requirement for the election of the federal republic). In spite of the measure of stability during this period, it was still marked by semblance of sectional tension as dispute over 1973 and 1975 killing of the head of state was the flash point. However, the relative peace and stability enjoyed during the period was broken by the Maitatsine which claimed lot of lives and the Kafanchan-Kaduna ethno-religious crisis which reawakened the age long Muslim and non-Muslim tension in the North. The Nigeria military as a stabilizing force to the manifestation of ethnic nationalism were able to curtail and bottle up the aggravated ethno-religious and regional diversities in the country between 1983-1999, suppressing the diverse tendencies and maintain the corporate existence of the country through creation of more states and review in revenue allocation formula as well as the sub-regional creation of the six geographical zone.

The military however were not immune from the ethno-nationalist aggravation which has remained a dominant factor in Nigeria politics (Duruji, 2010). The perception of some section of the society is that the military is serving the interest of the Hausa- Fulani major ethnic group since they dominate the military institution of Nigeria exercising hegemony over its major institutional structure of the security apparatus of the state (Fatai, 2012). This has further exploded and increased contemporary ethnic tension and identity relation in Nigeria.

Fatai (2012) believed that the emergence of democracy in 1999 opened up the democratic space for ethnic expression and transformation which hitherto had been bottled up by the Military and authoritarian regime before 1999 Nigeria. One of the most appealing aspects of democracy as a system of governance is the expendable system of rights that must be guaranteed, even though it brings with it its peculiar sets of problem (Duruji, 2010) The peculiar problem becomes more obvious in a multicultural compositional society because while managing identities problem in a multi-ethnic society poses a challenge, the truth however is that democracy offers opportunities for groups to express their feelings and putting their demand across to the state irrespective of their diversities. By this democracy is seen as the instrumentality for addressing monopolization of power by 'single ethnic group' or a 'group of ethnic groups' in the country as well as the restoration of political stability in a multi-ethnic society. The Hausa-Fulani hegemony and the marginalization of other ethnic group during the military era was the issue that dominates the national political discourse prior to 1999. Of the 50 years rule, the military had rule for 29years and the Hausa-Fulani ethnic extraction has, had more benefit from the federal power at the expense of other ethnic groups.

The tactical alienation of the Igbo in the federal power on account of their suspicion after the Biafra attempt at secession by the federal government had continue to be a source of agitation on the part of the Ibo major ethnic group.

More generally the North/South divide shows a picture of a marginalized south given the control of the political machinery of the state by the North over a long period of time: for instance the annulment of the June 12, 1993 election acclaimed to have been won by MKO Abiola believed to be Yoruba's opportunity for the presidency also raises issues on the deliberate scheme of the Hausa-Fulani major ethnic group to hold on to power at the expense of other major ethnic group. The event of 1993-94 must be seen in the context of an enduring pattern of ethnic antagonism and inequality where the Hausa-Fulani is perceived as 'other' (Adebanwi, 2004). Duruji (2010) asserted that this situation is a negation of democracy which gives equal opportunity for political contestants without restricting anyone. This view goes to argued that democracy is not a panacea for resolving ethnic contestation, for democracy will be undermine in a multi-ethnic society where majority interest are as important as those of the minority interest. The democratic opening therefore provides the platform and space for the resurgence of long- repressed demand for the restructuring of the Nigeria federation on a more equitable basis and calling to question the domination of the Hausa-Fulani hegemony.

The emergence of ethnic militant organization was another challenge seen as platform for bringing into the open complaints that were previously mouthed with hushed tones, thanks to the transition to democracy (Ubani, 2006). The manifestation of insurgencies in the name of ethnic militia such as Oodua People's Congress (OPC), Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA) Arewa People's Congress (APC) (While the first two were keen on the restructuring of the Nigerian federation (based on the outcome of sovereign national conference) to allow for autonomy, self-determination, resource control and social emancipation (Fatai, 2012), the third APC is keen on maintaining the status quo and preventing the marginalization of the North. The impoverish condition due to the neglect and marginalization of the Niger-delta region where the country major resources-oil is been generated has also spiraled minority ethnic militant

groupings, such as the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC)-which arose from the Ijaw National Congress), the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger-Delta (MEND) which arose from the Niger-Delta Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and the Federated Niger Delta Ijaw Communities (FNDIC). These militant groups predicated their struggle on resource control and regional political autonomy. The phase of their struggle has however changed with time as their struggle against the Multinational Corporation later change to targeting the state and its national heritage. Apart from the prevalence of ethnic militant, there was also flashpoint of sectarian and communal clashes. Hardly as the democratic government settled down that Ijaw/Itsekiri clashes exploded, Ife/Modakeke, Kaduna and Jos were all evidence of communal and identity clashes in 1999. These crises were further compounded by the Sharia crisis in the North, pitching the Christians against the Muslims and put to test the secularity of the Nigerian state (Obi, 2000). As Obi suggested, Nigerian democratic space is hotly contested terrain, which partly feeds into the interrogation of the hegemonic nation state project and the escalation of violent conflict across the country.

While some of these ethnic group have been appeased with innovative federal principles such principle of derivation (13percent as in the case of the Niger-delta state, Development Commissions and Amnesty) and power sharing quota system to foster equitable distribution and opportunity among diversities in the country, the government has sustained a long pattern of repression of local resistance demanding for autonomy, by unleashing the might of the state to suppress these ethno-nationalist manifestations. The incidence of Odi Massacre, Zaki-biam, Onitsha Gbaramutu Nigerian troops raze down the town in a manner not conformities with rule of law, were indicative of the repressive tendencies of ethnic agitation by the state. The story is not different in the South East were the agitations of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) is getting stronger and violent each day. More recently is the clash between Fulani

herdsmen and farmers in villages in Agatu Local Government of Benue State where over 300 persons were confirmed. These ethnic conflicts have heightened the feeling of miss giving between the masses and select political class. A scenario were citizens of the country are feeling left out and out of touch with the goings and policy direction of the country. This situation calls for a democratic system that encourages participation of its citizenry in issues of governance.

Solution to ethnicity in Nigeria

Years before the attainment of independence, Nigeria's constitutional development experiences were concerned with the principal goal of managing ethnicity, which had shown clear signs of subverting the nation-building project. Federalism, the creation of regions and states and local governments, the shift from parliamentarism to presidentialism, the institutionalization of quota systems, the prohibition of ethnic political parties, consociational politicking, and the adoption of the federal character principle are some of the approaches that Nigeria has taken to manage ethnic diversity. These mechanisms have enjoyed the intellectual backing of institutionalists who posit that there is a connection between ethnic conflict or peace and the nature of political institutions (Young 1976, Horowitz 1985). Several works on ethnicity in Nigeria have been committed to examining the impact of these approaches to the management of ethnicity (Ekeh & Osaghae, 1989, Adamolekun, 1991; Ekekwe, 1986). Nigerians should aim at operating a true federalism, cultivate a suitable political culture, out-grow ethnic rancor and stop blaming ethnicity for any social policy that affects a group unintentionally.

Implications for Reader-centred Library Collections

The existing information and researches on the causes, challenges, and solution on the ethnicity issues in Nigeria's post colonial era holds some implications for creating a reader-centred library collection. Equipped with the right information and research outputs, library staff can initiate reading

programmes and services and a varied, appropriate and culturally inclusive collection that appeal to readers. An efficient library team would plan, implement and evaluate programmes and services aimed at developing and sustaining readers' literacy skills and enthusiasm for reading (National Library of New Zealand, n.d). Through collaboration with other staff, the library team can support individual learning as well as organization's vision and strategic goals. Nigeria is a culturally diverse nation. It is necessary to improve public library services for culturally diverse communities in Nigeria through a reader-centred approach.

Conclusion

From the literature reviewed it is clear that Nigeria as a nation is riddled with a lot of ethnic conflicts. These conflicts results because of the religion and cultural diversity amongst are people. The paper opined that these conflicts results because of a feeling of marginalization by some ethnic groups. The paper argued that ethnic conflicts is prominent in Nigeria's political sphere because many citizens do not participate in the political process and policy formulation process of the country, so they appear to be left out on the scheme of things. The implications of this article for creating a reader-centred library collection cannot be overstated.

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