



# Ethnicity, Politics and National Development

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines the historical development of ethnicity in the Nigerian political terrain. It posits that the distinguishing feature of Nigerian politics is the role played by ethnicity in stunting the task of national development. It argues that federalism in Nigeria is a farce, as the major ethnic nationalities monopolize political power for self interest. This ethnic consciousness heightened political competition at the centre resulting in the social, political, administrative and cultural maladies that bedevil Nigeria. It concludes that elites crude accumulation for personal wealth field crisis, instability and violence which affected national development efforts.

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### Introduction

The historical background of Nigerian government and politics involves the pre-colonial era and the colonial era in Nigeria. The pre-colonial era is the period before the coming of the colonial masters to Nigeria while the colonial era is the period that colonial administration was established in the country (Nigeria). Before the advent of the European Colonial Masters on the coast of West Africa; there was established various system of government referred to as traditional political system in several parts of Nigeria and other parts of West Africa. These orderly advanced systems of government had all the organs of government established the principles of checks characterizing some of them. Nigeria, prior to the imposition of the British colonial rule and carving out a conglomeration of states, had about two hundred and fifty ethnic groups. Each of the ethnic groups maintained a different and independent system of administration.

The colonial era, was the period British held sway in Nigeria. The scramble for and the partitioning of West Africa by the European powers acted as the genesis of the establishment of the colonial administration in West Africa. A part from Liberia, all the West African countries were under the rulership of Britain, France, and Germany and at some time Portugal. These nations shared out West African countries as a result of its partitioning that took place during the Berlin Conference of 1884 and 1885.

In response to the call made at the 1890 Brussels Conference, the European nations that shared out West African countries sent their officials to these territories for effective occupation and that was the commencement of the colonial rule or indirect rule in West Africa. Therefore, the period of 1885 to 1950s served as the period of indirect rule in West Africa. This period witnessed political and economic dehumanization for the people of West Africa. This explains why the colonial era has a great impact on the pattern of administration in Nigeria. This clearly means that in the beginning of the Nigerian people before the arrival of the colonial masters, the people who lived in the territories today

called Nigeria were not in any serious conflict with any group hence, there was none to compete with around them. It becomes clear to say that; ethnicity was a deliberate and conscious creation of the colonial masters in order to use such sentimental expression to perpetually have dominion and control over the colonies in Africa. That is the more reason Nnoli's (2011:66) submission is accepted when he says that:

*...The British colonialist introduced various policies that emasculated the revolutionary potential of the working class and the trade unions some of these policies were part of the overall colonial strategy and tactics for subjugating the colonized people as a whole. Others were design specifically to counteract working class consciousness. In the specific case of the working class in Nigeria, the imperialists used ethnicity to destroy working class collective action... consequently the working class could not provide political leadership to the more militant peasantry, its natural political ally.*

Initially, the different ethnic groups were living in small autonomous villages of 100 to 500 persons in different geographical locations without any problem of envying or being jealous of another ethnic group hence their locations were far apart. For instance the Hausa, Yoruba and the Igbo were far apart that there was no need for chauvinistic feelings. It was the colonial masters who gradually gathered these ethnic groups in provinces, protectorates, regions and finally brought these different ethnic groups into one geopolitical entity to be governed by one person using a common treasury.

### Nigeria Federalism and Ethnicity

The origin of ethnicity began with the evolution of the Nigeria federalism. It was Sir Bourdillon who initiated the idea of federalism for Nigeria in 1939. He divided the country into provinces and regional councils along the three major ethnic groups in the country. According to Nwabughuogu (1996:49):

*Bourdillon himself now begun to develop the federal idea ... which would provide for regional councils in the provinces with a central council in Lagos... Bourdillon took a practical action to implement his ideas. He divided the protectorate of southern Nigeria into: eastern and western provinces... But he had not yet built a true federal structure before he left Nigeria in 1943. For he still left the North intact, thereby worsening the imbalance which is inimical to the growth of true federation. Nevertheless...Bourdillon had created a skeleton of a federation.*

The Federal structure which Bourdillon laid generated the notion of divide and rule. The west and the east that was initially intact as the southern protectorate was split to separate the Yoruba (west) from the Igbo (east) however the Hausa/Fulani (North) was left undivided, whose size was bigger than the west and the east put together. One question which remains unanswered is the non-divisions of the Northern region, perhaps the Hausa/Fulani ethnic group was the major dominant of the north. At this point, the West and the East who used to do things together under the notion of southern protectorate solidarity withdrew into identifying with their culture areas. By 1951, Nigeria was already clearly structured into three major regions: the Northern Region (Hausa/Fulani); the Western Region (Yoruba) and the Eastern Region (Igbo). These major ethnic regional entities became the basis for many political administrative and economic policies in Nigeria.

These groups became conscious of their groups and insisted on wooing favour from the central government to the regions which they belong to. Buttressing the ethnic consciousness created by the British colonial masters in Nigeria, Ekeh (2004:21) said: Under British colonial rule, in the old Provincial Administration of Eastern Nigeria before 1950, the component ethnic groups developed separately. Igbos were largely separated from the Ijaw, the Efik and the Ibibios in Calabar province and several other small ethnic groups in Ogoja province this had their own administrative divisions in the region. With the political changes in the 1950s all such ethnic autonomies in Eastern Nigerian dissolved. The rationalization that occurred turned the Igbos into the majority ethnic group, both demographically and politically.

Just the same way the Igbos emerged as the dominant ethnic group in the Eastern Region as a result of the provincial rationalization, the same thing applied to the Yoruba in the Western Region. Initially, Yoruba was not the dominant ethnic group among the ethnic groups it found itself. This is what Ekeh (2004:19-20) says: Under the British rule, Western Nigeria had six provinces. Four of these were Yoruba. Two of them Benin and Warri provinces had very little contact with the Yoruba before colonial rule. With colonialism there was considerable labour migration that brought Yoruba and non-Yoruba in the western region into contact. However, politically, the provinces including the Yoruba ones were administered separately. All of these political arrangements changed dramatically with the political rationalization of Nigeria, beginning in 1954, that dissolved provincial administrative autonomy. In a spate of a few years, the Yoruba emerged as the political power of western Nigeria and the non-Yoruba ethnic groups in Warri and Benin provinces became ethnic minorities.

Consequent upon the above political events of the federal move, the reactions from the new minority ethnic groups in

Warri and Benin Provinces were varied. While a Yoruba-led political party, called the Action Group had important following among the Yoruba linguistic kinsfolk of Itsekiri and a good number of support in Northern Benin Province and Urhobo in Warri later Delta Province.

The political relations between the new ethnic majority tribe, Yoruba, and the new minority ethnic groups in Delta and Benin provinces were fiercely brittle (Ekeh, 2004:22).

Another factor that gave birth to ethnic sentiment was the implication of the incorporation of Nigeria into the world capitalist system. This meant that the British colonial masters needed raw materials from their African colonies to feed their home industries at the same time look out for market to dispose of their finished goods which were brought from Europe for sale. To get away with the raw materials from Nigeria they need to move the raw materials from their different production joints to the seaports or hinterlands for evacuation to Europe. The process of gathering the raw materials necessarily required the establishment of infrastructures such as roads, railways, and telecommunications. The people were coerced into forced labour to be part of these public works, besides the local people needed money (the British currency) to pay the taxes that were imposed on them by the colonial masters. This resulted to several persons migrating from the rural areas to the urban centres where there was job opportunities in the European railway constructions and other public works.

As a result of this rural-urban migration, the urban cities became a place of high concentration of the different ethnic groups who came to work. The different ethnic groups began to identify with themselves in groups. It was at this time that ethnic and cultural organizations were formed in the cities by the different groups to pursue their common goals. These ethnic unions later became powerful associations to the extent that they started responding to the needs of their members beyond what the government could do for them. Some of these unions were the Idoma Hope Rising (for the Idoma ethnic group); the Egbe Omo Oduduwa (for the Yoruba ethnic group), the Tiv Progressive Union (for the Tiv ethnic group), Jamiyyan Mutanen Arewa (for the Hausa/Fulani ethnic group). According to Fafowora (2011:2).

The emergence of urban centers in colonial Nigeria... brought many migrants into the new urban area to look for employment following the introduction of tax regime by the colonial government. Economic integration made colonial rule easier and more profitable. But this development set in motion a process that was to lead to greater contact and competition among the various ethnic groups for dominance and the economic advantage one other ethnic group that would accompany such dominance. It is clearer now that, ethnic sentiments and the cut-throat struggle and competition among the ethnic group in Nigeria today have its genesis in the political and economic activities which were the reasons for colonization and imperialism. So, ethnicity cannot be totally separated from colonialism. It was colonialism that forcefully brought the different ethnic groups, who were initially separate, together to govern them in diversity. It was this forced union of the various ethnic groups that have generated sentimental feeling by the ethnic group against the others hence the state has proved to be a failed state for not guarantying the safety and provision of social amenities to the people.

By 1948 and 1951 when the colonial masters gave the nationalist the go ahead to form political parties.

For instance; the Egbe Omo Oduduwa “ a Pan-Yoruba” organization whose aims included the effort to ensure a ‘big tomorrow’ that would enable the Yoruba people to hold their own among other tribes in Nigeria, suddenly transformed into a political party known as Action Group (AG).

Invariably the AG was a Western Nigeria Yoruba based political party. Chief Obafemi Awolowo was the leader of the Western Region and AG.

In the Northern Region, the Western Nigeria experience repeated itself. The Hausa/Fulani cultural/ethnic organization, Jamyyan Mutanen Arewa became a political party known as the Northern People's Congress (NPC). The north was led by Sir Ahmadu Bello who was also the political leaders of NPC. In the Eastern Nigeria Region, the Igbo ethnic Union the Igbo State Union which was headed by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe became a political party for the East, known as (National Council for Nigeria and Cameroon NCNC).

By 1959 when the Federal General Election was to be conducted, it was on these three ethnic based political parties that the elections were conducted. That is the NPC, NCNC and AG. After independence, it was very clear that Nigeria politicians had not learnt their political lessons on the implications of ethnically based political parties. Nigeria is a greatly divided country. This division is accompanied with serious suspicion, distrust, and antagonism among its diverse people. These problems have had grave consequences for the good health, orderly growth, development, stable democratic government, unity and survival of the nation. The different measures and approaches designed and employed by successive Nigerian governments to unite and preserve and generally keep the country afloat cannot be said to have been really effective as the polity is daily faced with increasingly monumental crisis of insecurity, sectarian violence, ethnic strife, political instability and threats of disintegration.

A united country and people are in a better position to ably confront its crises of development, nationhood and stability. A strong historical consciousness of the political leaders and the generality of the people to do this with the appropriate frame of mind and instrumentalities are crucial for a successful and lasting result.

#### **Implication of Ethnic Consciousness for Nation-building in Nigeria**

Nigeria party polity has been polluted by ethnic chauvinism interest. This problem is one of the major problems confronting the progress of liberal democracy in Nigeria since 1960, to the extent that ethnic sentiment has gradually crept in to find a place in every facet of Nigerian political activity.

Ethnic sentiment has been one of the factors responsible for most of the inefficiencies and low productivity in Nigeria. Since the end of the Nigerian civil war, Nigeria has moved from one crisis to another owing to contradictory steps taken by past governments. Perhaps the most serious problems in Nigeria today which have made nation-building a mere construct are the issues of ethno-regional affiliation and religious crisis. One of the factors that have seriously dampened the image and glory of Nigerian party politics is ethnicity. The first open display of ethnic chauvinism in Nigerian party politics was the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) episode in 1941 when the party broke-down due to ethnic feelings expressed in party politics.

The major factors responsible for the post-independence economic and political turbulence in Nigeria: ...were the shaky tripartite federal structure with strong regionalism, disparity in

the sizes and populations of the three regions; three regionally based and tribally sustained political parties and a weak political class driven by ethnic ideologies. Obviously, ethnicity affected the foundation stone laying of party politics in Nigeria since independence in 1960.

According to Omotola (2010: 135) the issue of ethnic politics in Nigeria started with 1964 election when Nnamdi Azikiwe was denied the premiership of Western region after his party, NCNC in alliance with UPGA and some elements of AG won the election. Subsequent political activities that followed this action were tailored towards ethnic mobilization. The political party formation in the second republic in Nigeria followed ethnic affiliation and suspicion among the two leading ethnic groups, Igbo and Yoruba became intensified. Subsequent party formation has continued to follow this trend-Yoruba elements affiliating with political parties based in their region, the same with Igbo and Hausa. In the North, National Party of Nigeria (NPN) paraded a large number of the Hausa or Fulani stock; there was the Nigeria People's Party (NPP) in the East whose composition was basically Igbo and the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) whose members were predominantly Yoruba.

At present the same ethnic affiliation seems to be guiding the structure of the political parties in power in Nigeria. The South Western Nigeria has six states including Lagos. In 2003, five states in the region fell under the administration of Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), a party which claims to share ideology with UPN while the sixth state, Ondo fell under a minority party, Labour Party. This same ethnic affiliation has equally informed the formation of parties across the different ethnic groups in Nigeria giving the impression that ethnic loyalty takes precedence over national loyalty in Nigeria's political experiment. In the Nigerian Presidential elections that took place on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March, 2015, the ruling party, the PDP, presented the incumbent, President Goodluck Jonathan, who is from the South-South. The major opposition party, the APC, fielded Muhammadu Buhari, from the North. A close analysis of the election results shows that while the South-South and the South East voted overwhelmingly for President Jonathan, the North voted massively for Buhari. The South-Western votes, on the other hand, were divided.

The ethno-regional divide which was supposed to have gone with the creation of States between 1967 and 1996 now defines Nigerian national identity. Since the nation does not have a common denominator, for instance, national dress or culture, to which Nigerians can identify themselves most Nigerians prefer to seek socio-cultural relevance in their root. What exists in Nigeria today, according to Iwilade (2007) is a conglomeration of mutually exclusive social groups with fixations on primordial bonds that drive them to violent civil conflict and deep suspicion. Thus the intensity of ethnic mobilization in Nigeria makes historical awareness imperative. The need for our leaders to be sensitive to the History of ethno-regional consciousness and the subsequent mobilization which has become a fashion in Nigeria becomes more urgent. The formation of socio-political groups such as Igbo Youth Congress (IYC) Odua People's Congress (OPC), and Arewa People's Congress (APC) which represent the triadic ethnic groups in Nigeria is an indication that the current efforts at nation-building require more than good leadership. Nigeria needs more than mere slogans and jingles to be able to weld together the pervasive cracks seen to be conspicuous in its political structure.

This paper suggests recourse to historical consciousness as a viable option in the current efforts at nation-building.

Ethnic consideration in Nigeria today is more important than who one is and what he can deliver. The demand and desperation for the creation of states and local government councils in Nigeria over the years has been provoked by ethnic marginalization. In Benue state for instance, the Tiv ethnic group is the most dominant group in the state, it has been producing the civilian executive governors since the creation of the state. In the First Republic the chief executive was Aper Aku, in the Third Republic it was Moses Orshio Adasu, in the Fourth Republic it was George Akume and today it is Gabriel Suswan. The Idoma who are a minority tribe have been crying foul over the political marginalization in the state. They feel the way out is the creation of 'Apa State' a project they have been upon for a long period now. This is just one case out of several calls from minority ethnic groups for state creation in the country. Currently the National Assembly has over 30 demands from different ethnic groups in the country demanding for states of their own.

Ethnicity also affected the allocation of federal resources in the first republic, because the Hausa/Fulani was in charge of the administration in the First Republic they used the opportunity to allocate most of the federal funds to the Northern Region than they did to other regions. Ethnicity has also been seen as a major factor behind most of the civil unrest in the democratic journey of Nigeria According to Imobighe (2003:14) and Alebo (2006): Ethnic and inter-communal conflicts have become so pervasive that there is hardly any part of the country that has not been affected. More revealing still, hardly does any month pass without some form of civil disturbances, this has become a defining characteristics of the return to civil rule. Since May 1999, it is now generally understood that Nigeria is grappling with a rising wave of ethnic bloodshed in which well over 2000 people have died since military rule ended in 1999.

Another effect of ethnicity on the Nigerian polity is that it has heightened political competition in electoral contest. Most ethnic groups insist on winning elections by duress especially in their regions. No wonder, in the First Republic, Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) had to return some candidates unopposed even before the elections were begun. This kind of political behaviour created tension in the polity, according to Hembe (2003:110): The contestants sought power by projecting themselves as champions of this or that ethnic group, thereby splitting the country into hostile ethnic blocks. The struggles were spearheaded by regional governments and the leaders chose to rationalize them in ethnic rather than intra-class terms (Nnoli, 1978).

Furthermore, Hembe (2003:110) citing Onobu (1975) says that: Each party sponsored and supported ethnic minorities in order to destabilize the areas dominated by others, thereby promoting the proliferation of ethnic sentiments and the growth of ethnic tension throughout the country. It is essentially these inter-ethnic struggles that led to the emergence of political parties in Tiv land. It is quite obvious therefore that ethnicity has affected every aspect of the governing process in Nigeria. It will be highly deceptive for anybody to think that ethnicity is not harmful to Nigeria and its quest for development. Ethnicity has given rise to a dysfunctional effectiveness among the elites to pursue a common cause. Nigeria would have been independent before 1960 if the zeal of the nationalist was not tampered with ethnic tension in Nigeria Youth Movement in 1941.

The foundation of ethnicity which the colonial masters left since independence is what has determined several issues in the country. The desperate outcry for states and local government creation is a way of seeking solace in the face of provocative ethnic marginalization of the major ethnic groups against the ethnic minority groups.

If the ethnic question in Nigeria is not constitutionally addressed by imbibing historical consciousness, its effect will forever linger among the generations to come in Nigeria.

Bandyopahyay and Green (2011:2-9) wrote on the policies of nation-building in post-colonial Africa. In this report nine nation-building policies in post-colonial Africa, namely, changing state names, changing capital cities' names and location, changing national currencies, conscription and national service, religious and linguistic homogenization, republican and centralization policies, one-party state, non-ethnic censuses and land nationalization were considered for possible use to help nation-building. They examined each of these policies to see their contributions to nation-building in some countries in Africa. Their findings suggest that the "nation-building policies do not promote political stability and may in some cases even promote instability, as for instance in the positive correlation between higher levels of education and ethnic violence." They went ahead to argue further that "promoting political stability in Africa is a long and difficult process and is not one that can be easily achieved through select policies" (Bandyopahyay and Green, 2011:19).

Nigeria offers a typical example of a country where almost all but one or two of these policies were tested and failed. Shortly after the Civil War, Nigeria introduced a number of policies in its nation-building efforts. Some of these policies were: changing the capital city's location, for instance, the capital moved from Lagos to Abuja in the heart of the country, changing national currency. E.g. the former British currency (pound and shillings) were replaced by the country's Naira and Kobo. Among these policies is also the conscription of youths for National Service, a programme specifically designed to achieve cultural integration among the different ethnic groups in the country. Nigeria equally develops a language policy that compels Secondary school students to study one of the major languages outside their ethnic root, and primary school pupils are to be taught in their language of immediate environment, while it forbids any allegiance to a national religion. Other major policies are centralization of certain institutions even when the country pretends to be operating federal constitution, non-ethnic census to avoid disintegration and land indigenization policy. These policies evolve because they were taught to be capable of knitting together the diversities inherent in the country's political structure. Nevertheless, ethnic consciousness and mobilization have rendered the policies ineffective. This paper believes that the only option left for Nigeria in its bid for nation-building is to go back to its history, something that has been effectively done in other countries of the world. Omotola (2010:145) succinctly explains the steps taken by Nigeria to achieve nation-building, namely;

- a) Constitutional adoption of secularism which seeks to promote a culture of religious pluralism, and
- b) Federal character principle which seeks to promote ethnic pluralism through balancing of ethnic representation in government establishments at all levels. These efforts have had little or no effects on nation-building in Nigeria.

At present the issue of nation-building is contentious in Nigeria. Bandyopadhyay and Green (2008) explain nation-

building in terms of "nation integration" in societies with multiple ethnic, religious and racial cleavages." Gambo defines it as a process of socializing the people politically into becoming good citizens of the political order and making them feel they have a stake in the community worth fighting for.

It may be difficult for Nigeria to weld together its different ethnic groups owing to what Mustapha (2006: 46) classifies as the problem of ethnic mobilization. The most challenging issue today is suspicion among the three major ethnic nationalities and this is best illustrated by the view of some individuals from Southern Nigeria who contend that the federal structure as presently constituted in Nigeria does not allow each region to develop at its own rate. Indeed, this feeling from a section of the country constitutes a wrong signal which is capable of destroying the corporate existence of the country. Perhaps the historical consciousness may help to reduce this tension. Nigeria needs its past to be able to forge ahead in order to build a nation out of its diversified ethnic groups.

Ethnic sentiment was deliberately introduced and propagated in the polity by the British colonial government to realize colonial and imperialist economic and political objectives. It was also found that since the end of colonialism in 1960, Nigeria has carried forward the spirit of ethnicity into the post-colonial Nigeria; this vice has been discovered to have been responsible for most of the political, administrative, economic, social and cultural maladies in Nigeria. It is suggested that, indigene-settle phenomenon should be strongly discouraged while the Federal Character principles be genuinely implemented at the federal, state and local government levels in order to remove the age long ethnic unrest in the governance of Nigeria.

#### **Historical Perspective of Elite Formation in Nigeria**

In pre-colonial Nigeria societies the elite's class was traditional rulers, princes and chiefs, wealthy long distance traders and priests. These traditional elites include King Kosoko of Lagos, King Jaja of Opobo, the Awujale of Ijebu, Oba Ovonramwen, Attahiru II of Sokoto Caliphate, etc. However, with the development of western education, a new class, the westernised elite men and women emerged. They include Herbert Macauley, Messrs Ernest Ikoli, Samuel Akinsanya, H.O. Davies, J.C. Vaughan, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Ahmadu Bello, etc. These elites united in their struggle against colonialists. However, latter development shows that they merely united because they had common enemy the British. As soon as the European left, this unity collapsed. Each leading nationalists wanted to achieve power using the people of his tribe as the base. This shows that what was taken as unity of purpose by Nigeria nationalist's elites was only an illusion.

Fundamentally, all governments have elites at the head. Everywhere elites are viewed as essential elements of the political and social life of the country and in every country, the stability of the nation and its regime seem to depend in a large measure on way in which the elites is organized and fits with the other sectors. There are qualities which constitute the hallmark of competent groups. These qualities are so essential for national development. Essentially, elite' formation is legitimated by their identification with the most pervasive goals in society.

That is, elites are an embodiment of national consensus. Elite therefore is a nexus of need fulfillment that binds situational demands and group membership. Thus, the failure and success of national development depends on elite's

effectiveness in knitting together political influence so that it responds to functional demand on the system. Indeed, the quality of a nation's elites and the image which they project upon the world constitutes an important source of power. As Stoessinger said: "No amount of manpower or industrial or military potential will make a nation powerful unless its elites use their resources with maximum effect. China and America development status is a function of their elites cohesion on national development exploit".

It is sad that Nigeria has never been lucky enough because Nigeria elites toe ethnic ties with absence of a coherent system of choice in politics and economics. This prevented the emergence of leaders who will take the country as a whole, as their constituency. Nigeria is paraded with elites that regard themselves as the canonical representative of their personal and ethnic interests. Today elites organize their kinsmen to make various demands on the State. Rather than coming together to transform the nation economically, elites mobilize their tribal forces under sub-national organizations to threaten national survival.

#### **Nigerian's Elites and National Development**

According to Tamuno cited in Obaro 1980, prior to British colonization, what is today known as Nigeria had various ethnic cultural communities with varying forms of state formation processes. The various ethnic groups were joined together in 1914 through the Lord Lugard project and ruled as imperial state. The imperial state was organized and consolidated through ethnic based policy of regionalism, a political formation that post colonial Nigeria elites found difficult to depart from it. Today politics of ethnicity or region has become the ideology creating and sustaining power structure among the elites in Nigeria. People are now made to treat ethnicity or region as relevant to their personal and collective choice of candidate during election. This ethnic or regional dynamic is further reinforced by the relative economic prosperity associated with real or imagine favour derived from political advantage that accrue to group or region in control of public affairs in Nigeria the elites overriding concern is to preserve the postcolonial status quo with themselves in its commanding positions. The masses that had been mobilized and politicized on behalf of a universal goal now had to be depoliticized rapidly in the service of elite domination. Because ethnicity is close to core of individual identity, ethnic movements is created and used by the elites in furtherance of their own special interests which are time and again constitutive interests of the emerging social classes. In this way, ethnicity becomes a mask for class privileges (Sklar, 1967). The dominant classes unable intrinsically to increase production because of their dependent nature on the capitalist relation of production, this class depend on the state device to increase their benefits from the society. Part of the ethnic scheme is seen to be part of 'the mechanism through which the political elite maintain power and exercises influences. It is the attribute of elite behavior... the educated elite become the chief proponents and purveyors of parochialism' (Dudley, 1973)

Mamdani (2002) noted that the transference of cultural identities to the political domain by the political elites was to hijack power by using identity as a basis for condemnation, discrimination and marginalization. Such segregation along ethnic division is employed to discriminate not because of the superiority of a particular ethnic group over another but in competition to control the economic spoil of the nation – state. In 1949, Azikiwe shows his ethnic bias when he remarked: It

would appear that the God of Africa has specially created the Ibo nation to lead children of Africa from the bondage of the ages...the martial prowess of the Ibo nation at all stages of human history has enabled them not only to conquer others but also to adapt themselves to the role of preserver. The Igbo nation cannot shirk from its responsibility (Nnoli, 1978).

The NPC equally made such sentimental remark; it is the southerner who has power in the North. They have control of the railway stations, of the Post Offices, of Government Hospitals, of the Canteens; the majority employed in the Kaduna secretariat and in Public Works Department are all southerners; in all the different Departments of Government it is the Southerner who has power (Coleman, 1958). With intensive competition among Nigerian elites for control of the spoils of office, politics become a winner-takes-all affair. The political parties in control in each region easily became weapons in the hands of major nationality groups for the continued marginalization of the minorities. Oppressed minorities began seeking solace in the opposition parties with inevitable consequences of politicization of ethnicity. The expulsion of Eyo Ita, a minority Efik, from the Igbo dominated National Council of Nigerian Citizen (NCNC) led by Nnamdi Azikiwe in 1952 resulted in Eastern Region minorities forming the rival National Independent Party, with Eyo Ita as president (Ojo and Fawole, 2004).

The implementation of the Macpherson constitution of 1951 accelerated the drift towards sub-group nationalism and tribalism. Educated Nigerians who aspire to fill new position of power and status opened up to Nigerians by that constitution realized that their most secure base of support would be the people of their own groups. The indirect electoral system strengthened this realization. Manipulation and exploitation of ethnicity became a veritable tool of political contest. Thus, a symbiotic relationship develops between politicians who wish to achieve their own positions, and their 'people', who fear political domination and economic exploitation by a culturally distinct group allegedly organized for themselves. A politician thus gains a tribal power by successfully manipulating the appropriate cultural symbols and by articulating and advancing his peoples collective and individual aspiration (which he himself probably helped to arouse) (Graft, 1983).

With a weak economic base, Nigerian elite was rendered incapable of fulfilling the historical role played by its European counterpart i.e. the development of the forces of production. The dominant class at political independence was a pathetic parody of what a dominant class is (Ihonvbere, 2001). They were merely recipient of a socio-economic system and state structure created by and for the metropolitan power. The elite seize control of the centre to redeploy it rather than transform it. They were unable to subordinate the relatively high developed state apparatus. According to Alavin (1972) the relatively autonomous role of the state apparatus allows the neo-colonialist bourgeoisies pursue their class interest. Loss of political legitimacy is a crucial indication of state failure and collapse (Murunga, 2004). The incidents of vested interests and crisis of legitimating have been attributed to the configuration of the dynamics of social class. Ninalowo (1999) argues that for society not to be propelled toward self-annihilation through intra-class and inter class struggle over mutually contradictory vested interests, it become historically incumbent on the state to bring about orderliness via the abiding interests of legitimacy. Habermas (1986) points out "the acquisition of legitimacy (through manipulation) is self-

destructive as soon as the mode of acquisition is exposed. Although coercion is the ultimate basis of power, it is not a sufficient basis of governance. While force and manipulation can sustain a government, voluntary acceptance is more enduring, stable and reliable basis of governance (Osaghae, Isumonah and Albert, 1998).

Legitimacy crisis occurs when citizenship rights and benefits are largely denied, and the state seems out of reach, sub-national identities then form basic source of support and the individual may constitute a platform of *résistance* against the state. In this context, transformation of ethnic groups from group in them to group for themselves is more likely (Adejumo, 2001). In a situation of loss of legitimacy, the state loses the willing allegiance and legitimizing support of its population giving way to alternative centre of power within the territorial space of the nation – state. A discrepancy in vested interest of the elites and general interest and value deepens the crisis of legitimacy. Ninalowo (1999) purports the ultimate test of the legitimation resides in people's fulfillment of their needs, aspirations, value and interest. Widening disparities in access and opportunities, socioeconomic insecurity, corruption, politics of exclusion of the vast majority of the populace from the state and increasing enrichment of the few, politicization of ethnicity has led to loss of confidence among many Nigerians in the Nigerian state. Babawale (2006) writes 'the level of pillage that goes on within the state apparatus is reflective of the elites' loss of confidence in the Nigerian project'. Similarly, Ihonvbere (2001) adds that without avenue of legitimacy, the government is de-linked from the society and alienated from it. This makes mobilization of the society for development impossible; the parasitic elite preoccupation is primitive accumulation and not welfare and satisfaction of the governed (Onuoha, 1999). Exploitative elite that did not meet the aspirations or expectations of the people give rise to legitimacy crisis. Such unproductive elites whip up ethnic sentiments and emotions to enhance their strategic positions in the scheme of things. According to a Northern politician 'we had to teach the people to hate southerners; to look on them as people depriving them of their rights, in order to win them over' (Theen and Wilson, 2001). Politics in Nigeria is conceptualized by various factions of the elites as a competition for crude accumulation for personal wealth but it portrayed as a means of enhancing ethnic interest. Thus political competition has fuelled ethnic conflicts, instability and violence (Ojo and Fawole, 2004). Politics among the ethnic-based parties in the post-Independence years was dominated by competition for hegemony among the dominant ruling class. According to Theen and Wilson (2001) since the parties were closely tied to particular ethnic groups, their electoral Strategies focused not so much on broadening their base to include new social categories but rather on how to mobilize the seemingly fixed group of supporters in order to maximize turn out. The ethnic elements in elite's formation in Nigeria have implications for the balance of power that shapes policy choices and implementation, as well as its results. Hence: a) how elites emerge or consolidate their roles as part of the policy process; b) what the elites' strategic interests are; and c) how the relationship between knowledge elites and political elites shapes policy choices and implementation in the context of pursuance of the development agenda. This make their roles in the policy process more apparent than real. Building a developmental state in a country where national issues are giving ethnic interpretation is challenging. The ethnic power

relations involved in the policy process, the absence of elites that contribute to a positive political transformation make decision-making and the implementation of policies in Nigeria complex, chaotic, uncertain, unpredictable, and sometimes, solutions not always being aligned with national realities as the main actors – bureaucrats and politicians are concerned either with the ethnic interest or with their own parochial interests (Lane, 2000). In this concept, policy-making is an incremental process in which adjustments are continuously made to deal with development problems related to complexity, uncertainty and ignorance about the major issues influencing the trajectory of the development process.. It is essential to argue that in Nigeria the possibility of the policy process being high-jacked by particular groups and used to respond to their clienteles through relations of patronage is clear. Therefore, development problems in Nigeria centre around the elites abuse of development policy process, which comprises a set of four elements, namely 1) the constitution of power – the way power is made up as a result of the underlying socio-economic structures in Nigeria 2) the distribution of power – while power is formed in response to social changes, it is not distributed in response to challenges that require 'freezing' relations in order to obtain greater certainty and predictability; 3) the exercise of power – what means are used in exercising power; and 4) control of power – the extent to which power is checked and the various ways in which people constrain the use of power, which can range from coercion to persuasion. The ethnic feat of elites in Nigeria affect agenda setting – the general policy framework or strategy that a country relies upon; 5) policy formulation – the formulation of specific policies at the national level; 6) policy implementation – activities associated with putting policies in place; and 7) policy effects –the effectiveness (what has been achieved) and legitimacy (how it has been achieved), which implies analyzing how the country's citizens relate to the government and other public institutions (Hyden, 2006). The policy process is a combination of political and technical aspects .However; in Nigeria the relationship between the actors involved takes different forms as ethnic politics abuse public administration to the extent that there is no clear separation between politics and public administration. This has clear implications for the role and behaviour of elites in the policy process. In this regard, Nigeria lacks the Weberian perspective (Weber, 1982) bureaucracy elites one that pursues its collective interests through the discharge of its authority in a legal-rational and impersonal fashion, in stark contrast to the patrimonial form of organization that mainly characterized Nigeria structures. Nigeria bureaucratic elites are mere agents of politicians that end up pursuing their own interests.

This has affected national development effort. The concept development here mean process that raise a nation's standard of living, to free its population from a life of subsistence agriculture to improve health and health care, and to effectively join a world commercial community. It mean that people are the real wealth of a nation and the expansion of people's freedoms to live long healthy and creative to advance other goals. Thus, national development is one that put people first and enhance their empowerment, creation of favourable social and political environment for equal participation in decision making process.

### Conclusion

National development can only be effective when individuals and ethnic nationalities are committed to the Nigeria project.

The desire for primitive accumulation by members of major ethnic groups negatively affected the development of Nigeria. Unfortunately, nothing was done to alter the foundation of ethnicity even after the colonial masters. This continued to affect every aspect of the polity. It created a dysfunctional elites, ineffective in social economic transformation that would elevate the living standard of the Nigerian people. it is doubtful of this situation would change in the near future.

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