

IDENTITY POLITICS AND ITS SECURITY IMPLICATION TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: THE NIGERIA'S EXPERIENCE SINCE 1914

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Abstract

Nigeria is the largest black population in the world with different socio-cultural, political, economic background, and beliefs. The Federal Republic of Nigeria's constitution proclaimed Nigeria unity in diversity, considering its ethno-religious heterogeneity. The political configuration of Nigeria demonstrates the characteristic tendencies of sub-national loyalty. This paper examines identity politics and its security implications to national development: the Nigeria's experience since 1914. Primary and Secondary sources of data interpreted by qualitative historical and descriptive method of analysis are utilized in this work in investigating how identity politics results to security threat to national development in Nigeria. This paper adopts structural-conflict theory as theoretical framework of analysis. The paper argues that much of the scholarly works on identity politics tailors toward electoral process, national integration, good governance, conflict and gender while the security implication of identity politics to national development in Nigeria has not been adequately undertaken. This paper finds that Nigeria's political landscape of marginalization feelings, multi-ethnic and minority characteristic nature encourages identity politics with unsurmountable security threats to national development in various ways. The paper concludes that security implications of identity politics will continue to prevail and to that extent, affects Nigeria's unity in diversity hence, social group identity interest and sense of injustice and marginalization exist. However, the paper recommends true and operational federalism, equal and inclusive political participation, good governance, equitable distribution and allocation of resources, rule of law in political process and among others to shun identity politics and achieve national development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Identity Politics, National Development, Security Implication, Nigeria,

Introduction

Nigeria, as one of the prominent countries in Africa with large population and natural resources is awash with the problem of identity politics which has shaped the political, economic, social, and security aspects of the country endeavours to reposition itself and achieve national development. The reason for this is the failure to ensure the integration of the various segments of the country with different ethnic and religious characteristics, with the concept of identity politics being placed at the center of political discussions. Nigeria's large number of ethnic groups, inequalities among the people in areas of resource endowment, and access to state power, coupled with highly developed and factionalized indigenous bourgeoisie ambition to control the central government makes her ethnocultural situation perhaps, the most complicated in Africa.

Unarguably, Nigeria transited to an independent nation in 1960 with a number of unresolved issues. There exist numerous ethnic groups with diverse languages, customs, beliefs system and levels of political sophistication within the geopolitical boundaries of Nigeria. Those whom the reins of power were handed over by the British unfortunately failed to harness different political backgrounds to form formidable and unbiased united Nigeria's project, far from the British colonial state and administrative pattern of divide and rule. lack of trust among the various ethnic groups that made up the Federation and their struggle for political and economic relevance became obvious. Shortly after independence, those latent divisive elements within Nigerian politics came to the forefront and revolves round the question of ethnic majority or minorities syndrome, lopsided economic and political structures led to identity politics which resulted to security problems that eventually affected national development in Nigeria.¹

Nigeria's domestic policy failed to reflect the social needs and aspirations of an individual, group, class or culture. The ideology of moving Nigeria forward based on the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria that states, Nigeria's core value shall be 'unity in diversity' enshrined in equity, justice, and fair play: respect and care for humanity that ought to be the guiding principles for the survival of Nigeria remain an instrument of political maneuvering. From independence to the collapse of the first Republic, inept leadership, ethnic chauvinism, nepotism, favouritism, sectional discrimination, various forms of corruption, the politics of winner-take-all mentality and

institutionalization of elitist politics that characterized Nigeria's scene, undoubtedly, facilitate identity politics.² Above all, security implications arising from identity politics affect the harnessing and enhancement of 'unity in diversity' to capture the essence of national development in Nigeria.

Considering the heterogeneous nature of Nigeria, this paper looks at the conceptual meaning and theoretical analysis of identity politics, theoretical framework, historical overview and manifestations of identity politics in Nigeria, security implication of identity politics and national development in Nigeria, and conclusion.

Conceptual Meaning and Theoretical Analysis of Identity Politics

The concept of identity politics cannot be understood without prior grasp of the explanation of identity itself. The meaning of identity is complex and fluid because it depends on range of factors. The concept is shaped by individual characteristics, family dynamics, historical factors, social and political contexts. James Jacob and Owbor Nathan Oviiri refer identity as a combination of socio-cultural characteristics which individuals share, or are presumed to share, with others on the basis of which one group may be distinguished or recognized from each other. They further argued that identity is a state of having unique identifying characteristics held by no other person or thing, and it is the individual characteristics by which a person or thing is recognized.³

James D. Fearon asserts that:

Identity is people's concepts of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others. Identity is used in this book to describe the way individuals and groups define themselves and are defined by others on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, language, and culture. Identity refers to the ways in which individuals and collectivities are distinguished in their social relations with other individuals and collectivities. Identities are prescriptive representations of political actors themselves and of their relationships to each other.⁴

By Jacob, Oviiri, and James's explanations, identity simply connotes our sense of who we are as individuals and as members of social group. It means our sense of how others may perceive and label us. Our ideas about our identity are also influenced by the social groups to which we belong which is called social identity. Social identity defines the individuality of someone based on membership in certain groups.⁵

The philosophical concept of identity politics with the rise of new political and social movement is concerned with the differences between groups of people and

allowing of individuals to express those differences. The emergence of identity politics is often attributed to the rise of postmodernism and the rejection of universalism, which posits that all individuals are equal and should be treated as equal.⁶

Michael Haralambos, Martin Holborn, and Robin Heald emphasizes the importance of hearing different voices, particularly those of oppressed group in terms of gender, ethnicity, religion, age, nationality ..., and argues that political identity may transcend to convey individual and collective identity, power and identity, class and identity, gender and identity, ethnicity and identity and age and identity. The central message by Haralambos and others centered on oppressed group which means that identity politics starts from analyses of such forms of social injustice. It is predominantly a struggle for recognition and social justice by groups or demand for self-determination. The term signifies a socio-political project undertaken by representatives of a collective groups in a distinctive social location that has hitherto been neglected or suppressed.⁷

The conceptualization of identity politics as a political approach that focuses on the interests and perspectives of groups that share a common identity, such as race, gender, ethnicity, or religion, and sexual orientation formed exclusive political alliances that moved away from mainstream political parties and create their own political institutions.⁸ Therefore, what makes identity politics a significant departure from earlier pre-identarian forms of political recognition is the demand for recognition on the basis of the very grounds in which recognition has been previously denied. The demand by the group instead changed from inclusion within the fold of the existing socio-political larger body to respect for oneself as different.⁹

In the context of this discussion, identity politics jettisons national identity to encourage social group identity of ethnicity and ethnic politics that harbours the sentiments of marginalization. Identity politics depicts characteristics of ethnicity. What is then ethnicity? Ethnicity refers to the identification of a group based on a perceived cultural distinctiveness that makes the group into a people. It denotes ethnic group that an individual belongs to, where the identity of the group is determined by its culture, religion, and traditions.¹⁰ Okwudiba Nnoli argues that relations between ethnic groups within the same political system produced ethnicity, hence, he defined ethnicity as a group with both linguistic and/ or cultural similarity and a common consciousness or

identity.¹¹ Ethnicity in relationship to identity politics is a group option in which resources are mobilized for the purpose of pressuring the political system to allocate public goods for benefit of the members of a self-differentiating collectivity. It goes with the actor's adaptive ascription of ethnic identity to organize the meaning of his social relationships within the requirements of variously structured social situations.¹²

Corroborating from above, Nasir Ahmad Sarkin Dori categorically argues that identity politics is the deliberate attempt by a group to assert its identity and protect its interests above other contending interests. Identity politics is a development event that involves a person or group questioning their sense of self or place in the world. It shows the tendency of a particular religion, race, and social background to form exclusive political alliance by moving away from traditional broad-based politics or national ideology. It is a politics in which groups of people having a particular racial, religious, ethnic, social, or cultural identity tend to promote their specific interests or concerns without regard to the interest or concerns of any larger political group. Identity politics explains political positions or dispositions established on the concern and position of social groups of people distinguished with their identity through loosely correlated aspects of social organizations such as culture, dialect, disability, education, ethnicity, language, nationality, gender identity, generation, occupation, profession, race, religion, sexual orientation, settlement, urban and rural habitation, veteran status, and social organizations based on age.¹³

Consequently, it seems that common or shared belief is an important factor to identity politics, ethnicity, and indigenous rights movement where the central point is to achieve social group interest and identity. Thus, Terhembea Nom Ambe-uva conceptualization of identity politics gives more insight and acceptable description in this paper, when he posits that:

identity politics as a political concept refers to the political activity of various ethnic, religious, and cultural groupings in demanding greater economic, social and political rights or self-determination. Identity politics represents and seeks to advance the interests of a particular groups in society, the members of which often share and unite around common experiences of actual or perceived social and economic injustice, relative to wider society of which they form part and exist in.¹⁴

Arising from the above analysis, the political fabric of Nigeria reflects peculiar features of identity politics in terms of intense socio-economic competition, inequity in power distribution and control, resources allocation and control, politics of repression, exclusion, marginalization, widespread mismanagement, and rampant corruption. Also, democratic governance deficits provoked by the discontent at the center, which ultimately breed resistance and violence civil strife in an ethnically plural system are the root of identity politics. All these, unarguably, have led to security threat to national development.

Theoretical Framework

The development event of identity politics and its consequences has attracted theoretical explanations by scholars and researchers. Structural-conflict theory which is also regarded as theories of social conflict and social change attempts to explain conflict as product of the tension that arises when groups must compete for scarce recourses and other related social needs. There is a conflict of interest between these groups, the strong/most powerful groups impose social order on the weak and uses the institutions (such as school, police, and the mass media) to control others.¹⁵

Structural-conflict theory posits that society is characterized by various inequalities and conflicts arise due to differences in power, resources, dominance, coercion, and social status. It emphasizes the competition between groups, often framing issues in terms of dominance and subordination. Its idea is that societies exhibit structural power divisions and resource inequalities leading to conflicting interests. Karl Marx, Max Weber, and George Simmel are three proponent figures to this theory. Marxism theory focuses on social class inequality, Weberian theory emphasizes on inequalities in power, and George Simmel emphasizes the individual unit of analysis in his theory of conflict (that is, to understand the interactions between individuals that can lead to conflict and solidarity between people).¹⁶

Understandably, structural conflict theory stresses that conflicts occur as a result of ways societies are structured and organized, in conjunction with the exploitative and unjust nature of human societies, and domination of one class by another. In situations where existing structures are tilted in favour of one group at the expense and to the detriment of others, where holders of certain state powers or privileges are unwilling to

acknowledge the rights of others, or where people find it difficult to identify with the political and economic ideas of a political regime lead to identity politics which, in turn, give the chances of conflict and escalation if nothing is done to address such situation. Thus, the general basic theoretical assumptions of structural-conflict theory include:

collective battle for self-interest, dynamic nature of social change, function of ideology, unequal structure, economic determinants of social structure, inherent social conflict, unequal resources distribution, and role of power and dominance.¹⁷

The quest for identity politics captures the very essence of structural-conflict theory. This is because the struggle by social groups to assert their influence, protect, and realize their interest from the dominant and larger political body due to unequal structure in terms of resources distribution, economic and political marginalization result to social conflicts. The overvaluation of one's own group based on ethnocentrism in comparison with other groups explains the structural-conflict of identity politics. The frustration of basic needs required by social identity groups give impetus to collective battle for self-interest resulting to identity politics quite explains the structural-conflict theory. These groups could be minorities, ethnic, racial, religious, political or ideological.

Nigeria operates on multi-ethnic complexity of politico-economic and socio-cultural lopsided structural imbalance that depicts structural-conflict theory context of this paper. There is existence of substantial socio-cultural differences among the ethnic groups in Nigeria. The obvious is that sense of political and economic competition between these various social groups sustain identity politics and structural-conflict theory cannot be denied to characterizes relations arising from such heterogenous societies like Nigeria. Class inequality, inequitable distribution of power and individual solidarity to social group identity as observed by the supporters of structural-conflict theory buttress the perceived injustices that causes identity politics. Thus, contributory effects from identity politics traceable to assumptions of structural-conflict theorists position creates security threats to national development in Nigeria.

Historical Overview and Manifestations of Identity Politics in Nigeria

The historical origin of identity politics can be located on the structural defects of the colonial administrative patterns, idiosyncratic politics, ethnicity sentiments, majority/minority resentment feelings and regionalism in Nigeria. The idea of the

nomenclature “Northern and Southern Protectorates” that existed as divided entities and later amalgamated instituted the seed of identity politics in Nigeria. The reason was because the diverse people under northern and southern divide had already developed sense of affinities and attachment to their respective names. Buttressing this point, E. O. Erhagbe affirms that the tragedy of Nigeria’s history was not so much to be found in the diversity of groups that were brought together by amalgamation, instead the real tragedy was that British colonial policy in Nigeria after amalgamation administered the two protectorates separately. Instead of establishing interaction between the two societies that would have solidified the amalgamation, deliberate action was carried out by the colonist to isolate the north from the influences of the south which strived identity politics.¹⁸

Amalgamation was executed with myriad of unanswered questions as it was argued:

What would be the effect of uniting the Fulani emirates with their comparatively static, traditionalist outlook with the thrusting, competitive, individualistic society of the South, that are now acquiring knowledge from a growing number of mission schools, which were making available an expanding clerical class. How would societies that only a few years earlier had been rival and often hostile states live together under one administration? Should they form a single nation? In any case, what was the central objective of British policy? Was it to build an empire permanently subordinate to Britain, to act as a trustee for some shadowy African future, or to encourage a natural spirit leading to ultimate self-government?¹⁹

Following the above questions, eventually, became how Nigeria was to involve as a sovereign independent state amidst identity politics. This was because, the amalgamation brought together different social groups with little or no common identity in terms of language, religion, tradition, or custom and assorted elements such as Muslim feudal emirates, pagans states, Christianized states that per half had history of hostility to each other, sometimes to the point of warfare.

As earlier as 1947, Chief Obafemi Awolowo in his book titled, *Path to Nigerian Freedom* observed and supported a federal structure for Nigeria based on ethnic groups, ... a true federal constitution each group, however small, is entitled to the same treatment as any other group, however large.²⁰ Awolowo went further to say, each of the group ready for self-government should be granted that political privilege; the Yorubas in particular have suffered feelings of frustration for years, under a system which aims at getting all the peoples in the country to the goal of autonomy at the same hour and minute,

the Yorubas have been compelled to mark time on their high level which the other sections hasten to catch up with them.²¹ This statement by Awolowo, in extension, reflected on what Mallam Abubaka Tafawa Belewa earlier said in 1947 inauguration of Arthur Richards Constitution before he became the Prime Minister of Nigeria: He said, "we do not want, Sir, our Southern neighbours to interfere in our development ..."²²

Again, in the one of the various regional conferences summoned by Arthur Macpherson in 1949 and particularly, at the General Conference at Ibadan in January, 1950, the Emir of Zaria and Katsina respectively, demonstrated identity politics of their social group and threatened that if the Northern Region did not get 50 percent seats in the central legislature that "it will rather seek for separation from the rest of Nigeria on the arrangements existing before 1914".²³ The Northerners believed and made it no secret that the amalgamation of the North and South in 1914 was an error. The statement of March, 1953, by the Northern political leader, Sir Ahmadu Bello in Lagos, however, summarizes the North disgust and sentiments against amalgamation when he said, "the mistake of 1914 has come to light, and I should like it to go no further"²⁴.

The history of identity politics played out more critical but closely connected to issue concerned to the motion for self-government. Oyeleye Oyediran observes that on March 31, 1953, Anthony Enahoro, an Action Group back-bencher in the House of Representative moved a motion that the House accepts as a primary political objective the attainment of self-government for Nigeria in 1956. Oyediran argues that the Northern delegation saw the motion as directed against them and designed to intimidate and influence the political landscape of Nigeria. Being not prepared to accept the motion, Ahmadu Bello, on his amendment contribution to the motion stated, "as soon as practicable be substituted for in 1956".²⁵ By implication, one can see that Awolowo and Bello showed sentimental feelings of identity politics that focused on the protection of their various social groups interest even under amalgamation. Thus, the amalgamation and pre-independence politics wittingly or unwittingly instituted the origin of identity politics in Nigeria.

The historical origin of identity politics can be linked to the conventional concept of ethnic minorities politics as comprising those groups of Nigerians outside the so-called three major groups of Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo demand for separate state or

regions. It is on record that Sir Henry Willink was appointed in 1958 to head a Minorities Commission to investigate into the fears of the minorities and recommend means and measures for abating or allaying them.²⁶ The term of reference given to the commission posited that “if and only if no other solution was possible to meet the fears of the minority, as a last resort detailed recommendations should be made for the creation of more regions”. Although, the political leaders in the North demurred, the West supported with ethnic feelings and the East supported creation of more states only in its region.²⁷ Practicably, the commission in its report declined the creation of more states or regions. Pursuant upon this, the Willink Commission was the first official and remarkable but unjustified ethnic minorities efforts by the government. Its resultant effects were the continued identity politics at ethnic minority level in Nigeria.

The beginning of identity politics can also be traced to the colonial constitutional development in Nigeria. The Clifford constitution which provided National Legislative Council in Southern Provinces in 1923 with 43 members and for a Northern Provinces isolated and governed by the proclamation of the Governor. This was one of the isolationist policy and divide and rule of the colonial administration in which one group was played against the other in order to sustain imperialism and colonial domination in Nigeria. The creation of the Bi-cameral legislature in the North and the Uni-cameral legislature in the south by Clifford resulted in the later problems of national unity, integration, cohesion and collaboration between the Northern and Southern Provinces. It also caused marginalization and hatred among the ethnic groups.²⁸

Despite the split of Nigeria Youth Movement in 1941 that brought to limelight the ethnic divisions in the country; increasing divisions that were not only between the North and South but also between East and West steering Nigeria towards suspected regionalism. However, the reality became obvious by the emergence of the Richard constitution in 1946 which introduced regionalism in Nigeria with the creation of North, West and East regions.²⁹ It established three regional Assemblies into three regions and each region had a Regional Assembly more powerful than the center. The result of these colonial policies was the flourishing of ethnic, regional and cultural organizations based on parochial interests. Sir John Macpherson constitution of 1951 recognized the three major ethnic cultural groups namely: Hausa-Fulani from the Northern region, Igbo from

the Eastern region and Yoruba from the Western region as well as the creation of regional legislature with Bi-cameral legislature in the North and West with exclusion of East.³⁰ These interests transmogrified for the emergence of political parties on regional and ethnical bases that served as the foundation of primordialism and identity politics in Nigeria.

Historical manifestation of identity politics was further recognized by the tribal interest in the struggle for political power and other representations in the Nigerian system that allowed the formation of political parties ethnically and regionally. These are: Northern people's Congress (NPC), established in 1949 led by Mallam Aminu Kano and Mallam Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and former cultural organization from Jama'iyar Mutanen Arewa – a Northern region Hausa-Fulani group led by Ahmadu Bello Sarduna. The National Convention of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) which was formerly known as National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons founded in 1944, and Herbert Macaulay as its first President and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe as the first General Secretary was inherited and dominated by the Igbo Cultural group from the Eastern region led by Nnamdi Azikiwe. The Action Group (AG) formed in 1948, led by Obafemi Awolowo and originally from Yoruba Cultural Association (Pan-Yoruba Organization), the Egbe Omo Oduduwa.³¹ These three political parties were committed to championing the interest of their respective ethnic and regional groups rather than national interest. Their political activities signaled the subsequent institutionalized identity politics in the body politics of Nigeria.

Consequently, 'ingroup and outgroup', 'we' versus 'them' and 'majority versus minority' ethnic mentality, invariably, continues to aggravate hatred, division, disunity, conflicts, and political confrontation in politics, oppression, domination, exploitation, victimization, and discrimination, and marginalization of one group over other enthroned identity politics against national development in Nigeria. In fact, it was the aforesaid points and deprivation melted against Eastern Region (Igbo) that led to identity politics and the outbreak of Nigeria-Biafra war between 1967 to 1970.

Security Implication of Identity Politics and National Development in Nigeria

The security implications of identity politics to national development makes sense with the understanding of the nexus between security needs, causes of identity politics

and national development in Nigeria. Identity politics has fostered a culture of political patronage and favoritism, where politicians rewarded supporters of their ethnic or religious group with political appointments, contracts, and other benefits. This has led to a situation whereby merit and competence are often undermined in favour of loyalty to a particular social identity group. This act of political patronage has limited the quality of governance and public service delivery in the country. Manipulation of identity politics to favour one group against others has fueled violent conflicts and tensions in Nigeria. This is evidently seen in states such as Kaduna, Plateau, and Benue, where ethnic and religious tensions are high, and politicians used identity politics to incite violence and deepen divisions for their political gain. The resulting conflicts have led to loss of lives and property, displacement of people, and a general breakdown of law and order which undermined the stability and security of the country and threatens its prospects for peace and national development.³²

Polarization and division of Nigeria arising from identity politics has continued to generate security concerns for national development. Nigeria has tried different political system, implemented numerous economic measures, and adopted various socio-cultural policies. But, identity politics which involves the mobilization of individuals based on their race, ethnicity, religion, gender, or sexual orientation to achieve political and social objectives influenced these efforts. National development has been affected by the identity politics. Identity politics that limited political, social, and economic activities to a particular group with common aspiration, values and norms has derailed the policy programmes of national development. For example, the security implication of identity politics discards the concept of national development and diversify common identity and loyalty to sub-nationality. Identity politics is also noticed on the operational activities of the Federal Character Commission, National Youth Service Corps, and Unity Schools, etc. where the commission is bedeviled and overwhelmed by nepotism, favouritism, mediocrity, bribery, and corruption.³³

Identity politics as a multicultural issue underpinned with politico-economic and socio-cultural presentation of a collective social group of people who seek to address marginalization, inequality, injustice, and achieve self-determination has led to serious security challenges. The security implications can be seen by the rise in ethnic and

cultural organizations of various forms such as the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF), Ijaw Youth Council (IYC), the Oduduwa People's Congress (OPC), the Movement for the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) etc. which have divided the nation and negatively affected national development in Nigeria. Consequently, both MASSOB and MEND activities have been argued to negatively affected national development in the South-South region by bombing refineries and oil pipelines which consumed human life, animals, farmlands and socio-economic amenities. Even outside the region the attacks on Atlas cave in Lagos and on October 1, 2010, bomb blasts in Abuja are topical reference of attacks outside the Niger Delta by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND).³⁴

As pointed in above, identity politics includes the ways in which people's politics may be shaped by aspects of their identity through loosely correlated social organizations. These are organizations that champion the ideology of primordialism in Nigeria. The organizations were allied to respective cultural and ethnic groups without any element of national development identity. These organizations in disguised continue to aggravate mistrust, hatred, division, and conflicts among the regional and ethnic groups in Nigeria. Most of the terrible violence and ethnic-regional or religious conflicts were engineered and masterminded by these organizations through hate speech and sentiments. All these undoubtedly jeopardized the already exacerbated security architecture and stunted national development in Nigeria.

Another menace of identity politics and its security implications on national development and survival are the increasing marginalization, political and religious class instigation which resulted in the emergence of self-acclaimed individual liberators movement and various militant armed groups. For example, Aliyu Mukhtar Katsina asserts that Boko Haram group which started as an Islamic sect in 2002 but transformed into an armed group in July 2009, when about 17 of its members were massacred in cold blood by the Nigerian security personnel had a long-standing tradition of radical antagonism to injustice, deprivation, and crass materialism deeply rooted in Muslim North, and which is epitomized by level of corruption and moral decadence of the educated elites.³⁵ The achievement of national development, therefore, suffer setback from the security menace of Boko Haram in the North-east and Nigeria at large.

Since 2009, Boko Haram's audacious and unrelenting attacks have caused hundreds loss of lives to innocent people across the length and breadth of the whole northern parts of the country. Boko Haram's operation involves assassination of security personnel, local politicians, religious and traditional rulers. The groups have had coordinated attacks with wider scope and lethal effects such as Kano attacks of January, 2012, where hundreds of casualties were recorded. Added dimensions of Boko Haram's operational attacks from the middle 2011 were suicide bombings, bombings of churches, mosques, and market places as well as social spots with improvised explosive devices. The activities of Boko Haram sects, indubitably, have created much worries in the country, and its security implication is seen on the psychological fear, mutual distrust and economic siege it fostered on the already pauperized region, ravaged by poverty and bad governance.³⁶

Furthermore, security implication of identity politics to national development is negatively ascertained within ethnic cum religious affections and corruption to sabotage the ethics of profession in public sector. The public security was implicated of sustaining ethnic bias in the discharge of official duty. Kasali Monsuru Adegboyega observes:

The public condemnation of the immediate past Inspector General of Police (IGP) and Niger State Commissioner of Police (CP), Mr. Hafiz Ringim and Zakari Bui, following the escape from Police detention of Mr. Kabir Umar (popularly known as Kabir Sokoto) - an alleged member of Boko Haram (a terrorist group in the northern part of Nigeria) and the prime suspect of the December 25, 2011 bombing at the St. Theresa Catholic Church, Madala, Niger State where more than One Hundred people including, the worshippers were killed.³⁷

This act of compromise by Commissioner of Police, Zakari Bui was said to be masterminded because he (Bui) came from the same state of origin with the suspect, hence, the escape of the suspect was a planned one by some high-ranked police officers including former Inspector General of Police and Niger State Commissioner of Police to prevent the suspect from disclosing the sponsors of the terrorist group, Boko Haram and with the motive of covering-up the involvement of some Northern elites in the dastardly activities of the terrorist group.

Demonstration of identity politics was illustrative during the 2015 and 2019 presidential elections. Muhammadu Buhari who is from the north and a Muslim won 2015 presidential election with majority support from northern groups Muslim votes

against his opponent Goodluck Ebere Jonathan, a Christian from the south who also had Christian votes support across Nigeria, more especially, from the southern Christians. Thus, the election was regarded as Muslim north and Christian south political competition. But, in 2019 presidential election where Buhari won his second tenure election to office, with group identity support from the northern Muslim votes, his political opponent in the person of Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, a Muslim from the north whose support cut across southern Christian and northern Muslim votes eventually did not win. However, the election was viewed as a competition between the Muslim north and the Christian south with admixture of the particularity of social identity and political group alliance.³⁸

The above elections, inevitably, reared its ugly post-election security implications to national development in Nigeria that it led to: the fragmentation of the political system along ethnic and religious lines, leading to a lack of national cohesion and trust among different groups which made it difficult to form stable and effective coalitions or consensus on key issues affecting the country; rise of violent conflicts and insecurity in various regions of the country, such as the Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast, the Niger Delta militancy in the south-south, and the separatist agitation in the southeast, ... fueled by perceived marginalization, discrimination, or injustice by the dominant groups or the federal government; corruption and patronage that pervade the public sector, as politicians and bureaucrats use public resources to reward their loyal supporters or to buy votes from their constituencies; lack of accountability and transparency of governance and policy-making processes ...; underdevelopment and inequality that afflict many parts of the country, especially the rural areas and the northern regions, ... partly due to the lack of inclusive and participatory governance and policy-making processes that address the needs and aspirations of all Nigerians, irrespective of their social identity.³⁹

Also, the Nigeria's 2023 general elections were characterized by issues of identity politics made obvious by marginalization, abuse of power by incumbents, and judicial interference which persistently influence democratic principles. Politics becomes winners take it all with the background foundation of particular social group regarded as the 'chosen one' and their interest highly protected. The drive to control political power, therefore, reflected on ethnic line. Ethnic identity reflects a major factor in shaping

political alliances and preferences, especially at the presidential level.⁴⁰ For example, in the 2023 election, the three major candidates are from the three dominant ethnic groups: Atiku Abubakar from the Hausa-Fulani, Bola Ahmed Tinubu from the Yoruba, and Peter Obi from the Igbo.

Political configuration of 2023 general election generated tension especially, by the minority groups. This has had significant security implication to national development. First, communities seeking representation at the federal and state levels are likely to perceive electoral malpractice as an intentional act to further marginalize and reduce their ability to win elections, leading to attacks and reprisal attacks from armed personnel and rival groups. For instance, during the February elections, Peter Obi's candidacy played a pivotal role in altering the expected electoral dynamics in the South-East. The prospect of having the first president from the South-East since the era of the largely ceremonial Nnamdi Azikiwe's President garnered significant attention from citizens, motivating to substantial voter registration drives in support of his candidacy.⁴¹

Consequently, identity politics has security implications of cause and effect to national development in Nigeria sprouting from violent conflicts, indigene-citizenship dichotomy due to ethnic consciousness, primordial classification and exclusionary politics and ethnic loyalty which divest allegiance to cultural or social groups instead of national focus.

Conclusion

By the ongoing discourse in this paper, it is obvious that identity politics includes the ways in which people's politics may be shaped by aspects of their social group identity through loosely correlated social organizations. Social organizations that champion the ideology of respective to cultural and ethnic groups without much affinity to national identification. It has been demonstrated that identity politics emanates from ethnicity, regionalism, and religious sentiments with a resultant effect which perpetuate and continue to promote hatred, mistrust, division, disunity, tribalism, nepotism, discrimination, marginalization, hostility, violent conflicts, and hate speech in Nigerian political space.

Structural-conflict theorists analytical position give veritable meaning and understanding of the harbinger of identity politics in relationship with the heterogeneous

backgrounds of the people and multi-dimensional socio-cultural milieu among social groups in Nigeria. However, the historical and manifestations of identity politics in Nigeria, more especially, its trace pre-independence to post-independence political and economic activities. While it may be truth that identity politics has the potential to foster inclusivity and diversity, its security implications for national development proved complex and varied. Therefore, security implications of identity politics will continue to prevail and influence Nigeria's unity in diversity so far as there is existence of collective social group interest and sense of injustice, and marginalization.

However, this work recommends that various ethnic and regional groups should be committed to process that would create patriotic leaders with a national outlook for national development. Government should establishment a just and egalitarian social order, a free democratic society that enables inclusive participation in the country's political and economic process. There should be need to promote wide sensitization to accelerate greater national consciousness to Nigerians on the danger of identity politics. National Orientation Agency and other related mechanisms should be useful in this direction. Ruling class, elites, and politicians should unanimously engage in promoting common feelings, unity, love, and togetherness in the governance, political and democratic process in Nigeria. This would go a long way in eliminating primordial politics and promoting national development.

True and operational federalism in Nigeria should be developed to foster relative political and economic autonomy, substantial cultural and ethnoreligious affinities, promotion of patriotic leadership, management of diverse but common unity, and capability to adequately control and convert social groups agitations to achieve national development in Nigeria. Government should be committed in promoting a high level of literacy particularly, to masses through all avenues of political mobilization and communication. There should be need to promote good governance: equal participatory, consensus-oriented, accountability, transparent, responsive, equitable and inclusive, rule of law in political process. Building of trust, tolerance, and equity in sharing and distribution of power and resources will help to promote a sense of belonging to achieve national development. Government should also encourage grassroots development, and poverty alleviated programmes that would reduce the rate of poverty, unemployment and

inequality.⁴² This would assist in reducing the rate of aggression, anxiety, and tension within social group that will instigate identity politics in Nigeria.

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