

NATIONAL UNITY: A CATALYST FOR SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA, 2015-2020

Sarah Amos Akpanudoh and Mfon Gual Uko

Abstract

The paper examined national unity as a catalyst for sustainable democracy in Nigeria-2015-2020. The paper is guided by three research questions thus: what are the nexus between national unity and sustainable democracy? What are the challenges of national unity and sustainable democracy in Nigeria? To what extent can these issues be remedied? The research objectives are: ascertain the nexus between national unity and sustainable democracy in Nigeria; investigate the challenges affecting national unity and sustainable democracy in Nigeria; proffer suggestions to national unity and sustainable democracy in Nigeria. The theoretical framework adopted by the study is the democratic theory propounded by Alexander Hamilton, John Jay James in 1788 Data for the study was from secondary sources such as textbooks, Journal materials, internet materials etc. Findings revealed that national unity in Nigeria is being threatened by numerous challenges amongst them are: terrorism, corruption, secession, power rotation etc. The paper therefore suggested amongst others- distribution of power amongst the federating units, federal character principles should be strictly adhered to etc.

Key words: national unity, sustainable democracy, integration, regional government.

Introduction

Nigeria, as a state, is the product of British colonialism. Nigeria is made up of well over 200 ethnic nationalities, all of which a distance from one another in all ramifications. They differ in both socio-political, economic, cultural, religious and even traditional systems. Ethnic sentiments were planted in different ethnic nationalities. This became pejorative with the emergence of first republic political parties, which were mere representatives of their ethnic origins. Worst still is the fact that the political leaders of that time politicized ethnicity for political gains. Nigeria baked economy became what has to be known as 'national cake'. This became a food basket from which every ethnic group tries to court as much as possible at the exclusion and peril of the others. Policy thrust became ethnically biased and rationalized. With these issues at stake genuine sustainable democracy was a mere theory rather than practice (Iheriohanma, 2003).

It could be argued that if the colonial state resulted in certain circumstances in the creation of new hostilities, the politics, of decolonization intensified such facilities, especially between the three regions. The ethnic and regional base of the political parties, which emerged as part of the decolonialization process hardened regional and ethnic lines in Nigeria. Such parties were the National Council for Nigeria and Cameroons (later National Council for Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) in August 1944, dominated by the Igbo because of the influence of doctor Nnamdi Azikiwe, the Action Group (AG) 1951 under Chief Obafemi Awolowo (Yoruba based) and the Northern People's congress(NPC) in 1951(Hausa Fulani based).

The absence of national unity in the three regions brought about fear and suspicion. Thus, the 1966 military coup, favoured unitary system against the federal system and the 1966 cool we're all interpreted in regional and ethnic lines. The concept of the majority and minority worsen the line of division and resulted in the creation of 12 States in 1967 by Gowon administration. In 1976, 19 States were created by General Murtala Mohammed. Under the administration of General Olusegun Obasanjo, a national constitution was established in 1979 which entrenched the principle of federal character at the centre. The Politics of winner "Takes It All" which followed, did not help matters. All these resulted in an unequal development, resentment, growing disharmony and national disunity (Ndoh & Emezie, 1997). During this time, group identities as Hausa Fulani Yoruba and Igbo became more prominent and meaningful than during the colonial era. It now makes more sense for somebody from the North to identify himself as a Hausa/Fulani as a Nigerian, just as it is for somebody from the Western parts of Nigeria or Eastern part of Nigeria to identify as Yoruba or Igbo respectively. There is therefore need for partial self-denial. But this can be possible only when the interest of a year over for example in all their ramifications can truly be served by the large group -. For Nigeria to be occupied by two Nigerians, the country must guarantee genuine protection of the interests of all its components peoples (Ndoh & Emezi, 1997).

The politicization of ethnicity in Nigeria politics has its genesis in British colonial policies, which through the obnoxious Divide and Rule Policy, encourage the use of different applications of colonial policies on traditional institutions and the structures of the various ethnic groups in Nigeria. The results of this is the unequal impact for colonial policies in the perpetration of dynamism of the forces of modernization. The consequences have been distrust, rivalry and lack of cooperation that have characterized the relationship between the three dominant ethnic groups in Nigeria - the Hausa/Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba leading to the use by each group of its geographical area as a basis for political activism and support. The importance of the ethnic question, and the need by each ethnic group to promote and protect its economic and political interests at the expense of other groups had persisted in Nigeria since Independence from British colonialism (Ndoh, C A&Emezi, C E; 1997).

Looking at what's happened in Nigeria before and after Independence, the government has not given any serious attention in achieving the desired National Unity. It must be acknowledged that there were no serious shift towards attainment of unity in diversity which led to the achievement of sustainable democracy in Nigeria. The post-colonial governments inherited the approach of regionalization and tribalism which are ingredients of disunity and disharmony in Nigeria. It is in line with the above that (Ndoh, C A&Emezi, C E; 1997) explained that one significance source of conflict, alienation and criticism hindered Nigeria federal system has been the negative ways in which character and developments of the political process affects the various ethnic minorities. Political charges, accusation an allegations negligence, oppression, domination, victimization, nepotism, discrimination and bigotry have over the year's exhumed major salience because concrete socio-cultural and socioeconomic groups actually experienced these forms of maltreatment.

Statement of problem

Since federalism means the coming together of peoples, communities, and groups with different historical, cultural, linguistic and social backgrounds to form a supra-national state while retaining their separate identities in mutually agreed sphere, national integration is central to the success of the new political entity. This is the reason we need to study national integration in relation to federalism. As noted earlier, federalism involves the twin process of integration and self-identity, pulling in different directions. If the group that compose a society should be encouraged to maintain their identity, how can they remain integrated to enable the society to progress in the desired direction (Matthew 2013).

The central purpose of forming a Federal Government is to weave who integrate the diverse ethnic and linguistic groups to achieve some collective national identity. National integration goes beyond mere national identity to achieve a patriotic spirit that could diminish the strength of parochial attachment and feelings. (Matthew 2013,). He identifies five interrelated aspects of national unity (integration)

- The fusion of norms and cultures (including the sharing of values, modes of expression i.e., general lifestyles and common language,
- The promotion of economic interdependence,
- The narrowing of the gap between the elites and the masses, the urban and rural areas, rich and poor, etc. (social integration)
- The resolution of emergent conflicts and
- The sharing of mutual experience so that people can discover that they have undergone some important experiences together e.g. civil war experience (Matthew, 2013)

Such exchanges, voluntarily adopted rather than being imposed could facilitate national integration. They enhance the identification of people with groups other than theirs, and hence could reduce mutual hostility. The implication is that of love rather than hate toward each other because people cannot identify with and adopt what they have. Economically, there is hardly any single ethnic group that is self-sufficient in all resources. People needs each other to exchange their products and resources and in so maintain healthy relationship between them. A country with wide dichotomies between various segments of the society, is difficult to integrate.

This study therefore, seeks to examine the impact of National Unity as a catalyst for sustainable democracy in Nigeria 2015-2020.

Research questions

1. What are the nexus between national unity and sustainable democracy?
2. What are the challenges of national unity to sustainable democracy?
3. To what extent can these be remedied?

Research objectives

1. Ascertain the relationship between national unity and sustainable democracy
2. Examine the impact of national unity on sustainable democracy
3. Suggest ways of improving on national unity to sustain democracy in Nigeria.

Significance of the study

The findings of this study are important to the policy makers. It will help the policy makers to adopt measures that can help in the strengthening of national unity, since national unity is a catalyst for sustaining democracy. It will also help the academia and students in their different fields of endeavour.

Conceptualization and theoretical framework National Unity

The terms used for National Unity have included National cohesion, National integration, Nation building and social solidarity. The Clifford Constitution which superseded the Lord Lugard Constitution was significant in many ways. The most important aspect of it was the embodiment of principles of election. The elective principle stimulated the formulation of political organizations in the country such as the Nigeria National Democratic Party. The organizations provided a more effective vehicle for expressing grievances and aspirations of Nigerians. Out of the 46 members of the legislative Council, 27 were non-official and 19 officials. Four of the non-official members were to be elected by an adult male

suffrage with residential qualifications of one year and a gross income of 100 Naira per annum. Three of them must come from Lagos and one from Calabar.

One of the major defects of this constitution was the exclusion of the North from the legislative Council on the flimsy reason that the country was too large, coupled with poor communication facilities and ethnic diversity. Thus failure to integrate properly the North and the South post a disastrous problem to the cause of National unity in Nigeria (Eminue, 2005).

The defect in the constitution brought about the formation of another constitution as per governor of the day and so the defects of the previous constitution also brought the formation of Macpherson Constitution of 1951. Macpherson constitution was criticized to lack of uniformity in electoral system and dual membership of some members of the regional legislature and the House of Representatives which caused intra-party squabbles (Eminue, 2005).

Having been so set up, the rest of History of Nigeria political and constitutional development and process of federation revolved around these three regions: Their bickering, electoral and party struggles, disagreements over census figures, composition of federal legislative Chambers, revenue generation and distribution formula etc. The Niger Delta became lost region that never again came into political reckoning all through the colonial period essentially because it was denied a distinct political identity. What actually informed this development was during the period of colonization and nationalist struggles, there were two trends that the British colonial officers needed to address in order to properly administer the country. The native administration or indirect rule had been established in the North for pacification and it proved successful. For this reason, it was extended to the south, but met with limited success in the west and disaster in the east. Nevertheless, with some modification is still served the purpose of governance at the local level where the traditional rulers held sway.

However, there were also educated elites who manifested their dominance in the Southern cities, mainly Lagos and Calabar. Nationalist agitation was organized mainly by this segment of the Nigerian Society. They subjected to stringent criticism virtually every policy of the colonial state. This tended to pitch the Niger Delta against the British colonial officers. (Matthew 2013)

Factors militating against achieving National Integration in Nigeria.

1. Cultural assimilation

In the Northern part of Nigeria, the Hausa language is widely spoken. It actually serves as a lingua-franca for the North. It is the strongest means of communication as well as social bond that welds the North together. Virtually all other groups have adopted it as their second language. If language alone can integrate a nation then here would be no problem in the north, but the Hausa language is often complemented with the Moslem religion. This is where the problems lies. That is while accepting Moslem language, the other ethnic groups have not embraced Moslem religion willingly. This situation has created several fault lines of conflict in the north and constitutes one of the most obstacles to national unit. (Matthew, 2013). This is also applicable to the other two ethnic groups in Nigeria.

2. Religious Factor

Another factor that poses challenges to national integration is the religious factor. Christianity is a stronger unifying force in the South than in the North. Igbo, Yoruba, Ijaw, Efik etc. all united as Christians, no matter the diversity of denominations. But both Christians and Muslim speaks the Hausa language, but cannot accommodate each other when it comes to religion, often clashing with each other, destroying lives and property extensively.

3. Power rotation

In Nigeria the national leadership arguable constitutes the most serious obstacles to national integration. Over several issues, the national leadership has failed to rise above the petty, selfish and parochial interest. They preach patriotism but often turn out to be the least patriotic. For example the North after producing a president of the federal republic for eight years are the one fighting to produce another one come 2023 for Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). This has generated outcry from the minority ethnic group. These manifestations of the failure of leadership among the ruling class continue to pose a serious threat to national unity in Nigeria

4. Absence or distortion of democratic norms, values.

In the absence of sustainable democracy norms and values, politicians manipulate the electorate and the electoral process to win elections. The result is that people unfit for leadership often find themselves in leadership positions, taking decisions that are self-serving and endanger national aspirations. Criminals in leadership position, as Nigeria has experienced, could weaken national integration.

5. Disregards of Minority Rights

In Nigeria the rights of the minorities have often been disregarded by the majority ethnic nationalities who control the reins of power. Their demands for the creation of more states was denied them until it became convenient and more beneficial to the majorities for more states and local government areas to be created. This constitutes a serious threat to sustainable democracy.

6. The problem of underdevelopment resulting in unemployment, illiteracy poverty, criminality etc.

Under condition of underdevelopment, every deployment project such as a road, hospitals schools or scholarship become an object of competition. Communities, local government areas, and even states compete for the location of development project. Such situations as there they are many in Nigeria, are a serious threat to national integration which hinders sustainable democracy (Link.springer.com)

Sustainable Democracy

A sustainable democracy requires strong institutions, reliable structures, and active citizens. To achieve this, there is need to balance state power with strong contending interest that hamper the development of democratic institutions.

✓ **Security sector**

According to French Election Study (FES) in 2017, sustainable democracy in cooperate political system reforms. FES support civil society organizations, academic institutions and political parties to achieve a more participatory representative, and effective political system. Particular attention is paid to electoral reforms and in developing a more inclusive and accountable political party system. This includes support for initiatives on governance reform both at the local and national levels (Gougou&Sauger, 2017).

According to FES young people comprise the majority of the population but are largely excluded from political participation and decision making., while spaces for political participation exist, these are often accessible only to a limited number of young people and thus do not maximize their inherent empowering function.

FES contributes to expanding opportunities by both capacitating young people to become respected political dialogue partners as well as to providing spaces to advocate their concerns at the local, national and international levels, (Gougou&Sauger, 2017).

Jacob and Tunue in Ojo (2019), described national unity as a relationship of community among people within the same political entity. He further explained that it is a state of mind or disposition to be cohesive, to act together, and to be committed to mutual

programmes. Onifade (2013) sees it as process by which members of a social system becomes less consequential in affecting behavior. In this process member of the social system develop an escalating sequence of contact, cooperation, consensus and community. (Umaru, 2015).

✓ **Democracy in Nigeria**

There are roadblocks to a strong democracy in Nigeria at all levels of government. Conflicts triggered by political competition and communal, ethnic, religious or resources allocation rivalries pose a major threat to sustainable democracy in Nigeria. Corruptions pervades the daily lives of Nigeria (<https://www.usaid.gov/nigeria>>d 2022)

Nigeria democracy has been fragile and fluctuating since independence. Successive government have struggled to create a sense of national unity in a complex country whose borders were drawn by British colonialists incorporating more than 200 ethnic groups. Democratization and development have progressed at different speeds in the country's disparate regions Nigeria's democracy also has a long and troubled relationship with its military. For more than half of its existence as an independent state, Nigeria has been under military rule instead of civilian administration. Three republics have been overthrown by military coups since independent in 1960, and two of the four democratically elected presidents of Nigeria's fourth republic headed by those military dictatorships.

Challenges of Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria

Nigeria's democracy was severely weakened by the civil war and centralization of power during the military era. The conflict helped concentrate oil revenue in the hands of army officials and seceded a powerful, wealthy, and often corrupt military elites. The dictatorships militarized Nigeria's political space and disrupted the flourishing of democratic institutions and culture.

Nigeria's army once regarded as the continent's most capable has been dramatically weakened over the past decades. It has failed to provide basic security in large parts of the country, struggling to contain an insurgency by the terrorist group Boko Haram in the North East. Its officer corps has been implicated in numerous corruption scandals. Nigeria's federally controlled police is overstretched, under staff, underfunded, and endemically corrupt. These security and law enforcement challenges are aggravated by the fledging state of Nigeria's democratic institutions.

1. Freedom of Speech

A vibrant media industry exists in Nigeria, much of it based in the south –west, but the government has been cracking down on the free press as evidenced by its actions during the #ENDSARS protests of 2020. Twitter was banned for more than a year following the protest, while big media houses closed and journalists fled, diminishing open debate. Security incidents go unreported or misrepresented for fear of reprisals by the government.

2. Election

Most elections in the fourth republic have been regular, generally free, and credible, although this varies considerably by region, and election cycle. Violence is a lingering feature of elections in Nigeria. Voter's turnout has steadily decreased as voters have become disillusioned by the recycling of political candidates, the lack of internal democracy in political parties, and the failure of government to deliver real progress

3. Justices

The constitution guarantees Nigerians of religion expression, movement, and assembly and protects them from discrimination based on sex, religion, origin, or political opinions. Yet,

basic rights are continually challenged in a failing justice environment. Nigerians police have a reputation for brutality which led directly to the #ENDSARS protests of 2020, demanding the dismantling of the special anti-robbery squad, a unit accused of kidnapping, murder, theft, rape, and torture. Sharia penal code has been re-introduced in 12 Northern states directly challenging the constitution and civil liberties of non-Muslim residents. In April 2020, a man was sentenced to 24 years in jail by a sharia court in Kano on a charge of blasphemy for declaring himself and atheist.

The judicial system is too weak and compromised to step in and enforce civil liberties. This reflects the state of the political class in Northern Nigeria and the absence of mechanisms to defend constitutional democracy. Religious legitimacy shapes political power in the North in a way that challenges national cohesion and a common citizenship. Parallel legal systems undermine the main pillars of the constitution (Leena, 2022).

Theoretical Framework

The modern reformulation of the concept of federalism differs significantly from the pre-modern conceptualization. The most penetrating and profound theoretical explanation of federalism was rather embodied in 85 essays of Publius published in 1788 in the United States under the famous title “Federalist”, also known as the Federalist paper”. They were written by Alexander Hamilton, John Jay and James Madison primarily in defense of the constitution of USA, which had been drafted the previous year at the Philadelphia Convention. The Convention had to be ratified by nine States before it could take effect. Ratification almost failed as many people feared that rights would not be adequately protected. The representatives from the small state refused to join any national government that did not preserve most of their established powers. The framers broke the resulting statements by dividing power between the national and the state government, and gave each state equal representation in the national Senate”, (Almond, 2009).

Opposition to the new ratification was strong and in many states ratification was secured only on promise to amend the constitution at the first opportunity. Delaware was the first state to ratify the constitution on December 7, 1787. It was followed by Pennsylvania then New Jersey, Georgia, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland South Carolina and New Hampshire, the ninth on June 1788. Ratification was completed on July 26, 1788 when New York the last big state approved, voted its endorsement. The ratification of the constitution meant the rejection and replacement of the Articles of Confederation under which a weak central government ruled America from March, 1, 1781 to June 21, 1788. The Articles were adopted after the American War of Independence by thirteen colonies.

The new constitution shared legislative powers between Federal and State government in such a manner that provided the Federal government with an exclusive list which it did not share with the states, and whenever laws made by both levels of government conflicted that of the Federal Government prevailed. This became the new or modern principle of federalism (Matthew, 2013).

Research Question 1

A cohesive society is one where people are protected against life risk, trust their neighbours and the institutions of the state and can work toward a better future for themselves and their families. Fostering national cohesion is about striving for greater inclusiveness, more civic participation and creating opportunities for upward mobility. It is the glue that holds the society together. Structurally, the inability of the Nigerian societies to cohere or stick together for national development has been the bane of our growth and that has led to a constant situation of mutual suspicion, distrust and disunity. As stated by Okpoh (2003), there is no contradicting the fact that Nigeria has a problematic existence. Equally true is the fact

that over the years, the underlying forces for this problem have been left to eat too deep into the carapace of the nation. Unfortunately, this has seriously affected and is still affecting the process of nation building in the country.

According to scholars, the multi-ethnic nature and character of the Nigerian nation, coupled with the manner in which the country was integrated into the global capitalist system has been identified as some of the serious issues that has hindered genuine unity and national cohesion. Okpeh (2003, p.10), quoting D.A. Umar observed that conflict in Nigeria: Have their origins in the way and manner the different nationalities were amalgamated into one Nigeria when the British colonialists took political control of Nigeria, they decided for their administrative convenience to amalgamate the different nationalities into one country. In doing so, they did not consider the distinct cultural and historical background of the different nationalities. Under this artificial creation, the spirit of nationalism is difficult to inculcate. From the foregoing, we may be right to state that Nigeria is a colonial creation. This is because it came into being as a super-imposed and, arguably, over-developed colonial structure attending to the requirements of British conquest and imperial domination (Jega, 2003). Therefore, since independence in 1960, segments of the Nigerian elite associated with the critical organs of the state, such as the military officer corps, the so-called political class and the bureaucratic technocratic elite, have come to assume and play a prominent role in the Nigerian political economy, a role that has been profoundly facilitated as well as conditioned by the phenomenon of prolonged military rule. They do so, however, in close alliance and collaboration with other segments of the dominant classes in the Nigerian society. As a result, the Nigerian state is, paradoxically, shaped and conditioned by intense competition, conflict and struggles by contending classes in the Nigerian civil society, and particularly by incessant factionalism and in-fighting amongst the active and dominant forces in the polity. This factionalism and in-fighting has been nurtured and sustained by the mobilization of regional, ethnic and religious sentiments. This phenomenon substantially accounts for the military intervention in politics, the culture of coup d'état, and prolonged nature of military rule as well as its domineering control of and influence on the Nigerian state (Jega,2003). It is interesting equally to further state that since independence, the Nigerian post-colonial state has been riddled with calls for secession, confederation or other ways of breaking up the country. The reasons for the call for separation according to Ibrahim (2003), have been "self-interest of elite groups rather than national interest".

Therefore, structural functionalist theory enables us to examine and explain the importance and relevance of national cohesion as part of society's quality of life. National cohesion is characterized as an "elusive concept-easier to recognize by its absence than by any definition. According to the UNDP (2016), national cohesion has two main dimensions: first, reducing disparities, inequalities and social exclusion; and second, strengthening social relations, interactions, and ties. It also involves "tolerance of, and respect for diversity (in terms of religion, ethnicity, economic situation, political preferences, sexuality, gender and age) – both institutionally and individually". When societies lack cohesion, the results may include "increased social tension, violent crime, targeting of minorities, human rights violations, and ultimately, violent conflict (UNDP, 2016).

Research Question 2

Recent studies have shown that the problem of disunity among Nigerian peoples and groupings do not seem to emanate from lack of constitutional, political, cultural, educational and religious commitment to national integration and unity. According to EmeUche and Okonkwo (2020), indeed, there have been commitments by successive government administrations to maintain and uphold the unity of the country, however, the problem seems to lie with the manner in which these policies and programmes have been

implemented by the ruling elites. For instance, the utility of the federal character principle in the sustenance of the corporate existence of Nigeria, there has been incessant abuse of the principle especially in the recent time. In fact, no single issue appears to have attracted as much attention in the recent time as the issue of abuse of the federal character principle.

Koneke (2019) observes that out of over 40 initial appointments the current President Muhammadu Buhari made, only a few persons from the southern region of the country were appointed. The South East Geopolitical Zone have largely been ignored from the Presidents appointments and key position of governments both at the executive, legislative and judiciary arms. Besides, the northern region appears to have enjoyed monopoly of heads of government since independence.

Another challenge to national unity is the northern hegemony over security which do not seem to augur well for the confidence of citizens from other regions as they regard such developments as strategies for intimidation. This fact is not lost in the hasty proscription of the Indigenous People of Biafra (Ipob) movement by the Buhari administration in collaboration with Service Chiefs without south-eastern representation.

In view of the above; some scholars have concluded that the basis for unity in Nigeria does not exist. However, the contrasting view is that these challenges endure principally because of government's actions and inactions that present as government's inability to safeguard human rights and the undue manipulation of the gullible masses by the elites to their advantage.

Allegations of marginalization/victimization of minority groups/political opposition within the various states and at the national level are rife. These constitute major barriers to the quest for national unity by encouraging divisiveness and parochialism through transferring loyalty from the nation to the local units, states, religious and ethnic groups at the expense of the Nigerian state. The result is the unending demands for creation of more states that are sponsored by the political elites from all zones of the country. The ongoing Confab has recommended the creation of nineteen additional states without consideration for their viability. This move is an elite strategy to create political empires for themselves.

The Niger Delta Question and the issue of Resource Control (extreme derivation) against a minimum of 13% as the basis of revenue allocation is a major sore point. Resource Allocation is crucial to national unity. The consistent and intense demand for a fair, just and equitable revenue allocation formula by the Niger Delta region and the reform of the basis of sharing revenue between the federal, states and local governments is a major challenge to national unity. This will continue to be if these issues are not resolved. The refusal of the Northern delegates to the 2014 National Confab to approve increasing the percentage of the allocation to the Niger Delta region from a minimum of 13% as provided in the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to 18% without a rider of 5% allocation to the North Eastern zone because of the ravaging impact of the Boko Haram insurgency is a clear indication of how insensitive the political elite are to the plight of the masses who are the victims of their political antics.

The status of the National Youth Service Corps as an instrument for national unity has been queried in the event of the gruesome murder of corps members during the post-election crisis and the sectarian violence perpetrated against hapless corps members by the Boko Haram Islamist in some Northern states of Nigeria. Many Nigerians have called for the outright repealing of the NYSC Act. AfeBabalola (2012) argues that; national unity cannot be brought about by sending students to states where security of lives cannot be guaranteed. It requires more than sending hapless youth to premature death. Also, Okochie (2012) writes that although the NYSC was instituted as an instrument for national unity; events of the past few years have resulted to frantic calls for the scrapping the programme because it had become an object of mockery and rejection. It is not a surprise that because of the harrowing

experiences of the corps members they do not preach the “gospel of national unity”. This is a huge drag to the efforts at national unity; given that these groups of Nigerians are the future of the nation.

Research Question 3

1. De-emphasizing tribe, ethnic origin and religion: our traditional and religious leaders should educate their followers concerning national integration, telling them that people segregating those who are not from their ethnic group, tribe or religion leads to division among them and will hamper the development of the country, which will in turn affect them negatively. This should also be contained in all official documents.

2. Emphasis in national symbols: our national symbols like the national anthem and pledge should not just be taught in schools. People should be made to imbibe the message behind these symbols as a way of life.

People going about their daily activities carrying the message of our **national symbols** in their hearts fosters national unity.

3. History education: Nigerian history should be taught compulsorily to the end of secondary school level, this makes people know how Nigeria became one.

They also learn about the efforts of our founding fathers in maintaining this oneness. This will lay a burning desire in the hearts of youths to uphold the efforts of our heroes towards national unity.

4. Campaigns: higher institutions and other relevant bodies should carry out campaigns in favour of national unity. Humanities course in General Studies in higher institutions that teach ways of improving national unity can be taken to the rural areas as cinema by drama groups.

5. Equal opportunity for employment: **employment should be given to youths** based on merit regardless of status, tribe, religion or other factors. This will make the people believe that they are one.

6. Youth empowerment: not all youths are privileged to have formal education, and thus, may not obtain gainful employment. In this instance the government should find ways of empowering, they can be taught to be craftsmen or technicians to create employment for themselves.

This will keep them occupied with the right things, they will not be hungry or angry, and there will not be any cause for them to blame anyone for their inability to cater for themselves or their families. They will also not be available to be used as tools to create tension or crises by greedy or selfish politicians.

7. True federalism: federalism is the system of government whereby power is constitutionally shared between the federal, state, and local governments. If true federalism is adopted no part of the country will feel trampled upon, thus strengthening the unity of the country.

8. Resource control: every state in Nigeria should be allowed to control its resources, when revenue is centrally allocated some states receive less than their counterparts.

This is particularly true of states in the south south where majority of the country’s revenue comes from, but when funds are disbursed from the federal government, they get less than other parts of the country, which can lead to protests. However, when states control their own resources they will not feel cheated and crisis is least likely to erupt.

9. Political fairness: politicians at all levels of government must have the interest of the people at heart, and not just go into politics for their own selfish interests.

In addition, they should not make politics a do-or-die affair, winners in elections should extend their hands of fellowship to losers and let it not be a situation of “the winner takes it all”.

By so doing crises will be averted and the people will have confidence in the government. This promotes national integration.

10. The National Youth Service Corps should be revamped; graduates should stop lobbying to be posted to their states of choice.

They should be posted across all the states of the country without any bias or consideration of ethnic group, wealth, who they know or any other thing. States should also receive them with open arms, and treat them as indigenes.

Conclusion

The study is done in three parts: part one, talks on introduction, statement of problem, research questions, objectives of the study, and significance of the study. Part two deals with the conceptualization and review of related literature, theoretical framework while part three handles methodology, conclusion and recommendations.

Suggestions

Having gone this far, the paper therefore suggested amongst others as follow:

- Distribution of power The power of the government in a federal system should be distributed between the centre and states
- Supremacy of the constitution. All existing federations have written constitutions such as documents state the powers of the various levels and unit of the federation. Both the Federal and the state should run the administration in accordance with the provisions of the constitution and should not violate any provisions.
- Supremacy of the Judiciary. The establishment and impartial judiciary system is essential in any federal state.
- Federal character principle. For a sustainable democracy, the principle of federal character should be strictly adhered to.

References

- Abdulahi, Abubakar&Yahaya, Titus. (2021). Nationalism and National Integration in Nigeria. 10.1007/978-3-030-50509-7_16.
- Afe, Babalola (2012). Leadership and Good Governance. Sciences and Reproductive Health Research Network.
- Almond, G. A. (2011). The Civic Culture Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations. Sage Publications.
- Edosa, E. (2014). National Integration, Citizenship, Political Participation and Democratic Stability in Nigeria. AFRREV IJAH: An International Journal of Arts and Humanities. 3. 61. 10.4314/ijah.v3i3.6.
- Okonkwo, C. &Eme-Uche, U. (2020). Nigeria and the challenges of national unity. Conference: Proceedings of INTCESS 2020- 7th International Conference on Education and Social Sciences 20-22 January, 2020 At: DUBAI (UAE)
- Eminue, O. E. (2005). Public Policy Analysis and Decision making. Concept Publication Limited.

Friedrich Schneider, (2016). Estimating the Size of the Shadow Economy: Methods, Problems and Open Questions. *Turkish Economic Review*, KSP Journals, vol. 3(2), pages 256-280, June.

Federal Government of Nigeria. (1999). *The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*. Government Press.

Gougou, F., Sauger, N. (2017). The 2017 French Election Study (FES 2017): a post-electoral cross-sectional survey. *FrPolit* 15, 360–370. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41253-017-0045-6>

<http://www.link.springer.com>

<http://www.usaid.gov.ng>

Ibrahim, J. (2003). The transformation of ethno-regional identities in Nigeria in A. Jega (Ed.). *Identity transformation and identity politics under structural adjustment in Nigeria*. Clear Impression Press.

Ibrahim, J. (2013). Engaging the national dialogue process. Retrieved from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com>. Accessed: 06/12/2018.

Iheriohanma, E. B. J. (2003). *Path to Nigerian political and economic development*. Kosoko Press.

Jacobs, P. E., & Tenue, H. (1964). The integrative process; guidelines for analysis of the bases of political community in Ojo, E. O. *Federalism and the search for national integration in Nigeria*. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 3(9), 384-395.

Jega, A. (2003). The State and identity transformation under structural adjustment in Nigeria. In A. Jega (Ed.). *Identity transformation and identity politics under structural adjustment in Nigeria*. Clear Impression Press.

Köneke, Vanessa. (2009). Retributive justice - An Interaction of Head and Heart in the Name of Homeostasis. 10.13140/2.1.4584.0321.

Leeena, K. H. (2022). *Democracy in Nigeria: Explaining the history of Africa's largest democracy and the influence of the military, ethnicity, and religious belief*.

Mathew, D. O. (2013). *Theory and Trente in Nigerian Federation*. High calling Publishers

Ndoh, C.A & Emezi, G.A (1997). *Nigerian Politics*. CRC Publications Ltd in association with Achugo Publication.

Nweke, J. O. (2007). The Challenges of National Integration in Nigeria. *The Nigerian Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*. 5. 10.36108/NJSA/7002/50 (0160).

Okochie, L. (2012). Controversy Trails NYSC. *National Mirror*. 09/02/2012.

- Onifade, C. A. & Imhonopi, David (2013). Towards national integration in Nigeria: jumping the hurdles. *Journal of Research on Humanities and Social Sciences* 3 (8): 53-63
- Okpeh, O.O. (2003). The sovereign national conference: An historical appraisal of contending issues and their implications for the corporeality of the Nigerian nation. In O.O. Okpeh (Ed.). *The sovereign national conference*, Aboki Publishers.
- Umaru S. Z. (2015). National Unity: A Catalyst for Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria. *Developing Country Studies* Vol.5, No.8 pp86-89
- UNDP (2016). Progress Report: Social Cohesion and conflict prevention. Public Affairs Committee