

# IDENTITY CRISIS AND NATION BUILDING IN NIGERIA

By

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## Abstract

*The identity crisis in Nigeria is a product of colonialism nurtured by the post-colonial elites for selfish ends. Elements of progressive social engineering among the diverse ethnic groups were undermined in the formative years of the Nigerian state. State building takes precedence over nation building even when the philosophical elements of nationhood like commonality of culture, language, and tradition were lacking. These elements are instruments of political and social mobilization for the development of liberal democratic polity. The adverse relation among these elements forms the basis of identity crisis confronting the Nigerian state. However, it is ironical to continue to put the blame of the identity crisis and citizenship question on the doorstep of the colonial masters after 51 years of independence. Political alienation and political domination which was the dominant feature of colonial administration has been made the deciding factor in economic and socio-political relations. This has foreclosed attempts to develop appropriate political framework for the effective management of the citizenship question in Nigeria. The result is unhealthy competition for limited but scarce resources giving rise to dissension within and among indigenes and settlers. The attendant crisis is manifestation of poverty and political and economic inequality. This has limited the right to political participation for the disadvantaged group. This paper relied on primary and secondary data to conclude that the attendant identity crisis is against the norms of co-operative federalism, democracy, sustainable development and good governance. The paper recommends the distribution of national resources on the basis of equity, a national and cultural orientation that promote inter and intra-ethnic harmony as panacea to reviving the oblivious social capital in Nigeria among others.*

**Key Words:** Nation Building, Alienation, Governance, Citizenship, Domination

## Introduction

Nigeria is facing a crisis of identity in her task of nation building. There is growing rate of poor inter community relations. This has had implications on efforts geared towards building a virile democratic federal polity especially with the polarisation of Nigeria along ethnic and religious lines. This is against the tenet of federative brotherhood. Beginning from the colonial days, various administrative infrastructures were put in place to promote the task of nation building. Constitutional modifications were effected to smooth the bond of unity and increase the strength of representation among ethnic nationalities even when orientation towards the alienated political culture dominates socio-political life in Nigeria. High trend of political alienation exist among majority and minority ethnic groups leading to unhealthy competition for political and socio-economic resources.

The emergence of regional leadership in the political space of Nigeria with parochial political culture heightened ethnic consciousness in the realms of politico-economic

relations. This negates consensus building and undermined the political, economic and socio-cultural rights of many Nigerians. Cultural restrictions are reinforced in favour of gender, political and economic discrimination (FRN, 2003: 100-112). Nigerians are treated as aliens outside their states of origin and citizenship rights (rights to political representation) are denied them. Political issues are viewed with religious and ethnic pessimism and ethnic and religious identities tend to override national identity. Public issues are nourished with ethnic and religious flavor as reminiscence in the conduct of the April 2011 general elections. This has fuelled crisis in Jigawa, Katsina, Sokoto, Niger, Gombe, Adamawa, Plateau, Osun, Delta, Kogi, Kano, Borno, Bauchi and Kaduna states among others. This ethnic and religious nationalism threatened the corporate existence of Nigeria and undermined the post-civil war politico-ethical philosophy of reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction. The regime of internal colonialism nurtured by the post-colonial elites has destroyed socio-political and economic relations in Nigeria.

The author aligned his personal experiences with secondary sources of information in addressing the central theme of the paper. He introduces the paper in part one and thematic juxtapose nation building with internal colonialism in parts two and three respectively. How this relates with the historical and sociological context of identity crisis and nation building is treated in part four. Identity and citizenship milieu in Nigeria dominate discussion in part five and concluding recommendations in part six.

### **Discuss on Thematic Variables**

The word nation is associated with nation building and the creation of the modern nation state. It invokes the spirit of common identity where custom, language and tradition play decisive roles. Many traditional states evolved into the modern nation state in 1648 (Ziegler, 1989:114) with Nigeria witnessing the agglomeration of such through the ornamental use of force. Heterogeneity became an attribute of the modern nation state system and where it is not properly harnessed like in Nigeria abused the dogma of collective identity.

The foregoing analysis underscores the fact that nation building demands a concerted social action to sustain the state building project. The two processes are mutually re-enforcing. Nation building is an evolutionary process where citizens transfer their commitment and loyalty from small group to larger political entities such as the nation state. It is the cultivation by a people over time of political attitudes, beliefs and values that make up a political culture (Ogaba, 2008:11). The nation building project in Nigeria proceeded in a manner described by Caron (2003:2) as:

the intervention in the affairs of nation state for the purpose of changing the states method of government in terms of political representation, setting conditions for economic growth, and social well being.

This was the underlying goals of colonialism where the instrument of force was employed to achieve this goal. This instrument was employed by the post colonial elites to sustain the unity of the Nigerian state. The force assertion thesis is a sustainable political instrument in the nation building project and has created a sustainable and somehow binding force among tribes and religions. The force theory which is promoted by the American

government to justify her intervention in the nation building project in Japan, Afghanistan, Iraq and the peace enforcement actions of the United Nations Organisation in Somalia (1992-1995), Congo (1960-64), El Salvador (1991), Cambodia (1991-93) (Durch and Blechman, 1992; and Dows, 1992) among others redeemed Nigeria from the civil war era. This balance of force has prevented the federating units from breaking away. However, the use of force failed to generate sustainable peace in the world in the absence of consensus and confidence building. On this basis, nation building could be defined as the ability of the nation to sustain itself as a sovereign entity under the regime of rule of law, constitutionalism, equitable political representation in a guided transition process based on social justice. Such a nation building project has the potential of improving the material well-being of citizens and an initiated sustainable human development project. Where this is lacking primordial sentiments are mobilised for selfish ends.

Such mobilisation has resulted in social and political exclusion especially in a repressive democracy where official opposition is viewed as treasonable. Nation building in this context may require some revolutionary measures to redress injustices. Even though it is a time consuming, complex and multi-dimensional process, it requires the articulation and aggregation of interests, their socialization into a rationalistic political culture and a functional system of political communication about modalities for resource distribution. The absence of this creates condition for the manipulation of primordial sentiments for non-productive ends.

### **Theoretical Discourse**

One theory that lends itself to the dynamics of identity crisis in Nigeria is the internal colonialism theory. This theory upholds the view that internal colonialism exists in all heterogeneous societies. Characteristic of such societies is the domination of the politically and economically weaker ethnic groups by the politically and economically stronger ethnic group. It implies the existence of internal colonialism among social groups in multi-ethnic societies orchestrated by the state. Social groups in control of political power keep the less advantageous groups under conditions of perpetual domination. In many cases, state laws are initiated to promote social exclusion and alienation. In Germany, the holocaust against the Jews during the Nazi regime, the racial segregation in South Africa during the Apartheid regime and the racial discrimination in the United States of America created identity crisis that affected the processes of nation building for many years. The political transition that took place in South Africa in the early 1990s and the election of Barak Obama as President of the United States of America climaxed the resolution of the identity crisis in these countries. Even though they may still be pockets of social exclusion in the USA and South Africa, it can be compared with the rate of social exclusion in Rwanda, Burundi, Angola and Kenya. Olzack (1983:359) states that an internal colony exists to the extent that a richer and culturally dominant core dominates an ethnically identified periphery. She is of the opinion that the culturally dominant social groups take advantage of the economic and political weakness of the weaker social groups and exploit the resources in the region for the selfish interest of the dominant social group. the distribution of political power and economic resources are pursued with ethnic and religious agenda. In the attendant vicious circle of domination, a perennial regime of internal colonialism exists among majority-minority

ethnic groups and minority-minority ethnic groups like it is in many states of the Nigerian federation. This implies that there is domination in all levels of social strata in society. Such condition generates poverty, inequality, frustration and aggression as is the case in the Niger Delta region and ethno-religious conflicts in Northern Nigeria. While the Niger Delta crisis is an expression of resentment against economic exploitation the ethno-religious and post election violence and the Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (Boko Haram) insurgency in Northern Nigeria are reactions against alleged political exclusion. These crises has threatened national security and the corporate existence of Nigeria and placed the trajectory of nation building in Nigeria at pedestal of disunion difficult to manage by government. the abduction, killings and destruction of properties carried out by insurgent groups battling for supremacy in the political equation of Nigeria as in Somalia, Mali, Cote D Ivoire, Congo DR and also in France where the Corsica Island presents enormous challenges to nation building.

In line with the ideals of corporate governance, statutorily agreed formula is used by the state to distribute economic and political resources to each social group in relation to the political and economic relevance of social groups thereby promoting ethnic distinctiveness, ethnic consciousness and regime of ethnic exploitation. The attempt to address the imbalance led to political fragmentation (state creation) along ethnic lines and left minority of minority ethnic group in another regime of internal colonialism as the case in Kaduna between (dominant Muslim Northern Zaria Vs dominated Christian Southern Zaria), Benue (politically dominant Tiv Vs politically dominated Idoma), Kogi (politically dominant Igala Vs politically dominated Epira and Kabba) states among others shows. Acknowledging Leo Panitch (1977) and James Frideres (1988) and Tepperman and Curtis (2004: 406-407) is the recognition of the definitive role of state policies in promoting ethnic distinctiveness in Nigeria. Its role congruency with the registration of ethnically based political parties, the overbearing influence of ethno-religious associations like the Ohaneze Ndi Igbo, the Afenifere, the Arewa Consultative Forum, Christian Association of Nigeria, the Northern Elders Forum, Northern Governors Forum, South- South People Assembly as well as the Federal Character Principles project identity politics into political limelight. The recent vituperations over the introduction of Islamic banking by adherents of the Christians and Islamic religion smack of mutual distrust and disharmony. This trend of ethno-religious nationalism arises from patterns of resources distribution by the state and the desire by social groups to perpetually control the state power.

Stasiulis (1980) noted that such state policy has led to ethnic realignment and redefinition of identity and influenced the emergence of ethnic group leaders through whom resources are disbursed. This has made the management of ethnic relations difficult as is the case in Jos metropolis (Plateau state) between the Berom and Hausa. According to Osei, Dukor, Maduabuchi, in Izu (2009: 130-131) such situation subjected the masses to political manipulations and threatened the democratic aspirations of nation states across Africa. As a by-product of alienated political culture, instruments of religion, the media, military, state security agencies and traditional institutions are hypocritically mobilized to sustain the regime of internal colonialism. This is made worse by the mismanagement of the resource meant for the development of each ethnic region by ethno- religious and political leaders. The resultant bad governance leaves the masses in conditions of wants, poverty, deprivation,

destitution and desperation and expose them (the almajirai and area boys) as lethal weapon for prosecuting ethno-religious conflicts. In an attempt by the state to hold their leaders accountable for such infraction on the sovereignty of the state religious and ethnic sentiments are invoked surreptitiously in defence of the status quo.

In support of this view point is the state control thesis arguments of Raymond Breton (1984, 1989), Michael Rosenberg and Jack Jebwab (1992), Terry Wotherspoon and Vic Satzewich (1993). These scholars unanimously agree that state apparatuses are used to manage ethnic and race relations where fiscal policy measures are employed to distribute priority programmes to politically relevant ethnic groups. The use of state apparatuses for mutual benefits depends on the wisdom of the political leader. Where there is inequity in resource distribution ethno-religious violence as experienced after the April 2011 general elections fuelled as bargaining instruments. Many have seen the emergence of Goodluck Jonathan first as Vice President and later as President as trade off to stem the tides of militancy and hostage taking resulting from years of underdevelopment of the Niger Delta region.

It is not ironical to conclude that the breach of the informal arrangement between the north and south on power rotation with the emergence of Goodluck Jonathan as president in the April 16, 2011 poll accounts for the post election violence and spate of bomb blast in many states in Northern Nigeria. Such violence is used as instrument for political negotiation away from threat of internal colonialism. On this basis, identity crisis could be seen as a product of injustice nurtured and fostered by the state.

In countries like the United States where the nation building project has recorded remarkable success, ethnic and religious identity has become a modicum for symbolic interactions among groups. Unlike the past, primordial affiliations have little or no impact on how people live and relate with one another. The emergence of Barack Obama, a blackman of African descent, as the president of America gives justifiable evidence. This is unlike the situation in Cote d'Ivoire, Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi, Congo DR and Nigeria among others where ethno-religious identity determines one's degree of political relevance.

### **The Sociological and Historical Context of Identity Crisis in Nigeria**

The wind of political and economic globalization in Africa dates back to the era of empire building, the slave trade, legitimate trade and colonialism to the post colonial eras. Significantly, the industrial revolution that took place in Europe drove the train of globalization to Africa and Asia leading to colonisation. This ideology of capitalism and colonialism redefines the political, economic, and social-cultural relations among inhabitants in Africa in line with the demands of global capitalism. The assumption here is that identity politics is an historical product of globalization. The dominance of Empire over empires in Europe, Asia and Africa in the early phase of globalization created an identity crisis as groups struggle for political supremacy. The Westphalia treaty of 1648, the French revolution (1789) (Ziegler 1989:114) the American revolution (1776), the First World War (1914-1918), the Second World War (1939-1945) manifestly redefine the citizenship status of individuals within the international political system.

The industrial revolution which took place in Europe brought with it economic revolution and reinforced the ideology of colonialism where many third world countries

became prime victims. Rooted in the ideology of colonialism was state building at the expense of nation building especially in Nigeria. Divisive tendencies were sowed in the political and economic fabric of Nigeria. The concern of the colonial power to create an imperial state and bourgeois class that is sympathetic to colonial interest led to the politicisation of citizenship status and political representations. Political socialisation was guided by primordial interest and orientation to social action was not based on feelings of collectivism. Weber, (1964:136), and Gana (2002:28) argued that the absence of such orientation limits the progress of the nation building project in Nigeria. The absence of objective realities in socio-political relations re-enforced feelings of separateness and identity crisis in the pursuit of national goals. This has led to ethnic alienation, fragmentation, desperation, hopelessness and the in-group (we) and out-group (they) syndrome to either support or challenge this pattern of social relations. National loyalty was transferred to primordial groups.

This increased the tempo of political agitation for increased political representation and autonomy and the distortion of the traditional boundaries of nationalities to suit European economic interest using force-oriented bureaucratic machinery. Forms of identity politics emerged to redefine the new world order in countries like Kenya, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Burundi, Nigeria, Sudan, Yugoslavia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Congo DRC, Angola and South Africa (Apartheid). This has challenged the universality of socio-political and economic relations and the stability of the international political system. Attesting to this fact, Kofi Annan, observed that:

Particularistic and exclusionary form of identity politics has intensified in recent years within and among nations... it is responsible for some of the most egregious violations of international humanitarian law and, in several instances of elementary standards of humanity.. Negative forms of identify politics are a potent and potentially explosive force. Great care must be taken to recognise, confront and restrain them lest they destroy the potential for peace and progress that the new era holds in store (The Guardian, 1997:8).

This phenomenon has posed a threat to world peace and security. This epilogue shows that identity politics though historical is not peculiar to Nigeria alone.

The period 1900- 1952 is regarded as the formative phase of the nation building project in Nigeria. Significant in this era is the display of British political and economic assertion as influential elements in the formation of the Nigeria state. Little regard was paid to the imperative of national re-orientation and social engineering in establishing an enduring and sustainable nation. While the various regions were administered separately, administrative parameters were employed to create divisions among the diverse tribes. This was done ostensibly to effectuate colonial exploitation. The regional political arrangements proposed by Sir Donald Cameron (1939) and implemented by Arthur Richard in 1946 created condition of internal colonialism especially with the formation of regional political associations with ethnic agenda. The attendant political alienation according to Nnoli (1978: 173) creates feelings of insecurity, intolerance and inter-ethnic hostility. The Irikefe commission was therefore set up to address the minority problems.

The end of the Second World War marked a turning point in the history of Nigeria. In the first instance, it increased the tempo of agitation for decolonisation, administrative decentralization and introduced a regime of consensus building in the polity. The 1953, 1954,

(Lagos) and 1958 (London) conferences (Anyaele, 1991:255-261) were organized to resolve the crisis of governance and the citizenship question. This period witnessed significant political and administrative reforms that later influenced the democratization processes in Nigeria.

The census controversy (1962-1963), the 1964 and 1993 election, the Nzeogwu led coup of January 15, 1966 and the Unification Decree No. 34 of May 24, 1966 (Ademoyega, 1981:113), the counter coup of July 1966 and the attendant civil war of 1967-1970 were challenges to the democratisation in the first republic. The resultant civil war following the collapse of the consensus building project introduced new vista of identity politics in civil-military cycles. The aborted Gideon Okar coup of April 22, 1993 further exposed the trend of ethnic nationalism within the military establishment. The fragile peace it created underscores the strategic importance of military and ethnic balancing in the military to national integration. The structural balance created in the military by the Obasanjo administration between 1999 and 2007 has sustained the current of democratic growth in Nigeria today.

The period of military interregnum (1966-1979, (1983-1999) is a significant epoch in the history of Nigeria. In the first instance, the military maintained and sustained the sanctity and unity of this nation. In the second instance, it was characterized by high level corruption, mismanagement of public funds, collapse of basic infrastructure and social capital as well as the destruction of democratic culture in the psychology of Nigerians. Poverty became more entrenched and with it aggressive politics as strategy for survival and a resource in soliciting for ethnic loyalty. Such mobilization results to the Sharia controversy in 1976 and 2000 AD. Gana (2002: 37) see it as a historical construction by the political elites in line with capitalist modernization. There lies the basis for disrespecting the secular nature of the Nigerian state and the politicization of religion. Any region that is not in control of political power feels politically ostracized and resort to weeping up ethno-religious sentiment ostensibly to protest her political alienation. Reacting to this situation, Kirk-Greene (1975:19) noted that:

Fear has been constant in every tension and confrontation in political Nigeria. Not the physical fear of violence, not the spiritual fear of retribution but the psychological fear of discrimination, of domination. It is the fear of getting one's fair share, one's dessert.

The fear emerged from feelings of domination and alienation. At the macro level, the North is afraid of Southern dominance of the economy, the bureaucracy and currently the polity. Until recently, the south was afraid of northern political domination. This pattern of negative interaction among the various tribes (Eliagwu, 2005:9) affects political engineering as was the case at the National Political Reform Conference in 2005. The recent post-election violence and bomb blast (Orintunsin, and Asishana, 2011: 1-2) and the attack on houses of worship are manifestations of such imaginary fears. The adoption of the Hobbesian strategy to resolve political differences is anti-progressive and does not fast track the task of nation building. Political gladiators who employ it as negotiating instrument are enemies of the state.

This is likely to increase the tempo of fear in the polity even when Eliagwu opined that Nigeria is held together by the balance of fear (Adibe, 2011:64). His opinion might be credible when viewed from the fact that such conditions create adjustment mechanisms that will erode the fear of domination.

## **Identity and Citizenship Milieu in Nigeria**

Citizenship exists within the context of statehood. The state exists for the people and by the people. The state is an abstract entity which finds empirical expression in the presence of people and government. It sets clearly identifiable criteria for membership either as citizens and aliens. Citizens enjoy certain privileges, rights and benefits that aliens do not. Citizenship therefore becomes a unifying force especially where legislations have been passed to clearly defend such rights. In Nigeria, one could become a citizen by birth, registration and naturalisation but this is challenged by the culture of mutual exclusion and political alienation. The Nigerian state is obliged to secure full citizenship rights for everybody residing in any part of the country as contained in Chapter II section 15(3b) of the 1999 Constitution (Constitution, 1999:10-15). In a liberal political environment, citizenship creates a sense of national identity and the rallying points for socio-political and economic engineering. Citizenship is a product of political struggle among social forces and groups hence its use as a resource for identity mobilization by the state (Adejumobi, 2004:6).

In some respect, this has been beclouded by cultural artifacts (cultural rights) used as instruments of political and social exclusion by community and political leaders. Cultural restriction has led to conflict between indigene and settler (Omodo) in Kabba, (Olawale and Olarinde, 2010:40-41), Ife-Modakeke, (Osun state), Ijaw-Itshekiri (Delta state), the Idi-Araba (2002) in Lagos state, Shagamu (1999) in Ogun state (FRN, 2003: 100-112). This has created a crisis of identity, reify ethno- religious conflicts and devalue the collective aspiration in a nation especially where benefits and privileges are disproportionately distributed as the cases in Ethiopia, Sudan, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d' Ivoire and Somalia among others shows.

The greatest challenge to democratic growth is the preeminence of culture in the definition of citizenship in Nigeria. Patterns of citizenship have emerged from this socio-cultural milieu such as north-south, Muslim- Christian, Hausa-Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba. This has limited citizens' rights and access to political power, landed properties (land) and economic benefits especially where residence rights are granted outside ones traditional home town. This has made a Yorubaman or Hausaman whose parents were born and brought up in his state of abode a settler and not an indigene. To put it in the words of Akinwale (2009:2):

The absence of a tradition of respect for human and civic rights manifest itself in the creation of indigene-settler dichotomy that makes the Nigerian a foreigner once he is in the midst of Nigerians of other ethnic and/or religious affiliations.

The conflicts in Jos in 1994, 2001, 2002, 2007, 2010 are reflections of reactions to the indigene- settler syndrome. The Human Rights Watch (2004) captured this phenomenon vividly when it averred that:

Competing claims to the status of indigeneship; dispute over the process of selection of traditional chiefs; and more recently, political rivalry in the context of local election particularly election for the chairmanship of the ruling People Democratic party (PDP) congress in Yelwa, in April 2002, resulted to (emphasis mine) tension as voters supported candidates along religious lines.



This could be considered from the stand point of the level of frustration the acclaimed settlers may have suffered in the hands of indigenes and vice versa. Such frustration results from unequal distribution of political and economic resources. This underscore the views expressed of Schock (1996:101) that:

Violent political conflict within nations is contingent on the extent of economic inequality, the greater the degree of economic inequality, the greater the discontent experienced by individuals and groups. The more intense and widespread the discontent, the more likely that grievance will become clear and will somehow get translated into violent political conflict.

The Nigerian state failed over the years to tackle the problem of poverty, inequality and unemployment and this has created feelings of alienation, frustration and insecurity. The high rate of Almajiris in Northern Nigeria reflects the gross underdevelopment of human capital and the poor recognition of citizen value by leaders in this region in particular and Nigeria in general. The result is the emergence of the Boko Haram religious sect (Jama'atu Ahliss-Sunnah Lidda'awati WalJihad) led by Mohammed Yusuf (Bashir, 2011: 1-5). The aftermath of the Boko Haram crisis is the withdrawal of 278 corp members of Ondo state extraction, 200 of Ekiti state and 83 from Akwa Ibom serving in the North to their states of origin (The Sun, 2011: 6, 9). This has shown the disconnection between national integration and cultural integration in Nigeria. The identity and citizenship crisis that has created serious national security challenge is a fall out of this underlying factor. Underscoring this evidence, Maclean (1975) averred that under the anxiety of threatened attack or actual denial of basic needs, the probability that people will react violently (would) increase- emphasis mine.

Ademola (2006:5) was right when he argued that conflicts caused by identity crisis are violent because it rest on the notion of self worth, physical, social, psychological and spiritual security. To Northrup (1989:65), events which tends to undermine the feelings of safety that are tied to forms of identity usually leads to defensive reaction aimed at avoiding such spiritual and or physical exposure. This implies that that identity crisis results from basic needs deprivation.

This subjective perception has derailed the citizenship value and given rise to politics of mutual exclusion which is antithetical to democratic sustainability and national development. The breaking of such political jinx requires dialogue and in extreme cases revolutionary measures as was the case in America and South Africa where citizenship rights were fought for. The liberation of the blacks in America which culminated in the Obama presidency and the political reforms in South Africa and Zimbabwe leading to black independence are reformative measures on citizenship values. This type of measures is necessary where citizenship rights are arbitrarily denied. However, this is not a rationalisation for the acceptance of political violence as a tool in political bargaining. But it is sad to note that in a country where we all enjoy equal right of citizenship non-indigenes are denied political privileges in their state of residence.

### **Concluding Remarks**

No society or nation state is built on the basis of ethnic, religious and cultural homogeneity. Diversity is part and parcel of human existence and as such we must live with it and grow with it. Ethnic and religious differences are reflections of thought processes or

intuition. As one reconciled his inherently divergent thought for personal growth and stability so should ethnic nationalities in Nigeria reconcile their ethno-religious and political differences for national growth and stability. The challenge for our political leaders is to ensure that good governance resides within the realms of citizens needs. While ensuring equitable distribution of political and economic resources, human capacity development to address poverty, unemployment and inequality should be given primary attention. Identity mobilization thrived under conditions of wants, poverty and desperation. It is relevance seeking in nature and can only be addressed with the equitable distribution of national resources. Such identity politics nourished by the elites to secure hegemonic control over political and economic resource fan embers of disunity and thwart the development process in Nigerians. We should all be looking for a Nigeria where every citizen will live, work and contest any political offices he so aspires and is qualified for irrespective of ethnic or religious affiliation and place of residence. The emergence of Barack Obama, a black man of Africa parentage, as the president of America climaxes the end of identity politics in the United States of America. The election of Goodluck Jonathan from the minority tribe as president in Nigeria marked the beginning of the end of identity politics. It shows that Nigeria has gone a long way to bridging the political divide and restores more hope on minority tribes who had lived in fear of perpetual political alienation. If those fueling the ember of identity politics for selfish ends are to calculate the cumulative gains there have so far made there from objectively they will know they have gained nothing.

Nigerians should be encouraged to eschew their ethnic and religious differences and be more tolerant of one another so that a Hausa man living in Cross River state would have all the rights and privileges due for indigenes of the state. The political space should be liberalized to enable Nigerians contest election in their state of residence. This should start with the appointment of non indigenes into executive positions in all states of the federation. It is disheartening to see that after 51 years of independence Nigerians are still talking of northern or southern leaders. The provision of good governance values will erode this tempo of selfish leadership projections. The state should sanction anybody who indulged in acts that undermined its sovereignty no matter how highly placed.

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