

THE ATTAINMENT OF POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE GAVE THE NIGERIAN PEOPLE TOGETHERNESS BUT NOT UNITY: AN INTERROGATION

Dr. Linus Ugwu Odo¹
Department of Public Administration
Federal University, Gashua, Yobe State, Nigeria

Abstract

The lack of enduring unity among Nigerians has lay to waste the noble dreams of the founding fathers of the country. It has led Nigeria into an unfortunate civil war and stunted every concerted effort at national reconstruction and nation-building. The paper is an indepth analysis and interrogation of the lack of unity among the Nigerian people. The paper relied on secondary source of data collection and adopted Traditional Theory as its analytical framework. The paper found that the two major causes of disunity among the peoples of Nigeria are ethnicity and religion. These two fault lines have undermine every genuine effort at forging unity among Nigerians of diverse ethnic origin. It is therefore, suggested in the paper that government must as a matter of deliberate policy diffuse ethnicity and religion by laying much emphasis on citizenship and the secular nature of the Nigerian state. This is with a view to achieving sustainable unity among the diverse peoples of the country as a prelude to meaningful national progress and development.

Keywords: Ethnicity, Citizenship, Nation-building, Religion, Unity.

Abstrait

L'absence d'unité durable chez les Nigériens a gâché les nobles rêves des pères fondateurs du pays. Cela a entraîné le Nigéria dans une malheureuse guerre civile et retardé tout effort concerté de reconstruction nationale et d'édification de la nation. Le document est une analyse approfondie et une interrogation sur le manque d'unité parmi le peuple nigérian. Le document s'appuyait sur une source secondaire de collecte de données et adoptait la théorie traditionnelle comme cadre d'analyse. Le document a révélé que les deux causes principales de la désunion parmi les peuples du Nigéria sont l'ethnie et la religion. Ces deux lignes de fracture ont sapé tous les efforts véritables visant à créer l'unité des Nigériens de diverses origines ethniques. Il est donc suggéré dans le document que le gouvernement doit, en tant que politique délibérée, diffuser l'ethnicité et la religion en insistant beaucoup sur la citoyenneté et la nature laïque de l'État nigérian. Ceci dans le but de réaliser une unité durable entre les divers peuples du pays comme prélude à un progrès et à un développement significatifs au niveau national.

Mots-clés: Ethnicité, Citoyenneté, Construction de la nation, Religion, unité

¹ **Address of Corresponding Author:** Dr. Linus Ugwu Odo, Department of Public Administration, Federal University, Gashua, Yobe State, Nigeria. E-mail:dr.odolinus1@gmail.com

Introduction

Nigeria is an amalgam of about 450 ethnic nationalities which have been grouped into 36 states, 774 local government areas, and further compressed into six geo-political zones and one federal capital territory, Abuja (Otite, 1990, p.28; Bassey, 2011, p. 591). Soon after independence from British colonial rule in 1960, Nigeria came under a protracted military rule which lasted for 29 years (January 15, 1966 to October 1, 1979; December 31, 1983 to May 29, 1999) (Bassey, 2011, p.591). The military adopted various policies and strategies to no avail to promote and strengthen inter-group relations and integration of the diverse ethnic nationalities in the country. These include creation of states, creation of local government areas, recognition of traditional rulers, empowerment of rural women, compulsory National Youth Service, inter-ethnic marriage, introduction of federal character, the quota system, among others.

Disunity cripples the aspirations of Nigerians and inhibits their chances of becoming a united modern and attractive country. According to Achebe (1998, p.3), Nigeria has many thoughtful men and women of conscience, large number of talented people, yet with little impact on the life of the nation. Had the country been united, the forces of evil as embedded in corruption, gross inequalities, noisy vulgarity, selfishness, and ineptitude could be fought to a standstill with much ease. Indeed, nothing in Nigeria's political history captures her problem of lack of unity or national integration more graphically than the indulgence in identity politics by the political class. The apparent lack of unity could also be inferred from the maiden broadcast of the leader of the first military coup in Nigeria, Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu, when he said on January 15, 1966 that "(the military) seized power to stamp out tribalism, nepotism and regionalism" (Bassey, 2011, p.592).

The first Military Head of State in Nigeria, Major General Aguiyi Ironsi agreed no less with Major Nzeogwu that Nigeria's biggest problem was the lack of national unity (Bassey, 2011, p.592). Nigeria has often been referred to as a "mere geographical expression" by both the British who had an interest in keeping it so and regrettably by some Nigerian political leaders when it suited them to retreat into tribe to check their rivals from other parts of the country (Achebe, 1998, p.3). The rise to prominence of tribal politics in the First Republic aborted a pan-Nigerian vision, which some nationalists have tried to imbibe. This was the death of a dream-Nigeria in which a citizen could live and work in a place of his choice anywhere and pursue any legitimate goal open to his fellows (Achebe, 1998). Despite the self-conscious wish to banish tribe from the country's political culture, it has proved largely futile. As Achebe (1998, p.8) noted:

A Nigerian child seeking admission into a federal school, a student wishing to enter a college or university, a graduate seeking employment in the public service..., will sooner or later fill out a form which requires him to confess his tribe (or less crudely and more hypocritically, his state of origin).

The true problem with Nigeria is that she is fully embroiled in an identity crisis leading to the lack of national unity. The diverse ethnic nationalities had each remained distinct and separate. The paper is an interrogation of this phenomenon with a view to identifying the causes and proffering solutions. In precise terms, the paper had examined the role and place of ethnicity and religion as constraints to the unity of Nigeria and made suggestions on the way forward. This is very apt at this time when ethnicity and religion are playing such prominent roles in the country's body politics.

Conceptual Clarifications

It is important and necessary that we are clear about the term "unity" as operationally defined or explained within the context of Nigeria such that the unfolding narratives on the lack of unity in

the country and its implications for the socio-economic and political development of the nation, including its survival could be put in proper perspective.

Unity

According to the Dictionary of Contemporary English (New Edition) for Advanced Learners (2012, p. 1923), unity means when a group of people or countries agree or are joined together. Ojukwu (1989, p.18) noted that unity does not mean uniformity or that differences cease to exist. On the contrary, he said, unity means that differences are recognized and accommodated to the satisfaction of all concerned. He argued further that there are two forms of unity i.e. unity of Jonah inside the belly of the Whale and the unity of marriage. He stressed that the unity Nigerians seek in the country is unity of marriage in which differences come together to yield forth increase.

Achebe (1998, p.14) noted that the most commonly enunciated Nigerian ideal is unity. According to him, unity is so important to Nigeria that it stands inscribed on the country's coat-of-arm and so sacred that the blood of millions of Nigerians was shed between 1967 and 1970 in an unfortunate civil-war to uphold it against secessionist forces. According to Kukah (2007, p.107), the unity of the Nigerian state is like a Catholic Marriage. It may not be happy but it does not break up. For the purpose of this discourse, the paper adopted the conceptualization of unity as offered by Ojukwu (1989, p.18) to the effect that unity in the context of Nigeria's political history means the conscious recognition and accommodation of our differences to the satisfaction of all segments of the Nigerian society.

Theoretical Framework

The traditional theory draws heavily on normative ideas about the management of society. The theory places much premium on custom, ideas, history, laws, institutions, primitive empiricism, etc. which are closely related to the political philosophy of administration or management of societies. The proponents of this theory such as Plato, Hegel, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, among others are preoccupied with value positions relating to what ought to be; what should the purpose of an organized society be; how the society should be organized to meet its identified purpose and so on (Sapru, 2013, p. 501). According to Plato, and Hegel, the purpose of a successfully organized society include liberty, peace, freedom, right, justice, equality, love, to mention but a few (Sapru, 2013, p.501).

Arising from the thrust of the traditional theory is the central question, which run through the paper as to whether Nigeria has identified its purpose and if so what direction the country should take to achieve unity epitomized in liberty, peace, freedom, right, justice, equality and love for every Nigerian. The theory is therefore, not only appropriate but very apt for the current narrative over the lack of unity and its implications for national development including the continued corporate existence of the Nigerian state.

Nigeria's Elusive Unity

The source of Nigeria's fundamental problem of unity is rooted in the lack of will by Nigerians to transform their primordial instincts and create a modern polity. This phenomenon has distorted, complicated and to a large extent stultified every developmental effort undertaken by successive governments in the country since the country's political independence in 1960. As Ojukwu (1989, p.2) noted, everything about Nigeria bears the frightful aspect of dichotomy e.g. north-south dichotomy; majority-minority dichotomy; Christian-Muslim dichotomy; amongst others.

However, besides the castigation and denunciation of the dichotomy problem, successive governments in the country from independence to date, have made gestures rather than take concrete actions to address the problem. Rather than seeking solutions, the narrative has degenerated into bargains for influence and privilege by the political elites. Nigerians have thus continued to wallow in recriminations and scape-goat syndrome or at best every effort has been confined to mere administration of palliatives.

When the British colonialists arrived at the Nigeria area, they met and dealt separately with the various communities that now form the Republic of Nigeria. These communities though aware of the existence of one another, each developed its own civilization independently and retained absolute autonomy in all spheres of human development (Ojukwu, 1989, p.4). With colonial conquest and subsequent consolidation of colonial rule through the amalgamation of the administration of the entire Nigeria area, no effort was made to amalgamate the communities. Thus, at independence Nigeria was left polarized. The founding fathers of the country were of mistaken belief that the granting of independence was the goal of the national struggle. As Ojukwu (1989, p.4) argued:

To them it seemed that once a new flag was hoisted; once the people sang a new and hurriedly learnt anthem. Once the colonial army marched past to give salute to a black face in a uniform that aped the imperial ceremonial splendor; and once these rituals were performed our leaders believed that a nation was born.

Unfortunately, however, the granting and accession to independence was not an end but rather should have been the beginning of the long journey to nationhood. This understanding was lost among the post-independence leaders, hence the lack of attention to the problems of nation-building after independence. The consequences of this error in the perception of the Nigerian reality include the persistence in celebrating the achievement of independence into their senility. In the euphoria, they neglected charting a direction for the country. Indeed, the failure of leadership overtook Nigeria after independence. Across Nigeria under colonialism, a new elite group was fashioned and imposed on the indigenous people of the country. Nigeria was thus saddled with an elite group whose point of reference was more imperial than local.

The new elite group which imperialism imposed on Nigeria found that the only viable way for its survival was to excel in progressing imperialist interests (Ojukwu, 1989, p. 6). The local elite's struggle for independence was fixated only on the replacement of the white masters and easier and unfettered access to national resources. Unity has thus, continued to elude Nigeria with dire consequences. For instance, every successive government in Nigeria has ascended to power with the promise that it would produce unity but each government had crashed because it failed to produce the much sought after unity. The beginning of unity in Nigeria is the realization that no ethnic or religious group can absolutely dominate every other group; instead, all that need to be done is to accommodate and tolerate one another either as individuals or groups. Unity in the context of this paper is a state of affairs where the entire polity is completely reconciled with itself. This is a state of affair where fear or suspicion, perceived or real, reasonable or unreasonable is diminished or reduced to manageable level if not eliminated. It is a state of affair where citizens can confidently seek and find their due place in the Nigerian society.

Despite the many years of Nigeria's independence, Nigerians still have no clear concept and definition of home. It is common to hear Nigerians within the country talking about returning home. As long as Nigerians resident in Nigeria intend eventually to return home, the question of unity remains unresolved. The elites in Nigeria use ethnicity or religion as a ladder and a weapon in their struggle for power. Thus, one of the greatest hurdles on Nigeria's path to unity has been

the elites with vested interests, selfish and inordinate ambitions for power and wealth. They are men and women who feared losing their positions and privileges; and who cared more for self than for the nation. Lamenting over the absurdity of Nigeria's lack of national unity, Ojukwu (1989, p.22) raised a number of fundamental questions as follows:

What is the sense of asking the question: state of origin in a country in search of unity? Why must students from different areas of our country suffer discrimination even though their parents have lived and paid taxes in the state within which they seek education? Why do we established federal schools to integrate our youth; send them to National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) to be better integrated only to separate them promptly in employment when they become adults?

The situation expressed in the above questions remains a constant strain on the critical efforts at achieving unity in diversity in Nigeria. The Nigerian rhetoric is therefore, very much at variance with the concrete realities of the Nigerian situation. In Nigeria, the accident of birth is sacrosanct. So also are the accidents of geography; the accident of language, the accident of religion, the accident of tribal marks and the accident of dress amongst others. Each of these can decide and does decide to a large extent, a Nigerian's place in the society notwithstanding that we preach the gospel of unity.

At Nigeria's political independence in 1960, there were discussions and debates about the problem of national development in the country. There was an exciting amalgam of hope and possibility of Nigeria becoming "developed" within a short while. However, fifty nine years down the line, Nigeria is still battling with the challenge of unity among its people. Thus, the attainment of independence, to say the least, brought the various nationalities within the Nigerian area together without proper integration or unity. This has had serious implications on the country's national development so much so that whether we consider the political, social, economic or any other aspect of human development in Nigeria, the situation is poor and disappointing (Amucheazi, n.d, p. ix). As Heeger (1974) cited in Amucheazi (n.d, p. i) observed, "it appears that development has eluded Nigeria and most other African countries with underdevelopment threatening to become a permanent feature rather than a transitory stage". This situation calls for continuous interrogation of the course of events in the post-independence Nigeria rather than despair and resignation.

There has been a simplistic viewpoint that cultural diversity is the reason for the polarization of the Nigerian state. However, instances abound of countries with similar ethnic and religious diversity that have come together to form strong political unit. Example of such countries include, the United Kingdom, USA, Peoples Republic of China, Canada, Kenya, Cote D'Ivoire, among others. The lack of unity in Nigeria can therefore, not be rooted in diversity. Instead, it is the will to unite that is at fault. According to Ojukwu (1989, p. 7), " Nigerian leaders have not shown any remarkable enthusiasm for unity", adding that:

It was the fear of unity that postponed the granting of self-government to a major sector of this country; it was fear of unity that triggered the civil war from which millions of innocent Nigerians suffered and perished, and from which Nigeria has not recovered.

As the title of this paper suggested, the struggle for independence gave the Nigerian people a togetherness, but not unity. At independence, the Nigerian leaders chose to remain in their respective regions while the federal center was considered as no man's land. Subtle efforts were made by each leader to control the center. The struggle soon broke out into the open and the delicate compromise that won independence became its first casualty. This gave birth to the first

attempt of secession in the east (Adaka Boro's Revolution) and later in the west (operation wetie). There was also a breakdown of law and order in the north represented by the Tiv riot (Ojukwu, 1989, p.8).

It was this state of affairs that culminated in the first military coup d'état in Nigeria. The first major task of General Aguiyi Ironsi as Head of the Military Government was to restore law and order. While Ironsi re-imposed law and order, he failed in his interpretation of the "unity" term, Nigeria. As at that time, the question of identity had become the true motor of Nigeria's situation; and until and unless the issue of identity is resolved, the Nigerian vehicle will not become dynamic. When for instance, General Ironsi decreed unification, the North revolted and seized the central government. The East equally resisted the unification while the West hesitated including the Mid-west. The Eastern resistance continued until the end of the civil war. Indeed, the entry of the Military into Nigerian politics had failed to deliver on its promised unity. For instance, as Ojukwu (1989, p. 10) noted, the Military had installed and legitimized indiscipline, but failed to solve the social and economic problems bedeviling the country. It also destroyed the delicate balance of Nigeria's political structure without putting in its place a better structure.

Nigeria as a nation has missed its route and she is floundering in the wilderness of history. This implies that as a people, Nigerians have lost their natural direction. They have abandoned themselves to their disappointments and have wallowed in despair. It was often asserted that the beginning of wisdom in the Nigerian politics is the removal of every perceived or real imbalance, which constantly distorts everything within the Nigerian body politics

Constraints to the unity of Nigeria

In the elite struggle for power and privileges of the state, religion and ethnicity are manipulated to achieve their selfish ends. Ethnicity and religion are therefore, among the most dangerous threats to the attainment of national unity in Nigeria. Ethnicity and religion have generated more heat than light on the Nigerian political land space. Most Nigerians seem to take recourse to the basic instinct of man when they lose out in competition. For instance, it is when a Nigerian has lost in political or economic competition that he invokes the thin specter of ethnicity (Obasanjo, 1994, p. 23). The settler/stranger syndrome undermines the sense of belonging and stake in the country. According to Obasanjo (1994,24), it is pathetic and most lamentable that after forty years of residence in any part of Nigeria, a "non-indigene" is still regarded and still regards himself as an alien in that part of the country. Worst still, are the institutional and procedural mechanisms that accentuate, amplify and reinforce such a feeling of alienation. These include, discriminatory school fees in state-owned institutions, requirements for state or local government of origin, and religion, in the filling of official forms either for employment, admission, or hospital, among others.

There are two dominant religious groups in Nigeria, Islam and Christianity. Almost the entire gamut of social, political and economic relations revolve around these two identity formations. The Nigerian politics, even when pitched on other fault lines such as North-South dichotomy, always ends up being largely about Islam or Christianity (Kukah, 2007). It has been argued that the attitude of the Missionaries of these religions sowed the seeds for their consequent politicization in Nigeria (Kukah, 2007). Their quest for converts and subsequent expansion created various forms of internal problems for some communities where relationship had been largely without conflicts. For example, as Kukah (2007, p. 97) noted, "in a place like Northern Nigeria, conversion to Christianity was an attractive option for some of the many minority ethnic groups, which had experienced tribulations in the hands of what some see as Hausa/Fulani colonialism and imperialism during and after the jihad of Usman Danfodio". Over time, the differences became

so fossilized and deep-rooted that the prejudices built have created awareness of opportunities to use the differences as means for political bargain and differentiation.

At another level, some missionaries tended to reinforce these prejudices as a means of containing their flock. Thus, the missionaries as well as colonialists did help in sharpening the boundaries of prejudices which have today come to dominate the Nigerian political landscape. The interplay of religion and ethnicity in the power calculations in Nigeria is such that any comment relating to it no matter how seemingly innocuous, can end up striking a raw nerve at every turn. For example, Kukah (2009, p.98) observed that:

In 1995, Alhaji Maintama Sule created a storm among southern intellectuals when he noted that various communities in Nigeria were variously endowed thus: the Fulani with leadership qualities, the Igbo with industry and the Yoruba with diplomatic skills. Thus, religion and ethnicity have been kept on the front burner of Nigerian politics while pushing the Nigerian state and its quest for unity increasingly, closer to the brink of national disaster and disintegration. The military, while in power, had toyed with religion and ethnicity as a means of legitimizing their power. Under civil rule, the Nigerian political elites have continued with the unwholesome manipulation of religion and ethnicity for their selfish interests.

Measures toward achieving national unity in Nigeria

The barricades erected by ethnicity and religion to the unity of the Nigerian state are not insurmountable given their brittleness, temporariness and fragility. The main challenge is that their constant manipulation and usage as tools by the ruling elite has been facilitated by a docile population or civil society, which has shown no willingness to make sacrifices. Also, given the high level of poverty, illiteracy and squalor, we must concede that for a long time, ethnic and religious differences will remain a decisive force in the country's path to unity. However, successive governments have adopted a number of measures to find solution to the lack of unity in the country. Such measures are discussed further in different synopses

1. *Unitary system of government:* Following the military coup of January 15, 1966, the then Military Head of State, General Aguiyi Ironsi, believed that the solution to the lack of unity in the country lay in the adoption of a unitary system of government for the culturally heterogeneous country. This policy, perhaps led to the overthrow of General Ironsi's government in July, 1966 and his successor, General Yakubu Gowon, had to abandon the policy of unitary government in favor of tinkering with the structure of the Nigerian federation through the creation of more states (Ojiako, 1983; cited in Bassey, 2011, p.192).

2. *Creation of States:* One of the strategies adopted by General Gowon for the purpose of achieving the much desired national unity in Nigeria and promote cordial inter-group relations was to change the federal structure of the country. To this end, Gowon created twelve states in May, 1967 to replace the former four regions (Bassey, 2011, p. 592). The exercise was to all intents and purposes aimed at allaying the fears and suspicious of domination of one ethnic group by another in the country. For instance, as Bassey (2011, p. 192) noted, the minority ethnic groups in the Eastern, Northern and Western Regions have been agitating for separate states of their own since the 1930s. There is no doubt that the state structure has helped to spread rapid development across the country and had served as political bases for ethnic groups. Besides, the state structure also helped in promoting inter-group relations, as states now discuss or negotiate national issues as equal partners.

However, critics of the state creation exercise and the military in Nigeria have argued that the military deformed the Nigerian federalism. They contended that the policy of state creation had concentrated power in the hands of the military and the federal government (center) and reduced the states to mere administrative units taking orders from the center (Okpeh, 2004, 20; Ihonvbere, 2000, 57). The excessive centralization of power, resources, privileges and opportunities had encouraged the rise of authoritarianism and other forms of despotic rule as well as the negation of democratic values and good governance in Nigeria.

3. Creation of Local Government Areas: One of the primary aims of establishing local government areas in Nigeria is to bring governmental activities closer to the people at the grassroots level of the Nigerian society. The vast majority of Nigerians are rural dwellers residing in the local government areas. It means therefore, that it is only through an effective local government system that both human and material resources could be mobilized for local or national development. Indeed, the momentum of development occurring in the country at any point in time could be measured by the pace of human and material well-being or stagnation taking place at the various local government areas.

Accordingly, in order to reach out to the majority of Nigerians and further preach the message of national unity and cordial inter-group relations, the military created a total of 774 local government areas in the country.

4. National Youth Service scheme and Inter-ethnic Marriages: To further promote inter-group relations in the country, the federal military government in 1973 introduced the compulsory National Youth Service Corp (NYSC), scheme for graduates from Nigerian tertiary institutions not above 30 years of age. As a policy, corps members are not posted to serve in their states of origin. They are posted to states other than their own to serve the country for one year. While, they are in service, corps members are encouraged to learn the culture of the people in their place of primary assignment. The corps members while in service are also encouraged to contract inter-ethnic marriages, sometimes with government sponsorship. This is with a view to integrating the various ethnic groups within the country.

5. Federal character principle: The federal character principle or quota system is the distinctive desire of the peoples of Nigeria to promote national unity, foster national loyalty and give every citizen of Nigeria, a sense of belonging. This was to reduce ethnic rivalry and fear of domination. Section 14 (4) of the 1979 Constitution as amended provides among others that the conduct of the affairs of government at all levels shall be carried out in such a manner as to recognize the diversity of the people within the area of authority and the need to promote a sense of belonging and loyalty among all peoples of Nigeria (FRN: Constitution, 1979, Sec. 14).

In the educational sector, quota system has come to stay, especially in admission of students into tertiary institutions. These policies have potentials of promoting inter-group relations and strengthening national unity. They forestall the domination of the political, economic and social life of the country by one ethnic group.

In addition to these measures, which are by no means exhaustive, the tribal war lords and religious fundamentalists must be kept at bay through the enthronement of democracy and good governance. However, it must be noted that both ethnicity and religion can also serve as forces of mobilization for national unity depending on the quality of political, traditional and religious leadership. It is the crisis of legitimacy, which often pushed political leaders in Nigeria into misusing the opportunities that ethnic and religious identities offer. For example, as with water or

fire in our daily life, we use both to sustain and enhance the quality of our lives in various ways. However, a misuse of either of the two can lead to our injury or death. In the same manner, if properly channeled, ethnicity and religion can serve as a positive force in the quest for national unity in Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations

There has been a feeble but renewed interest in the unity of Nigeria as the country attempts to consolidate its democracy. Indeed, every peace loving Nigerian must be concerned about the articulation and legal defense of the liberty of the Nigerian people to live in unity under a secular, democratic Nigerian state. The flagrant struggle by the Nigerian political elites for control of the Nigerian state across religious and ethnic boundaries stand to serve only the personal interests of the perpetrators without consideration for the general interest of majority of the poor masses of this country. Until and unless Nigerians are prepared to modify and sometimes even abandon their primordial attachments in favour of a new Nigerian relationship, the country cannot achieve unity. Indeed, the people of Nigeria must say goodbye to their ostrich posture and embrace unity.

Nigerians must believe in unity and accept that the survival of the country must be through unity without which the people risk disintegration. It is against this background that the paper recommends that Nigerians must approach the issue of the unity and national solidarity of the country realistically, selflessly, fearlessly and with singularity of purpose. The people must overcome old prejudices and entrenched interests. In this respect, to strengthen the faith of Nigerians in the unity of the country, government must abolish ethnic ghettos in some of the Nigerian cities. Government must conscientiously set about to diffuse ethnicity in the Nigerian body politics, blur those imaginary boundaries that separate citizens from citizen; encourage all Nigerians to feel at home anywhere of their choice in the country.

The government at all levels should do more to de-emphasize ethnic origin in all official documents. In line with this, government should make membership of an ethnic group solely dependent on place of birth. Also, children of mixed ethnic marriages should have full rights in each ethnic area of their parents. These measures should aim at diffusing ethnic origin to the greater benefit of the Nigerian unity. Furthermore, there is no better way to promoting unity than “endeavours jointly undertaken, and achievement jointly won”, such as when Nigerian national teams play and won at international games. Thus, if Nigeria must achieve unity, government must maximize efforts to create avenues for joint endeavors and above all, the secular nature of the country must not be compromised under any guise. Government must recognize and respect the right to freedom of worship by all and sundry in the country.

Finally, government must address all issues of regional and ethnic discontent and ensure that citizenship of Nigeria guarantees equal opportunities for every Nigerian citizen. This is because justice is a major pre-condition for an enduring peace and unity of the Nigerian state, as elsewhere in the world.

References

- Achebe, C. (1988). *The trouble with Nigeria*. Enugu, Fourth Dimension Publishers.
- Adibe, J. (2019, January 3rd:48). Osinbajo and the politics of 2023. *Daily Trust*.
- Amucheazi, E.C. (n.d). *Readings in social sciences: Issues in national development*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers.
- Bassey, J.R. (2011). The military and governance: Efforts at preserving national unity. In B.M. Barkindo; F. Ifamose & Akpen, F. (Eds). *Nigeria at fifty: Issues and challenges in governance, 1960-2010*. Lagos: serenity Press

- Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN). *1979 Constitution*. Abuja: Government Press
- Ihonvbere, J.O. (2000). A recipe for perpetual crisis: The Nigerian state and the Niger-Delta question. In W. Raji & A. A. Ale (Eds.). *Boiling point*. (pp,23 – 42) A CDHR Publication.
- Kuka, M.H. (2007). *Democracy and civil society in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd
- Kuka, M.H. (2016). *Religion, politics and power in Northern Nigeria*. Ibadan; Spectrum Books Limited.
- Obasanjo, O. (1994). Keynote address. In A. Mahadi., G. A. & A. M. Yakubu (Eds.). *Nigeria: The state of the nation and the way forward*. Kaduna: Arewa House.
- Ojukwu, E.O. (1989). *Because I am involved*. Ibadan, spectrum Books Limited.
- Okpeh, O.O. (2004). Contending issues in resource control controversy: A historical Appraisal. *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 1(2), 1 – 15
- Otite, O. (1990). *Ethnic pluralism and ethnicity in Nigeria*. Ibadan, Shanason.
- Sapru, R. K. (2013). *Administrative theories and management thought* (3rded.). Delhi, Asoka Ghosh.