ETHNIC CONFLICT IN PLURALIST NIGERIA: ENTRECHING PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

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Abstract

This paper reviewed literatures on ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. The review showed that Nigeria is blessed with diverse ethnic groups. However, over the years, "this blessing has turned to a wound eating deep into the flesh of the national unity of the country". It might be said that the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates by the colonial administration is the root course of the ethnic conflicts experienced all over the country till this day. However, the entrenchment of the democratic rule in 1999 brought a ray of hope for the citizens. Sadly, democracy has failed to completely unite the people of Nigeria; this is evident in the scores of conflicts in different parts of the country. Authors and Researchers have blamed the incessant conflict on the marginalization of different ethnic groups in the country. It is against this background that the research explored views on participative democracy and proffers it as a solution to ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. This paper explored ethnic conflicts in Nigeria and participatory democracy as a means of tackling ethnic conflicts.

Introduction

The nation Nigeria is the brain child of the amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates by the British colonial administration under the watch of Sir Fredrick Lord Lugard in 1914. This process brought about the merging of people of diverse belief and culture into a single entity. The amalgamation of the northern

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and southern protectorates was done in the "wisdom" of the colonial power masters to promote national unity and integration. However, the decision to amalgamate the protectorates have been criticized by authors, commentators and researchers as being ill advised and self serving of the British. It is believed that members of the protectorates were not consulted on the planned merger (Nwaoga, Nche & Olihe, 2014). This view is echoed in the comment of Awolowo (1947) who said that "*Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression. There are no "Nigerians" in the same sense as there are "English," "Welsh" or "French." The word 'Nigerian' is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not."* This proclamation goes a long way to portray the frustration of persons of divergent cultural and religious beliefs who are forcefully and unwillingly joined in an unholy union. In consonance, Thompson in Achebe (2012) opined that "….the amalgamation of the southern and northern protectorates, inextricably complicated Nigeria's destiny. Animists, Muslims and Christians alike were held together by a delicate, some say artificial lattice". According to Ojo (2014), "*the systemic forceful unappealing catastrophic and uncongenial institutionalized querulous cementation of divergence caste artificially orchestrated and certificated by the British colonialism mainly to ease the challenge of onerous task in socio-political milieu of Nigeria has underscored sore Achilles heel engraved with irrevocable creation of indelible pauperization of Nigerian political web consequent in a state of passivity and fait accompli. The incompatibility of multi-diverse ethnic configuration has fuelled the acidulous ember manifestation of rigmarole, cataleptic, catatonic and chaotic political arrangement of Nigeria while identity politics becomes a prodigious threat to the sustenance of Nigerian."* The result of this unholy union have resulted in the continuous state of disunity, political instability, general insecurity of lives and property, mutual suspicion and distrust among the diverse ethnic nationalities that make up the geographical entity called Nigeria.

In line with the above, Adetoye and Omilusi (2015) observed that

the lack of cohesiveness in the nation's polity has been demonstrated by the trenchant call for Sovereign National Conference in some parts of the country, resource control as well as persistent wave of political, inter-ethnic and sectional violence. The authors further averred that some groups saw the return to democracy as an opportunity to express grievances. These expressions of grievances has led to the occurrence and re-occurrence of ethno-religious and political conflicts. In consonance, Ojo (2014) opined that the unjust and unequal sharing of socio-political and geographical landscape intentionally manufactured by British administration that called for Northern region domination, leaving the southern region in lassitude in political investment of Nigeria has generated a longstanding debate. The author further observed that the southern region has lagged behind in the cringe worthy political representation which called for cautionary tale in the political processes of Nigeria. This has recently led to the increased agitation of the Biafran state through the broadcast of radio Biafra. The subsequent arrest of Nnamdi Kanu who is adjudged to be the operator of radio Biafra has heightened the political protest in most towns in the South-East and South-South geopolitical zones of Nigeria.

In the North East geopolitical zone of Nigeria, Bokoharam have continuously and persistently slaughtered and killed thousands of Nigerian citizens in cities and villages in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states. Despite the December deadline given to the Nigerian Military by President Mohamed Buhari, the insurgent group have continuously attacked the populace in the Nigeria especially in the states in the North East. The most disheartening is the use of innocent and young females as suicide bombers in their mindless and senseless actions. In a separate development in Benue state, the cattle breeders and farmers have constantly been at loggerhead. These situations have claimed the life of hundreds on both side of the divide. It is disheartening to note that the parlance "One Nigeria" is a mere farce that is not imbedded in the heart of many Nigeria. It is sad to note that the country Nigeria is just the amalgamation of different ethnic groups who are detached in believes and moral,

hence the "we versus them" attitude. It is against this background that the author explores the concepts of peace and conflict with a view to ameliorate the conflagration of conflicts that burden the country through the promotion of participative democracy amongst her citizenry.

Conceptualizing Conflict

Conflict is a universal feature of human society. It takes its origins in economic differentiation, social change, cultural formation, psychological development and political organization all of which are inherently conflictual and becomes overt through the formation of conflict parties, which come to have, or are perceived to have, mutually incompatible goals. This is why Adetoye and Omilusi (2015) stated that conflict entails struggle and rivalry for objects to which individuals and groups attach importance. In their description of components of conflicts; Osagbae and Suberu (2005) opined that the material objects in relation to conflict may include scarce resources like money, employment, and position including political ones, promotion in both the private and public organizations. The non-material objects include culture, tradition, religion and language. The identity of the conflict parties, the levels at which the conflict is contested, and the issues fought over (scarce resources, unequal relations, competing values) may vary over time and may themselves be disputed. Conflicts are dynamic as they escalate and de-escalate, and are constituted by a complex interplay of attitudes and behaviours that can assume a reality of their own. Third parties are likely to be involved as the conflict develops, and may themselves thereby become parties in an extended conflict.

In another vein, Galtung (1967) proposed an influential model of conflict that encompasses both symmetric and asymmetric conflicts. He suggested that conflict could be viewed as a triangle, with contradiction (C), attitude (A) and behaviour (B) at its vertices. In a symmetric conflict, the contradiction is de?ned by the parties, their interests and the clash of interests between them. In an asymmetric conflict, it is de?ned by the parties, their relation- ship

and the conflict of interests inherent in the relationship. The conflictual attitude includes the parties' perceptions and misperceptions of each other and of themselves. This can be positive or negative, but in violent conflicts parties tend to develop demeaning stereotypes of the other, and attitudes are often influenced by emotions such as fear, anger, bitterness and hatred. Attitude covers emotive (feeling), cognitive (belief) and conative (desire, will) elements.

Behaviour is the third component. It can involve cooperation or coercion, gestures signifying conciliation or hostility. Violent conflict behaviour is characterized by threats, coercion and destructive attacks. Analysts who emphasize objective aspects such as structural relationships, competing material interests or behaviours are said to have an instrumental view of the sources of conflict. All the three components have to be present together in a full conflict. A con?ict structure without conflictual attitudes or behaviour is a latent (or structural) one. Galtung saw conflict as a dynamic process in which structure; attitudes and behaviour are constantly changing and influencing one another. As the dynamic develops, it becomes a manifest conflict formation, as parties' interests clash or the relationship they are in becomes oppressive. Parties then organize around this structure to pursue their interests. They develop hostile attitudes and conflictual behaviour. And so the conflict formation starts to grow and intensify. As it does so, it may widen, drawing in other parties, deepen and spread, generating secondary conflicts within the main parties or among outsiders who get sucked in. This often considerably complicates the task of addressing the original, core conflict. Eventually, however, resolving the conflict must involve a set of dynamic changes that mean de-escalation of conflict behaviour, a change in attitudes, and a transformation of the relationships or clashing interests that are at the core of the conflict structure. A related idea due to Galtung (1990) is the distinction between direct violence (children are murdered), structural violence (children die through poverty) and cultural violence (whatever blinds us to this or seeks to justify it). We end direct violence by changing conflict behaviour, structural

violence by removing structural contradictions and injustices, and cultural violence by changing attitudes.

Ethnicity in Nigeria's Democracy

Ethnicity should be seen as arising in any situation where a group of people, no matter how small, with different cultural and linguistic attributes from those of its neighbours; uses this as the basis of solidarity and interaction with others. In so doing, the group sees itself not only as distinct, but as a "group in itself and for itself (Anugwom, 200). In other words, socio-cultural consciousness of oneness develops and forms the basis of interaction with and participation in other socio-cultural processes, especially in power and resource allocation, within a larger social group or state. And this consciousness is most crucial in the definition of an ethnic group. Ethnicity implies the fact that the group feels ethnocentric towards others; that is, it sees other groups as relatively inferior and more or less as rivals. This feeling brings about certain attitudes, which distort reality and breed subjectivity in the evaluation and perception of events. Ethnicity is also characterised by a common consciousness of being. And this factor, more than any other, defines the boundary of the group that is relevant for understanding ethnicity at any point in time (Nnoli, 1978). Ethnicity, in addition, often contains an obscured class component. In this sense, it becomes a tool for the elite members of society to hold on to their privileges. Ethnicity, according to Nnoli in Akindiyo (2013) is a social phenomenon that is associated with interactions among members of different ethnic groups. Nnoli explained that ethnic groups are social formations distinguished by the communal character of their boundaries. The author noted that such groups may be distinct in terms of language, culture, or both. According to Nnoli, language has clearly been the most crucial dividing factor in Africa and Nigeria in particular. Nigeria is undoubtedly a plural society with different ethnic groups, religions, languages, cultures and institutional arrangements. As a heterogeneous society, 374 ethnic groups have been identified each interacting with one another in competition for power and wealth. This has resulted into ethnic

conflict (Salawu & Hassan, 2011). The history of ethnic conflict in Nigeria can be traced back to the colonial and post colonial era.

Ojo (2014) posited that the colonial tripartite division of Nigeria prevented a Nigerian nationalistic movement, manipulating geographical boundaries to reinforce separation between ethnic groups and transforming ethnicity into an identity by which to gain political power; this structure along with other administrative decisions emphasized ethnic nationalism and regional politics, resulting from significant uneven development within each region. According to Ebegbulem (2011), colonial division of Nigeria that reinforced ethnic groups, the rise of ethno-political consciousness, and the development of ethnic/regional political parties demonstrated that the British administration intentionally prevented the rise and success of Nigerian nationalism, instead promoting ethnic nationalism as a means to gain political power. It is believed that Lord Frederick Lugard's 1914-18 constitutional exercises, which resulted in the amalgamation of the separate protectorates of Southern Nigeria and Cameroon with the protectorate of Northern Nigeria, were carried out without any explicit consent from Nigerians. As a result of this action, Okoye (2005) opined that provinces and other divisions were created according to the wisdom and convenience of imperial British officials. This influenced the ethnic consciousness of Nigerians. The wave of ethnic crisis in the country can also be traced to the creation of three regions by the British government using the two major rivers, the Niger and the Benue rivers to divide the country into three geographical units, namely, the North, East and West. The unjust nature of the division is encapsulated in the words of Ojo (2014) who averred that the "division exacerbated the country's ethnic problems. Firstly, the regions were not equal; the Northern region was the size of the Eastern and Western regions combined. Secondly, the three regions were created without due consideration of minority groups that abound in these regions".

The division of Nigeria into three regions in 1946 by Richard Constitution for administrative convenience was directly associated with the three major ethnic groups – Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo. It is

not surprising therefore that the first political parties were formed along ethnic lines. During the first republic, politics was organized in the same way as during the pre-colonial era. It was still the AG, NCNC, NPC and other minor parties like the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) by Aminu Kano; and United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) led by Joseph Tarka. There was no radical departure from those of the pre-colonial era as the parties had ethnic colouration in terms of leadership and regional affiliations. However, it was in the Second Republic that regionalism was played down a bit. And it was because the 1979 constitution stipulated that for a political party to be registered, it must be national in outlook. The new political parties that were registered had their leadership replicated along ethnic lines as in the first republic. Thus, Obafemi Awolowo retained the leadership of AG which metamorphosed into Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), Nnamdi Azikiwe controlled the Igbo speaking areas under Nigeria's People Party (NPP), which is an offshoot of the old NCNC. National Party of Nigeria (NPN) dominated the Hausa-Fulani areas; Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) in Hausa speaking while Great Nigeria Peoples Party (GNPP) led by Ibrahim Waziri controlled the Kanuri speaking area. Therefore, ethnic affiliation played out in political party formation and operation during the 2nd Republic. James (2011) asserted that voting patterns equally followed ethnic lines in the elections. It Akindiyo (2013) pointed out that political parties formation had a different dimension in the Third Republic which was led by President Ibrahim Babangida's government. These were the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC). Even though these parties were established by government, ethno-religious cleavages were visible in the membership and composition of the two parties. While the SDP favoured the southerners, NRC was a party for the Hausa-Fulani North as could be observed from their operation. In the Fourth Republic, ethnic colouration has reared its ugly head. The All Nigeria's Peoples Party (ANPP), Alliance for Democracy can still be traced to Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba ethnic groups. The ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) is being perceived as to have

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deviated a bit from the usual ethno-religious dominated party politics of the past with their membership and formation cutting across the clime of Nigeria. The amalgamation of political parties like the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), All Nigeria's Peoples Party (ANPP), Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) and a faction of the <u>All Progressives Grand Alliance</u> (APGA) gave birth to All Progressive Grand Alliance (APC) in February 2013. APC came on board as a party of unity, the goal of which is to change and wrestle power from the Peoples Democratic Party. It appeared that majority of Nigerian bought the political manifestos of the APC, this resulted in the emergence of President Mohamoud Buhari in the 2015 presidential elections. However, this union has not dulled the feeling of ethnicity in Nigeria's politics.

Ethnicity and the Struggle for Participation in Nigeria

That the Nigeria state as a composition of so many identities is not a coincidence, rather it is as a result of its historical construction by the colonial master. Although, the Nigerian nationalist were pessimistic on the foundation on which the Nigerian state was built. The fact that Nigerians were forcefully integrated by the British against their wish and the lack of understanding of identities by the different ethnic groups further confirms this pessimism. According to Arazeen and Saka (2007), the union of ethnic groups in Nigeria through the 1914 amalgamation was a marriage of inconveniency because the whole process was conceived and executed without due respect to and for social-cultural and political differences embedded in the political, economic and social structures of the wedded couple. The pessimism observed was reinforced by the reality of pre-colonial identity construction where identity was mobilized along ethnic and sub-ethnic line against migrant settlers who were displaced either by natural occurrence, war, artificial boundary and lack of resources which continue to generate conflict due to the discrimination against the immigrants by the original settlers (Osaghae & Suberu, 2005). For example Modakeke migration to Oyo due to the internecine wars in Yoruba land crisis, Urhobo and Ijaw into Warri where the Itsekiri people claimed to have been the

original settler; the migration of the Jukun-Chamba from Cameroun to the present day Taraba state, originally settled by the Kuteb and the settlement of Hausa merchants in Zangon-Kataf within a territory occupied by the Kataf (Isomounah, 2003). As earlier stated, colonialism was the cradle of ethnicity in Nigeria (Nnoli, 1978), and a key factor in the crystallization of contemporary identities. (Osaghae & Suberu, 2005) The amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Nigeria in 1914 was basically for the economic interest of the British rather than a deliberate attempt at integration of identities. This has generated blame on colonialist as being responsible for the woes of the country. Whether colonialist are to be blamed for ethnicity problems in Nigeria or not the truth however is that the amalgamation of Nigeria promoted modern economic opportunities in emerging colonial centre leading to the influx of people from the Yoruba and Igbo into northern cities such as Kano, Jos, Kaduna and Zaria and also people from the North to the southern cities like Lagos and Ibadan. The British reaction was to prevent inter- ethnic tension by creating a culturally artificial political entity called "Strangers Quarters" or "Sabon- Gari" for preventing non-Muslims immigrants from interacting with Muslims in the North. Similarly, the same policy also applied to Muslim from interacting with Christians in the South. The sense in this is to prevent the destabilizing effect of the cultural incursion of other identities. Coleman (1958) characterizes this new artificial colonial construction as "aggregation of tribal unions" where these associations provided members of their ethnic group with social security and welfare generally denied them by the colonialists and equipped them to compete with other members of other ethnic group. This eventually allows the ethnic group to coalesce into pan-ethnic national organization such as the Igbo Federation Union (later Igbo state Union), Egbe Omo Oduduwa (organization of the descendant of Oduduwa and the mythical founder of Yoruba race) and the Jamiyyah Mutanen Arewa (Northern People's Congress). The implication of this transformations and ethnic alienation from one another became one of the strong bases for conflictual identity formation and discriminatory practice as could be seen in the ethno-

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religious crisis in Kano in 1953 and 1966, Maitatsine religious crisis in 1980, Faggae inter-religious violence in 1982, Behead the Infidel-Allah Akbar conflict in1994, Jos-Pleateau Carnage in 2001, In support of Afghanistan" the ethno-religious killing in 2001, Sharia crisis in 2000.(Abdu, 2011). In Southern part of Nigeria, the Shagamu reprisal attack in 1999 and myriads of ethno-religious conflict in Lagos, Ibadan and many other places in the southern part of the country. The ethnic segregation strategy of identity integration of the colonialist was further exacerbated by the establishment of federal structure of three units. That is the North region, West region and East region. The regional structure was constructed to accommodate the identities of the major ethnic formation, Hausa-Fulani, (North) Yoruba (West) and Ibo (East) without adequately capturing the ethnic minority components in the major ethnic group.

In another vein, the establishment of the federal structure led to the incessant minority agitation for their own autonomy and the growing feelings of nationalism among these groups. Since the federal structure does not ensure the protection and security of the minority interest, their agitation became deepened. According to Osaghae and Suberu (2005), the federal arrangement encouraged an enormous degree of ethno-regional polarization as the imbalances tripartite ethno- regional structure even with the creation of Mid-Western state) collapsed into bipolar north-south confrontation. The post colonial Nigeria had witnessed two contradictory tendencies. The first is the continuation and aggravation as well as proliferation of colonial conflict legacies. The second is the tendency in post colonial Nigeria to manage identity conflict through federalist practice. The aggravation of ethnic identity after independence in Nigeria was due to the lopsided federal structure which eventually implicated on the violent ethno-political discontent prevalent during the post-colonial Nigeria. Indeed the incessant disenchantment and frustrations of the ethnic minority under the federal structure accounted for the Tiv riot 1962 1964 the secessionist campaign of Isaac Adako Boro and his Ijaw group. Other ethno-regional conflicts were also expressed through the

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Census crisis of 1963/63, 1964 federal election, sectional military intervention and the counter coup of 1966. Rather than the lopsided structure of the Nigerian federalism to be restructured by addressing the minority question through the creation of sub-federal regional units, the crisis of the federation was deepen with unification decree leading to the attempted secessions of the Biafra republic and the eventual outbreak of 30 month civil war. The aftermath of the civil war was the relative period of peace and stability for the country in terms of ethnic conflict. The stability was a measure of transformation of the federation into a horizontally balanced union. The dissolution of the four region into twelve state and nineteen respectively, the use of oil revenue to douse inter-group resource conflict through ethno-distributive measures, including (provision of infrastructure in the new state administrative capital and the expansion of the general distributive pool account (DPA) under the revenue allocation system) and innovative statutory mechanism of ethnic conflict accommodation (federal character principle and the interregional distribution requirement for the election of the federal republic). In spite of the measure of stability during this period, it was still mark by semblance of sectional tension as dispute over 1973 and 1975 killing of the head of state was the flash point. However, the relative peace and stability enjoyed during the period was broken by the Maitatsine which claimed lot of lives and the Kafanchan-Kaduna ethno-religious crisis which reawaken the age-long Muslim and non-Muslim tension in the North. The Nigeria military as a stabilizing force to the manifestation of ethnic-nationalism were able to curtailed and bottle up the aggravated ethno-religious and regional diversities in the country between 1983-1999, suppressing the diverse tendencies and maintain the corporate existence of the country through creation of more states and review in revenue allocation formula as well as the sub-regional creation of the six geographical zone. The military however were not immune from the ethno- nationalist aggravation which has remained a dominant factor in Nigeria politics (Duruji, 2010). The perception of some section of the society is that the military is serving the interest of the Hausa- Fulani major ethnic

group since they dominate the military institution of Nigeria exercising hegemony over its major institutional structure of the security apparatus of the state (Fatai, 2012). This has further exploded and increased contemporary ethnic tension and identity relation in Nigeria.

Fatai (2012) believed that the emergence of democracy in 1999 opened up the democratic space for ethnic expression and transformation which hitherto had been bottled up by the Military and authoritarian regime before 1999 Nigeria. One of the most appealing aspects of democracy as a system of governance is the expendable system of rights that must be guaranteed, even though it brings with it its peculiar sets of problem (Duruji, 2010) The peculiar problem becomes more obvious in a multicultural compositional society because while managing identities problem in a multi-ethnic society poses a challenge, the truth however is that democracy offers opportunities for groups to express their feelings and putting their demand across to the state irrespective of their diversities. By this democracy is seen as the instrumentality for addressing monopolization of power by 'single ethnic group' or a 'group of ethnic groups' in the country as well as the restoration of political stability in a multi-ethnic society. The Hausa-Fulani hegemony and the marginalization of other ethnic group during the military era was the issue that dominates the national political discourse prior to 1999. Of the 50 years rule, the military had rule for 29years and the Hausa-Fulani ethnic extraction has, had more benefit from the federal power at the expense of other ethnic groups. The tactical alienation of the Ibo in the federal power on account of their suspicion after the Biafra attempt at secession by the federal government had continue to be a source of agitation on the part of the Ibo major ethnic group. More generally the North/South divide shows a picture of a marginalized south given the control of the political machinery of the state by the North over a long period of time: for instance the annulment of the June 12 1993 election acclaimed to have been won by MKO Abiola believed to be Yoruba's opportunity for the presidency also raises issues on the deliberate scheme of the Hausa-Fulani major ethnic group to hold

on to power at the expense of other major ethnic group. The event of 1993-94 must be seen in the context of an enduring pattern of ethnic antagonism and inequality where the Hausa-Fulani is perceived as 'other' (Adebanwi, 2004). Duruji (2010) asserted that this situation is a negation of democracy which gives equal opportunity for political contestants without restricting anyone. This view goes to argued that democracy is not a panacea for resolving ethnic contestation, for democracy will be undermine in a multi-ethnic society where majority interest are as important as those of the minority interest. The democratic opening therefore provides the platform and space for the resurgence of long- repressed demand for the restructuring of the Nigeria federation on a more equitable basis and calling to question the domination of the Hausa-Fulani hegemony. The emergence of ethnic militant organization was seen as platform for bringing into the open complaints that were previously mouthed with hushed tones, thanks to the transition to democracy (Ubani 2006). The manifestation of insurgencies in the name of ethnic militia such as Oodua People's Congress (OPC), Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA) Arewa People's Congress (APC) (While the first two were keen on the restructuring of the Nigerian federation (based on the outcome of sovereign national conference) to allow for autonomy, self-determination, resource control and social emancipation (Fatai, 2012), the third APC is keen on maintaining the status quo and preventing the marginalization of the North. The impoverish condition due to the neglect and marginalization of the Niger-delta region where the country major resources-oil is been generated has also spiraled minority ethnic militant groupings, such as the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC)-which arose from the Ijaw National Congress), the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger-Delta (MEND) which arose from the Niger-Delta Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and the Federated Niger Delta Ijaw Communities (FNDIC). These militant groups predicated their struggle on resource control and regional political autonomy. The phase of their struggle has however changed with time as their struggle against the Multinational Corporation later change to targeting the state and its national heritage. Apart from the

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prevalence of ethnic militant, there was also flashpoint of sectarian and communal clashes. Hardly as the democratic government settled down that Ijaw/Itsekiri clashes exploded, Ife/Modakeke, Kaduna and Jos were all evidence of communal and identity clashes in 1999. These crises were further compounded by the Sharia crisis in the North, pitching the Christians against the Muslims and put to test the secularity of the Nigerian state (Obi, 2000). As Obi suggested, Nigerian democratic space is hotly contested terrain, which partly feeds into the interrogation of the hegemonic nation-state project and the escalation of violent conflict across the country. While some of these ethnic group have been appeased with innovative federal principles such principle of derivation (13percent as in the case of the Niger-delta state, Development Commissions and Amnesty) and power sharing quota system to foster equitable distribution and opportunity among diversities in the country, the government has sustained a long pattern of repression of local resistance demanding for autonomy, by unleashing the might of the state to suppress these ethno-nationalist manifestations. The incidence of Odi Massacre, Zaki-biam, Onitsha Gbaramutu Nigerian troops raze down the town in a manner not conformities with rule of law, were indicative of the repressive tendencies of ethnic agitation by the state. The story is not different in the South East were the agitations of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) is getting stronger and violent each day. More recently is the clash between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in villages in Agatu Local Government of Benue State where over 300 persons were confirmed. These ethnic conflicts have heightened the feeling of miss giving between the masses and select political class. A scenario were citizens of the country are feeling left out and out of touch with the goings and policy direction of the country. This situation calls for a democratic system that encourages participation of its citizenry in issues of governance.

Participatory Democracy in Context
Democracy generally can be defined as government of the people by the people. This is intricately linked with the participation of the

people. According to Offor (2006), democracy is a system of government in which every individual participates in the process of government maximally or minimally. Young (2000) cautioned that in principle each member of society in a democracy should be able to exercise his or her vote in broader terms when it comes to affecting change: 'Only in a democratic political system, do all members of a society in principle have the opportunity to try to influence public policy' (Young, 2000). This orientation takes cognisance of the reminder by Fung (2006) that when in contemporary democratic contexts 'there is no canonical form or institution of direct public participation' the task becomes to understand the feasible and useful varieties of participation.

This means that participatory democracy would entail that democracy entitles each individual citizen to speak and be heard - a notion that is not necessarily conducive to determining the running of a state. It may also be out of tune with the complexities of running contemporary, complex national political systems. Participatory democracy cannot be viewed without referring to the process of deliberative democracy. Participation is one matter, ability to influence another. The process of deliberation entails that all parties are allowed sufficient time within which to argue its particular viewpoint. In this regard, Abayomi (2010) opined that participatory democracy is a process emphasizing the broad participation of constituents in the direction and operation of political systems. However, participatory democracy tends to advocate more involved forms of citizens participation than traditional representative democracy. In another vein, participatory democracy is used with reference to a community in which every citizen is recognized as both enabled and encouraged to participate directly and actively in the dialogues and practices which define, build, and sustain the common life, the general will' (Roelofs, 1998). Roelofs further noted that participatory democracy encompasses deliberation and action. In this sense, deliberation involves participants taking positions, exchanging information, and possibly changing their minds. Roelofs nevertheless still recognises that the individual's right to exercise his or her political power is more about

'community' within a state, than about direct influence on the power machinations of the upper echelons of decision making. Yet, part of the appeal of this participatory democracy is in being acknowledged as part of the process, or as active in the process of exercising democratic muscle. It is important to note that participatory governance is not equal to representative democracy, which is understood as the regular election of members of Parliament, of provincial legislatures or councils. Rather, it refers to the manner in which the elected bodies, and in particular the locally elected ones, govern between elections. It also refers to a set of structural and procedural requirements to realise 'community participation' in the operation of local government. Thus, 'community participation', more commonly known as 'public participation', is one of the objectives of the legislation, and 'participatory governance' is the mechanism through which this is to be realised. Pithouse (2006) supported those who argue for protest to be regarded as public participation. Part of his argument is anchored in the reality of structural violence that is manifested in massive poverty and inequality. He refutes common perceptions that public participation requires transformation into civil society organisations that aim at professionalized engagement in official opportunities for public participation. He also goes further and suggests that the road to successful public participation is closely linked to establishing democratic protest outside of the organisations of party and state.

The author notes that participative democracy can be achieved through the following modes:

1. **Community-engagement participation.** This mode of participative democracy relates to a range of important phases of the policy process and governance, and has a bearing on engagement with members of both the political and the bureaucratic spheres of government. It is also extended participation, because these initiatives often involve participation that helps bolster the conventional channels of representation. It brings executives,

legislatives, bureaucrats and citizens together to help address developmental issues that might have become neglected in the processes of more conventional representation and participation.

2. **Proactive Participation.** This mode of participative democracy may be manifested upon request and initiative by government, or be of a more spontaneous nature. It may emanate from community and/or NGO initiatives.

3. **Representational Participation.** It relates to the notion of indirect or representative democracy. In this situation, the populace might be satisfied with having their interests represented by their elected members of government, across the respective spheres.

4. **Alternative Participation.** In this mode, civil society members could regard the formal processes as ineffectual, and feel that pressure, protest and mobilization are the required forms of policy participation.

5. **Information-Related Modes of Engagement with Government**. Most citizens, in some form or another, receive government and policy-related information. This would be either directly from government media, or from the mass electronic and print media on government. Citizens may use this information to try to become more active participants in public affairs

The author holds that an assessment of participatory democracy in Nigeria needs to take account of, in broad terms, (a) conventional 'participation in democratic processes and institutions' (including elections), (b) participation in deliberative, specifically designed processes to add to the impact of conventional political participation, and (c) unconventional processes of public participation that further supplement and complement the more mainstream activities. This will create a feeling of belongingness amongst the diverse ethnic affiliations in the country.

Conclusion

From the literature reviewed it is clear that Nigeria as a nation is riddled with a lot of ethnic conflicts. These conflicts results because of the religion and cultural diversity amongst are people. Most authors opined that these conflicts results because of a feeling of marginalization by some ethnic groups. The authors argued that ethnic conflicts is prominent in Nigeria's political sphere because many citizens do not participate in the political process and policy formulation process of the country, so they appear to be left out on the scheme of things. It is against this background that the author proffers the deepening and adoption of participative democracy were citizens are encouraged to be part of the policy making processes of the government. It is believed that the adoption and entrenchment of the tenets of true participative democracy will help to curb the web of ethnic conflicts in Nigeria.

Recommendations

In view of the literatures reviewed, it was recommended that for participative democracy to be enhanced in Nigeria;

1. Government should create opportunities for participation, either to sustain or to complement core institutional opportunities; ƒ

2. The citizens should perceive the participatory opportunities as meaningful, thus leading to the furthering of the interests and needs that are intended to be addressed through the generated opportunities; ƒ

3. It is accepted that not all public participants wish to assume activist roles; many are therefore satisfied, for example, with occasional electoral participation, or they rely on the information-receipt mode of participation in which information from and about government is relatively passively received.

4. Public protest could equally enhance participatory democracy: where it deviates from intra-system, rule-compliant behaviour, it is interpreted in terms of enhancing

participation in that it strives to bring more effective representation, and ensure effective governance through better attention to developmental and delivery needs. It potentially co-exists with intra-system action.

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