National Ethnics for Peace and Stability: The Search for a New Paradigm of Living Together In Nigeria.

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Abstract: *Terror and violent is one major burning issue that threaten the unity of Nigeria. Nigeria as a multi-ethnic and religions country is confronted on daily basis with ethnic-religions terrorism in different manifestation. It portrays Nigerians as not living together in peace Nigerians are suffering from multidimensional social problems, especially ethnic-religious terrorism because of lack of national consciousness rooted in national ethnics'. Using narrative and descriptive analytical approach the study contends that, today, Based on this knowledge, the study suggests ethnic-religious dialogical confluence, that will compel all ethnic groups to lay down the fundamental principles of national ethnics that expects us to realize our roles and duties regarding national survival.*

I.   Introduction

The concept Nigeria, as a nation state as we know it today, came into being in the colonial period. The various communities in habiting what is now Nigeria – The Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, each had their distinct ways of life, obtaining their food through various means. There were various modes of political organization. Due to differences in cultural and socio-economic activities, there were occasional violent conflicts between some of these communities.

After the conquest, the colonial power, Britain established infrastructures and institutions to serve it interests. Kimse (2006) was too clear on this, when he said:

In their bid to have a big empire in order to accumulate a large volume of resources, the British decided on a policy of integrating the numerous nationalities around the dominant groups.

The British policy of integration created a tripolar political arrangement with the Hausa occupying large territorial area to the North, the Yoruba to the west and the Igbo to the East. As the chances of independence improved, the three dominant groups began to reposition themselves for eventual take over of the state and thus, began the process of nationalist agitation. They won independence and inherited and retained the state as it was, inspite of what they considered as its structural limitations. To put the fact differently, Nigeria as a nation state lack one essential factor "National Consciousness", in its creation, to the extent that ethnicity has stayed long after independence.

What is clear about post independence African conflicts is that they have generally been between different ethnic groups within a country (Nkrumah, 1970). Even conflicts that are apparently free of ethnic considerations involve factions and alliances build around ethnic lines for example, conflicts in Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Rwanda Sudan and Nigeria – Biafra war, have all been caused or exacerbated by ethnic dynamics.

While some multi ethnic states have successfully unified their multi ethnic configuration, others have not done so well. Nigeria is one of such states that are yet to unify her diverse ethnic groups, hence, Nigeria, like other multi ethnic African states is today confronted with the issue of national cohesion or integration, especially in the moments of intense ethnic religious disagreement and misunderstanding.

II.   Ethnic Character Of Nigerian State

Nigeria has an estimated population of more than 160 million people, with about three hundred (300) ethnic groups of different sizes, inhabiting various geo-political region of the country. Otite (1990) points out that the various ethnic groups vary in sizes, level of cohesiveness or homogeneity, language, religions and in most cases are found within identifiable geo- political boundaries. The multiplicities of Nigeria's ethnic groups are grouped along major ethnic groups and minority ethnic groups (Otite, 1990).

As rightly observed each of the major ethnic groups has a geo-graphical area of dominance. It is interesting to note here that minority ethnic groups exist side by side with major ones. The various Nigeria's ethnic groups are indentified on the basis of consanguinity in terms of their tradition of origins, cultural affinities and similarities, especially in the area of language and political preference (Eddy,) one features of

multiplicity of ethnicity in Nigeria is that, the diverse ethnic groups are more conscious of their sub-group than at the level of national interaction (Kia 2008). Though multi-ethnic groups are not bad, but the fact remains that ethnicity in Nigeria is manipulated to becoming a quite disintegrative, destabilizing and destructive.

In Nigeria, ethnicity problems have its root from pre-independence period and manifested in the formation of pre-independence political parties. For instance, Yoruba ethnic group dominated the Action Group Party, the Igbo ethnic group dominated the National Council of Nigeria Citizens NCNC, and the Hausa/Fulani dominated the Northern people Congress (E rhagbe, 2002; coleman, 1958, Ez era, 1960). The ethnic based political formation aimed at protecting the interests of respective ethnic group at the expense of true national integration. To this extent post independence Nigeria, witnessed a lot of ethnic bitterness, acrimonious struggle, disagreements, and fierce competition among the various ethnic groups.

This situation is obvious because each ethnic group regard itself as distinct nationality with defined customs and territories. The contending desires to assert this distinctiveness collides with each others in the struggle for power and influence in Nigeria. The historical legacies of colonial rule create some challenges for Nation-building in Nigeria. Colonial rule as stated earlier "amalgamated people with different traditional-based authorities into one country with disregard to their consent on a republican arrangement. In the Nigeria project, the Britain did not gives every ethnic group the liberty and responsibility to participate in various capacities and at various levels in the task of building Nigeria. While British colonies like India and the Sudan had a single administrative system, Nigeria had two, one for the North and one for the South. It was almost as if these were two separate countries; held together by British "shared interests". Many of the nationalist leaders in the1950s and 1960s had regional orientation with little or no understanding of their neighboring regions. Under these conditions, it was easy for prejudice and fear to thrive. During the period of the struggle for independence, Nigeria nationalist from different regions fought each other as much as they fought the British colonialists , Nigeria never had a central rallying figure like Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, or Nelson Mandela in South Africa. Instead, each ethnic group threw up its own champions.

Today, this historical mistake has been a major challenge to National Unity to the extent that hardly does a day pass in the heart of the nation, without an episode or event that makes one wonder what kind of a people are we?
(b) what principles drive us as a nation?
(c) what are our priorities? (d) what do we share as a collective? Indeed do we have a collective sense of nationhood?.

The founding fathers of our nation tried to deal with this challenge by adopting federalism and advocating a policy of unity-in- diversity. In the spirit of addressing the problem of ethnicity, Federal character principle of representation clause and National Youth Service Corper (NYSC) were introduced (Eteng, 2004).
A major way in which Nigeria has sought to address the problem of multi-ethnicity has been through the process of deliberate political engineering, such as the adoption of constitutional frameworks. The various constitutions of the country since independence have deliberately addressed the issued of ethnic balancing in terms of political appointments and distribution of social amenities. A very eloquent constitutional provision that attempts to recognized the multiplicity of ethnic groups in Nigeria is found in chapter 11 section 14 sub- section 3 of the 1999 constitution.

(Nigerian Government, 1999). This constitutional provision states interalia that The composition of the government of the federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out but in such manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national loyalty thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that government or in any its agencies (Nigerian Gov't, 1999).
In section 15 sub-section 2, the constitution states that:-

National integration shall be actively encouraged whilst discrimination on the grounds of place of origin, sex, religion, status, ethnic or linguistic association or ties shall be prohibited".
Unfortunately, the lack of consolidation of the national peace around commonly shared values and positions means that this challenge of divisive historical legacy continues to undermine efforts at building integrative Nigeria". This ethnic-religions division has been a source of domestic tension and undermined our efforts at creating a common nationhood. Since the beginning of the current democratic dispensation in may, 26 1999, the cycle of ethnic-religions violence seems unstoppable in Nigeria. The first was the outbreak of ethnic-religions uprising in Sagamu in 1999 (Adebisi, 2002).

In 2000, many killings were recorded from ethnic-religions disturbances in Kaduna. An estimated 3,000 people lost their lives in the clash between muslems and Christians. There was a reprisal attack in Abia, Abia State and about 450 persons were killed. The riot was initially sparked up by the introduction of Islamic Criminal law in some Northern States (Olukorede, 2002).
In November, 2002, ethnic religions violence rocked the city of Kaduna after an English Newspaper This day, made a remark about prophet muhammed. The remark was made in the context of an international beauty

pagean being staged in the country. Muslim militant groups went on rampage, targeting churches and private property. The rioting briefly spread to Abuja. This attracted reaction from the minority ethnic religions groups. Lives were lost (Cherian, 2002). Plateau State had also been a theatre of war, as a result of frequent ethnic-religions crisis. From September 2001 to date, crises between the settler Hausa/Fulain and the natives had become a reoccurring decimal in the state. The plateau violence also led to the reprisal killing in Kano of Christian and non-indigenes by muslem youths in Kano According to Jike (2004), Nigeria's plural institutional structure incline the society toward conflict. Access to positions of high authorities in the various institutions such as presidency, senate, governor etc is hotly contested because of their importance. Votes are usually solicited partly through appeals to ethnic sentiments within ethnic enclaves with implications for inter-ethnic contrapositions. The multiethnic characteristics of the Nigerian is replete with apt examples of conflicts that authenticate our model of inter or intra-ethnic conflicts.

The situation in the Northern part of Nigeria where the Boko Haram sect is being manipulated by ethnic-religions sentiment to destabilize the nation, making the nation seems ungovernable, portrays that, thought we are living together, but without durable peace. The Niger Delta militancy, the various declarations, and movements to actualize Biafra state out of present Nigerian state, and Oduduwa group of the west, is not exemption, as they all in one way or the other used ethnic sentiment to threaten the unity of the country. .. In the constant struggle for the sharing of the national scarce resources all primordial sentiments are called in to play

How it has gotten so tragically rotten is anybody's guess. But a more rewarding approach is an exploration of what it takes to avoid an impending crash and redirect our national ethnic to a track of survival and prosperity.

III. National Ethic As Panacea For National Survival

Several solutions have and can be proffered as a way of promoting peace and stability in Nigeria. Nigeria is no doubt a complex country given its numerous ethnic-religious groups with varied characteristics and interests. Since the problem of re-occurring ethnic religious violence in Nigeria has been attributed to the plural nature of the country, we must radically transferred our obsolete ethnic modes of interacting with each other and develop a viable and sustainable national ethnic.

With the word national ethnic, we are referring to the largely set of cultural habits, rule of behaviour and expectations that inform, define and constitute our living together including the various dimension of emotional, intellectual and physical interrelationships that shape our daily activities (Harry 2003) national ethnics pay homage to the vital importance of maintaining a keen awareness of events that affect us in our own nation."Nigeria".

We live in a country stained by terrorism, cruelty, torture, conflict and violence etc. which are not natural conditions but scourges of ethnic bitterness and lack of national consciousness to be eradicated. Hence, national ethnics expound that living together with durable peace and stability in Nigeria may be achieved when such negative ethnic dynamic will be replaced by mental and social peace. Mental peace would ensure a state of unshakable quiet and composure, which is achieved through the inculcation of such creative virtues as friendliness, compassion, mercy, moderation, modesty, forgiveness, non-violence, love, etc. most of this virtues imply that national peace carried with it a surpassing of personality, and abandonment of ethnic and religious egoism. It means that national ethic anticipates peaceful-inter-ethnic relational relations (musty 2000). In Nigeria today, inter-ethnic peace relational relation is lacking due to cultural and ethnic network, political superiority complicated by ideological extremism and religious intolerance etc.

IV. Towards A New Paradigm Of Living Together

The ethnic groups share the yearning to lives their lives in peace, like other mankind that strived always to exist and grow in an environment of peace. Though peace has always been the overall goals of man, but, the approaches to the realization of peace has always been faulty, especially, the appeal to ethnic dynamics, as means of achieving desire peace. Today, peaceful living and healthy future of Nigeria civilization depends upon the cultivation of national ethnics, that enforces a solely novel attitude in regard to discharging our duties, based on national consciousness that transcends ethnic boundaries (Hans, 1991) to the extent that ethnic sentiment, religious extremism will be replaced by equality domination by autonomy, ethnic division by national solidarity, marginalization by participation in policy-making and ethnic vertical and horizontal relationship among ethnic groups, by national progress, politics by transparency and wants by need.
What paradigm in this direction is apparent?

Today, we live in an increasingly global society that is incrementally developing a newly complexified global consciousness (Harry, 2002). The independent emergence and subsequent confluence of global events indicates that the apparently divergent realms of human endeavour are evoking responses to patterns of interaction that are leading global citizens toward global consciousness as panacea for global peace and stability (Harry, 1993). The global consciousness is a valuable window of opportunity that opens unto a collaborative

horizon a meeting of minds where global citizens may observe, learn to recognize and cooperate with the divergent patterns that are drawing mankind towards global consciousness.

Therefore, the emergence of a new paradigm (national ethics rooted in national consciousness, will involve a profound transformation of ethnic differences in Nigeria's plural society to national solidarity. For surely Nigeria's diverse cultures exhibits more than a single consciousness. Following the lead of Ewert(1993), we may assume that the process of cultivating national consciousness will entail the development of a newly complexified dialogical consciousness, a "collective" consciousness that is integrated through dialogical dialogue against present ethnic sentiment, in which one ethnic group attempts to refute the claims of one's opponent (Northern Hausa/Fulani, opposition to south-south minority ethnic groups claims to Nigeria's presidency in 2015). The task before us is to learn how best to engage in an authentic dialogue, to listen to each other. Since all ethnic groups are interactive participants within the singularity interconnected holistic Nigeria system, we are called upon to engage the whole ethnic groups in dialogue, and our national ethnic will have to pay particular attention to understanding and caring for what "others" are "saying".

As remark by Henry (2002), dialogue begins with the willingness to question and to be questioned, while realizing that mutual understanding and working together towards common goals requires accepting differences. In part, dialogue is an effort to comprehend the inherent value of difference and commonality, for the sake of learning and living together.

In short, a dialogical co-evolution among various ethnic group serves to maintain national consciousness while enhancing the ability of differentiated individuals within the national polities with unifying actions (Chhaya, 2006).

Although our cultural and religious traditions have been conditioned by hundred years of divergence, animosity and violence, we can still envision a (Nigeria) in which all indigenes experience peacefull co-existence. A country where all citizens have access to their needs; a society where in the opportunities created by a just and equitable political system are truly accessible to all. In order to achieve national progress, the rebirth of national consciousness should facilitate total elimination of social problems that inhibit peace and stability. Hence, our template(s) for the rebirth of national consciousness should account for the evolution of Nigeria society where the scourges of negative ethnic dynamics will be eliminated.

V.   The Way Forward

Since ethnic-religious terrorism begins in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defense of national peace must be constructed (preamble to the constitution of UNESCO). The above thought aptly capture the believe of this paper that the search for peace to enhance our living together in Nigeria can be achieve through inter ethnic and inter religious dialogue

For better or worst, religious traditions allow people the ability to live and think at levels of integrated complexity that would be otherwise impossible (Hans, 1993). If we are going to succeed in transforming the misguided and destructive values (ethnic-religious terrorist that are leading us to the brink of disaster, religious authorities must tap the vast resources of knowledge and potential wisdom of the country's diverse religious traditions for positive change.

The ecology of mind that emerges when religious and cultural traditions meet in dialogue enhances our individual and shared abilities to learn, adapt and evolve.

The exchanges that occur in successful dialogue deepen personal faith, while enabling people from diverse religious, cultural and ideological perspectives to discover common interests and to work together towards common goals. (Chhaya, 2006). Since inter-religious dialogue candidly accept and affirms the pluralism and diversity embodied in the various religious system of the world, including Nigeria open dialogue offers the means by which we may access and seek to develop the vital resources, the capacity for ethical leadership, the potential for meaningful change and the profound national cohesion. From national perspective, it is self-evident that Nigeria has yet to actualize its full potential, and political efforts at creating a unified nation have fallen far short of the mark.

There is a clear indication that a new stage in the evolution of interreligious dialogue, would initiate a process that opens the possibility of engaging one another in a manner that is profound and integrative.

The issues relating to peaceful co-existences are not solely the property of politicians, religious authorities and social scientists, but of every one (minty, 2000) Every citizen of Nigeria must be aware of his/her responsibility, and that is to make men free from their deep-rooted ethnic religious sentiments, dogmas, illogical, irrational and outdated way of thinking (Gregory, 1979). The greater responsibility is to see that national peace should be upheld as supreme. Hence it is necessary to awake conscience at personal, ethnic, religious and national level because the seeds of national peace do not lie in lofty ideas, but in citizens understanding and sympathy for one another (Pathak, 2005).

To have national peace and stability, we must use inter ethnic and religious confluence to educate ourselves and others in ideal of human conduct, for ultimately ethnic-religious conflict is the insurmountable

barrier in the accomplishment of national peace and unity in Nigeria. Therefore, inter-ethnic religious dialogical confluence would concentrate on the creative possibilities of the citizenship. Nigeria Christians breaking of Ramadan fast with Muslim faithful within and outside the country and a group of Muslim fellowship with their Christian brothers at Redeem Christian Church rightly indicate that peaceful co existence is attainable through religious approach (NTA Network News, August, 2013).

VI. Concluding Remarks And Recommendations

In this paper, focus has been on problem of ethnic-religious terrorism that threatens the survival of our dear country Nigeria.

The paper noted that, all the problems emanated from coercive unity and fragile peace bequeathed to Nigeria at independent by the British in their failed nation building effort.

It is the conviction of this study that Nigeria is on the threshold of creating and discovering a dialogical vision of national unity and national responsibility that will be embraced by all the ethnic groups. To clearly articulate this dialogical vision is the task presently facing religious authorities. If we are going to implement viable and sustainable modes of living together, we must evoke national ethnic that is informed by the fact that all ethnic groups are part of the profoundly inter connected holistic unity of this country. The diverse ethnic and religious groups must begin re-evaluating and transforming their persistent hubris, ethnic religious centric and egocentric, that threaten national solidarity to national convergence, and authentic dialogue confluence, such dialogue should serve to identify the fundamental principles that will address our largely unconscious understanding of national consciousness as national ethnic for peace and stability.

Respect for human life form the basic foundation of global, national, ethnic, religious, political, mental, social and even environmental peace. No action is worthy of human effort, if it degrades man, even if its outcome is a spectacular success" therefore it is instructive to treat all ethnic as ends-in- themselves. Since the nation is an organic whole, governed by cosmic order, all ethnic groups irrespective of size must be treated as fellows.

If this is done ethnic religious conflicts can be avoided and national unity strengthens. For the sake of national unity and stability the idea of "ethnic well-being of all" ought to be incorporated in national ethnic, thus on the basic of cosmology and psychology, we must prepare the ground for the institution that all ethnic groups are equal. Hence natural ethic requires the performance of these actions which are based on national analogy. Mutual trust is also needed in the stage of interreligious and inter ethnic dialogue.

Psychology informs us that where ethnic and religious divisibility prevails, national consciousness becomes isolated. Therefore, national peace requires national ethnics to adopt the policy of dialogue or multi-ethnic peace negotiations, approach to strengthen our living together. Ethnic confrontational determination to counter forces of perceived injustice would be replaced by a policy of non-violent dialogue.

When peace seekers argue in favour of preparedness to discuss and change (if necessary) our beliefs and those of others, entirely on the grounds of factual experience and reason, even the ethnic ideologically inspire mistrust can be dissolved and the aim of national peace may be achieved. National ethnic should therefore encourage all ethnic groups to walk together, speak in concord and their efforts be united towards the progress of the nation. While we should learn from history together so as not to repeat its mistakes, we must never see ourselves simply as victims of our history; it is our responsibility to overcome the challenges posed by our history.

Justice and fairies and above equity should be the guiding principles of state craft.
The practice of non indigene in political practice should be discouraged. Nigerians that lives in any part of the country for a long time should enjoy the right to vote and to be voted for.

Generally speaking, peace is not merely a state of non-violence or absence of war, it also involves positive cooperation to achieve Justice, development, freedom and security (Otoabasi, 2012). Within a nation state, peace is not only a sine qua non but also a disseratum if that country is to experience sustained economic growth and development. Peace at national level or stability progress is freedom from civil disorder. If it has to be established on an enduring basis it must be national because it is the foundation of the survival of any nation state with diverse ethnic groups. (Hans, 1993).

There should be a fundamental restructuring of the Nigerian state through the "recurring decimal" of national conference.
(i) Devolution of power to the component groups on the basis of ethnic nationalities in the true spirit of federalism. This will help to reduce the source of tension and terrorism, and also the struggle for state power among the various ethnic groups.
(ii) The monopoly of power by few ruling class should be broken. Political power holding should not be vested with just few ruling elites, rather it should be re-distributed to accommodate all groups or constituents of the Nigerian state.

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