

# ETHNICITY AND DEMOCRACY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INTERROGATION OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF ETHNIC POLITICS IN NIGERIA

Albert O. M. Ogoko, PhD  
Department of Philosophy and Religion,  
Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria  
[albertusogok@gmail.com](mailto:albertusogok@gmail.com); [albertusogok@yahoo.com](mailto:albertusogok@yahoo.com)

## Abstract

*Nigeria's kind of democracy is a body polity that has been heavily underlined and predicated on ethnic sentiments and all forms of prejudices. Given the divergent cultural orientations and ethnic divides of over a million people brought together in 1914 by Sir Frederick Lord Lugard's policy of the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Nigeria British's Protectorates, one must ask what it is in ethnicity that not only characterizes and truncates Nigeria's democratic process but also its implications that threaten her corporate existence. This is germane that, knowing the implications of her being multi-cultural, the constitution is put in place to regulate and define the principle of her unity and overall development. Contrarily, our historical experience seems to attest that emotion and biases play more to determine the quality of Nigeria democracy. Having exposed the currents in our historical experience, particular modes of political activities depicting ethnic colouration are examined and interpreted as phenomenal. Though weak as it is, the Nigerian constitution is not totally ineffectual in guaranteeing protection of lives and property, and in ensuring equitable distribution of privileges and resources for all Nigerians which ethnic politicking seeks to preclude for sectarian interest. It is the goodwill of the leadership of the country in the spirit of rule of law that can ensure this.*

**Keywords:** Ethnicity, Democracy, Phenomenology, federalism, Politics

## Introduction

“Man was born free, and he is everywhere in chains. Those who think themselves the masters of others are indeed greater slaves than they (Rousseau, *The social Contract*, 1,1,49)

What we have today as independent and sovereign State Nigeria is the over a century of concerted diplomatic but aggrandizing colonial Britain's efforts that brought over two hundred and fifty ethnic nationalities together into her enclave of preserve in the in 1914 amalgamation policy. By this fusion of the Southern Protectorate (which comprises the Bights of Benin and Biafra with their hinterlands) and Northern protectorate followed the recommendation of Selborne Committee of 1898. The British government was not unaware of the cultural, political and ideological differences between the peoples of the Northern and Southern regions. She realized that the Muslim North “enjoyed at least a monotheist

orderliness and respect for authorities as canonized the scriptures” and the South had a “taste of ungovernable liberalism.” Hence, her policy was to hold Nigeria together even though it set up the divide and rule policy and administered the two regions differently. The application of this principle, Suberu and Agbaje opine deepened an already “division, suspicion and recrimination among the diverse ethnic nationalities that had been capriciously consolidated into a single, culturally artificial state.” (Suberu and Agbaje, 1998:336). It is the colonial Britain the sowed the seed of ethnic politics in Nigeria and bequeathed it as legacy for the hegemonic structure she left behind.

But the British allowed the Muslim North's segregation laws which did not permit close contacts and interaction between the people of the North and those from the South. Those from the South lived in secluded area of the city called, *Sabon Gari*, settlement for the visitors while those from the North living in the South seclude themselves in *Ogbe Hausa*, Hausa Quarters. This served for the Northern religious and ideological interest; it ensured that they were secluded and prevented from being corrupted by the South whom they perceived as *infidels*. Politics and every other thing are tailored along this ethnic *cum* religious line of mutual bias, suspicion and hatred. While the Igbo people integrate and settle in other parts of Nigeria, you only see the Hausa people in their numbers trading in other ethnic regions. They neither build houses nor invest in other lands, and pay no tax to government. The Yoruba people and those from other tribes also rarely travel and settle in Igbo land as the Igbo people do their lands.

The realism of Nigeria's multiculturalism: the different historical, political, economic, religio-cultural, sociological experiences, among others are ontological categories that should have been properly and honestly negotiated for a robust democratic culture and cohesive national unity. This has not been so. True enough Nigerians' sixty years of stifled and tumultuous co-existence has raised much concern as have been the subject of most discourses on Nigeria. Hence, Suberu and Agbaje opine that the inherent “contemporary conditions and contradictions of the Nigerian federation have been heavily and directly shaped by the federation's colonial origins and the legacies of the country's successive post-independence military regimes.” (Suberu, Rotimi T. and Adigun Abgaje, 1998: 335).

What has that been for the ethnic nationalities of Nigeria if for these years history was not vindicated as the 'healer of wounds' but that open scars had continued to be created in the course of her everyday passing history? It is largely argued that it would have been a different ball-game were the consent and mandate of the different ethnic nationalities adequately sought for and accented to be included in the one Nigerian project. But let's suppose that their cooperation was not properly elicited and truly negotiated and even that the British government understood and exploited the implications of the socio-cultural, religious, economic and political differences among the various ethnic groups for her imperial advantage. Does that exonerate Nigerians, from the nationalists to the present day political dispensation from complicity? How have we tried as a multi-national federated units tried to manage the situation? History does hold her lessons. What has this been for us today? It from this backdrop that the following research questions are posed: (i) How and to what extent has

ethnicity characterized our democratization process and at what implications on the corporate existence of Nigeria? (ii) Does the Nigerian constitution take care of the plural nature of the Nigerian State. In other words, is it a factor in ethnic politics in Nigeria?

### Conceptual and Theoretical Development

The concept *ethnicity* (noun, derives from the Latin *ethnos* which itself comes from *ethnicus*, and its Greek equivalence is *ethnikos*) means *nation*. The concept refers to groups of people or nationality who are culturally-bound, culturally-defined and culturally-related. Culture is a socio-construct and a conscious and dynamic human developmental framework and serves as praxis for human existential and sociological orientations. This, according to Michael Paul Gallagher in *Clashing Symbols, An Introduction to Faith and Culture*, agrees with Edward Brunnet Taylor's definition, that "complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Ghallagher, 1998:7) in terms of culture being set of ideas and 'ideology' that a cultural group puts together to screen, to accept and to justify and preserve certain perceptions which are expressed in words or actions to justify life-style, beliefs, assumptions, and expectations. Ghallagher argues that beyond the descriptive or empirical approach to it as "simply a neutral cluster of behavior pattern or values", there is also the idea of a "hidden set of control mechanisms that shape our sensibility and our 'structure of feeling'" to it. (Ghallagar, 1998:7)

The concept *democracy* derives from the Greek "Demos" and "Kratos" meaning "people" and to "rule", "power" or dominion, respectively, is defined as "the government of the people by the people and for people by the black American president, Abraham Lincoln. Simply it is government by the people. Politics derives from the Greek "polis", "city and "techne", "art", "skill" or method. Taking the two together we have the art or method of governing a city. The people come together to form the city in order to pursue the common life's ideals, goals, and achieve good life and happiness. Politics is the science of organizing the community of persons, the manner of discovering political goods, and the principles to be followed in achieving them. Nigeria does have her variant of political system and process. Joseph Schumpeter discountenances the "classical doctrines" of democracy, a substantive (view of democracy) in favour of the procedural view of democracy, a distinction of two models that democracy, according to Lawrence O. Bamikole is a "kind of popular power in which citizens are engaged in, in self-government and self-regulation in order to pursue some social and political objectives, and democracy as an aid to decision making." In other words, this Joseph Schumpeter's distinction is whether "democracy aims at promoting specific political, social, economic, ethical and cultural goods or whether it is just an instrument for deliberating how these goods can be achieved." For Bamikole "there is no rigid distinction between these forms of democracy" because both focus on "how human beings are to enjoy the dividends of living in a human society." (Bamikole, 2008:3).

Arguably, the two considerations have implication for the other. It is the Constitution that defines clearly the operative principles in a democracy. The National Constitution is, therefore, constitutive and regulative of what is to be administered or governed,

how, when, by whom and by *what* means and process the art of governance is undertaken. If government is the “instrument of state, governance is its activity and the processes of articulating means, and resources within the framework. Her constitution provides the framework by which to act on behalf of the people and for their collective interest in provisions of goods and services, protection of lives and property, and ensuring the country's economic growth, maintenance of law and order, and pursuant of social advancement of the civil society and national security.

Section 1 of the 1999 Constitution declares the Constitution is “supreme and its provisions shall have binding force on the authorities and persons throughout the Federal Republic of Nigeria”; that The Federal Republic of Nigeria “shall not be governed, nor shall any persons or group of persons take control of the Government of Nigeria or any part thereof, except in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution”; and should any other law be “inconsistent with the provisions of this Constitution, the Nigerian Constitution “shall prevail, and that other law shall, to the extent of the inconsistency, be void.” (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). We take as inconsistent here any proclamation by any section of Nigeria seeking to thwart, subvert or legislate (even by unguarded utterances) over the sovereign provisions of Nigeria Constitution. A good case is the operative Sharia law in some parts of Nigeria.

Over the years Nigeria came to agree on federalism as the best form of political arrangement. Tekena N. Tamuno (1998: 3) defines federalism as that form of government “where the component units of a political organization participate in sharing powers and functions in a corporative manner though the combined forces of ethnic pluralism and cultural diversity, among others, tend to pull their people apart.” According to Appadorai (1975:501) a *federal state* is one in which there is a “central authority that represents the whole and acts on behalf of the whole in external affairs and in such internal affairs as are held to be of common interest and in which there are also provincial or state authorities with powers of legislation and administration within the spheres allotted to them by the constitution.” The idea of federalism hinges on the civic culture that the government through her institutional frameworks designs to meet the particular needs of the communities establishing the federal system.

### **Ethnicity, Politics and Democratization Process in Nigeria**

In Nigeria there are between two hundred and fifty to three hundred and seventy ethnic nationalities according to many scholars. Each of these is bound and can be identified by specific cultural traits: language, religious belief and morality, system of thought, local administrative system, historical and political experience, etc. These sovereignties existed in their rights in and their different localities on their own socio-political, economic, religious rights, among others before colonial invasion. At the coming of the British government these sovereignties were gradually being annexed, coalesced into the British Northern and

Southern Protectorates and finally amalgamated by Lord Frederick Lugard, for administrative convenience, into Nigeria in 1914. But these ethnic nationalities and kingdoms had their traditional forms of governance prior to this amalgamation. The colonial office did all it could to vilify the pro-independence persons especially Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, among others. As a matter of fact, Sir Lord Frederick Lugard, the Governor-General was at the time committed to creating a unified Nigeria. His concern was administrative convenience. He didn't think it necessary, on this ground according to Osarhieme, B. Osadolor "to carve up a territory undivided by natural boundaries, more so since one portion (the South) was wealthy ...while the other (the North) could not balance its budget." (Osadolor:1998: 35).

What occupied the minds of the nationalists from that point was the best political arrangement for Nigeria. Meanwhile, the West African students union (WASU) had, in 1941 called for a system of government similar to that practiced in the United States of America. Hence, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe in 1943 proposed eight regions – four in the north and four in the south while Chief Obafemi Awolowo proposed ten based on ethnic lines. There were constitutional conferences at Ibadan, London, and Lagos in 1950, 1953 and 1954 to tidy up knotty issues before independence. The Ibadan conference of 1950 was brought about by the fear nursed by the northerners of being dominated by the south. Delegates from the three regions set up a committee which came up with recommendation that these be a central legislature for Nigeria on the ratio of 45 Northern region while 33 from the Eastern and Western regions. According to Oyeleye Oyediean, *et al.*, the delegation from the northern region countered the above recommendation by a motion moved and seconded by the Emirs of Zaria and Katsina, respectively. These argued that the population of northern region was above those of the eastern and western regions combined. After much arguments the delegates at conference succumbed to this 'myth' of largest population argument and got their bid, a concession that has since become a yardstick and recurrent index for resource allocation and political gambits in Nigeria (Oyeleye Oyedirin, *et al.*: 170).

The Arthur Richard's constitution thus compounded the mutual suspicion among the different ethnic groups in Nigeria and masked the beginning of acrimonious ethnic politics in the country". (Albert Olawale, 51) This fear is of being subjugated, dominated or being used by others, especially the other to major ethnic groups. The same fear informed the fact that subsequent political party formation and (affiliation) membership were tailored along ethnic and emotional grounds. The following are examples.

1. The Nigerian National Democratic party (NNDP) formed on 24 June, 1923 with Herbert Macaulay as its inspiration; was in all respects a Lagos affair .....and its membership was predominantly Yoruba; (ii) The National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) Herbert Macaulay and latter Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe claimed a national spread but had its strongest backing in the eastern region; (iii) The Action Group (AG) led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo represented a "western regional socio-cultural and political organization *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* which was dominated by the Yoruba people. (Oyeleye Oyedirin, *et al.*:1991:186). (iv) The Northern People's Congress (NPC) which arose from a cultural organization, the "famiyaar Jama'r Arewa" became a political party in 1951 and was

predominantly Northern Hausa Fulani in orientation. This character of ethnic politics and ethnic political party affiliations continued till date whether it was the UPN, GNPP, NPP, PDP, APGA, NPN, APC, AC, *et c.* Occasionally one ethnic dominated party formed alliance with another, mostly minority affiliations across the other regions.

Certain unguarded utterances and show of ego among some political leaders were misconstrued by others as disparaging. An example is one which Albert Olawole has Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe say in the *West African Pilot* of July 8, 1948: “It would appear that the God of Africa has created the Ibo nation to lead the children of Africa from the bondage of the age ..... to adopt themselves to the role of preserver... the Ibo nation cannot shirk its responsibility from its manifest destiny.” Chief Obafemi Awolowo saw this as a deliberate policy to corrode the self-respect of the Yoruba people as a group; and to build up the Ibo as a “master race.” (Albert Olawale, 52) Another case of face –off and show of animosity was the Western Nigeria election crisis of 1965 between the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) led by Ladoke Akintola, for deputy leader of AG, the Action Group (AG) led by Dauda Adegbenro in the absence of Chief Obafemi Awolowo been incarcerated in prison on the charges of treasonable felony. The National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) led by Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe had formed an alliance with AG called the United Progressive Grand Alliance that seats to be contested in the September, 1965 election in the West were to be shared. The NNDP backed by the NPC accused AG and NCNC of “shamelessly working towards the establishment of Igbo Empire in Nigeria through the voters of the Western Region” and promised to make the Yorubas “masters in their own region.” That the UPGA could not find the local electoral officers to receive the nomination papers of its candidates while NNDP was able to announce her's before the deadline 27th September, 1965, that by 30<sup>th</sup> September, NNDP claimed to have won fifteen had been elected unopposed, including the office of the Premier by Samuel Ladoke Akintola and Remi Fani-Kayode as deputy, the AG broke its alliance with NCNC, and with the final result NNDP had won 51 seats as against 11 by UGA while thirty were yet to be declared. Realizing what was coming out of this, Oyeleye Oyediran, *et al.*, noted, the AG leader Dauda Adegbenro “declared that 68 seats had been won by UPGA” and went ahead to announce the formation of interim government. He was detained along with some party members. Meanwhile armed rebellion broke out “everywhere in the region” and followed by “widespread arson, looting, and murder occurred throughout the Western Region.” Meanwhile, the Prime Minister, Tafawa Balewa did not heed the call by students to declare a state of emergency. This crisis was mainly about “political succession” which became endemic problem in Nigeria. In this case of the West it boiled down to loyalties: either to Chief Awolowo or Akintola led faction of AG, or the perception of extraneous break-through influence from the NPC led federal Government or that fear of the 'great Zik' of Africa's Pan-Nigeriana seen as an Igbo political onslaught in the West. The Western crisis is historically significant; “it led first to armed rebellion by civilian politicians and their aggrieved supporters, and eventually to military seizure of power” (Oyeleye Oyediran, *et al.*: 1991: 205-207) by an interventionist *Coup d'etat* of 15<sup>th</sup> January 1966 led by Chukwuma Nzeogwu. This *Coup* was dubbed 'Igbo Coup' by detractors of the Igbo people, a case of 'give a dog a bad name, then hang it' orchestrated after the Biafra-

Nigeria Civil to have them hamstrung, the 'No Victor, No vanquished' notwithstanding. Facts were, however, put straight in *The Nigerian January 1966 Coup and Biafra, Myths and Realities*. It reveals that out of the thirty-three members of the plotters, sixteen were South-East; three, Rivers/ Akwa Ibom; four, Mid-West/ Delta; West, five; and North, five officers. (T.U. Nwala :2018: 19-20).

Ethnic politics has continued to determine political party formation and membership in Nigeria. It has, in the process tended to dilute the quality of Nigerian democracy and truncate her democratization process. Political parties are pulled down because members from one ethnic region have risen to prominence in the party and are averse to domestic or internal colonialism or certain ethnic hegemony. one At each phase of most of the past and the present administration we witnessed and witness regional pressures been mounted and sectional interests been marshaled in and projected to influence, and to favour one ethnic group over the others. In not too recent times different Islamic terrorists' groups targeting certain groups in Nigeria; ethnic militia groups either set to drive home claimed hegemony over others, or just to thwart spate of acts of conflicts, insurgencies and insecurity unleashed on their region, and at any case to muscle-in their negotiating power.

Politics, political concepts, and political activities very well involve play of emotion and feelings be they positive as the excitement that applauds a good orator with whom person(s) is or quite pleased with or the jeering that greets most political opponents. A good case is the jeering at Sir Ahmadu Bello, and the leaders of the Northern People's Congress (APC) by some remnants of the Action Group (AG) and National Council of Nigeria and Cameroun (NCNC)'s party supporters in Lagos in 1953 for opposing the motion by Chief Anthony Enahoro of Action Group at the floor of the House of Representatives that Britain hand over in 1956. There was no physical assault. They were called such names as 'slave of the white man', 'His master's voice', 'Stooge', 'Kolanut men', 'Kolanut Chiefs', and that was all. So angry and disappointed was the Sardauna of Sokoto that Albert Oluwale in "Federalism, Inter-ethnic Conflicts and the Northernisation Policy of the 1950s and 1960s" quoted him as having said, "we were not only angry at our treatment, but indignant that people who were full of fine phrases about the unity of Nigeria should have set their people against the chosen representatives of another region while passing through their territory." (Albert Oluwale,1998, 54-55). The North saw the Lagos incident as an Igbo- Yoruba coalition and hostility against the Northerners. The News reporters did not help matters but fanned the embers of hostility; their wise cracks, castigation and unguarded utterances further infuriated the Northerners. This led to the North's preventing the visiting AG campaign team on tour to Kano on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> May, 1953. Quite early morning on this day, Oluwale observed:

...about 3,000 demonstrators, largely constituted of Native Administration Staff, assembled at Fagge armed with bows and arrows. From there, the crowd led by hundreds of cyclists and horsemen moved to Sabon Gari in the process of which more demonstrators were recruited. As they moved, they were shouting 'We do want the Yoruba here'. Then the rioters descended on the Sabon Gari market and closed it down (killing and wounding many of the

marketers). (Oluwale, 56, in bracket, mine)

This rioting continued for the two days and thirty-six and forty-six people most whom were Igbo people were officially announced to have been killed and wounded, respectively. Such was the scale of response to verbal assault meted out to NPC leaders and the unjustifiable consequence on the Southerners. But it was out of fear of being outwitted by the Southerners that made them to oppose the motion for earlier granting of independence to Nigeria until they stitched every loophole and they quickly did exactly that. But this was not all, and we have never seen all in Nigeria. The leadership of NPC followed up with the hateful 'Northernisation Policy' which import is represented in: 'Enough is Enough: Every Baby unto its Mother's Breast.' This may have given rise to the ethnic politics in the indigene- non-indigene problem of citizenship in Nigeria. General Yakubu Gowon may not have realized the impact of this in his politics of creation of twelve States in Nigeria which, more or less was targeted at emasculating the Igbo peoples of the former Eastern region. Apart from this divide and rule policy to incarcerate the Igbo people, there is the factor of "abandoned property" in the South-South of Nigeria. This remains fresh in the minds of many Igbo people as an open wound that reminds them either of the price that they have to pay for seeking for self-determination in the face of extermination or as a reminder that the Biafran-Nigerian Civil war is an unfinished 'cause' though it was declared to have been the case of 'no victor, no vanquished'.

Expectedly, the government is expected to follow the constitutions of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, apply the principles and reflect the spirit of the law enshrined therein. But what obtains (as have characterized most of the past administrations in Nigeria) is following declarations and directions of the ruling party. These decisions are, more often than not couched in inflammatory speeches, sectional and divisive to make void and mockery the federal character provisions as equity principles. A good case in point is the present administration's unilateral appointments of over eighty-five percent of the security chiefs and sensitive ministerial positions portfolios to a choice section of the country and members of an ethno-religious group. In the country's fifty-nine years the serving military Heads of State ruled for about twenty-nine years, six months and retired Military Generals, seventeen years; and Civilian administration-12 years, 260 days. Combine years of military rule and those under retired Generals and civilian administrations gives the North 41 years and about 290 days, West 12 years and 83 days, South-South 5 years and 110 days, and south-East, 6 months. These amount to 67.5%, 20.3%, 8.5%, and 0.6%, respectively, for North, West, South-South and South-East rule of Nigeria. These figures clearly show how ethnicity has negatively impacted on Nigeria's democratization process.

To pave way for representative democracy to thrive, checks and balance are put in place to

guide distributive of power in the political tendencies that could violate the natural right of citizens. This operative principle is that of the constitution. Constitutionalism, Ike F H. Odimegwu and E.I Ani in *Constitutionalism and the Dynamics of Democracy* aver, is concerned with limiting the power of government by enforcing rules of law and applying various checks and balance to limit the concentration of power so that the basic right of individuals and groups are protected, (2008:181). Without this check it is possible for a section of the country, an ethnic group or group of persons to take laws into their own hands.

Constitutionalism is rooted in the very idea of human freedom, namely, that all Nigerians are, and distinguish between sovereignty and government, entrenchment, rule of law, and separation of power. Odimegwu and Ani explain that: sovereignty is the possession of supreme power of authority over some domain, and government is the whole of those persons or bodies through whom the sovereignty is exercised. Once such distinction is drawn, we see immediately that sovereignty might lie somewhere other than with the government. From this implication, it becomes consistent and meaningful to speak of limited government and unlimited sovereignty. (182)

### **How Does Ethnicity 'Configure' Politics Negatively?**

Now it is important to explain how ethnicity impacts on the democratization process in Nigeria. The phenomenological method is used here having seen politicking as political events. These events are expressive, phenomenal and meaningful. Phenomenology is the science and the significance of the appearing or appearance of being. What *appears* in our own case is *ethnicity* as a negative conscious existential orientation to objects of experience. Politics is an activity which, from the point of party formation and membership recruitment, electioneering campaigns, and voting and declaration of election results unfolds as series of events. These manifest activities are phenomenological inasmuch as they represent concrete acts, in words and actions what people mean by them and reveal the current motions of interests, desires, wants, intentions, etc. It is in this regard that Paul Ricoeur in his “Existential Phenomenology” (eds. Regan and Stewart, 1978: 75-76) explains that:

...when this question is raised: what does 'appearing' signify for a thing, for an animate being, for a person, for a conscious experience, for a feeling, for an image, and the like? How do the 'regions' of reality...relate to the subjective process of consciousness (perceiving, imagining, positing an abstraction, judging, etc).

Ricoeur notes that all phenomenology is transcendental inasmuch as it tries to relate the “conditions of the appearing of things to the structure of human subjectivity (in short, to the very life of the subject to whom and for whom things appear.)” In this case *existential* phenomenology is not another form of phenomenology. Politics is an activity and involves persons who are emotional and rational, who are desirous of one thing or other and who have needs to satisfy and whose existence may be threatened or enhanced according to how these are satisfied or not. The Social Identity theory used here is situational. It understands and explains that motivational factors inform group behaviour and that these arouse passions which depths are rarely found in other social arrangements. At core here is the feeling and perception that the ideas, views, explanations and justifications for one's actions which come

from one's ethnic group is right, good, and is superior to others. This frame of mind helps members to find meaning in life, boosts self-esteem and tends to justify the actions of members of an in-group while disparaging or discriminating against members of the out-group. However, Leonie Huddy, according to David P. Houghton argue 'dispositionism' not only because of the variance in individual personality make-ups among members who have the same structural relationships and in how each member identify with his or her social group but the degree of discrimination and prejudice shown against "the other." (Houghton, 2009: 172-173, 175).

Expectedly, certain different hard line ethnic cleavages ought to melt down with time and the disparate contentious areas fused into a nationalistic identity. But while some ethnic regions are ready to relax claims arising from certain identities others adduce the Social dominance theory that group oppression as normal condition of human relations. In Nigeria the Hausa/Fulani ethno-religious group ascribe unto themselves the epitaph 'born -to-rule' and systematically go out to actualizing it in the nation's polity. As a consequence this orientation towards social dominance "serves as a "legitimizing ideology for inequality, oppression, and dominance that occur within all hierarchically organized systems." (Houghton, 2009: 174). People set up certain horizons of perceptively possible goals for themselves. These fuel the Will so passionately to attaining them. That is why it is always seen to be about 'us', 'our lives', religion, tradition, language, etc. More often than not people are driven by emotion rather than reason into acts of terrorism, genocides, dictatorial regimes, etc which are targeted at the *other*.

### **Evaluation and Conclusion**

A reasoned conclusion by M.F. Asiegbu is that in Nigeria there are ethnic cleavages "ethnic loyalty far overrides the citizen's obligation to the Nation-state" and where ethnic bond is stronger than the love for the fatherlands", and that "Nigeria is an amorphous entity" which is being viewed with suspicion both by the rich and the poor alike. (Asiegbu, M.F., 17). He thinks that the Nigerian constitution is a factor of ethnicity in Nigerian democracy. How? There are so many contradictions and inconsistencies in its provisions in terms of civil and civic rights and responsibilities, ethno-religious affiliations, citizenship and identity, rule of law, just judicial and penal system for every Nigerian. etc.

The rule of law must be obeyed by all persons, the implication are: that it entails arbitrariness in governance. "Everyone is equal before the law, and this is a formal or procedural justice-that its formality endows it with universality and impersonality." (Odumegwu and Ani, 182). The principle of separation of separation of power to guard against tyranny and dictatorship should be encourage and the other arms must have checkmate the excesses of the chief executive. It is in this manner that constitutionalism blends the functions of sovereignty, entrenchment and the rule of law in the protection of the rights and liberty of citizens. However, it paves the way towards political absolutism. In the current dispensation, we witness to a scenario where the chief executive coerces members of the other arms to do his bidding. Thus, it is possible that a ruler subtly manipulates his way and becomes a tyrant even in a liberal democracy. (Odumegwu and Ani, 182-183).

The socio-political, economic, and religious rights which the different ethnic nationalities had prior to colonial experience have not been sacrificed at the altar of Nigheriahood. The corporate existence of Nigeria must continue to be renegotiated. Jean Jacque Rossuaue in the spirit of the founding fathers of modern socio-political philosophy; Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, etc wrote the “social contract” on the conviction that “the state was the outcome of a covenant or agreement among men” and that the “purpose of the state was the protection of those people to which it owed its being.” (Rousseau, 1968: 26).

Rousseau's theory, therefore, “since no man has any natural authority over his fellows, and since force alone bestows no right, all legitimate authority among men must be based on covenants. For him “the only way in which the citizen “preserve themselves is by uniting” and combining their “separate powers”, with the single motive “to overcome any resistance.” (Rousseau, 53, 60). Therefore, the unity of Nigeria is negotiable. The Nigerian Constitution stipulates the principles of this negotiability. It is on this assumption that almost each of the successive administrations, military and civilian preempted to the Constitutional, Sovereign/ National Conferences Nigeria attempted having. It is understandable that most of the turned out to be delay tactics to hold onto power, to distract and divert people's attention, and to diffuse tensed moments bordering national questions.

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