

DEMOCRACY AND THE FEARED FACTORS THREATENING NIGERIAN NATION

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ABSTRACT

Hidden, and operated under fear in the era of dictatorship, the concept, ethnic militias and its threat to the Nigerian Nation arose immediately after the ushering-in of Neo-democracy. Like if hell were let loose, the several ethnic groups, incredible conflict paradigm being politicized in the midst of sought to actualize the basis of their self-acclaimed rights and existences in a united-unity prone state. Thereby imposing a great threat to the thriving democratic tenets; as their activities seeks to redefine the geographical entity called Nigeria in their separately avowed interest. The perspective of this pieces, ‘ethnic militias, democracy and the threat to Nationhood: a negative dimension toward Nigerian polity’, is considered a very important area of study, referencing the categorical and destructive tendencies of violence in the country when everybody supposedly ought to be one. A persistent phenomenon in the past decades, and even into the new millennium. More so, this work, mindful of the essence of Neo-democracy which seek to Unite the world into a global village wished not to be truncated to the disfavour of Nigeria, as its benefits need to be explained further. The research examines the reoccurring decimal of violence, agitations and the dimensional propensities as affecting the inhabitants politically, economically, and socially. The implications of the increasing number of displaced people, refugee overflow and poverty in the midst of a threaten democracy also need to be revisited. The work, hinged on the theory of political rights, explains the reasons for all struggles. Thus, to advocating for the enthronement of a virile democracy where everybody will be a co-participator to the development of the society is very essential.

Key Words: *National Polity, Neo-Democracy, Ethnicity, Nationhood, Development, Instability*

INTRODUCTION

The perspective of the Nigerian state socio-political landscape had from time to time witnessed social instability, ethnic conflicts, and conditions of poverty, ignorance, disease, exploitation, injustice, inequality and debasement among others, thereby increasing the capacity prone of the society to violence.

Social insecurity of this kind, and in an objective sense, measures the presence of threat to acquired value, life and property of the individual and groups within the society. In a subjective sense, Anugwon (2001) noted that it relates to the presence of fear that such values, life and property of the individual or groups will be denied or attacked. When this threat or fear of threat is increased or allowed beyond the bounds of order, a situation of social instability results. However, the primary role of the state then goes to the point of progressively eliminating the objective conditions of social insecurity by reducing the capacity for social instability.

Against this danger in the Nigerian situation, the military, mindful of the uncertainties, incapacitation of the people and unacceptance of each other ethnically appropriated the people's shortfall to entrench a long chain of military rule, that had in no measure be of any benefit to the entire society. Thus, Idowu (1999) aptly noted that the Nigerian polity has been characterized by mutual suspicious, distrust and hatred amongst the various ethnic groups, thereby culminating in unmitigated inter-ethnic rivalry, animosity, and hostility and otherwise among others, with the military been the only icon of its corporate existence.

With the outlawing of the obnoxious acts of military rules, the ending stage of the twenties century and into the new millennium witnessed a new internationalization of the structure of the international system, it also confirmed the emergence of a single hegemonic power and the universal adaptation of the principle of Neo-democracy. A concept of globalization, as the world had increasingly and gradually turned into a hamlet, Thomas (1999:9) observed.

The Nigerian state under democracy, however, had opened up many sealed cans of contradictions formerly under the suppression of the military. Thus, causing the accreditation of identity by groups with aggressive demands of their rights without a thought about their obligations to the polity. The worsening social upheaval and political instability especially after the advent of the Fourth Republic have however, warranted several questions to be asked, especially as regarding the relationship between democracy, social instability and the engendering threat to democratic tenets.

For the features of the Nigerian scenario clearly show that, apart from industrial strikes, other forms of manifestation of social instability seem to present as ethnic and or

religious conflict or instability. Both ethnic and religious conflicts have tended to evolve into more frequently, since the inception of the fourth Republic and have tended to evolve into more violent and organized, ethnically based movements with stated ethnic agenda, Edlyne (2002) asserts.

This new recruit, otherwise called ethnic militias and structural make-up, only interested in what they can get from the state, are not only a threat to the Unity of the state and democracy but had a preponderance overture of dislocating the sovereignty of the Nigerian state. The most worrying aspect of the recent escalation of ethnic conflicts in the country seems to be its impact on the nascent democracy and the prospects of democratic consolidation. A case the Niger Delta youths, both disgruntled, jobless and miscreants had appropriated to show how neglected, their deceptive leader and the federal government had played on their ought to be valued welfare. As Nigeria's contemporary history shows, periods of great socio-political instability are usually chained with the overthrow of the civilian government and the assumption of power by the military. But away from this notion, the present ethnic structure in Nigeria seems to be complex with contradiction as many of these groups have acquired sophisticated arms and weapons to rubbish the state system. For the number of weapons in the hand of the individuals and on the streets, except the military tanks and gun boats among others are nothing to compare to, as the level of sophistication shown in the electoral period had informed that the police are mere child-soldiers to the dread thugs and armed carriers on the Nigerian streets. Beside the threat, the growing domestic instability and turmoil in the country now seriously negates the ideals of democracy. Hence, the sustenance of democracy in a context of heightened inter-ethnic rivalry, social instability, division, and distrust seems quite unlikely. Consequently, this envisaged interest and threat, this works, taking a recourse into state and group affairs in the world, where groups are now more conscious of their interests and the needs to protect competitions with other results to violence, will examine other salient features that may impose as a threat or tend to derail democratic goals in this era of a thriving institutionalization of the tenets of democracy and peaceful governance in Nigeria.

FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS OF AN OVER EXPRESSED RIGHTS AND THE CONTENDING SOCIAL ISSUES

The concept of suppression, frustration, deprivation, denial and a growing social decimation clogs, which had been an event of a long period, has been noted apparently as one of the misfortunes of dictatorship and or weak leadership. Although, they are still termed as factors modulating conflicts, but in this respect we are concerned with the phenomenon of rights and its attributes to peaceful co-existence. Thus, the situations of the fourth Republic may seem desirable with contradictions. For not only have democratic enthronement permit national borders porous, and natural economics been penetrated by uncontrollable extra national economic forces. The forces of globalization

and technology as noted by Ajayi (2002) have gate-crashed into nation states, accelerating identity explosions of groups which aggressively demand their rights, without a thought about their obligations to the polity. An implication portends to put the state in a chain of confusions and contradictions in future if it fails to meet up the various demands of these agitators.

Theory of political rights thus may best describe the period in-review. This is because, the precarious era of military rule, civil dictatorship, and civil weakling administration of present, with its consequent neglects, unabated corruption of state power, malfunctioning electoral system, corruptly-greedy electoral officials and economic profligacy had heightened relationship between various ethnic groups in the country against possible enthronement of sound social civility. The Nigerian military, itself, having an antecedence of a product of interplay of ethnic and geographical forces had helped in raising the drive for ethnicity. Therefore, the military utilizes ethnicity as a tool to perpetuate its hold on power as well as to negate any attempt by the civil society to strive towards democracy and responsible governance. But even more crucial than the role of the military in the power equation in Nigeria is the fact that democracy, according to Held (1997) is ideally seen as the bastion of equity, freedom and justice. Therefore, political rights and democracy, which was denied the populace was rightly expected to bring into existence a new socio-political era.

According to Dilys (1996) political rights is something that no one anywhere may be deprived of without a grave affront to justice. There are certain actions that are never permissible, certain freedoms that should never be invaded, and certain things that are sacred. Thence, marrying this notion to individual human rights norms, Ifowodo (1994) observed that human rights are laws, custom and practice that have evolved over the centuries to protect ordinary people, minorities, groups and races from oppressive rulers and government. This rights, when further examined, could equally be those rights, fundamental or otherwise, which uphold the inherent dignity of man and promote the quality of his existence by providing the bases for freedom, justice and peace without distinction as to race, color, sex or creed Humana (1993:166) posits.

In the Greece city-state, according to Haries (1990), liberty and equality was taken as the central mark of democracy as their increase in liberty and equality also led to their increase in democratic processes and values. Liberal democrats in their enunciation, however, contended that the premise of democracy and democratic rule are the only avenue through which, respect and upholdment of the dignity of human person can be obtained.

In addition to the views above (Humana, 1993) further opined that anyone who professes to take rights either political or economic rights amongst others seriously must accept at

the minimum the vague but powerful idea of human dignity. Thus, freedom of speech, movement and participations among others, becomes a great elements of political rights. In another realm, Bhegwati (1994:9) observed that he who bids the law, rule, bids God and reason rule, but he who bids man rule odds, an elements of the beast, for desire is a wild beast and passion perverts the minds of rulers, even though they be the beast of man.

Re-examining the facts above, political rights rest on the consent of the people, on the need for the people to rule themselves, make their own laws and desires for themselves what seems rights. Contradicting this to the era of military rule, when every ethnic groups and people were under fear of the military might, no right was observed as no right was recognized, and the oppositions were overwhelmed and contained. In that period, several things, apart from taken place were swallowed without questions to the governing body. Thereby justifying the facts that under the military or a dictatorial government that human rights or political system is not encouraged. Thus, no human rights in the military become the order of the day. Comparing this to a civil government, like the Nigerian Fourth Democratic Republic, it is obvious that every groups want to be heard. Though, formerly, hidden and operated under fear, each ethnic groups organized into ethnic militias, sought to actualize their self-acclaimed rights and interest. Increasingly, the main dilemma is where one strike a balance between the demand of these to protect the difference in a democratic setting through the instruments of violence and the need to protect the fundamental human rights of individuals or groups. Where does one strike a delicate balance between the need to provide security for all. And yet respect the democratic rights of some others. Does the freedom inherent in a democratic system warrant a licence to impose threat to the state? How do we demarcate the boundaries of rights in a democratic system? Where do our rights end and where do our obligations to one another begin? These questions are however pertinent to the growing problems being created by the activities of ethnic militias particularly in Niger-Delta where criminality and destruction had been the mode of agitation for rights upholdment.

This is because the coming of the Fourth Republic, ought to be for the establishment of a peaceful democratic polity, but the activities of the ethnic, religious, geo-ethnic and other groups, have punctuated the political process and rendered extremely fragile the security of persons, groups and their properties on the context of the fact that they are entitled to the necessary rights as provided for by the democratic system and constitution. But be that as it may, the so-called rights are not only abused, swapped into antics of stealing and crimes' heaven among others but had also been over expressed to the detriment of the general society.

In this realm, a political commentator according to Tempo Magazine (2002:8) had argued that, the government's position explicates the fact that social and ethnic conflicts are actually the results of manipulation by elites shows a narrow understanding of the

problem. But the facts remains, that ethnic conflict lies more with the mismanagement and malfunctioning of the political system, the economy and associated poverty resulting to the citizenship problem and general dissatisfaction with the government and its policies, Yusuph (2003) argued. Thus, it is that same dissatisfaction that the people mindful of the composition of the present government and seen as not difference from other military rules in term of its structure, that they have sought solace in democratic tenets to seeks for their rights of total freedom. A course that had not only threatened the Nigerian polity but tend to dismember the entity, Nigeria, believing that rights is freedom. For the case in Niger Delta, which have a high degree of militant actions and activities had to some extent placed the Nigerian state to a no go area to other foreign National and businessmen alike. The criminality of the over expressed rights and claims of denial had also made mess of the struggle for better welfare by the youths and criminal leaders of that region to be dismay of the desires of the Nigeria people and her place in the committee of Nations. This criminality leading to fragmentation and faction among the militias had not only portrayed Nigeria as a failed state, coupled with riggings and thievery of elections results as attendant electoral quagmire, but the combination of kidnapping, terrorism and the boldness of the militias to face the Nigeria military in a battle confrontation exemplified the notion that Nigeria is on the keg of gun powder, wittily expected to explode one day.

ETHNICITY IN THE NIGERIAN POLITY

a. The Origin of Ethnicity

Arising from the unmitigated reasons that the colonial master had in welding the geographical entity – called Nigerians into one – nation – state, the antecedence of the events that followed afterward explains that Nigeria is mix-up of people of different ethnic background. The independence era, both post-era and contemporary among others according to Babawale (2002) saw a different people coming together to form a quasi – federation that was ethnically controlled by the struggle of the three major groups – the Hausa, Yoruba and the Ibo. This competition not only affected the entire state system but left the nation in a perpetual emptiness and instability.

This grave animosity and other salient elements portend great problems however, derailed the reasons that the founding fathers had as a course for making Nigeria one. Nnoli (1993) in this respect noted that evolving from this angle is that every child born-grows up to discriminate and differentiate in both character and political pursuits among the three groups. With the control of the military and state power for a long time by the North, the South – highly dominated by the Western Yoruba nation and the Ibo nation seeks to accept the fact that politics is the unending struggle amongst classes to dominate state power through ensuring that the class role in production is dominant over the production process (Held, 1997) opined.

This domination determines the pattern of distribution of rewards among various roles in the process and occupies such strategic position in the process that the sole occupants are able to achieve their interests. Once a class dominates state power, it organizes itself and society in such a way as to establish and perpetuate control over this power and uses it to pursue their interests.

In line to this structure, political associations and parties was formed on ethnic base. Thereby nurturing a kind of cyclical ethnic dynasty for eventual winner in the struggle to state power. This act, which actually saw to the total political and economic destruction of the nation's wealth amidst impoverished citizenry detriment, becomes the end of many hopes about Nigerian.

As discussed above, Abubakar (1997) in joining issue asserts that urban ethnic identity, which had emerged before and during the independent era established itself with concomitant manifestation of dysfunctional political system. The colonial powers were also seen manipulating this ethnic identity to perpetuate colonial rule. It used the divide – and – rule syndrome to create divisions amongst the population, Okafor (1982) noted. Furthermore, colonial preferences between the North and South of the country were sometimes overt and have blamed for the politics of the North - South divide in Nigeria.

Apart from the colonial distortion, ethnically based political parties and the military being highly controlled by the North, loopholes and incapacitations of this ethnic cleavages of which their shortfall was appropriated to the debasement of the entire country was instituted with over ridding force.

This indigenous ruling class who failed to rise above ethnic quagmire, then created several problems amongst others, iniquity in politics of development. Consequently, till date, the struggle for political power by the different ethnic groups became intensified. The intensification of ethnic struggle for political power continued to define Nigerian politics up to the present time.

This act which had not only created a more terrifying problems, have in several realm armed young men and youths to seek their ethnic nationality as supreme amongst others also tend to endanger the national polity with the advent of ethnic militias as a force backing their individual ethnic interests.

ETHNIC MILITIAS IN NIGERIAN POLITY

Imperatively, Nigerian historical past and present cannot be succinctly explained without under lining the fact that Nigeria as a nation has a long history of ethnic violence. Few, if any, had occurred in the pre-colonial Nigeria except inconsideration of the relationship between the conquering Fulani and their Hausa subject, (Okafor, 1982) revealed.

Otherwise, most ethnic groups in pre-colonial Nigeria co-existed peacefully until the coming of colonialism.

However, in the present, Nigerians are divided along more lines than just the ethnic lines; religion – Christian/Moslem, Cultural (multi-cultural), international affiliation (the West/Islamic Arab World), of all these lines of division, the most volatile and often the most troublesome has been religion, Akinboye (2001) contended. Nigeria has a long history of social unrest, traceable to religious differences.

Often, those religious disturbances assume an ethnic connotation and collaboration. This is so because the various ethnic groups are identifiable with one religion or the other. There is therefore little difference between ethnic and religious divisions. What starts most at times as a religious disagreement soon assumes ethnic dimensions and vice-versa. Even what starts as a political struggle is often misconstrued as a religious or ethnic struggle? The contradictions and confusions played a major role in obfuscating issues involved in the military coup of January 1996, (Okafor, 1982) reiterated. What started as a purely political struggle within the class structure of the Nigerian Army soon assumed an ethno-religious dimension that led to the worst case of ethnic killings in the history of Nigeria.

However, digressing from this view above, Eghosa (1994) observed that militant groups or ethnic militancy operating on the basis of purely ethnic agenda are relatively new, except the case of the earliest militant groups of the 1960, under political and economic agenda, led by Isaac Adaka – Boro, on the issue of marginalization by the then Eastern region government to the present states of Rivers and Bayelsa. The armed struggle was quickly pulled down and the leader charged with treason.

Moreso, the Nigerian civil war of 1967 – 70 was ethnically based and after the civil war, there have been several other records of civil and religious disturbance, riots, clash and social disorder etc. But while these incidents pass for social instability, they are not considered as cases of ethnic militancy. They were noted to have occurred as a spontaneous reaction to situations. They were not sustained campaigns based on stated agenda. They were not organized groups out to achieve some political and/or economic objectives. The numerous religious riots in the Northern part of the country belong to this group. So also is the occasional inter or intra ethnic clashes over territorial boundaries, lands, and location of some public offices among others.

Against, the degree of social instability and the discontent of the various sections of the country during the long chain of military rule and especially in the period of General Sani Abacha, Akinyele (2001) noted that the emergence of ethnic militias became pronounced with series of hidden agenda. These ethnic militias did not only exist but they operate

secretly while opposing several programmes of the military juntas. Thus, by May 29, 1999, with the re-birth of a new democratic government, the highly centralized Nigerian federation, of which the centre had for long enjoyed enormous political and economic powers with an apparently suffocating hold on the sub-national states was once again questioned like if hell were let loose by the activities of the several ethnic groups.

Hence, at the terminal period of transition from military to civil rule in 1999, there were signals of a resurgence of aggressive sub-nationalism, which had been under the suppression of the military and General Abacha in particular, Anifowoshe (2002) contended. At the hand over period, there arose a latent aggressive sub-nationalism, which exploded to violence, thereby triggering – off the emergent of the ethnic militias one after the other to either contain or engaged the activities of the existing ones and government.

This politics of engagement and containment amongst the ethnic militias underlines the observations of Eleazu (1977) who observed that one effects of the over-centralization of power in a purported federal structure, especially in a military regimes was always the emergence of a strong centrifugal forces, which felt disadvantaged in the system. Hence, many sub-national groups felt that if Nigeria federation were not as centralized as it was, they would have had a fairer deal in the federation. Thus, under the present polity many of the suppressed ethnic groups and militias found reason to question the so-called Nigerian federation and the basic essence of a powerful (but lacking in provision and security of the people) centre. It is this categorical questions, the violence and the engendering organized marginalization that resulted in each ethnic group trying to seek and protect its own. Still on the same situation, few amongst the ethnic militias criminalized the individual struggle towards subverting the national integrity of the country. However, the following are the known ethnic militias:

NEO – DEMOCRACY, STATEHOOD AND STABILITY IN NIGERIA

In the 80's, a remarkable trend toward the establishment of democracy and democratic institution was apparent throughout many years of the world. In Latin – America the generals and colonels were returning to their barracks, while the end of cold war witnessed the emergence of fledging democracies in large parts of the Eastern Europe and former USSR and Asian minors. However, this trends wasn't reproduced in certain states of the African continent, where one party autocratic leadership is not only implaced, instead the military still has a pivotal role in influencing and directing policy and actively suppressing the emergence of democratic tents and institutions. This is no more noticeable than in Nigeria, where this entailed a great hardship on the people till late 90's, when it was fully embraced to promote social civility that has provened unattainable.

Democracy, imperatively, rest on the consent of what is best peaceful for the interest of the people. The United Nation in 1992, according to Glieman (1995) observed with utmost sincerity that as from 1995, it will henceforth, then cease from allowing or admitting any nations whose way of governance does not allow for majority mandate or consent. They abhor all form of quasi, autocratic and dictatorial systems of governance, thereby substituting it with what was otherwise called Neo-democracy, new form of democracy. A democracy being reintroduce by the western world, that must be monitored and supervised by the western actors in order to promote international peace worldwide.

To this end, several gains were said to accompany this democratic re-birth ideas. Such gains as total integration unto the world economic system, technological improvement and stabilization, and trade liberalization among others, were to be embraced by adherers. The idea also enhances diplomatic intercourse and relationship as well as the recognition of state in the committee of nations.

The OAU, now AU, the APC, and Commonwealth of nations among others in 1992 December at Harare Zimbabwe, also agreed that the full implementation of the New Democratic agenda should be the icon of every member states' system of governance procedure, Macnuell (1997) enuciated. On this legate, state every where has come to appropriate and appreciation the good idea of peaceful governance which at now can only be found in democracy.

Again for our purpose, democracy was not only accepted and meant to be practice but it has become the yearning of people everywhere. Although, democracy has some universal principles even if these principles may be adapted to different environments. There is therefore no single model of democracy. Democracy, therefore to the notion of the above scholar involves, however, certain attitude, or beliefs and emotions of the society, which govern the polity. It is however, in awakening to this fact that the ushering in of democracy on May 29 1999, that several interest groups who have seen reasons in a true peaceful and good system of governance sought to align themselves to the new agenda. Certain of this course, they from all angel wants to appropriate the good virtue of democratic governance. Democracy, in itself, has certain values which all must accept if there is to be a stable sustainable democratic polity. And it is in the quest of this goal that since May 29 1999, there has been an explosion of ethnic drives and other forms of identities, which to some extent, the individual ethnic groups has used their ethnic militias to demonstrate the larger form of communal dissatisfaction with the polity.

Although, in Nigeria, the several ethnic group which has been under military and dictatorial suppression was seen rearing their ugly heads due to the extent and freedom of democratic liberty, but as Smith (2000) observed that this democratic virtue which, preaches freedom and peace are however misappropriated by the each struggling ethnic

group in the sense that democracy is not a panacea for violent aggressive ethnic-group militias like the activities of MEND or the NDPVF against a constitutionally formed government, and neither is the emergence of ethnic militias a resolute solution to social ineptness, but over time, democracy provide avenue for addressing the grievance of which led to their emergence. Thence, an effective and constructive response to ethnic militias is to be found in within a relatively equitable state structure like in Nigeria, where an effective honest, just, fair and democratic governance with natural respect amongst the entire country ought to be promoted by all the component groups, as members of one polity toward enthroning a stable statehood.

Going along this line, it will be obvious that the idea of democracy to promote peaceful statehood was threatened by the spate of violence and ethnic clashes, which the criminalization of the act in Niger-Delta by some of the leaders and the militants combined, however may be blamed on the state violation of some of the characteristics of democracy. These characteristics, Ghali (1994) argued that the base of authority in democratic system lies with the people. And since authority depends on the people, any authority that does not emerge from the consent of the people is not democratic. Although the manner in which this word consent may be applied may vary from one system, state or society to other. Likewise, the said consent does not permit to threat to the corporate existence of the system as is found in the Nigerian state. For there is an extent to which demands and agitation can be stretched it would be no longer a true intentions of all but a criminal intent of few who are gaining from the rackets.

Another point that tend to play on the scale is that a state like Nigeria cannot be in want of state stability if the very concept of democratic governance had not been abused by the governing elites. This is because, according to Elaigwu (2003), democracy is based on rule of law, which helps to sustain statehood and its enabling integrity and legitimization. And when a democratic polity is said to be lacking in legitimacy, then the basic condiments of true governance is neglected or otherwise wished away. Thereby deranking the rights given to the leader to lead from him and subsequently been spotted in different hands as each hands will want to display its own make-up in the manner best known to them. At the same time the institutional mechanism will not only be moribund and desecrated upon, but the growing negativism inherent in the system will equally demand for urgent change or group conflicts to survive or shake-off the shackle of blames and pains among others.

Democracy also calls for choice of the people for any state to enjoy a stable polity. The element of choice in a polity rest on the people. The people should have the rights to effect changes in the leadership. Choice in a polity includes such values as freedom of association, movement, thought, expression, existence, and ownership of properties among others. But when an individual or group of criminal intent cabals like Olusegun

Obasanjo and Maurice Iwu personally select and impose leaders on the people as was in Nigeria in 2003 and 2007 elections respectively, then the people against whose rights had being denied in making their own choice may be left with no alternative than to pursue their self –avowed and trodden rights in whatever manner for recognition and subsequent actualisation. On the other hand when this is not done against the wish of the people, then, the leader who uphold all the desires of the people and the things that benefit them is admitted to have accounted well at the end of his tenure to the people. Because, every leader whom the people entrusted some values like democratic tenets are held responsible for their action as representatives of the people who are entrusted with power to achieve particular ends. But when all this basic things mentioned above is lacking, then the state and people may sought solace in anything that could give them the required protection and happiness.

In view of this, the present government, though were faced with several social problems, but the input or mechanism put in implace to submount this upheavals was never focused. They only engaged in chasing empty parlance and initiating un-ideal policies to the detriment of the people. Thereby allowing the continual escalation of several ethno-religious violence. They sincerely forgot that Nigeria has a long chain of ethno-religious historical problems. And that the only way to welding them is by enthroning a virile democratic system that the principle of equity, equality, law and legitimization of every component of government are thoroughly uphold, toward promoting stable statehood in Nigeria.

Analyzing this contention, it is evident that if the Nigerian polity is anything to go by, that the government who are aware that an average Nigerian who have lived under suppression, intimidation and deprivation need to be uplifted and provided with succour. Thus, OPC, APC, IPC, Ijaw Youth, MEND and other militants among others would not have been dissatisfied if the government of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo had come into power to attend to those several socio-economic and political neglects and deprivations that the people of Nigeria had suffered. The incessant ethnic and militias clashes in the past twelve years, which had accounted to the lost of over fifteen (15,000) thousand Nigerian to an untimely grave beyond would not have occurred but the most uncultured and insincere idea about the present government is their principle of insistence of how bad the past military regime was with the retardation of the principle of lets push forward and make improvement. The Obasanjo/Yar’adua government had being weakling and inefficient in many respect as the former suddenly remembered that he was dyeing a poor man hence the craze to amass wealth was his only contribution to the Nigerian outlook and existence from 1999 to 2007, while the latter is confused and meshed in a pathogenic scenarios of self imposed contradictions. This continual occurrence of those who have nothing to offer but to steal and deprave the society had been adjudged as the basic factor mitigating an increase in militancy and subsequent threat to democratic tenet.

It is imperatively, reasonable to argue that it is this distrusted and cyclical neglect and over-theorizing without food on the table of an average man that do much at times instigate people or even tribe or ethnic group or militants not only against each other but daring the national army to a battle as the MEND had consistently displayed their intention against the status quo. A reference point showed that a derail democracy is an abused stability, and a threatened statehood, just the instances below had shown.

Consequently, the above highlighted cases of ethnic militias, militancy and communal crises in the country, the Nigerian government since 1999 seemed to have enjoyed more crisis, instability and wanton destruction of lives by the so-called militant forces whose interest seems to out-weighted the national interest of the Nigerian state in trying to enthrone a virile democracy and encourage vibrant development programme. This abysmal violence is however a categorical inference of saying that something is wrong within the system and that it could equally be adduced that the people enjoy violent more than peaceful resolute of a particular crisis or deprivation.

Moreso, evidence arising from the above capitulations, shows that from the inception of democratic governance in Nigeria, that the period 1999 to half of 2002 witnessed cyclical instabilities, while others from 2003 to 2009 are mostly caused by over endured frustration, deprivation and neglects among others. The prevalence of one ethnic conflict or another as been the mainstay of Nigeria was not only pronounced, but exacerbated. In fact, the preponderance of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria in the year under review has been succinctly captured in the following manner by Ndegwa (1997) who noted that from Modakeke – Ife crisis in the South-West to Ijaw_Itsekiri in the South-South to ethno-religious crisis Kaduna/Kano and Plateau and Tiv-Jukun conflicts in Benue/Taraba states. It is unabating gory tales of endless loss of human lives and materials possessions all the way.

Apart from the alarming and astounding increase in both number and magnitude of lost, destruction and wanton human carnage, ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria, championed by militias and privates armies alike since the era of the nascent democracy has become fused into the political agitation strategies of groups. While conflicts and crisis may have become more rapid and heightened, the nature has undergone considerable change. The change has been in the fact that entho-religious violence mitigated by ethnic militias, even, while bloody, are now channeled toward garnering more political benefits and economic gains for the groups concerned within the context of the new democratic dispensation.

Thus, (Anugwon, 2001) in complementing this view above had argued that ethnic mobilization even among the very conscious Niger Delta people is nor geared toward improving their lot within the ambit of democracy and a free society. In addition, the

ethnic group/associations are not any longer engaged in a zero sum game mobilization but seen the prevailing socio-political dispensation as amenable to the fulfillment of their separately – individual groups aspiration. But even this sort of ethnic drive as championed by each groups organizations has been more after than not contradicted by the violent activities of the existing ethnic youth groups.

Obviously, too, the elite leadership of all the ethnic groups in Nigeria appears helpless in the efforts to rein in the youthful militant and often sprinter groups. But equally worth mentioning is the fact that the actions of the elite leadership have often smirked of a subtle collaboration with the militant elements. In retrospect to this notion is the role of late Abraham Adesanya who openly endorsed the militant group leader of OPC by holding the hands of the faction leaders in the spirit of reconciliation as an indication that he does not understand the full implications of the message to the public. More importantly too, is the romance between the old elite and militant groups in the various ethnic groups in Nigeria and the aiding of the Niger Delta militancy by some criminal retired generals as presently unraveled by the federal Government itself, which may serve as further boost to the spats of bloodletting tendencies of the militants.

ABYSMAL IMPLICATIONS AND DEMOCRATIC THREATS

Inference from the aforementioned on democracy and state governance vis-à-vis the durability of democratic system, the enabling stability that democracy creates and the engendering smooth system of governance, it is imperative to accentuate that if democratic tenets are vividly adhered to, that the enabling and working principles of democracy will be seen permitting the fabrics of the society. Thus, the idea that a democratic polity does gradually build its own culture becomes a reality. But against the situations facing the polity now, the whole issues still look dicey as the drive toward true democracy are not only far but had been placed in the same messy and trash can that the ruling class had dumped the idea of true federalism in Nigeria. Thus, the shortchanging of the latter with quasi and criminal foisted centrifigural forces as federation had also being blamed as a factor mitigating consistent violence in the polity apart from the ethnic aspirations.

It is also evident that in a democratic system, that it is the majority who dictates while being sensitive to the interest of the minority. Tolerance of divergent views within the political parties, the legislature, executive and judiciary and the general society at large are also viewed as a vital pivotal scheme of democratic initiatives in a polity. In the parlance of this fulcrum, commitment to upholding of the necessary constitutional legates as a supreme guide for operation of a democratic polity is viewed as a necessary evil. Adding to this is the acceptance of the rules of the game of politics and being bound by its tenets. Thus, both winners and losers see politics as a game and not as a battle in which one or the other would win as criminal individual like Olusegun Obasanjo notoriously

see it as a do or die game of gangstars affair in 2007 election. An implication that has displayed itself not only on the inactiveness of the imposed president but an act that had retarded and debased the political clout of the Nigerian state in the commity of nations. In a polity of this nature, it is always necessary for the political elites to be sensitive and responsible to those who elect them into such offices but the present failures and confrontation with the militants by the federal government could be said to have steemed from the fact that the so-called leaders are not elected by the people but imposed by the ex-combatants of Obasanjo and Ali.

However, when a polity tries, and adhere to all the above mentioned political culture and ideals in a democratic system, such a system will not only be seen as democratical enjoying a stable polity but its development and pursuit will be a success to the particular society. But on the alternative when such a polity as existed in Nigeria is threatened by social instability and war arising from ethno-religious conflicts, and militancy confrontations, deliberately championed by ethnic militias, for ethnic interest, the political system which is seen as a conversion process where received demands and supports inputs are processed to give output becomes negated by the engendering quagmires generated by the threats, (Ndegwa, 1997) noted.

Instabilities resulting from the disruption of this process as may occur in the system due to the cyclical ethnic violence leads to a democratic breakdown. The break in the relationship between input and output due to the failures in the conversion process result to anarchy and social upheavals. Instability will also occur in the supposedly feedback loop that is already broken, thereby availing the system to several and unwarranted power hijackers and absolutist of autocratic dominance.

Applying this notion to the Nigeria nascent democracy, it is obvious that if the current democratic threats are allowed or sustained, that democracy in itself will not only be defrauded and compromised as already being displayed in the polity but the basic notion nursed and intended by the so-called militant groups will extolled their desires. Although, it is easy to explaining that the present activities of ethnic militias and it threat to democracy and the foundation of the Nigerian nation, might be as a consequence of the various policy lapses, decisions unimplemeted and certain practices of the political class in governance had portrayed criminal zeals, but much is absorbed to contravened the ideas that they are making the Nigerian democratic system to be valueless and unprofitable to the yearns and aspirations of the common electorates' bargains with their mandates.

The fact should not equally be denied that many implications abound when the present government fails to creating a melting pot of the various constituent ethnic groups, with the manners in which each government official and Nigerians continues to see

themselves first as ethnic national instead of an unbiased bureaucrats or person. This is evident because the political system is not only been blamed for the attendant crisis but on their continual entrenching the feature by which the majority ethnic groups are favoured in the distribution of benefits to the detriment of the minority groups.

The utter neglect of certain areas and the consequent denial of infrastructure based on ethnic consideration may become one of the negating force against the aforementioned democratic cultures, since it is relevant to note that the stability of a federal structure demands, equity amongst all ethnic groups as a way of reducing ethnicity, but if otherwise becomes the case, say the political conversion processes if negated, will produce inequality, exploitation and social instabilities. Thence, the reception that might follow will distort the enabling factors for democratic sustenance and peaceful co-existence.

This implies that while the government need to check where they have fall short of their promises to the people, the society in general should equally resolve in treating all problems through constructive dialogue and corporate understanding among parties. The idea of any ethnic militia, like OPC, IPC or the Egbesu and APC trying to settle every score through violence amongst their neighbour need to be rethought for national interest and the survival of democracy rather than ethnic characteristic drives among others.

Considering other implication toward democratic threat, emphasis need to be drawn on the preponderance factors of a separatist ideas nursed by the ethnic groups. For instance, the OPC was formed to protect the rights of all Yorubas in Nigeria, by propagating and projecting positions, which would enhance the welfare and well-being of the Yoruba race is a cosmic abuse on statehood of Nigeria. The Igbos also under MASSOB, IPC and Bakassi Boy trying to re-echo the Biafra separatist idea, in which they are only meant to project the interest of the Igbo race is a great set back to the Nigerian corporate existence, and likewise the APC of the North among others trying to do the same is an idea that never go well with an incubating institutions like democracy and democratic tenets in Nigeria.

The OPC and MASSOB who had in fact announced their intension to declare an O'dua nation and Republic of Biafra among others, respectively standard to inform us that the present democratic system is a chimera and has no human face. The past and present activities of the MEND, NDPVF, NDRC and NDT among others, which had been confrontational to the government of the day also explains the import of denial, frustration, deprivation and absence of Human needs in the region where both leaders and youths control oil well against the national security requirement and national interest of the Nigerian state. For it is evidence that the same people who fought for the exit of the military were the same people funding the OPC, APC, MASSOB, NDPVF, NDTC

and Egbesu among others. It is of recent, due to the fall out among the protem commanders of MEND aka Boyloaf that the country were informed that their key sponsor is a staff in the presidency, Ogoigbe, (2009) posits. This great accusation that the presidency had failed to debunk or accept implies that it is the same government that chase and pursues the militant that aids them. A cause which might be due either to disagreement between the parties as was in the case of notorious Obasanjo and Alammeseya of Bayelsa state in 2006 over oil well and party-issues disagreements. For instance, the OPC was mainly financed by the Yoruba politicians, businessmen, academics and even foreign agents. The Pan Yoruba group, Afenifere, NADECO and some government officials were in support of their course. The MASSOB on the other hand enjoy the support of the world Igbo congress council, Ohanaeze group and many foreign agencies among others (Yusuph, 2002) revealed. The Egbesu were also enjoying the support of the affluence in the South – South for their possible control of the oil and resources of the zone. The APC, apart from enjoying the support of the Northern elements, emirs, political cabals and religious bigotries etc. are nurtured by the ex-military class (Thisday, 2001) .

Going by this enumerations, it is evident that Nigeria and Nigerians are still far away from the costumes of democracy. That, it seem that everyone is living on democratic hocus – pocus, a parlance of self-deprivation and self – negation in an institution that everyone seem to be working toward its actualization in a pretence prologue. This categorical implication of a democratic threats supposedly informs the international community that the attendant crisis are mitigated by the same people who yearns for democracy on one hand and perpetuate series of acts to discredit democratic initiatives on another. It also decried the level of unpreparedness of the country in actually toeing the desired line of democracy.

More factors that seem to imposed a great threat to democracy in recent time is, first, the incident of ethnicity or ethnic nationalism, political marginalization and economic exploitation by the ruling class. In an ethnically divided society, it is easy to present politics as an inter-ethnic struggle for socio-economic resources. Consequently, Campbell (1996) aptly noted that most Nigerian have come to believe that unless their “own man” is in power, they are unable to secure those socio-economic amenities that are disbursed by the government. The failure of government to devolve power have also ended up in the over centralization of the government, thereby negating the cardinal points of promoting social civility.

Secondly, the existence of MEND, NDPVF, OPC and NDTC among others, which is today a national threat, was borned out of the peoples’ quest to shake-off the level of marginalization and their perpetual states – stands as opposition group in every government. Hence, the intention of the Ijaws and Yorubas to actualize the mandate of

June 12 elections while at the same time allowing the former to control her resources implied that their aspiration is a necessary evil. The Igbos who has found their existence in the Nigerian Nation as an affair of frustrating interaction in the general scheme of things also saw the marginalization as an awful, hence, the vowed by the youthful MASSOB groups to lead other people out of Nigerian presumed 'Babylon'. MASSOB is therefore a creation of the willful marginalization of the Igbos. The Egbesu in their own saw their exploitation by both government and other ethnic groups as a dehumanization and share thieffry to the gifts of God to them. Thus, with poor environment, non-availability of foods and continual land degradation that is not only hazardous and destructive due to the manners of oils – exploration, (Punch, 2002) contended, would prefer controlling the resources and its harnessing and proceeds than the abysmal cyclical cheatings. So is the APC, and other ethnic militancy with one complain or the other. A course that never promote or project the basic rudiments of a democratic system of governance, since it is reasonable to argue that the freedom granted by democracy also allows for the proper addressing of the several complaints and solutions proffered by the government as their continual neglect and carryover will not only be a threat to democracy but a detrimental factor to the Nigerian statehood.

DEMOCRACY, ETHNIC MILITANCY AND THE THREATS TO NATIONHOOD: A SUGGESTION

It is imperative that democracy enthrone social civility, but the contending factors that imposes as a threat to it was occasioned by circumstantial necessities affecting the adherents. Thus, we cannot categorically agree that the various ethnic groups have acted in the wrong direction, instead what I think that ought to be done immediately after the erstwhile military regimes that had treated every citizens as an endangered species by appropriating their inabilities to opposed them was by instilling suppression and autocratic tendencies was that this ethnic dreams and their individual struggles would have been attended to by the present government considering their separately existed.needs. The people and the society in general would have been submissive to state in strict adherent to the intervening variables and in conjunction with the resolute applications of the necessary tenets of democratic changes world over, since we equally believe and know that democracy mean different things to different people if their needs were addressed with cogency.

However, the terrible manners in which the MEND, NDPVF, OPC, MASSOB, APC and Egbesu among others had been carrying out their separately avowed struggle is not in anywhere acceptable or could be condole, because democratic freedom does not in anywhere allows for the sovereignty of the state to be threatened or subverted. This ethnic groups who have turned indecent groups in a bid to explaining their sufferings, pains and sorrows among others need not to adopt violence, kidnapping, stealing, or inter-religious chauvinism as a way of trying to let their voice to be heard. What they would have done

is to making sure that they have a true representative of the people to present their desires and demands before the appropriate authority instead of seeing violence as the alternate means of the struggle.

Moreso, under the legal and constitutional frames, their acts are not only termed illegal and anti-civility, except by otherwise, the National Assembly or state houses makes law for their existence. In the parlance of Nigerian constitution, under sections 214 and 216 of the 1999 constitution respectively, the Nigerian Police is to maintain law and order. The state does not recognize any other law enforcement agent other than the police in this regard. Although, (Edlyne, 2002) once blamed the inefficiency of the Nigerian police as a prelude or the mitigating force calling for the spring up of ethnic militia in different parts of the country. But, in whichever manner one viewed their existence as either a measure or necessity to abridge the several discrepancies or loopholes existing in the Nigeria security body, the idea of one or many ethnic militias existing to run or takeover the function of the Nigeria police is a constitutional defects and abnormalize and unheard – off in any democratic system. These militias are otherwise, extra constitutional bodies and therefore have no place in a democratic setting. The wanton killings, kidnapping, stealing and destruction of lives without due process by the group is a great threat to the national security and statehood of the Nigerian – Nation. In the same vein, this groups acquisition of sophisticated weapons in addition to the several primitive and barbaric weapons for killing and maiming people informs every citizenry that the government’s continued adamant shows that excluding the army from the society, the country – Nigeria is near ethno-rebellious incursion, whose devastating consequences will be away from hell town to unknown oblivions.

It is evident, however, that a democratic regime, provides avenues through which aggrieved people or group and issues can be settled, but it seemed that the several ethnic groups are abusing that opportunities by not only trying to declare their own interest and possibly state, without minding what happens to the larger state and people of Nigeria, as they go on and on threatening the nascent democracy. Importantly, also, we know that a democratic system in the course of any face-off, first, must try to neutralize every sources of grievance by either dampening conflicts and striking a balance with the adoption and implementation of certain democratic values, but the present government in many instances must be blamed for playing the role of unconsignment, especially on those issue, that could impose threat to the corporate existence of the Nigerian - nation. Examples of this is the manner of handling certain state matters, sensitive religious matters and political acts of hullabalooitic tendencies among others.

While this work, mindful of the growing implications, deters not to be in support of any of the existing or intended ethnic groups drives in the name of militias, and their perpetuated violence, wishes to recall that terror, they say, does not alter opinions, but it

only drives the views underground, thereby trying to gather storm for a dangerous days ahead. Better also, the government inefficiency and failures can neither be supported, instead, the state system should be revisited in the engendering years by ways of amendment and redirection of policies.

It is important also to note that these militias are rooted in the interest of the common people. They are like revolutionary armies fighting to liberate the people from an oppressive regime. This explains why inspite of repressive measures including outright ban by the federal government, they continue to thrive. Federalism, no doubt, allows for the plurality of viewpoints but when groups takes up arms against themselves and/or the state, the indication is federalism has failed. The failure of federalism or its severe shortcomings in Nigeria has been responsible for the upsurge of these militia groups.

Nigeria's future lies in the reconstruction of this federalism wholesale or piecemeal with the necessary attendant democratic values. Demands for sovereign National conference have been sustained at serious level by these militias especially those in the South-South. When politicians echo such demands it is for the usual game of political posturing, (Elaigwu, 2003) maintained.

Ethnic militias activity can also be seen to be the effective response and reasons why the failure of the state security services to provide security to the people was very obvious in the past ten years. Already, the outlines of the future of Nigeria's federalism are being defined: power devolution; fiscal federalism; increased autonomy of constituent units; recognition of ethnic/language groups as constituent units among others. Incidentally, these coincide with the demands of these ethnic militias. These militias in themselves have been redefining Nigeria's federalism even if their contributions are not recognized as such. The questions now, is, how would the future of Nigerian Democracy be in the midst of this several problems with the daily growing threat on the Nigerian nascent democracy and sovereignty.

Premised on this, the following stand out to be few amongst the many intend suggestions:

- i. Political culture and democracy must develop along the lines suitable for plural societies. This implies that any form of belief, whether sacred or secular, which claims that the final truth for society lies in some supreme and esoteric knowledge that is beyond question by the uninitiated and to which political authority must be subject is compatible with democracy.
- ii. Secondly, societies divided by clearly defined and historically antagonistic cultural groups like Nigeria usually have great difficulty sustaining democracy. The lesson here is that at all time, the Nigerian state must keep working hard at building democracy and should see it as work in progress.
- iii. Political institutions for sustainable democracy must be established and

constantly maintained. The electoral system comes clearly to mind. Questions have been asked as to how truly independent the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is. The time for keeping or imposing a criminal as electoral officer like the present Maurice Iwu should be rethought if this nation must attain statehood through democratic posture. This dismay is at the heart of the credibility of the entire electoral process and by extension, the democracy project that is still at a transition state. For given the kind of show of shame perpetrated by the above name mindless character as electoral officer, the country is still far from any iota democratic tenet and initiatives.

- iv. The incursions of the ethnic militias and militancy are borne out of the failure and poor treatment of issue that border on national interest by the federal government. The tackling of the following may pave way for national stability and the thriving of democratic virtues in the country.
 - attention to the lopsided allocation of revenue, development project and resources with fair sharing of national resources.
 - checkmating of still existing colonial implications
 - the proper placement of the returned Ex-military men from Liberia, Sierra Leone – both the wounded and dejected and the importation of arms for survival. The level of production of recruitment among others among this deprived citizens.
 - the treatment and attention to persistent injustice in the land.
 - what is seen as crisis of development structure in the country as affecting the Niger Delta people. And the removal of the syndrome of ethnic majority and minority status from the body politics.

With stage of development, both political, economic and other angle striving to attain a certain degree of balance, combined with free and fair elections, ethnic militias and militancy confrontation with federal government may not arise as no one or section is shut off the political development process. They may be encouraged to pursue their objectives through the political process. But where the state and stage is seen to be manipulative of the electoral process, the only option open to the oppressed poor may be ethnic militancy. Particularly true of ethnically and regionally divided countries are that democratic sustainability is improved by a system of devolved regional government. The recent demands for regionalism are very instructive.

Moreso, in every democratic course, the economy really stand out to be one amongst the best in term of importance in state's pursuit, because no one will care about democracy if he or she cannot put food on the table or pay for children's school fees and other necessities of life among others. Thus, it is this pains and suffering that arouse ethnic grievance to ethnic militias and militancy incursions. If we must deal with ethnic militias, our production and extractive level must be relatively equitable and fair. Government

roles in this regard is not only a necessary evil but it is vital, hence everything that could led to pain or even unemployment need to be disabused on the faces of the poor masses, because this can easily cause ethnic militancy.

The leadership questions in Nigeria also need to be revisited. For our leaders are self-seeking, conceited and hypocritical. They runs away from transparency and accountability and engage in opposite activities. That is another reason the so-called corruption war had been deluded with hanky-panky of the powers that be being above the law and so on. At this juncture, we need a leader who lives by example and not sycophants or apologist because this is the only thing that could compel other citizens to make sacrifices. The wide spread unemployment and rapid fluctuation of market economics render citizens vulnerable to demagogic mobilization in favour of ethnic militancy and even authoritarian and exclusive forms of politics. This implies that socio-economic policies must pay serious attention to the welfare of the people. Those left behind by the market reforms, recruitment, production capacity must be assisted. The majority of the people must be assisted to live a decent life to make their citizenship meaningful.

CONCLUSION

The emergence of ethnic militias and militancy in Nigeria's political scene has provided alternative political voice to the common people. Born of ethnicity, they have turned ethnic passions into serious political demands for the benefit of the people.

This contrasts significantly with the use of ethnicity by the factions of the governing elite in their competitive bid to control and exercise state power for class interest. The new political opposition constitutes a credible compliment to the efforts of bourgeois politicians to force the hand of the state to provide answers to the ethnic questions. Otherwise referred to as the National Questions in the Nigerian context.

However, having argued several factors as a means at achieving a stable and sustained democratic tenets, it is imperative that while implementing or initiating the necessary democratic values toward sustainable polity, that the severally exploded ethnic identities should be contained with the engendering individual dissatisfaction attended to by the necessary government and its agencies.

Then, against the fact that democracy extol total freedom and provide avenue for attending to all dissatisfied sections of the society, it is important also for those championing ethnic course to bear in minds and never to undermines the legal implications of using their individual interest to impose threat on the state. Democracy is not a resolute solution to the chants of ethnic desires, and neither is it a panacea to all social problems. Only that protagonist had relied on the carvet it provides in term of

rights and its freedoms, in appropriating as such. They should be mindful to note also that the same democracy informed that where one's rights stop is where the others' own begins. Thus, all parties should tread with carefulness to avoid collision of rights and the necessary infringements. Ethnic drives should be constructive and responsive to national goals, rather than violence and threats to nationhood. A virile democracy should be allowed to have its course with all the necessary democratic values and tenets. Although Nigeria may have successfully witnessed a transition from military to civilian rule since 1999 and the subsequent civil to civil in 2007, but it should equally be accepted that it has not been able to resolve the numerous inter-ethnic, inter-religious, militant confrontations and criminal activities, and the mindless act of kidnapping, killings and destructions of high magnitude among others. Feuds that have contributed in no small measure to threaten and possibly towards the subversion of the goals of nationhood. Likewise, the several threats to democracy has not in any measure made it possible to the consolidation of democracy in the country coupled with the ineptitudes of the corrupt electoral umpire like Maurice Iwu still holding on to the power to rig and short change candidates in future elections in Nigeria. It therefore, believes on the government to creating an enabling environment toward accommodating all interest group for a healthy development and peaceful co-existence.

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