

Ethnicity And The Crises Of Citizenship In Post-Colonial Nigeria: An Impediment To Development

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ABSTRACT:

Nigeria is undoubtedly a society polarized along acute diversities such as religion, culture and language. As a corollary of the poor management of conflicts arising from these divergences, the problem of nationhood has given ways to the citizenship crises that has remained a subject of heated debate and have by extension hampered economic, social and political development. For decades now, Nigeria has been plunged into a vortex of communal disputes. Hitherto peaceful communities are at each other's throat. Peoples that have cohabited peacefully in some instances for over a century are up in arms against each other. The age-old bonds that once bound communities together are falling apart with the unfortunate consequence that very minor disagreements often result in violence. This paper therefore makes an analytical x-ray of the nature of conflicts that have bedeviled the nation hitherto their trigger. Its findings are that Nigeria's heterogeneous nature, its belligerent leaders, institutional and constitutional flaws, tussle for power, power play and botch of leadership have all culminated in failing to address the question of indigene-citizen dichotomy, and these amongst other reasons is why the nation has had to be plunged into ethno-religious conflicts over the years. It therefore recommends amongst others that the clauses on indigene-citizenship dichotomy must be addressed by constitutional means and this will have to be done by leaders with political will and that the people will have to see themselves first as citizens and put national interest before ethnic or regional allegiance.

Keywords: *Ethnicity, Crises, Citizenship, Indigenship, Dichotomy, Post-Colonial, Impediment, Development.*

INTRODUCTION:

Prior to the incursion of the colonial masters, the political demarcation called Nigeria today was a potpourri of divergent ethnic nationalities and enclaves, ranging from; the KanemBorno Empire, the Sokoto Caliphate, the Benin Kingdom, the Igala Chieftdom etc. These ethnic nationalities were slowly and steadily beginning to cohere

through inter-tribal marriages and festivities, and through that, developing a consciousness of nationality (Birai 1997). Nigeria, a heterogeneous society with over 374 ethnic nations was later to be – dragged into a forceful marriage – amalgamated by Lord Lugard in 1914 after the annexation and bombardment. This amalgamation as perceived by most was not in the interest of

Nigerians, but for the economic and otherwise benefit of the then colonial masters the consequences thereof, was that it created for a situation of animosity and strife among these ethnic nations which were alien to themselves. Little wonder, people like the late AbubakarTafawaBalewa was quoted as having said that 'Nigeria is a mere geographical expression, created to serve the interest of its creators', and Sir ObafemiAwolowo who said the 'creation of the political entity called Nigeria was to serve a particular course and to place some people over others'. With the creation of the three region namely; the northern, western and eastern region and with the subsequent placement of the north over other region that accompanied it, it became even more daring and apparent to the others that the colonial masters were been favorable to a certain region of the country, and this created for more antagonism amongst the people. The coup that took place in Nigeria in the first republic (1960-66) where the killings were selective and sectional and the successive counter-coup, coupled with the civil war all culminated in informing the contestation of or for indigene-citizenship dichotomy, as the people became even more ethnic conscious rather than develop a national identity. Nigeria's socio-political experience is replete with a troubling history of deep contestations between indigenes and settlers. These contested terrains rather than shrinking are intensifying with unbelievable animosity. Its continued manifestations are sure to impugn the

capacity of the fragile and volatile state called Nigeria as we are currently observing. Official response to this protracted malaise has been half-hearted, that many accuse successive governments at the national, states and local governments of complicity. Arguably, Nigeria is about the third most ethnically diverse nation in the world, a population of more than 170 million with over 374 ethnic groups, and equally unwieldy amalgam of crisscrossing identities.

These recursive identities, and other mundane categorizations, have been both cause effect of violent conflicts. Such primordial identities have become widespread and prominent that national integration will continue to be elusive until we interrogate the misapprehension of citizenship in Nigeria, and how the dichotomy between indigenes and settlers has helped to fuel and sustain it. Most problems bedeviling Nigeria are traceable to the character of the Nigerian state and its political economy. The concept of the Nigerian state does not hold any appeal to the average Nigerian. Given the skewed character of the nation, the artificiality of its amalgamation, the emergent cities under colonial rule became readymade theatres of competition along the lines of ethno-religious divide. All over the patterns of social existence were not spared of suspicions. This development explained the proliferation of several town unions and other community development associations in the urban centers in the face of overwhelming impersonality of social

life. The incessant struggle to gain relative advantage in the competitive struggle for scarce socio-economic resources was the impetus for the consolidation of this exclusivist behavior. Indigenes are often referred to as largely those persons or group of persons who claim to be the original inhabitants of a given community, or can trace their ancestry to the original inhabitants. That is why in Nigeria, a major demographic requirement is town of origin, local government or state of origin. They refer to themselves as “sons of the soil”, the Amalas or NdiNweAla (those who own the land) or the descendants of the original inhabitants. Indigenes feel entitled to the choicest resources of the place in question, and expect to be so treated, accorded these rights. The observed pattern is that indigenes are accorded special treatment in both public and private sectors in those communities. On the other hand, settlers are those who cannot trace their history to these original ancestors or inhabitants. They are latter day arrivals, who have settled with their families amongst their host communities. In Nigeria, any person who stays on a permanent basis outside his traditional area of partilocal ancestry is considered as a non-indigene, or at best a settler. It does not matter if the person’s parents migrated decades earlier, and he was even born in the community, or he has lived there for an extended period of time. Try as they would, the indigenes would not accept the naturalization of these new entrants. To do so would be to reduce their expected preferential outcomes which normally accrue to

them on the premise of ascription. In Nigeria’s body politic, the dichotomization of indigenes and settlers is used to determine who gets what, when and how. This primordial classification which has found its way into every facet of our modern national life is used to convey politics of exclusion that is characterized by a monopoly of societal resources by indigenous groups, while also denying others seen as settlers of a taste of the pie. It doesn’t matter if the settlers are, strictly speaking, the more productive group. The struggle to gain access, control and dominate has been at the center of inter-community, even inter-personal relation. The settler groups, with time started challenging the pre-eminence of the well-heeled indigenous groups which in turn elicited the anger and hatred of the latter. There are however, situations or times, when the settlers would lord it over the majority of indigenous groups exercising tremendous influence over the allocation of cherished societal values, power, wealth, prestige etc.

Ethnic Crises in Nigeria; In Perspective

Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa – one out of four Africans is a Nigerian – has been devastated by serious political and economic contradiction. In national and international affairs, the conventional wisdom in analyzing Nigerian politics is to see Nigeria as made up of over 300 tribes hostile to one another. Others view Nigerians as been enmeshed in regional politics, Northerners vs. Southerners or Easterners vs.

Westerners. But a history of Nigerian struggle for independence from the British rule from 1861-1960 will reveal that conventional wisdom in analyzing Nigerian crisis is very misleading. Nigerian independence was not fought and won by ethnic groups; rather it was won through Nigerian organizations that had the vision of Pan Africanism, where all Nigerian tribes participated in the struggle against colonial oppressors and oppression in the 1950s and 1960s. Ironically it was ethnic and tribalist organizations that undermined the above struggle that also weakened the hope towards greater national or even African cohesion. The constitutional conferences before independence were used by Nigerian elites to divide the Nigerian people through tribalism, religion and regionalism. The dimension of class, social strata, occupation, territoriality and political ideology were far more vivid and important in determining the goals and the ideas of Nigerian elites than ethnicity, religion and regionalism. Before independence relations between Nigerian tribes were not as they are today; colonial and post-colonial policies created what struggles we see today in Nigeria. Colonialism created its own elitist policies with tribe, religion and regionalism as contradictions among Nigerian people. The kingdoms, chiefdoms and village confederations which the British conquered were not ruled by today's tribalist, political and military elites in Nigeria. They were people who had good relations with other ethnic groups as people with whom they traded and overtime intermarried.

Historically, there were no Urhobo polity; they were no Yoruba, Hausa-Fulani, Igbo or Ogoni polities. There were no single Muslim polities at peace with one another among the Muslims in the pre-colonial Nigeria. Again, the tribal names of Yoruba, Igbo, Urhobo, Idoma, Ogoni, Hausa-Fulani as applied today were produced by the historical experience of colonial domination and process of decolonization in the 20th century. One must understand that the present day Nigeria did not come into existence because tribalist chiefs and Emirs sat over kolanut, tea or palm wine to agree to establish it. Nigeria public space since independence has experienced a plethora of these cleavages in inter-community relations. The Ife – Modakeke, Aguleri – Umuleri, Itsekiri – Urhobo and Ijaw, Ogoni – Andoni, Hausa – Fulani Versus Berom, Jukum – Tiv, etc are some of the recent hotspots.

For decade now, Nigeria has been plunged into a vortex of communal disputes. Hitherto peaceful communities are at each other's throat. Peoples that have cohabited peacefully in some instances for over a century are up in arms against each other. The age-old bonds that once bound communities together are falling apart with the unfortunate consequence that very minor disagreements often result in violence. From Kaduna to Jos, from Bauchi to Taraba, Benue and Nasarawa, a situation is rapidly developing which threatens to destabilize the entire nation. The people are faced with the predicament never

prepared or bargained for. The meager resources are being frittered away on conflict management in a country whose citizens are unarguably the poorest. In addition to these, it is particularly difficult for migrants in rural locations to have access to farmlands because indigeneity implies membership of the local ethnic community. The system gives undue power to the traditional authorities and power brokers in regulating access to land understood as the collective, natural possession of the ethnic group. Next week, we shall analyze the specific ways in which the categories “indigenes” and “settlers” are at conflict with the idea and practice of national citizenship in Nigeria and how the political crisis being generated play into Nigeria’s population dynamics.

The categories of “indigenes”, “settlers”, and “natives” are social and political constructions of the Nigerian power elite in their search for legitimacy within the local community/state and their quest for access to power and resources. In the ordinary meaning of the words, “indigenes” and “natives” simply refer to a region or country of birth - aborigines and autochthones. In countries such as the United States of America and Australia with a unique history of conquest of indigenous populations such as the native Indians (United States) and Aborigines (Australia), it may be more or less straightforward to use these categories to delineate between the natives and conquerors or settlers. Such usage does not make sense in Nigeria given the country’s peculiar history of state formation, constant migration of people and

population shifts in the period prior to and after colonization.

Indeed, a major study of our region – West African Long Term Perspective Study (1994) undertaken by the African Development Bank and the Club du Sahel revealed that West Africa has had become a region of migrants and settlers with two profound modes of migration that had completely transformed the population dynamics of the region. The first is movement from the Sahel to the middle belt and forest zones, which has produced profoundly cosmopolitan towns and cities. The second is movement from rural to urban areas, which has turned the region into an urban majority zone. By 1990, almost 50% of the people in Nigeria had moved from rural to urban settlements in the post-independence period. When we factor in the pre-colonial migration patterns to current trends, it becomes clear that the great majority of Nigerians, and indeed West Africans are settlers, not indigenes of the places in which they live and work.

In spite of this fact, self-declared indigenes and natives are pitched against settlers in deadly confrontations over access to local power, resources and questions of identity. These labels have become potent instruments for the negative mobilization of peoples’ sentiments and feelings in ways that undermine the national political objectives of integration and the evolution of a harmonious political community. Given the peculiar history of Nigeria just alluded to, every

group resorts to history in order to prove its claim to the indigeneity of some specific local political space which is therefore, the major source of communal violence and ethno-religious conflicts in both urban and rural Nigeria. Citizenship is applicable to a person endowed with full political and civil rights in a state. It defines the political, civil and social rights attributable to the individual as a member of a state. In the modern state, the acquisition of citizenship can be through birth (the law of blood), law of place, and through naturalization. The notion of citizenship was developed in the context of the bourgeois revolution and the ascendancy of liberalism. The idea evolved with the collapse of feudalism and the medieval state, which limited the rights, and freedom of the individual. The rights and freedom, which were won and secured with the birth of the modern state, therefore, transformed the individual from subject to citizen. Citizenship is thus defined in terms of the special status granted by the state to its members and expresses at the formal level, the equality of all before the state.

In the contemporary Nigerian context, the discourse on citizenship and the application of citizens' rights often generate political tension and violence because it is intricately tied with the issue of ethnic identity, ethnicity and religion. This is the case in so far as indigeneity is tied to membership of a particular local ethnic community. There are three reasons why ethnicity is problematic in relation to the discourse on identity and citizenship: Ethnic

identity is not a fixed form of identity. Although it may appear as a natural community distinguished by a common language, ancestry and myth of origin as well as a common consciousness of being one in relation to others, it is not a static category. It is therefore, subject to frequent reconstitution and redefinition. It is interesting to note for example, that from what the British colonialist identified as 90 ethnic groups in the early part of the last century, the number of ethnic groups in Nigeria has expanded to over 470. Ethnic identity has had a constant history redefinition, re-composition and reconstitution. Nigerians characterized by a state of unequal ethnic relations reflecting an intense unequal competition for state resources. The most important resource being state power itself; particularly its coercive and resource allocating elements. Finally, there were historical processes of integration and migrations of various communal groups that were in place before the intrusion of colonialism. This often makes it difficult to establish which group can claim the "native" or "indigenous" status of a place at the expense of others. What all this means is that the ethnic category on which the definition of citizenship hinges is a very fluid category. It partly explains why the political disputations arising from contradictory notions of citizenship often leads to conflict and violence. In some instances, the groups at conflict over such claims are not necessarily from different ethnic groups. The groups at conflict may thus be sub-ethnic communities of the same ethnic

groups as is the case of the recurrent Ife/Modakeke conflict.

What needs to be emphasized is the fact that after several decades of colonial capitalist development, and the tremendous expansion of infrastructure across the country as well as increasing cultural diffusion, Nigeria cannot simply be reduced to a mere geographical expression. These conflicts relate to the crisis of citizenship in the sense in which groups at conflict deploy or even twist history in the contestation of identity by using such to establish "indigeneity" over a particular political space which could be a state or a local government area. In most of the recorded cases located within semi-urban and rural locations, attempts are often made to establish 'indigeneity' over a local government or any other local political and economic space. A few illustrations will shed some light. The use of history of migration, early patterns of settlement or local history about patterns of power and domination among the different ethnic groups in establishing "indigenous" claims are evident in virtually all the cases. On the Mambilla Plateau, the series of attacks in the early 1980s on the Bansa and Kamba by the Mambilla is hinged on this conception of citizenship. The Mambilla who laid indigenous claim over the entire Mambilla Plateau do so precisely on the historical claim that their settlement predated the arrival of other ethnic groups such as the Fulani, Bansa and Kamba. For the Bansa and the Kamba whose presence on the

Plateau is more or less recent, the bulk of them have arrived in the post-second world war period, it is a lot easier to label them as "aliens". It is in this context that one understands the basis of exclusion that the so-called indigenous group seeks to subject the stranger elements. The situation in Zango-Kataf is fairly unique and more complex as centuries of interaction between the Hausa on the one hand, and the other communal groups such as Bajju and Kataf (Atyab) have failed to produce the basis of a more enduring harmonious community life. In this respect the situation differs from other cases where the adoption of Islamic religion and inter-marriages have attenuated the level of social and cultural distance between "immigrant" Hausa population and the "host" communities. What one finds in the Zango-Kataf area of southern Kadunais the tendency for ethnic boundaries to remain impervious to social and cultural exchanges such as marriages across ethnic and religious boundaries. The representation made to the Cudjoe Commission by the Kataf following the violence of February 1992 is largely hinged on the claim that the land belonged to the Kataf who accommodated Hausa immigrants on generous terms. By the traditional system of land holding, the Kataf claim, such land in principle should revert to the original owners. However, this historical claim to indigeneity is contradicted by the position of the Hausa community who claimed centuries of effective residency.

Similar claims by "indigenous" groups aimed at excluding "strangers" appear to be central in the communal conflicts between the Kuteb and Chamba in Takum Local Government Area of Taraba state and the unending circle of communal clashes in Nasarawa involving the Ebira, Bassa and Gbagyi. These cases illustrate the enormous difficulty of resorting to history in the contest over identity. The difficulty arises from the fact that there can be no such a thing as eternal historical facts. There is the tendency for facts to be either carefully selected or for the same set of facts to be subjected to conflicting interpretations. Take the Kuteb/Chamba conflict for example. Although a number of ethnic groups such as Hausa, Jukun, Kuteb and Chamba are found in the Takum area, the major contest has been between the Kuteb and Chamba. From available historical evidence both Kuteb and Chamba had taken effective residency of the area around Takum prior to the colonial intervention. However, in the present context of contestation over the "ownership" of Takum, each of the two communal groups has resorted to different accounts of history to bolster its claim. The Chamba account, which is strongly challenged by the Kuteb appeared to have been the version initially accepted by the colonial authorities, suggests the Chamba as a warrior group, conquered and displaced the more numerous Kuteb around 1830. The Kuteb on the other hand, who make a strong historical claim over the area in addition to being the most populous in Takum area refute the claim by the Chamba to have conquered them at

any point in history, and even cite colonial records in support of their position. The Chamba whom they claim migrated from the Camerounswere given a place to settle by the Kuteb. The rule of the Kuteb in Takum was later codified by the government of the Northern region in 1963. The situation was however, reversed in 1975 when the Chamba, apparently using their influence in the military government that followed the collapse of the First Republic, got the then Benue Plateau state government to amend the 1963 law. The amendment ensured the eligibility of two Chamba families to contest and ascend to the Ukwé throne, increased the representation of the Chamba and Jukun on the Kings Selection Committee to three, while reducing that of the Kuteb to two thus ensuring advantage for the Chamba.

In 1976, a riot broke out between the Chamba and Kuteb in Takum. The cause of the riot was the alleged manipulation of electoral wards by the Secretary of Takum local government, a Chamba, to give electoral advantage to Chamba contestants. The victory of a Chamba candidate where the Kuteb constitute the majority was not acceptable to the latter. Some of the allegations were later confirmed by a government panel, which had been set up to investigate the communal disturbances. However, renewed violence between the two communal groups has its roots in the process of democratising the local government, which commenced in 1987. The numerical strength of the Kuteb had conferred on them electoral advantage in

the elections that had been organised since then until the outbreak of violence in 1997. Although it would appear on the surface as tension between democratisation and multi-ethnic existence, it has a deeper basis in contestation over identity and for control of local power and resources. The crisis in Ife/Modakeke is fuelled by the same dynamics despite the fact that it pitches one sub-Yoruba group against another. The Modakeke who are believed to be refugees from the Yoruba wars that followed the breakdown of the Old Oyo Empire are believed to have come from Oyo. Political tension and conflicts leading to the death of thousands of people had characterized the relationship between the two communal groups over the last two decades. The reasons for the conflict between the two communities seem to have been generated by disagreements over the creation of new local government areas. It goes to show that the question of access to local power is at the core of the unending conflict between the two communities.

Other Issues on Indigene/Settler Contestation

The issues involved in the Tiv-Jukun conflict addressed above, especially the one revolving around the indigene-settler matter, exemplify the intricacies and contradictions inherent to inter-group relations in the country. The Nigerian State, just as others in Africa, has been blamed for its inability to develop a way to accommodate the various ethnic groups that make up the country. Rather, Nigeria's post-colonial policies fracture and dismember Nigerians, thereby sustaining

bickering relations between its varied groups (Adejumobi, 2001:160-161). This explains why the lacklustre attitude of the Nigerian state in settling the citizenship question has fuelled rather than extinguished conflicts that are similar to the Tiv-Jukun one. The roots of these conflicts hinge on quarrels over land, that is, the warfare between those claiming to have settled first on a given land (indigenes) and those who are seen as having arrived later (settlers).

In the Zangon-Kataf conflict, the contestation has been between the native Kataf (Atyaps) and the perceived immigrant or settler, the Hausa-Fulani, in the Zangon- Kataf Local Government Area of Kaduna State. The Kataf people, who claim to be indigenous in Zangon town, consider that the Hausa, who are the supposed settlers, have no right to land. In 1992, a claim of "indigeneity" by the Kataf and a counter claim of right to land by the Hausa over the re-location of a market exploded into a series of conflicts. The Aguleri-Umuleri conflict is an intra-ethnic antagonism between sub-ethnic factions that belong to the same homogenous Igbo ethnic group, the same Anambra State and even the same Anambra East Local Government Area. This conflict, over the right of ownership of Otucha land, first occurred in 1904. It has been linked to a genealogical factor as well as the colonial policy that favoured the Umuleri against the Aguleri in the area (Ekeh, 1999: 2; Ibeanu, 2003: 192). Another case of conflict evoked by the indigene-settler factor is the Mango- Bokkos feud in Plateau State between

the Mwangavul and the Ron people. The central problem in the conflict has been farmland. The Ron people claimed to be the 'natives' and original owners of the land while Mwangavul, according to the Ron, are the 'settlers'. Legal actions have however given the Mwangavul (the 'settlers') victory in the courts. Thus, in an attempt by the Ron to reclaim their landlordship from the Mwangavul, brutal hostilities erupted on October 19, 1992 and on May 8, 1995. In a similar vein, the Ife-Modakeke intra-ethnic feud in Oyo State has its roots in the disagreement between the Ife people and the Modakeke. The Modakeke migrated to the old Oyo Empire because of the Fulani Jihadists invasion of Yoruba land. They were given a permanent settlement by the Ooni of Ife, Abaweila, in 1840 (Albert, 1999: 145; Peters 2003: 155). However, the Ife people have always declared that the Modakeke were not indigenes in the area they now reside and should leave; and that after all, what Ooni Abeweila did in 1840 was a mistake. These opposing arguments by the two groups have always resulted into bloody conflicts. The implication of all the cases of conflicts arising from indigene-settler disputes highlighted above is that the citizenship question in Nigeria remains contentious and a veritable trigger of social upheavals. It is apparent that Nigerians residing in parts of the country other than their own feel less at home because of the *de facto* practices of the so-called indigenes or natives which tend to alienate the 'visitors'. Many Nigerians suffer from discrimination and are denied certain rights where

they live because their host communities see them as settlers and non-indigenes (Toure, 2009: 12-13). Paradoxically the *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999* in Section 42 abhors discrimination of Nigerians by virtue of their ethnic affiliation, sex, religion etc. The Constitution also states in its fourth chapter the rights of the Nigerian citizens. It however fails to clarify the definition of what a citizen is and what an indigene is and their rights according to which state of the federation they live in. This ambiguity in the 1999 Constitution is responsible for some of the interand intra-ethnic conflicts Nigeria has witnessed since the 1990s (Nnoli, 2003: 14-15).

An attempt to conceptually define an 'indigene' and a 'settler' is shrouded in contradiction in the Nigerian context because of the difficulty in delineating an indigene from a settler since virtually all ethnic groups are known to have migrated from somewhere (Okocha, 2000:5; Avav, 2002:14; Best, 2005:2). It is much easier to define citizenship as "*a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All those who possess the status of citizens are equal with respect to their rights and duties with which the status is endowed*" (Marshall, cited in Egwu, 2009: 188). However, if we consider the concept of indigene for instance, it has been acknowledged that the idea of "indigeneity" is universally problematic (Best, 2005: 3) because it draws on the perception of groups of people who first settled in an area where the land and other opportunities belong to them. But because of the

inevitable migration of people to an area already inhabited, the earliest settlers are often threatened by the new arrivals especially when competition over economic resources ensues. This scenario can make conflict inevitable. On other hand, the concept of “settler”, particularly in the Nigeria sense of the word, breeds serious problems. Although a settler may be thought of in terms of a person who does not live in his/her original place of birth, or his/her ancestral home, for reasons ranging from business, war and work, what makes this movement and settlement problematic is the tendency for the “local” people to discriminate these “newcomers”. As mentioned above, different discriminating concepts are used by the so-called natives in their local dialect to describe the migrant people even if they have settled in the place centuries ago. The migrants are also denied scholarship awards and employment in local and state institutions where they reside. This overly creates an alien psyche and sets the “settlers” against the “natives” or “indigenes”. It makes the ‘settlers’ to raise questions on their status as Nigerian citizens. For instance, how long should one reside in another part of Nigeria to be treated equal to other persons in the community? Why someone should be called a “settler” in his/her country while others ascribe themselves the status of “indigene” with accrued privileges? These issues underscore the persistence of the citizenship question in Nigeria today. Best (2005: 8-9) attempts to explain conflicts arising from the indigene-settler divide. Best’s argument is that the

majority ethnic groups, that are more mobile, are inclined to overshadow the minority ethnic groups in their own lands. He cites the impact of the Tiv, who are a majority group in North-Central Nigeria, over the Jukun in Wukari and the Hausa/Fulani over the Kataf in ZangonKataf as cases in point. However, it can be underlined, in contradiction to Best’s position, that in a place like Kano, even though the Ibo and Yoruba groups are national majority groups, they are in minority in the Hausa-dominated Kano city. Thus, there have been conflicts along the indigene-settler divide between these three groups in the city. So the point is not the question of dominance of one group by another because of the superiority of its population. Rather a more plausible explanation lies in the failure of the Nigerian state to web its numerous ethnic nationalities through the conscious creation of a national structure that will enhance equal rights and justice and access to social welfare for all individuals and groups. The problem is further aggravated by the “power and property relations” (Momoh, 2009).

The fierce contest among the Nigerian political elite to acquire political power and by the same token, acquire private property and accumulate capital has blurred the vision of the ruling class towards creating an equal economic platform for all citizens to benefit from. Thus, the indigene-settler divide just like ethnicity and religion have become easy tools for the political elite to defend their class interest. This explains why, at the rebirth of democracy in 1999, ethnic nationalism

also regenerated in the forms of hitherto invisible ethnic-based organizations such as the *Oodua* Peoples Congress (OPC), *Arewa* Peoples Congress (APC), *Igbo* Peoples Congress (IPC) and *Ijaw* Youth Council (IYC). For the past ten years, these organizations have turned out to be umbrellas for ethnic mobilization to the detriment of national cohesion and integration. Again the existence of these organizations has reinvigorated the citizenship crisis because Nigerians tend to identify themselves first as members of these ethno-oriented organizations before they give consideration to their national status. Ethnic identities have therefore gained more ascendancy than national identity. This negative development risks jeopardizing Nigeria's quest for national integration (Alubo, 2004: 2). More so, these centrifugal identities built around religion, ethnic groupings, 'indigeneity', 'settlership', 'nativity', 'migrants', 'non-indigenes' 'southerner', 'northerner' etc have collectively sharpened the dividing line between Nigerians thus making cohesive nationhood a more convoluted task.

The Place of Identity in the Contentious Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria

Identity may be defined as a combination of socio-cultural characteristics which individuals share, or are presumed to share, with others on the basis of which one group may be distinguished from others. Identity is a group concept in the sense that it is based on traits which make individuals members of a group; such traits also provide responses to the question, "Who am I?"

Identity has a combination of ethnic, religious, gender, class and other layers all of which refer to the same person either in self-definition or as defined by others. Identity as other defined persists irrespective of whether people so labeled accept the definition(s). Thus, people who might see themselves as different may be seen by others as "one of them". There is thus a telling dimension of "othering" and being "othered" in addition to self-definitions. As I explore later, the sense of "othering" is crucial in identity politics. Identity is also about meanings in relations to social existence. In its multi-layered nature, and there is the tendency for some layers to dominate in particular circumstances. Depending on the circumstance, the crucial layer may spell inclusion, exclusion or even violence. It is in this sense that Mohamed Kunaw is right in arguing that identity has both objective and subjective components: An identity is *a distinguishing label that objectively exists, is subjectively felt, and enables its bearers to experience individually and collectively a sense of solidarity*. As a label, it can be assumed by, or imposed on bearers.

It is also a prism by which objects, people, and collectivities are sorted, organized, mapped and ordered into meaningful [and] understandable units.

Identities are socially constructed, dynamic and multifaceted. Subjectively, identification with a category is simultaneously a definition of self, so that groups come to identify themselves as

ethnic, religious, occupational, national and other terms. Objectively, individuals do not identify in general, but do so in relation to others' definitions of themselves and the boundaries implied in such definitions (Kuna 2004);).

The complex and often contentious nature of the concept make identity politics a natural outcome. Identity politics is used here to denote the process of categorizing and de-categorizing people (ethnic, religious, gender, etc) into groups on the bases of shared and presumed similarities. More often than not, such similarities may be based on assumptions and stereotypes rather than actual traits, attributes or characteristics. There is thus a regular sense of "in their character" or, in the more popular Nigerian pigeon English, "nademdem"; even when differences between people being pigeonholed into one group are striking. Such categorization and de-categorization become the basis for a range of issues related to rights, opportunities, privileges and entitlements. Identity politics is a basis for determining who is in and who is out (Alubo 2003) and hence there are contestations and struggles to maintain the *statusquo* by those favoured and for change by those left out in the cold. Identity in its ethnic and religious forms is central to the citizenship question in Nigeria because it is a basis for inclusion and exclusion. The issue becomes more crucial because, as in most of Africa, citizenship is tied to group rights and thus, inextricably linked with identity. In

effect, identity is a form in which the citizenship question is posed and practically experienced. This perhaps explains the rise in identity politics, especially in relation to material issues.

Citizenship is here defined as a relationship between the individual and the state in relation to mutual rights, duties and obligations. Citizenship is also a form of participation in the running of the state and society, and in this sense an agency and subject. As spelt out in the 1999 constitution, one is a citizen of Nigeria provided such as person:

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

The constitutional provision also spells out rights and privileges in a fairly comprehensive manner as to ensure rights of all citizens. The problem is not however, the constitution but the translation of its provisions to reality. Part of this complication

is the division of Nigerian citizens –in daily experiences— into *indigenes* and *settlers*. As used in common parlance, an indigene is synonymous with native, autochthon and “son/daughter -of-the soil”, and refers to ascribed identity of being born in a particular location into a specific ethnic group considered to have a “homeland” within the locality. To be an indigene of a place therefore means that the ethnic group can point to a territory as “native land” where such native land is in a local council or state. The Federal Character Commission has defined indigeneity in the local council and states. It accepts people whose parents and/or grandparents were indigenes and/or people accepted as indigenes by the council. When one is an indigene of a local council in a state s/he is automatically an indigene of that State (Federal Character Commission ND: 16). This position is more trenchantly expressed by Sam Egwu who asserts that “Indigeneity” of a state is conferred on a person whose parents or grandparents were members of a community indigenous to a particular state” (Egwu 2003:37; 2009). Thus Nigerians, who have their ethnic genealogy elsewhere, even if they were born in a particular state or lived all their lives there, are regarded as “settlers” (Alubo 2006; Ibrahim 2006). A settler is regarded as a stranger, a sojourner who may have been born in a location but is regarded as a bird of passage who would ultimately go “home”. Indigenes insist sojourners have a home where they periodically visit for celebration and where prominent members of the former are conveyed

for burial. Herein lies an illustration of the nature of identity as both self-defined and other imposed. Most of the people defined and treated as settlers do not regard themselves as such. In the Nigerian experience, being an indigene or a settler is a permanent identity, as there is no provision for the latter to convert to the former. In the daily experiences, the classification of Nigerians into indigenes and settlers only indicates who is native to particular locality and who is not. It creates problems because the classification is a basis for citizenship rights, entitlements and access to opportunities. Nigerians’ daily experiences are replete with tales of denial, exclusion and discrimination of some groups on the one hand, and access, inclusion and a sense of belonging by other groups on the other. The more common forms of discrimination against settlers include the following:

- Employment—available jobs are often reserved for indigenes and where non-natives are employed at all, they are placed on contract appointment. This form of employment has no provision for pension benefits. Sometimes, advertisements for employment are run with the proviso that “only indigenes need apply”.
- Since the return of civil rule, all non-indigenes who were employed have been dismissed from many state civil services, obviously to replace them with indigenes. Increasingly, settlers are perceived as snatching food from the mouths of indigenes, a perception which becomes

more telling because of the uneven development. Only few centers (such as the former regional capitals, oil producing areas and state and federal capitals) have thriving organizations and easier opportunities for employment.

- Admissions to secondary and higher institutions—these too are reserved for indigenes and only few non-indigenes are offered places. The issue here goes beyond quota and catchment considerations; there is a clear sense of who receives or is denied priority opportunities.
- Scholarships –this is exclusive to indigenes; non-indigenes are required to “go home”, even where they may not have another home.
- Higher schedule of fees for the non-indigenes in educational institutions such as Polytechnics and Universities. This is enforced without distinction to who may have lived for decades and paid all taxes in the state.
- Standing elections—while non-indigenes can vote, they are frequently not allowed to stand elections. Married women also suffer similar discrimination. The only exception is the Federal Capital Territory where Nigerians qua Nigerians can run for office.

There are other forms such as headships of federal institutions and establishments which, since the period of Late General Abacha (1993-1998), have gone to indigenes even where the so called settlers are better qualified. Nigeria's is in a situation

where federal establishments such as universities, colleges of education, research institutes seem to have been appropriated by the states where these are located. But since the appointment of headships is made by the federal government, there is an apparent complicity of the central government in knuckling to the pressures of indigenes. Some of these forms of discrimination have been formalized through certificates of indigene (Alubo 2004, Ibrahim 2006, and Human Rights Watch 2006). These certificates have become prerequisite for admission to tertiary schools and employment, including into the federal civil service. The experiences point to a two tier citizenship structure, the first for indigenes and the second for settlers.

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

the *Ohanezeis* the *Ndigbo*, and the Arewa Consultative Forum is the Hausa-Fulani. Similar geopolitical associations exist from the Middle Belt Minorities as well as for oil bearing Niger Delta Region.

These geo-regional movements were preceded by identity construction and reconstruction which provided the bases of further divisions into new majorities and minorities. This was particularly true each time state and local council creation exercises were carried out. Yet, agitations for the creation of more states and local councils, or simply spaces over which groups could exercise more control and influence, are unrelenting. However, the creation of states and local councils has not in themselves, solved the problems of a sense of belonging and integration, nor have they allayed the fears of domination (Alubo 2004). Instead, these exercises create additional theatres for contestations, as new majorities and minorities are created in the process. Illustrations include Kogi, where the Igala as a national minority are the majority; the same is true of the Tiv in Benue and the Urobo in Delta. In some states, a few national majorities find themselves as ethnic minorities such as the Yoruba in Kogi and the Hausa/Fulani in Plateau. Indeed, as

ObaroIkime has argued: ...each time a state is created, there is a new majority nationality and new minorities, and relations within the states have been more acrimonious since states were created than before because the struggle for resources and development become more

localized and so more intense (Ikime 2002: 65-66).

One only has to recall the relationships after new states were carved out of existing ones to appreciate how an exercise meant to “solve” a problem really creates further fractionalization. Much more than creating new majorities and minorities, new states also reconfigure the indigene-settler structure. Thus, whenever new states are created, some who were hitherto indigenes of the previous states cease to enjoy that status. In this way, the creation of states, *ipso facto*, redraws the borders and also reconstructs identities. From past experiences, people who lorded it over others as fellow indigenes became bitter enemies. State and local council creations construct and re-construct identities because indigeneity is based on claims to having an ethnic territory within a state. Furthermore, in daily life indigene/settler status assumes different dimensions, depending on the locus of the contestations: federal, state and local councils. The terrain widens and narrows and the criteria change accordingly. At the federal level, for instance, ethnic groups from the same state are indigenes who unite against contestants for other states. The same “indigenes” in solidarity at the federal context become divided into specific ethnic—and sometimes religious—groups at the state level. This same fission and fusion take place at the local council levels where indigenes break into clans and lineages.

The exclusions and denials of rights and opportunities on the basis of identity have resulted in many cases of violence, especially since the return of civil rule in 1999. It appears that military jackboots more effectively kept the lid on the situation. Secondly, as civil rule returned many politicians are fond of ethnic mobilization during electioneering campaigns and thus whipping up sentiments. The North central region is overrepresented in the table of identity based violence. Here, the conflicts are frequently over the control of spaces such as a state (Alubo 2008) and local council areas. In many instances, religion is deployed and rather than focus on believers, the entire swathes of territories are redefined as “holy land” to be purified and sustained through new religious codes (Casey 2007; Abdu 2005). This is the genre of violence which attended the *sharia* in most states in the North. Wherever *sharia* was imposed, the state governments became enforcers and through its new police, the *hisbah*, offenders—including non-Muslims— were apprehended and disciplined (Abdu 2005, Kuna 2005; Casey 2007). There were also other conflicts such as disputes over land, chieftaincy and the perennial disputes between pastoralists and agriculturalists. More vicious are conflicts over denial and exclusion of some groups from rights and opportunities enjoyed by others. Identity conflicts have been experienced in Ife Modakeke, Umulerei Aguleri and virtually all over the country (Federal Government of Nigeria 2003; Otite and Albert 2001; Nnoli 2001;

Oshagaetal 2001). It is important to focus on specific instances— Plateau State.

Constitutional Questions on Settler/Indigene Issues

The issue of the constitution, the constitution happens to be at the helm of our sense of indigene-citizen tussle. There has been a steady rise in communal tensions and conflicts since the introduction of the indigeneity clause into Nigerian public law through the 1979 Constitution. Since then, numerous cabals of local political elite have devoted considerable resources and time to defining themselves as indigenes, natives and autochthons while defining others in their communities as settlers, migrants and strangers. With the return of democratic rule in 1999, there has been an explosion rather than a reduction of political and religious conflicts. As the number of conflicts and the death toll and destruction of property increases, the strains on democratic governance and indeed political stability have been enormous.

On 19th May 2004, the Nigerian Senate and House of Representatives voted massively to give validity to a state of emergency that had been declared by President Olusegun Obasanjo on Plateau State. The President had suspended the State Governor, Deputy Governor and House of Assembly for six-months citing the rights conferred on him to do so by section 305 of the Constitution. For the declaration to enter into force, the President needed the support of at least

two-thirds of the National Assembly, and he got it. The reasons the President gave for taking such a drastic action are the following. The breakdown of law and order in Plateau state and its ripple effects with violence or the threat of violence growing in neighboring states such as Bauchi, Nassarawa, Taraba, Kano, Gombe, Kaduna and Benue. The President also cited the state governor's lack of: "Interest, desire, commitment, credibility and capacity to promote reconciliation, rehabilitation, forgiveness, peace, harmony and stability" (President Obasanjo's Address to the Nation, 18/05/04). The Plateau state governor, Joshua Dariye had indeed been making incendiary remarks questioning the citizenship of the Hausa-Fulani Muslim population in Plateau state, who he refers to as settlers, as the following quotes indicate: "Jos, capital of Plateau state is owned by the natives. Every Hausa man in Jos is a settler whether he likes it or not." "Even if I spend 150 years in Bukuru, I cannot become an indigene of Du." "It is an Al Qaeda agenda to bring down Plateau state... The ulama were chased out of Kaduna during the Babangida regime. If they were so good why were they sent out of Kaduna? And they came to form their headquarters in Jos."

(Quotes from "What Dariye Did Say" Weekly Trust, 15th May 2004)

With this type of encouragement from their state Governor, the "indigenes/natives" of Plateau state, previously known as a haven of peace, have since 2001 been engaged in a series of bloody clashes

against the Muslim Hausa-Fulani minority population, hundreds of whom were killed. While some of the Hausa-Fulani are relatively recent settlers with memories of their homeland, many have been in the Plateau for hundreds of years and have no memory of a home other than the Plateau. The provisions on Citizenship and Fundamental Rights in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria are contained in chapters 3 and 4 respectively. The most salient provisions are as follows. Chapter 3 which focuses on Citizenship basically contains provisions relating to citizenship by birth, registration and naturalization in addition to provisions relating to dual citizenship, renunciation and deprivation of citizenship. Chapter 4 provides a detailed checklist of the fundamental rights, which are the entitlements of Nigerian citizens. These include the right to life, right to the dignity of the human person, the right to personal liberty as well as the right to fair hearing and the right to family and private life. Others are: the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, right to freedom of expression and the press, the right to freedom from discrimination, the right to freedom of movement and the right to acquire and own immovable property. As can be gleaned from the above, there is nothing to suggest that the enjoyment of these rights have discriminatory application. A reading of other relevant provisions of the constitution lends credence to the point that the promotion of the political objectives of national integration and cohesion are of central concern to

the constitution. For instance, Chapter 2, Section 14 (3) provides as follows:

The composition of the Government of the Federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the Federal Character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also to command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that government or any of its agencies. Section 14 (4) calls on the states and local governments in the country to implement the federal character principle. Furthermore, Section 15 (3) of the same chapter states that: "For the purpose of promoting national integration, it shall be the duty of the state to (a) provide adequate facilities for and encourage free mobility of people, goods and services throughout the Federation; (b) secure full residence rights for every citizen in all parts of the Federation." It is also instructive to note that the Constitution allows anyone to contest election anywhere he/she wishes, as indigeneity is not a requirement for election into such bodies as the Senate, the Federal House of Representatives, or the State Houses of Assembly. The 1999 Constitution goes further to encourage "inter-marriage among persons from different places of origin, or of different religious, ethnic or linguistic associations or ties in Section 15 (3c). What seem problematic however are the constitutional provisions regarding the implementation of the federal character

principle? The issues of federal character and quota system have their origins in the recommendations of the Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) in 1976, which had reasoned that there was need to give every ethnic group in the country a sense of belonging. At the risk of repetition, Section 14 (3) of the 1979 Constitution which captures the reasoning of the CDC defined the objective of federal character as ensuring that the "Composition of the Government of the Federation or any of its agencies, and the conduct of its affairs, shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria, and the need to promote national unity, and also to command loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or form a few ethnic groups or other sectional groups in that government or any of its agencies".

However, this provision has made it more convenient for the aspiring politicians and ambitious elite to hang on to birth and descent criteria to determine citizenship. In this sense the most problematic aspect of the issue of citizenship derives from the way in which the 'indigeneity' clause in the 1979 constitution has tended to legitimise discriminatory practices against Nigerians who reside within a state, which is "not their own". According to the constitution, "indigeneship" of a state is conferred on a person whose parents or grandparents were members of a community indigenous to a particular state. We shall return to the specific ways in which the issues

of “indigenes” and “natives” have provided practical obstacles to the implementation of the rights conferred on Nigerians by their citizenship of the Nigerian state. The 1999 Constitution apparently in recognition of the controversy generated by the “indigeneity” clause in the 1979 Constitution has no definitional clause. However, the Constitution still requires the implementation of the federal character principle. The interpretation of Section 147 regarding the appointment of Ministers shows clearly that the notion of “indigeneity” has not been expunged from the constitution. It states: *“Provided that in giving effect to the provisions aforesaid the President shall appoint at least one Minister from each state, who shall be an indigene of such state.* What this means in effect is that, Nigerians who cannot prove that they are indigenes of a state cannot be appointed into such positions no matter the length of their residence.

The implication is that a tension exists between the formal provisions in the constitution on citizenship and fundamental rights on the one hand, and the practical application of these rights because of the reality of difference introduced by the politically introduced dichotomy between elites seeking to increase their power by defining themselves as “indigenes” and “natives” through the definition of others as “settlers” and strangers. These categories have tended to undermine the very essence of Nigerian citizenship in the sense that one is not really a citizen of Nigeria, but only a citizen of the place to which he/she is indigenous. The result is

that it has created a multi-layered system of citizenship as follows:

- i. Those most privileged are those who belong to the indigenous communities of the state in which they reside.
- ii. Those citizens who are indigenes of other states are less favored.
- iii. The least favored are those citizens who are unable to prove that they belong to a community indigenous to any state in Nigeria
- iv. Women who are married to men from states other their own are in a dilemma, as they can neither be accepted in their “states of origin” or that of their husbands.

In addition to these, it is particularly difficult for migrants in rural locations to have access to farmlands because indigeneity implies membership of the local ethnic community. The system gives undue power to the traditional authorities and power brokers in regulating access to land understood as the collective, natural possession of the ethnic group.

Implications of Identity-based Violence for Development and National Integration

The situation in Nigeria demands urgent national attention for several reasons. First, this country by its strategic geographical location is the connecting rod that binds the rest of the sub-African region together. Because it is so centrally located, instability in this region if left unattended

could gradually tear the region apart. Its position in the Economic Community of West African states is tremendous; therefore, a major crisis in the region has immense social and economic implications.

Over and above the foregoing, the lingering crisis portrays our country as unstable and could scare investors away not only from investing in the region's rich economic potential; it could also scare international investors from Nigeria. No investor would want to take his capital into a country where there are incessant reports of ethnic wars.

All stakeholders, therefore, must come to the aid of the Nation to invest in peace in the region because Nigeria has made the most sacrifices for the unity of the region.

In this concluding section we point to the challenges thrown up by state of identity based violence in Nigeria. The following are the key:

1. The immediate and more visible impact of the violence is on development and economic activities such as disruption of markets, closure of businesses. There are no data on number of businesses which collapsed or numbers who lost their lives, livelihoods and employment. The City of Jos is feeling the impact of the various conflicts. As Rodger Blench has shown (Blench 2004) conflicts are antithetical to economic development. In the case of Plateau, the November 2008 conflict only compounds an existing problem. A night time curfew has been in force since the end of November 2008 and this has

disrupted night time economic and social life. The curfew has been eased to between 11pm and 5am. The impact is legion: the Jos Main Market was burnt in 2002 in a mysterious inferno. Other markets have been relocated and in a few instances re-designated Muslim and Christian markets. In a situation where there is no security of lives and property, economic activity is a prime causality. This is even more profound in relation to foreign investments which are regularly courted by the state government.

2. Plateau state is regularly advertised as the home of peace and tourism. Its picturesque sceneries were important attractions. However when there are frequent conflicts and explosions of violence the tourism industry too would have been adversely affected.

3. There is now a de facto division of Jos into ethnic/religious enclaves. Muslims have moved out of locations considered unsafe; Christians have done the same. In several instances, members of the two groups who discover their houses are in the wrong neighbourhood sought each other out, swooped or traded.

4. The causes of the conflicts point to the nature of national integration and co-existence where all constituent units have a sense of belonging. Specifically, what kind of national integration does Nigeria have where in terms of the practice the right to vote is respected but not to be voted for? This is the supreme irony of euphoria which greeted the emergency of Barack Obama, first as the Democratic flag bearer and now the President

of the USA. Had he been in Nigeria, he would have been dismissed as a settler and may never have been allowed by the current ethnic structures to run for the presidency. In our context, candidates are seen as indigenes and settlers rather than what they stand for (Kaza-Toure 2004). This is why legislators and the executives at state and local council levels in virtually all of Nigeria are indigenes, in a telling attestation of the fact that people occupy ethnic rather than civic spaces.

5. Access to opportunities; Before the law all Nigerians are equal but the daily experiences do not always reflect this equality. Access to opportunities now depends on whether one is indigene or settler. Opportunities for education, including admission to secondary schools and tertiary institutions, employment, etc now depend on whether one is an indigene or a settler. In some cases, such opportunities is extended to headship of Federal Institutions most of which now go to indigenes even where the so called settlers are more qualified and senior. There are thus important questions about the nature of national integration and sense of belonging.

6. Duplicitous in the Constitution; The current constitution is duplicitous in dealing with the indigene/ settler questions. It espouses universal criteria for Nigerian citizenship but also recognizes indigenes for purposes of appointment of ministers. In daily existence, residency is discarded in favour of indigene/ settler. Again, where is the national unity, especially that there is no opportunity for settlers to convert to indigenes?

The experience underscores the nature of one country where citizens have different structures of opportunities not because of any objective criteria but due to ethnic origins. This situation perhaps explains why previous peaceful coexistence between ethnic and religious groups is now blighted by regular bouts of violence.

Conclusion

Nigeria is undoubtedly a society polarized along acute diversities such as religion, culture and language. As a corollary of the poor management of conflicts arising from these divergences, the problem of nationhood has given ways to the citizenship crises that has remained a subject of heated debate and have by extension hampered economic, social and political development. However, this does not mean that the country cannot exist because of the current trend in which Nigerians are denied some rights in other parts of the country. In other parts of the globe as in the USA, Canada, France etc, diversity in these societies has been effectively managed to produce a relatively cohesive and stable socio-economic and political atmosphere that has enhanced development. The reality is that we exist in a heterogeneous world and our thinking galvanized along ethnic and religious lines, thus conflict is an existential attribute of human organization. The complex composure of Nigeria is therefore not a peculiar circumstance. However, what is weird about this country is an unceasing flood of conflicts among the various ethnic nationalities it encompasses, which the government seems to do

little about. Overcoming the problem of the eruption of conflicts remains a challenge to any regime. Indeed, it is imperative to begin to nurture a principle of citizenship that is all inclusive, a citizenship that does not evoke abhorrence among Nigerians. It is only by so doing that harmony, trust and cohesion will prevail among Nigerians and cynicism about one's Nigerian-ness will retreat into permanent oblivion and hence foster development.

Recommendations

There is need for the political will to confront the issue of building a system of national citizenship in the country through a reform of the Nigerian Constitution. With specific reference to the provisions on citizenship, the following constitutional amendments would be necessary.

➤ The concept of indigene should be completely deleted from the Nigerian Constitution because it produces a majority of losers rather than winners. Since the majority of Nigerians are settlers, there is a need to address the issue of residency rights for Nigerian citizens in the places where they live and work. There should be a constitutional provision, which provides that a Nigerian citizen, who has resided continuously for a period of five years in any state of the federation and performs his/her civic duties including paying taxes, shall be entitled to all the rights and privileges of the state. This will be in accord with the practice in most federations, and will strengthen efforts

at national integration. When this provision is made, it would mean that anybody who has spent five years in a state can have any political appointment and access to all rights and privileges currently restricted to indigenes.

- At a more general level, it would be useful to devise means for the promotion of social citizenship in the country. The provisions on social and economic rights, which are not judge-able, should be made judge-able. This is important because poverty and the lack of access of most Nigerians to the basic means of livelihood is the primary cause of a lot of communal strife we have been having in Nigeria. Of course the Nigerian state does not currently have the capacity to provide all the needs of the population. What is being proposed is a constitutional devise similar to the one in the South African Constitution that would compel the government to provide for social needs to the extent of its capacity. The South African constitutional devise also involves the entrenchment of independent commissions to monitor the implementation of the said social and economic rights.
- The constitution cannot fix all problems. It is neither desirable nor helpful to do so. But it must address the practical problems of citizenship and seek to assuage the fears of the weak in order to achieve the prospects of national integration and development. How this can be achieved is the enduring challenge

of our young federation. This challenge is very enormous because attitudes are still far behind the general trends around the world toward integration. But we must start from somewhere.

- In the course of the crisis in Nigeria, which have pitched the people against their neighbors, and hindered development, government must take the pragmatic path and declare that as a multi-ethnic and multi-religious community, the basis of our unity should be to accept this reality. Government must offer protection to all the groups and sought peace through unity in diversity. This will not be an easy path but the alternative is separatism and perpetual turmoil.
- The way out of these problems must be sought through appropriate constitutional review to give vigor to common citizenship, while finding a way to protect the weak and local sensibilities and mores, thereby increasing investor confidence. Further integration will promote rather than deter development. A country of our dreams cannot be built without resolving the question of citizenship. And, we can have full citizenship rights for all our people with adequate protection for the weak and the minorities through affirmative action where necessary and a determined expansion of opportunities.

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