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Leadership and Ethno-Religious Crises: Implications for National Integration in Nigeria

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Abstract

In recent times, no issue has generated widespread public comment in Nigeria more than the issues of leadership and ethno-religious threats rocking the country and its bitter consequences on national integration. To achieve this feat, the paper examines the concepts of leadership, ethno-religious crisis and national integration I Nigeria making use of library research and content analysis approach common to all historians. Besides, the paper establishes when national integration became an issue in Nigeria, some integrative instruments adopted so far by the Nigerian state, expected qualities of a leader and an overview of leadership in Nigeria. It reveals some ethno-religious crisis the nation-state had experienced and a link between leadership and ethno-religious crisis and its implication on the nations are quest toward nationhood. Besides leadership challenges and disintegrative crises also examined. The paper submits that, Nigeria has failed to realize its manifest destiny with her crop of leaders since 1960 because they lack in-depth understanding of the Nigerian project the felt needs and voiced concerns of the people and will to integrate the Nigerian nations divided among divergent but similar lines. The paper concludes by making some recommendations because national integration is imperative, desirable but possible with visionary leadership.

Key words: Leadership, Ethno-religious Crisis, National Integration, Political Will, Challenges

Introduction

Every nation on earth desires national integration. National Integration remains one of the cardinal objectives of every multi-ethnic nation. National development is usually conceived and implemented by the nation's leadership. In Nigeria, the objective of developing the national economy for meaningful national integration has remained a mirage because the country has not been fortunate to have leadership that is capable of conceiving and conscientiously implementing National integration and development agenda. In addition to this, incapable leadership is the problem of the country's diversity which manifests very often in ethno-religious crisis, ethnic squabbles, ethnicity among others. Since 1960 when the country attained independence, ethno-religious violence has left the country comatose. Inter-ethnic rivalry, mutual distrust, bigotry, ethnic cynicism and religious intolerance have invariably and seriously undermined Nigeria's quest for national integration due to its leadership pattern and quality. This paper therefore seeks to look at the challenges posed by poor leadership and ethno-religious violence on Nigeria's match towards national integration. It makes the point that no country can hope to develop without good leadership since leadership is important in stemming the tide of ethno-religious crises that has engulfed Nigeria for some time now. The paper is divided into six sections. After this introduction, section-two deals with conceptual clarifications. Section, three attempts an appraisal of ethno-religious crises in Nigeria while section four examines the causes of ethno-religious crises in Nigeria. Section five treats the nexus between leadership, ethno-religious crises and national integration while section six is the concluding and recommendations are part of the paper.

Conceptual Clarifications

What Is Leadership?

No organization can survive without leadership because the attainment of goals and objectives of any organization is dependent on leadership. It is the leadership that plans, organizes, coordinates, leads and controls the organization's activities.

The definition of leadership has been attempted by different authors. Thus, Catt and Miller (1985) (in Maxwell, J.C. 2001), define leadership as the ability to influence the activities of others through the process of communication towards the attainment of a goal. According to Ebukelo (2010) leadership is the ability to counsel, to manage conflicts, to inspire loyalty and to make subordinates remain on their jobs. In the words of Tilley and House (1969) leadership is a process where one person exerts social influence over the members of a group. Northouse (2001) defines leadership as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individual to achieve a common

goal. Contributing to the definition of leadership, Fafowora et al (1995) see leadership as implying a purposeful direction of the affairs of the led. Some movement towards definite and defined goals which will be to the benefit of the society and such leadership is characterized by imaginativeness (i.e. possessing ideas which can be translated into reality) courage (to stand on principle) and by its decisions as to be able to provide moral, social and motivational climate for its followership and disciples. From the foregoing, it can be deduced that leadership is a process, leadership involves influence, leadership occurs within a group context and leadership involves goal attainment (Northouse, 2001).

Ethno-Religious Crisis

Ethno-religious crisis can he described as a situation in which relationship between members of one ethnic group and another or generally amongst ethnic groups is characterized by tensions. In a multicultural polity such as Nigeria it is characterized by a lack or cordiality by heightened mutual suspicions and fear, by quarrelsomeness and by a tendency towards violent confrontation. Ethno-religious crisis are extreme manifestation of conflict in the crisis of identity. In so many parts of Nigeria, Nigerians are finding it difficult and/or impossible to coexist with themselves. Ethnic and religious sentiments are rising and the country is daily challenged by these forces. The character of the Nigerian sate is responsible for the country's deepening ethno-religious contradiction that are presently threatening the fabric of the country, and which has become a clog in Nigeria's attempt to develop her economy (Mohammed, 2013).

For us to adequately conceptualize the subject matter, we must separate them. Thus, ethnic group refer to any social formation distinguished by the communal character of their boundaries, language and culture being the most important attributes (Nnoli 1978). According to Otite (1990), ethnic groups are categories of people characterized by cultural criteria of symbols including language, value system and normative behaviour and whose members are located in a particular part of a new state territory. Ethnicity can also be defined as an ethnic quality or affiliations resulting from racial or cultural ties. The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defines ethnicity as connected with or belonging to a nation, race or tribe that shares a cultural tradition.

Religion on the other hand can be said to be a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature and purpose of the universe: It is the belief in and worship of a super human controlling power. According to Bella (1970) religion is a set of symbolic forms and actions that relate men to the ultimate conditions of his existence.

National Integration

The concept integration has been variously defined by social anthropologists, historians, and political scientists. The consensus in these definitions is that, it is that cord that binds or holds a society (geopolitical clime) together for their mutual benefits. However, attempt will be made to x-ray a couple of definitions. Weiner (1965:52) sees integration as "a process of having together culturally and discrete groups into a single territorial unit". Expanding this definition, Ogunojemite (1987, p. 224) posits that integration is a political phenomenon which covers a vast range of human relationships and attitudes i.e. the integration of diverse and discrete cultural loyalties and the development of a sense of nationality; the integration of the rulers and the ruled and the integration of the citizens into a common political process. Applied this way, integration is meant to create homogeneity out of heterogeneity, and, reduce or eliminate parochial attachment to cultural and regional political identities. Okoli et al (2004, p. 405) observes that:

> This kind of integration implies both the capacity of government to control the territory under its jurisdiction as well as to stimulate a set of popular attitudes described as loyalty, obligation, allegiance, patriotism and willingness by the people to place national interest above local or parochial concern...

Integration as posited by Weiner (1965, pp. 54-55) comes in five different ways: territorial integration, value integration, elite-mass integration, integrative behaviour and national integration. Despite the fact that these types have a common link in that they point to the fact that integration holds a society together; our focus will be on national integration.

According to Weiner (1965, p. 58) national integration refers specifically to the problem of creating a sense of territorial nationality which overshadows or eliminates subordinate parochial loyalties. For Nnonyelu (1997, p.145); National integration is determined by the degree to which members and groups in a plural society adapt to the demands of national existence while co-existing Republic harmoniously... citizens are expected to respect the overriding supremacy of the national government.

A couple of theories of national integration exist. These include the functionalist, federalist and cybernetic theories. The functionalist ideal of national integration focuses on the heterogeneous nature of a society and the need to make them into a homogeneous whole-like the Canadian example. The federalist typology centres on the creation of a central government that would co-ordinate its component or federating units into a synchronized whole. The cybernetic construct, "emphasizes the establishment of contacts and promotion of interaction through which the component units would understand and appreciate themselves better" (Okoli, et al 2000, p. 405). In most cases countries adopt the three theories as it is evident in the Nigerian situation for optimum and total national integration.

Integration may therefore refer to the process of bringing together culturally and socially discrete groups into a single territorial unit and the establishment of a national identity. When used in this sense, "integration" generally presumes the existence of an ethnically plural society in which each group is characterized by its own language or other self-conscious cultural qualities, but the problem may also exist in a political system, which is made up of one distinct independent political unit with which people identify. Thus, national integration refers specifically to the problem of creating a sense of territorial nationality which overshadows or eliminate subordinate parochial loyalties.

Furthermore, the term, according to Ake (1967), is often used in the related sense to refer to the problem of establishing national central authority over subordinate political units or regions which may or may not coincide with distinct cultural or social groups. However, Liweiner (1971) is of the opinion that, while the term "national integration" is concerned with the subjective feelings which individuals belonging to different social groups or historically distinct political units have toward the nation, "territorial integration", refers to the objective control which central authority has over the entire territory under its claimed jurisdiction. The term is often used to refer to the problem of linking government with the governed. This implies the notion of a gap between the elite and the masses characterized by marked differences in aspiration and values.

Integration is also viewed as the minimum value consensus necessary to maintain a social order. This may be end value concerning justice and equity, the desirability of economic development as a goal, the sharing of common history, heroes and symbols, and in general, an agreement as to what constitutes desirable and undesirable social ends. Therefore, integrative behaviour is that which refers to the capacity of people in a society to organize for some common purposes of nation building with sustainable structures.

In summary, the term "integration" covers a vast range of human relationships and attitudes. The integration of diverse and discrete cultural loyalties and the development of a sense of nationality; the integration of political units into a common territorial framework with a government which can exercise authority; the integration of the rulers and the ruled; the integration of citizens into a common political process; and, finally, the integration of individuals into organization for purposive activities. These are attempts to define what it is that holds a society and political system together.

How National Integration Became an Issue in Nigeria

Available historical material points to the fact that before the advent of colonialism in 1861 (annexation of Lagos) and the subsequent January 1, 1914 amalgamation; a tremendous degree of tolerance, accommodation, borrowing and interactions among the various ethnic groups existed (see Apthorpe 1999; Falola et at 1991; Udo 1980; Ajayi & Alagoa 1980). As such they usually referred to themselves as people or traders from Hausaland, Yorubaland, Igboland, and Ibibioland etc. Uya (1992), Nnoli (1978), Ndoma-Egba and Ndoma-Egba (2000) all agreed that the picture of intrinsic and inherent incompatibility of ethnic groups in Nigeria was the handiwork of colonial anthropologists. According to these scholars, European anthropologists first used it as a label of identity and later this was appropriated as a tool of divide and rule by the colonialists. This trend continued till 1914. The amalgamation which brought the protectorates of Northern Nigeria and that of Southern Nigeria with the colony of Lagos was only to pool the resources of the relatively richer territories of the south to meet the cost of running the north and thus, reduce the burden on the British tax payers (Ndoma-Egba & Ndoma-Egba, 2000, p.74). The British therefore achieved territorial integration. By this, they incorporated the various ethnicities into an amalgamated Nigeria. Thus, began the process of acrimony, distrust, suspicion, hatred, culture of parochialism in national affairs and a legacy of tension among the component parts of Nigeria (Falola et al, 1991, p. 9).

However, the imperial Order-in-Council that established the Arthur Richards Constitution which became effective on January 1, 1947 contained integrative elements. The purpose of the Constitution as stated in the Nigeria Seasonal Paper No. 4 of 1945 was:

1. To promote the unity of the country;
2. To provide adequately for the desire for the diverse elements which made up the country; and
3. To secure greater participation of Africans in the discussion of their own affairs

As noted by Adigwe (1974:188), the constitution sought to promote the unity of the country by establishing regional councils together with a central council in Lagos... (but) the establishment of regional councils tended to weaken the unity (national integration) of the country.

This explains why subsequent review or evolutions of a new constitution (1951, 1954 and 1960) were advocated for, from purely ethnic stand-point by the Nigerian representatives. For example, those that represented the North-in the would be 1951 Macpherson constitution-demanded for parity with the South in representation in the central legislature, those that represented the West called for a revision of the Northern Frontier, so as to exclude the people of Offa, Igbomina and Kabba from the North since they are Yoruba speaking tribes; while the East in conjunction with the North requested for Lagos to be removed from Western Region and made a "no man's

land". From the foregoing, it is clear that each of them were preponderantly interested in its hegemony over the others. Invariably, discordant views greeted the motion for "self- government in 1956" which was originally conceived to "present a united front of collective responsibility". Again, as a result of the fears of the minority groups in the Niger-Delta, a commission of enquiry (headed by Henry Willink) was set up and instead of creating states as desired by them, it made a detailed list of fundamental human, rights in it stead to cushion it. With independence in 1960, the stark reality was the need to build a strong and united country despite the presence of over 250 ethnic groups and 466 dialects (Mbeke-Ekanem, 2000:328). Thus, it became clear that Nigeria would need integrative mechanisms, just like other plural societies in the world.

Integrative Mechanisms Adopted By Nigeria Governments towards National Integration

The Constitution

As an integrative measure, the federal government abolished the regional constitutions and evolved a single document for the whole country. Equally, several provisions were enshrined in all the constitutions adopted thereafter including the current 1999 Constitution, such as articles that are expected to promote national integration.

Federalism

Federalism is a system in which government powers that exist in a state are shared constitutionally between the central authority and that of the component or federating units. Through this, the concept of national integration is given expression. As opined by Obafemi Awolowo, "if a country is bilingual or multilingual, the constitution must be federal, and the constituent states must be organized on linguistic basis". He goes further to stress that "only a truly federal constitution can unite Nigeria and generate harmony amongst its diverse racial and linguistic groups (Fagbamigbe, 1981:4-5). Basically, the amalgamation of the North and South in 1914 laid the historical foundation for federalism in Nigeria and the outcomes of constitutional conferences agreed on the use of federalism as an ideal system for the country.

National Anthem

A national anthem is intended to evoke a feeling of patriotism and make people of that country work for the progress, unity and growth of the country. Usually it contains the ideals and traits which the country intends to impart to its citizens. The National Pledge is regarded as an oath of citizenship with promises to the country. It is intended to help citizens to grow to love and serve their country and reminds them of other responsibilities to the country.

Revenue Allocation

To further strengthen national integration, revenues which are generated are pooled into a common fund, and shared thereafter to all tiers of government using agreed parameters (see Section 162(2) of the 1999 Constitution).

Establishment of Political Parties

Ethnically based political parties were known to be harbinger of distrust and violence. To avoid this, and encourage national integration section 222 (b) of the 1999 Constitution states: "The members of the association are open to every citizen of Nigeria irrespective of his place of origin, circumstance of birth, sex, religion or ethnic group". Also section 223 (2b) of the said constitution states: "The members of the executive committee or other governing body of the political party shall be deemed to reflect the federal character of Nigeria".

Federal Character Principle

This is a strategy adopted by the government at all levels to ensure equal distribution of scarce resources to all diverse groups that make up Nigeria, so that no group dominates and controls the resources to the detriment of the others. Consequently, appointments, siting of industries, schools, and provision of social amenities, etc are made in a way to allow every group to participate in the system. The central philosophy is to diffuse primordial sentiments, create an enabling environment for peaceful co-existence and engineer the process of national integration (Okibe, 2000, p.194). As expressed in the moribund 1979 Constitution, the federal character principle states:

> The composition of the government of the federation or any of its agencies be carried out in such 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 from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that government or any of its agencies (section 14(3) of the 1979 Constitution).

Equally, the 1979 Constitution (and the 1999 Constitution) enjoins that the affairs of the centrel, state, local government areas, government parastatals, etc shall be carried out in such manner as to recognize the diversity of the peoples within its area of authority with the over-riding intention to unite and integrate them.

State Creation

Decree No. 14 of 1967 introduced by the Gen. Yakubu Gowon's regime created twelve states in Nigeria on May 27, 1967: six in the north and six in the south. This move was made to satisfy the yearnings of Nigerians for state creation since colonial times. The government equally felt that such decision will help strengthen national unity. Along this trend, by 2009, the number of states have risen to thirty-six- with the tendency of increasing further.

Rotational Presidency and Rotation of Power

In its strong and determined desire to further strengthen the spirit of national unity, the still-born Gen. Sani Abacha's 1995 Constitution in section 229(4), made provision for rotational presidency and rotation of power between the six geopolitical zones, as in:

1. North-Central: Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau and FCT.
2. North-Eastern: Adamawa, Bauch, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, and Yobe.
3. North-Western: Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara.
4. South-Eastern: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo.
5. South-South: Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross-River Delta, Edo and Rivers.
6. South-Western: Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Oyo.

Expected Qualities of a Leader and an Overview of Leadership in Nigeria

It is increasingly evident that growth and development cannot he achieved or sustained for that matter, where the moral and ethical fibre of the society is weak. Since independence in 1960 Nigeria has not been fortunate to have a leadership that has been able to translate the dreams of the country into reality. Leadership is a vital ingredient in national progress and development. The challenge of leadership in any country is the ability to craft appropriate visions and goals and align people behind them to achieve common goals and common objectives. Most Nigerian's agree that the major reason for her underdevelopment is poor political leadership.

Leadership is in short supply in all sectors of her country and it is most acute in political leadership. From federal to the state and local government levels, Nigeria has had fractured political leadership that has proven chronically incapable of lifting the nation to where it should be. UNDP report (2009) rated Nigeria below average in the entire index used in their analysis. There is hardly any Human Index (HI) in Nigeria today which is not inexorably linked to leadership failure. No policy in Nigeria in the last 20 years has been successfully implemented. Today Nigeria lags behind in virtually everything except in corruption which according to Achebe (1983) has grown enormously in variety and magnitude.

The Nigerian economy is in tatters, its infrastructure is in a state of ruins, the standard of living has sharply fallen and the middle class is almost going into

extinction. The country's leadership mirrors corruption and monumental fraud. For instance, the M.O. Ibrahim Index of African Governance in 2011 ranked Nigeria 42 in safety and rule of law, 37 in accountability, 24 in personal safety, 81 in National Security, 41 in sustainable economic opportunity, 55 in public management, 61, 49 and 36 in welfare, education and health respectively.

Nigeria being the 5th largest oil producer in the world is ranked below many countries that do not export oil. The reason for this poor rating by the MO Ibrahim index is the result of corruption, impunity and leadership insincerity to fight corruption. Most leaders in Nigeria claim they want to fight corruption, but they only pay lip service to it. Everything in Nigeria has been corruptly managed. No one believes that anything can be done without corruption. The bane of Nigeria's national development has been leadership inspired corruption in every facet of the country's lives. In the executive, legislature and in the judiciary, corruption, in terms of recruitment of personnel to manage courts, corruption in terms of political interference with the process of decision making in the law courts. The nation's leadership has not been able to purge itself of corruption, Today in Nigeria, most of the anti- corruption agencies are corrupt, all they need to do to get money is to catch the big thieves and ask to be settled. Nationalism and patriotism has taken flight from the common sense of all in Nigeria. This can be traced to lack of good leadership (Okutepa 2012).

A good leader is one who is able to motivate his followers. Every good leader must have the ability to plan for his followers and be able to achieve established goals and objectives. However, Eghe (2002) identifies the following qualities of a good leadership:

- Intelligence
- Judgment
- Objectivity
- Initiative
- Dependability
- Cooperation
- Honesty
- Courage
- Confidence
- Stability
- Humanness
- Good Leadership
- Power for its sake
- Team worker
- Foresight

- Clarity of vision.

See Mohammed, 2013

Ethno-Religious Crisis in Nigeria: An Appraisal

Nigeria one of the largest countries in Africa is made up of many ethnic groups with diverse cultural, religious and social backgrounds. These ethnic groups have different political, social, religious and economic interests to protect and they do this by using any machinery at their disposal even if it is at the detriment of the country. Ethnic and religious issues form part of the most recurring phenomena in Nigeria's body politic. The issue has permeated the nation's political and economic landscape in the last few years, and there seems to be no solutions to it. In Nigeria, ethnicity plays a major role' in almost everything. Whatever is done or anticipated to be done in Nigeria particularly in government quarters has, ethnic and religious undertone. From employment, admission into schools, distribution of social amenities and even in social relationships ethnic and religious affiliation and attachment are conspicuously manifest. Attachment of the average Nigerian first to his ethnic and religious groups before the nation is the best of Nigeria national integration/nation building.

Between 2001 and 2014, so many crisis stimulated by ethno-religious reasons have engulfed Nigeria. Ethnic and religious bigotry has become a serious issue undermining the very foundation of Nigeria's unity. Mutual fear and suspicion, absence of cordial relations ethnic alignment and re-alignment, ethnic affiliation and attachment have being very strong features of Nigeria since independence. Nigeria has become a theatre of war characterized by an increasing number of ethnic and religious crises. In 1980 in some parts of Kano and Maiduguri there were the Maitatsine religious disturbances. By 1984, there was the Yola religious disturbance. In 1992 the Zango Kataf crisis rocked Kaduna State. This crisis spread to Kafachan and other parts of the north central states. By 1999, the Shagamu religious crisis took place, Tafawa Balewa in 2001; Hausa, Christian and Muslim still exhibit existence of hate to date. The above is evidence of the rate at which ethno and religious crisis takes place in Nigeria. Anytime this crisis takes place in any part of Nigeria the fear of reprisal attack is always high. The Jos case is a pointer to the fear of reprisal attack.

The extent to which ethno-religious crisis is going in Nigeria is alarming. It has been hijacked by a group known as "Boko Haram". This group is responsible for many bomb explosions in some parts of northern Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory. Many analysts are also of the view that Nigeria is sitting on a keg of gun powder because of the activities of this Islamist sect known as "Boko Haram". They have invaded churches, mosques, markets, schools, motor parts, homes and killed and of maimed innocent citizens and have destroyed properties worth billions of naira. Jega

(2005) identified leadership and ethno-religious crisis and ethnic militancy among the problems challenging Nigeria's integrational match.

Causes of Ethno-religious Crisis in Nigeria

Many factors can be held responsible for the rampant cases of ethno-religious in Nigeria. As observed by Alfa (2012), the major causes of ethno-religious in Nigeria can he attributed to the overbearing character of the post-colonial Nigeria state, greed, selfishness, parochialism, pettiness and irresponsible conduct by those who are supposed to be leaders. Nigerian leaders pursue self-serving objectives in the power game and in the process of accumulation of wealth and tend to aggregate these with and project them as a part of an ethno-religious group agenda. Moreover, the leadership has largely failed to provide the needs of the people. An average Nigerian lacks access to all the basic things for a healthy, satisfying and productive life. This has contributed to the emergence of large number of frustrated population who are ready made tools in the hands of extremist.

Growing population of Almajiri's, Quranic students in the northern part of Nigeria is also one of the causes of ethno-religious crisis in Nigeria. These children who are sent to live and study with Islamic teachers are cramped into shacks and left with little or no food, forcing them to roam the street from where they are recruited by extremist, tribalist or desperate politicians as thugs, supporters or followers to achieve their end.

In addition, weak national security system is also one of the factors responsible for ethnic and religious conflicts in Nigeria. This problem of weak national security system is, compounded by illegal cross border migration and arms trafficking across the nation's boarder. The porosity of Nigeria's land borders especially in the northern part has seriously undermined the nation's security as this give rise to the influx of foreign national whose activities are inimical to the security interest of the country. In addition, the lack of clear cut document on national security policy has remained a problem confronting the country since independence. The lack of security policy to a reasonable extent has undermined the capacity of the country to confront ethno-religious crisis whenever they arise (Ebukelo 2010).

Unemployment is also a factor responsible for ethno-religious crisis in Nigeria. Large numbers of Nigerian youth are without any legitimate source of livelihood. Most of the recent ethno-religious and communal conflicts in Nigeria can be explained from the angle of joblessness and intense competition over scarce resources and services both in urban and the rural areas. The mass of unemployed youths are ready made instruments to be motivated to partake in riots, demonstration, reprisal attacks, violence, armed robbery and other sundry acts.

The persistent ethnic chauvinism exhibited by Nigerian elites has grave effects on the psyche of the various ethnic nationalities to an extent that those groups that are even benefiting now lay claim to marginalization at every attempt to reverse the status quo. This is nonetheless the causes of the plethora of violent crisis rocking the Nigerian state. Today, according to Mohammed (2013), the body language and actions of all the regions in Nigeria claim to be marginalized. Crises of ethnic nationalism and calls for national conference, a new dimension in the issue are the increasing recruitment of ethnic militia with reckless abandon. The relationship among ethnic and religious groups in Nigeria is characterized by lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion and fear and a tendency towards violent confrontation.

Religious factors cannot be left out of the causes of the crisis. In Nigeria today, two religions predominate; Islam and the Christianity and these two religions have different conceptualization. For instance, the Christians want man to give unto Caeser what is Caesers and unto God what is God in an apparent segregation between the worldly and the spiritual. Islam on the other hand, addresses the Here-and-Now in the perspective of the hereafter (Abdulfadi 1992). Just like ethnicity religious identity is a critical issue in Nigeria because it is more often than not used in creating sense of order, meaning and hope especially in an environment of both physical and political insecurity like Nigeria (Okene 2005). Another protracted dimension is the inability of one leader not been able to manage the turbulences and unite the nation state since 1960.

Leadership, Ethno-religious Crisis: A Challenge to National Integration

As noted earlier, the importance of leadership in any nation is vital (if such nation is to succeed in achieving its goals and objectives of nationhood. Over the years, Nigerians have been yearning for good leadership that is capable of transforming the enormous human and material resources that abound in the county for the benefit of national development but as noted earlier, no country can engender any development without a leader with integrity, strong moral principles, honesty, self-respect and who is exemplary. Kane (2006) considers integrity and courage as attributes of leadership and stated that leader's effectiveness is impaired when they are not sound within themselves because that soundness provides the foundation for integrity. Since independence in 1960, the country has not been able to integrate the divergent and multi-nationalities in a whole due to bad leadership. Leadership problem in Nigeria has been quite overwhelming and frustrating. Achebe (1983) observed that the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership and the unwillingness or inability of Nigerian leaders to rise to the challenge of personal example which according to him is the hallmark of true leadership. Leadership in the context of Nigeria is characterized by sycophancy, greed, dishonesty, endemic corruption, fuelled by personal aggrandizement, political authoritarianism, budgetary abuse, political patronage etc. No national integration or nation building can take place in any country in which her

leadership is characterized by the vices listed above. Okene (2005) notes that the greatest cause of ethno-religious and indeed other identity based conflicts in our period is the enthronement of bad leadership. Thus one can say that the ethno-religious crises rocking the country are outcome of the leadership problem.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has attempted to demonstrate that leadership and ethno-religious crisis retard national integration. The problem posed by ethnic and religious crisis is a threat to Nigerians corporate existence and its desire to engender national integration. There is nowhere in the world were brothers are at war that there will be peace and development of any magnitude. The crisis in Nigeria is capable of truncating her hard won democracy and return the country to military rule. Leadership crisis in Nigeria has had effect of retarding development and national integration in the country.

However, if the following recommendations are strictly adhered to, then the country can reduce the incidence of leadership and ethno-religious crisis currently threatening the country's national integration for effective development.

First and foremost, the constitution, of Nigeria should be restructured and reformed to meet up with the challenges and the phenomenon of ethnic and religious intolerance in Nigeria. The security system of the country should be strategically placed to confront such problems anytime they arise.

In stemming the ugly tide of leadership and ethno-religious crisis, the government of Nigeria must imbibe the spirit of democratic federalism and all principles of good governance that includes political and financial transparency, executive and judicial responsiveness and accountability and genuine independence of all the institutions of democracy like the judiciary, the electoral management agency, legislature and anti-graft agencies. The government must also tackle the problems of imbalance in education between the north and the south.

Religious bodies should partner with Nigerian state in the provision of social services, basic healthcare, education, job security among others to all population, not only to reduce threats of ethno-religious crisis but also as a matter of rights for all Nigerians.

Convocation of regular national dialogue is recommended here because this will facilitate the mobilization of those who are divided along ethnic, cultural, economic and religious lines in the task of national unity and nation building.

Strengthening the Nigeria inter-religious council will also help to check the occurrences of ethno-religious crisis. This can be done by expanding the scope of the council to include ethnic matters as well. Hence, instead of just inter- religious council, it should be inter-religious and ethnic council to cater for ethnic conflicts as well.

The National Orientation Agency should also be made more viable and proactive. It can be used to build bridges across religious and ethnic divides by deepening national values in the citizenry through social programmes, such as educating the populace on the dangers of ethno-religious bigotry, extremism or fundamentalism in order to address the low level of consciousness of the vast majority of Nigerians which makes them easy to be manipulated by politicians and other extreme groups in the country.

Corruption in all forms must be eradicated, and the imposition of leaders by political godfathers must be discouraged. This will help to entrench leadership integrity, values, accountability, tolerance and selflessness. Once the leadership is a reflection of the wishes of the people then the dream of nation building and integration is largely achieved.

Finally and most importantly is the provision of employment for the country's teeming youths. If these youth are gainfully employed, it becomes difficult for anybody to recruit them and use them to cause ethno-religious problems and other disintegrative activities.

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