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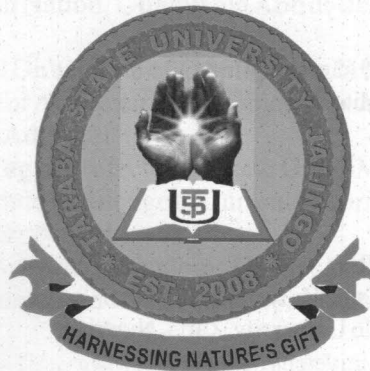
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CONTENTS

1. The Dynamics of Iworoko Dance and its Impacts in Nembe Local Government Area of Bayelsa State, **Larry, Steve Ibuomo, PhD** 1-8
2. Solving the Conundrum of Insecurity: The Imperative of Idealizing and Actualizing the Nigerian Nation, **Gbemisola Abdul-Jelil Animasawun, PhD.** 9-23
3. The History of National Directorate of Employment in Nigeria and Its Strategic Programmes for Achievement of Objectives **Akombo I. Elijah, PhD & Adebisi Rasaq Aderemi** 24-37
4. Shing Bor (The Big Thing or Protector) Among Dong-Mumuye of Taraba State, Nigeria: An Antidote Challenge to Current Security Threats **Hosea Nakina Martins & Peter Marubitoba Dong.** 38-48
5. Nigerian Migrants in the United Kingdom: The Socio-economic Contributions to their Home and Host Countries, **Alaba, Babatunde Israel** 49-63
6. ASWOT Analysis of the Educational Management Information System in Taraba State University, Jalingo, **Oyeniye Solomon Olayinka, & Stella Gideon Danjuma.** 64-72
7. A Brief Assessment of the Impact of Generals Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida and Sani Abacha's Regimes on the Growth of Nigeria's Economy, **Odeigah, Theresa Nfam, PhD.** 73-78
8. Pre-Colonial Political and Socio-Economic Activities of the Afikpo People, **Abdulsalami, Muyideen Deji, PhD, Nwagu Evelyn Eziamaka & Uche, Peace Okpani** 79-89
9. Economic Significance of the Livestock Sector in Nigeria **Sheriff Garba, PhD & Alhaji Umar Bako, PhD.** 90-99
10. Perceived Benefits of Physical Exercise Among Staff of Tertiary Institutions in Adamawa State, Nigeria, **Salihu Mohammed Umar** 100-110
11. A Historical Survey of the Significance of Animal Husbandry In the Economy and Society of Kilba (Huba) People of Adamawa State, C. 1500 – 1960 AD, **Samuel Wycliff.** 111-120
12. Culture and Gender Roles in Ogboin Kingdom of the Central Niger Delta, **Ayibatari. Yeriworikongha Jonathan.** 121-127
13. Factors responsible for poor utilization of instructional electronic media in Nursery and Primary Education in Jalingo Local Government Area, Taraba State, **Oyeniye Solomon Olayinka & Oyeniye Titilayo Mercy.** 128-135
14. Conflict and State Formation in Africa: The Role of Mahdism in the Creation of Modern Sudan, **Otoabasi Akpan, PhD & Philip Afaha, PhD.** 136-144
15. Colonial Taxation: "Nature and Implication in Kona Community, 1900 - 1960", **Prof. Talla Ngarka Sunday, Edward Nokani & Lawan Abdullahi Muhammad.** 145-161
16. Struggle for the Attainment of Food Security In Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects, **Ngah, Louis Njodzeven Wirnkar Suleiman Danladi Abubakar & Maimolo, Talatu Emmanuel.** 162-172
17. Arabic Loanwords Common to Fulfulde, Hausa and Kanuri: A Phonological Approach, **Ladan Surajo, PhD, Yahya Nasiru Abubakar & Aliyu Hassan Muhammad.** 173-180

Solving the Conundrum of Insecurity: The Imperative of Idealizing and Actualizing the Nigerian Nation

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Abstract

The task of making a nation out of the disparate and dangerously clashing ethnic identities that define Africa and the many states of the continent such as Nigeria is a perpetual work in progress. While civil wars and military coups were common during the Cold War, warped electoral processes and demands for more of what the state has to offer have resulted in complex political emergencies since the end of the Cold War. Therefore, nation-building processes have been experiencing stasis. Given an historical context that created a dominant and dominated class of ethnic nationalities in many post-colonies, there has emerged a negative consciousness of ethnic security dilemma akin to the Realist thinking of security dilemma during the Cold War days. Using Nigeria as its laboratory, this article engages how ethnic insecurity constitutes the bane of making a nation out of an assemblage of nationalities. The article presents the challenges faced in the onerous task of nation-making, since juridical independence as too complex for the current power cartel and draws attention to potentials of the agency of intellectuals and the international community in nudging African states to the path of good governance, constitutionalism and credible electoral processes that would enable the enactment of a valid social contract in transcending the extant ethnic contract in correcting the Mistake of 1914 and taking Nigeria beyond a mere geographic expression.

Introduction

One of the successes that continually elude the Nigerian state has been that of making a coherent whole from its disparate parts. Relationships of identity groups in Nigeria, whether religious or ethnic have been a case of clashing cymbals (Adebanwi 2007) of discordant tunes which shows the emptiness of the over-mouthed aphorism of *unity in diversity* which informed the hope of making Nigeria Africa's greatest power at its infancy. Amongst other needs in many post-colonies, peace, security and development have been very scarce, and after over five decades of self-rule or juridical independence, inter-group relations in most of Africa is still very fragile and adversarial. Evidently, while many countries on the continent have experienced protracted ethnic conflicts, many are still enveloped by the fear or indication of imminent ones. Therefore, most African states are emerging from conflicts; engaged in one or faced by the imminence of one. Leading global peace ranking indices produced by agencies such as Global Peace Index (GPI); Failed State Index (FSI) and Centre for International Development and Conflict Management all reveal the grim realities on the continent, and one of the leading causes of poor ranking is the high frequency and bestiality of inter-ethnic conflicts that have largely shaped the fragility of the state.

Similarly, it is increasingly becoming clearer that the proponents of the democratic peace thesis as a dividend of democratization and a guarantee of global peace did not envisage that the Third Wave of democratization will trigger change in the pattern of conflicts in a way that has now come to define democratization, especially the electoral process as early warning signs of crisis and reminders of the gaps in nation-building processes in many African countries. Using Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia and Kenya as examples, Mehler (2009) draws attention to the limitations of power-sharing as the bastion of post-

conflict peace. Therefore, it can be posited that close to two decades of Post Cold War transition on the continent, democratization, peace, nation-building and security have not become reinforcing. After over fifty decades of juridical independence, it is apparent that many African post-colonies still lack the clarity on a generally acceptable framework to bring the nations into being. In Nigeria, there is still fundamental contest between those who espouse true federalism and a nostalgic preference for parliamentary democracy on one hand and a conservative class that appears satisfied with the prevalent unitary type of federalism (Adebanwi 2012). However, what starkly stands out today is the fragility of inter-group peace in Nigeria.

While there are historical, structural and agential explanations for the foregoing Adesanmi 2011 and Amuwo 2010, Kew (2010) identify ethnicity and ethnic nationalities as the agential factor responsible for continued elusion or withering of the possibilities of having an Hobbesian or Lockean social contract in causing a nation to emerge from the disparate nationalities. At a time when secessionist tendencies were being considered as losing attractions, the eventual emergence of Southern Sudan speaks volumes of eventualities that may arise from African countries where ethnic and religious fault lines have remained combustible. Also, the eventual eruption of fault lines in countries that were hitherto held together by strong men underscore the need to ensure that nation-building processes get initiated properly girded by the conviction to bring a nation into being based on shared and reconciled imaginaries. The Nigerian case invites deeper analysis given its combustibility as a petro-dollar state (Obi, 2004). This is because, contrary to the dream nursed at independence as expressed in the aphorism: "Unity in Diversity", the relationship amongst ethnic nationalities that constitute a core of that diversity cannot be confidently described as reinforcing the unity in that diversity. Therefore, there arises the need to examine how these ethnic nationalities through their respective main ethnic platforms have interacted with themselves on one hand and the kind implications of the demands they have been placing on the state before surmising whether they are contributing to the making or unmaking of a Nigerian nation.

Having bungled and faltered at virtually all junctures of consciously making or imagining the Nigerian nation, there has been the uncontrolled and unsystematic emergence of different kinds of scenarios within sub-Saharan Africa's most populous post-colony. These scenarios have been consistent with the mood on the continent at various times. For example, the Nigerian civil war was fought at a time that self-determination was common on the continent, while the current forms of low-intensity conflicts and complex political emergencies aimed at getting more from the state by disgruntled groups also speak to what is obtainable in other parts of the continent given the high risk and unbearable cost of exiting the state (Boas and Dunn, 2007). Comparatively, triggering these two scenarios are issues of poor management of diversity; a largely irresponsible state, poor democratic credentials, skewed sharing of state wealth leading to increasing inequalities and abuse of fundamental human rights. However, it is instructive that while the same features fueled agitations for separatism in the Cold War days, the reaction has been more of armed engagements with the state to demand for greater inclusion by marginalized groups in order to have a sense of ethnic security. Extant fragility and stasis of nation-building on the continent speak broadly to failure of constitutions and especially the largely ambiguous federal systems in place in most of the continent (Deng, 2010) and the blurred line between modernity and tradition in which modernity has been reduced to Westernisation (Taiwo, 2011) inadvertently conferring

legitimacy ethno-nationalistic struggles against cultural subjugation. However, rather than confronting these challenges from a causal point of view, there has been the continued promotion and bludgeoning of a false consciousness of *unity in diversity*, which in actual fact is denial of group differences which makes the over-mouthed unity a charade and mockery.

This article shares the view of Nairn (1975) that nations are Janus-faced, that is, they are often oriented towards an ancient ethnic imaginary but should be also futuristic by trying to mobilize populations for progress. Impliedly, this presupposes that in forging a nation-state, ethnic-nationalities do not have to delete their collective past vision and identities like the Pentecostal born-again who declares that "Behold old things have passed away and all things have become new" (Adesanmi, 2011); but rather old things should be respected and used as basis for constructing a new and common future.

While ethnic nationalities through ethnic associations have been the agency of interactions and exchanges in Nigeria, the same cannot be said of how they have galvanized their people towards the making of a Nigerian nation. Hence, the motif of this article is introspective, analytical and prescriptive by underscoring the agency of intellectuals in reimagining a Nigeria that provides security for all ethnic nationalities. This is against the back ground of the demonstrated limited ability of the current mercantilist and consumerist cartel that wields power in Nigeria and their conniving collaborators from the Metropole to comprehend, not to talk of reimagining a nation out of the current inchoate structure. While this is not an entirely new argument, it contributes to existing discourses by depicting the current state of inter-ethnic relations as defined by the Realist thinking of security dilemma as the bane of reimagining and making a nation out of disparate nationalities in sub-Saharan Africa's biggest post-colony.

Quest for Nationhood in Post-Colonial Nigeria: A Cascade of Mistakes and Misses

Is there a Nigeria indeed and in truth? Whose Nigeria? If not, can there be a Nigeria(n)? Answers to these questions have been proffered from different angles and orientations. Using the work of Maier (2001) as a window, one gets the impression of a Nigeria at risk but not totally lost or foreclosed perhaps reinforcing its stasis summed by Professor Eghosa Osaghae and Nobel Laureate, Wole Soyinka, as a *crippled giant* and *open sore of the continent* respectively. However, in concluding his illuminating review of Karl Maier's Book whose title implies that Nigeria as a country was fast falling apart, Adebani (2001:10) posits that Nigeria at best remains an aspiration which largely explains why it has not fallen because: "few realities can obliterate an aspiration. Aspirations cling stubbornly to possibilities even against reason." No doubt the potentials are enormous, but Adebani and Obadare (2010:379) wonder: "why have the socio-economic and political actualities of, and in, Nigeria been historically (permanently) subversive of her potentialities?"

Ethnic nationalities represent one of the socio-political actualities hindering the fulfillment of Nigeria's manifest destiny. While inter-group relations can be grouped into the contexts of inter-ethnic and inter-religious bifurcations, events since July 2009 when the Boko Haram insurgency got triggered by the extra-judicial killing of its leader by men of the Nigeria Police indicate a replacement of inter-ethnic conflicts with Islamist insurgency between the Nigerian state and the sect. However, the inter-ethnic relations, especially amongst the ethnic majorities, have remained largely tempestuous and volatile especially between the Yoruba and the Igbo ethnic nationalities although there has not been

any incidence of confrontations. Nevertheless, Maier (2000) observes that Nigeria stands at a crossroads of three probabilities. These are addressing the systemic decay through a talk-shop to re-engineer the or reinvent the wheel, stay with the current structure with its attendant contradictions and crises or failure to act which leaves room for a return to military rule or dismemberment which resonates the prediction by contained in Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) report 2015 in which a break-up of the country may not be ruled out.

Since 1999 when the Fourth-Republic began, realities in Nigeria reflect two global tragedies: Iraq and Afghanistan. Incidentally, Iraq and Nigeria can be described as products of the original sin or folly or swindle that lumped disparate identities together. In the two cases, the need for a repressive fiat was not lost on the crafters in keeping the structure together which necessitated specific approaches. Catherwood (2004) points out that Iraq risks going the way of Post-Marshall Tito Yugoslavia which bloodily went apart sequel to the demise of the strongman that held it together. Comparably, Iraq and Nigeria were drawn up largely due to: "wars, treaties, compromises, backroom deals, internal and external pressures and plain chance" (Abdullah, 2006: 2). In the face of continued conflict with Boko Haram given the fact that the sect has virtually taken over a part of the country, it mirrors Afghanistan in terms of both the discursive and strategic engagements with the Nigerian state. These two scenarios speak to the softness of the Nigerian state (Costello 2004) and the inability of the state to mediate differences, which is one of the features of the state in a plural setting (Smith, 2003).

Furthermore, this reverberates and confirms the words of Lord Frederick Lugard that: "when we are discussing the past of Britain, I always tell [my African friends]: yes but it was all done in the interest of Britain not Africa" (Perham 1960:48). As observed by Adebaniwi and Obadare (2010: 394), many of those who have held the highest office in the country have *no idea or notion* of what Nigeria should be beyond being an object of plunder. Therefore, given that the rationale for creating post-colonies was primarily in the interest of the imperialists and many of these countries like Nigeria have had the misfortune of being led or held hostage by those without an *idea or notion* of what to do with these projects after over fifty years, we may need to examine the status and imaginaries of those caught in the trap of such emergent states, their perceptions and use of state powers and their aspirations and relationships as a window of projecting what may become of the colonial project. This lack of imagination reflects in the analysis of realities on the continent which informed the observation by Ewi (2013) that in many post-colonies, the state, ethnicity, religion and criminality have conflated to constitute the main sources of terror. Consequently, this article opines that Nigerians have been relating within the context of a largely adversarial relationship and insecurity. Against this background, this article presents an analysis of what the future holds for the continued togetherness of the biggest British post-colony.

Ayoade (2009: iii) opines that the: "amalgamation was more of the amalgamation of the treasury than of the administration." This was rightly described as the Mistake of 1914 by Sir Ahmadu Bello, one of the three foremost Nigerian patriarchs. The golden voice of the north and the only Prime Minister in Nigeria's history, Tafawa Balewa, canvassed for an "understanding of our differences", the late Sage and finest Yoruba leader described as the main issue in Nigerian politics and the best President the country never had, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, described Nigeria as: "a mere geographical expression" perhaps in cautioning the enthusiasm of Dr. Nnamidi Azikiwe that: "we forget our difference." the

preceding indicate inflections about prospects and prescriptions on how to correct the Mistake of 1914.

Since then, there has been wasted opportunities to imagine the kind of Nigeria desired. Cognizant of the revelations of Harold Smith that the British colonial interest that created it did not look forward to its survival, the need to look inwardly for its making and survival cannot be over-emphasized. Much as opportunities continuously appear for reimagining and (re)making Nigeria at various times such as during census; national elections and constitutional conferences; the failure to utilize these opportunities has configured Nigeria as an *unimagined community* (Adebanwi and Obadare, 2010: 382). Ayoade (2009) in an analysis of such instance drew attention to the *Mistake of 1951* census as having a worsening impact on the *Mistake of 1914*. This event marked the beginning of a cascade of mistakes and a culture of not only patching up at the brinks but actually dancing on the brink (Campbell, 2010). Ayoade (2009) explains that the *Mistake of 1914* was intended to be corrected through a restructuring of the federation but it (in)advertently gave birth to arithmetical justice on one hand and socio-political justice on the other hand in 1951 which till date is reflected in ratio 19:17 with the North singly constituting 52.8% of the country. This reflects a similitude of a prefectural system wherein the North can be described as the Senior Prefect.

Constitutionally, the 1959 constitution codified along Westminsterian parliamentary system entrenched regional identities, fostered inter-ethnic competition and eventually eroded the basis of state and nation-building (Lewis, 2012). Therefore, this can as well be termed the *Mistake of 1959* which sounded a death-knell to using elections as a basis of imagining Nigeria because each region was controlled by one of the three dominant ethnic nationalities; the North was controlled by the Hausa-Fulani owned Northern People's Congress (NPC); Western region was the purview of Action Group (AG) and the Eastern zone was the lot of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC). This arrangement foreclosed the enactment of national social contract and a substantial loss of accruable benefits of federalism for a plural setting like Nigeria. Out of this grew an ethnically-circumscribed and legitimized social contract and the making of clients and Big-Men otherwise known as neopatrimonialism. Kew (2010:500) describes the resultant *rogue peace* as one sustained by massive corruption, and rent distribution through patronage pyramids nationwide..."

With the establishment and entrenchment of ethnic social contract, the Nigerian state became coveted, hijacked and abused for primitive accumulations by politicians playing the ethnic card aided by "British meddling" (Kew, 2010: 501). The result of this has been ethnic security dilemma akin to the security dilemma of the Realist School. It is a situation in which other ethnic groups other than the ones in control of reins of government feel threatened (Kew 2010) and overtime each group strives to control the reins of government in order to bolster their sense of security and (un)consciously undermining the security of other ethnic nationalities.

However, the manifestation of ethnic insecurity in Nigeria operates on the principles of corruption, competitive looting of state resources or the national cake and the subversion of bureaucratic processes and rationality all disguised and legitimized in the guise of solidarity to one's ethnic representative at any point in time. Osoba (1996), quoted in Adebanwi (2010:104-105), posits that corruption lies at the core of the explanations of the crisis of Nigeria's nationhood which has culminated in ethnic insecurity:

The attempt by each of the three major political groupings that dominated the politics of the First Republic to monopolise, or at least have the lion's share of, the loot from this systematic plundering of the wealth of the nation was a major factor in intensifying and embittering the contest for political power along ethno-regional lines – process whose high points were the Action Group crisis of (1962), census crisis (1962-1963), federal election crisis (1964), Tiv rebellion (1964-1965) and Western Nigeria election (1965), making the country more or less ungovernable.

All these instances qualified as missed opportunities for the imagining of Nigeria based on the preponderance of ethnic social contract that fed into ethnic insecurity rooted in corruption. An explanation for the legitimization of corruption was provided by Bashir Tofa who was unofficially defeated by late Moshood Abiola acclaimed winner of the June 12, 1993, presidential election that: "corruption will continue as long as the masses depend on corrupt officials to earn their livelihood" (Adebanwi, 2010: 119). Elis (2006:206) observes that: "Africans who have served as state officials are expected by their own people to enrich themselves through corruption." Therefore ethnic insecurity remains sustained by ethnically legitimized corruption.

The subsistence of ethnic social contract continues to torpedo the (re)imagination of Nigeria at critical junctures, especially when mass social actions and grand norms are required for the country. Two of such were the annulment of June 12, 1993, presidential elections in which late Chief Abiola was coasting home to imminent victory and the January, 2012, protests against increase in the pump price of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS). In the first instance, after years of deceptive procrastination by the military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida and at a time of growing doubts about his sincerity to the completion date of the transition process, he avowed before the world just after his election as the Chairman of the defunct Organisation of African Unity (OAU) that:

. . . In short, the cost of maintaining the structures of dictatorship, including the energy dissipated and the blood expended in warding off challenges to the monopoly of power all over the continent, make it imperative that democracy is not only an attractive option but a natural and inevitable one (Adebanwi 2008:67)

This level of optimism was corroborated by the then Attorney-General and Minister of Justice, Prince Bola Ajibola, when he averred that:

I, Prince Bola Ajibola, as the Attorney-General and Minister of Justice of Nigeria verily affirm that the President informed me of the government's commitment to 1992 handover date. So help me God . . . 1 October, 1992 remains unaltered (Adebanwi, 2008: 69)

Nevertheless, the handover date was eventually changed twice first to January, 1993, and later to August, 1993; although eventually neither dates materialized as the presidential election was eventually annulled. In an undated and unsigned short statement made available by Mr. Nduka Irabor, then Press Secretary to the Vice President, Augustus Aikhomu, the entire transition programme was terminated and the election annulled

(Adebanwi, 2008). However, in a volte-face on June 26, Babangida accepted that: "the presidential election was generally seen to be free, fair and peaceful" (Adebanwi, 2008:63). While the cancellation of the election has been analysed from different points of views, however, the fact that it gave birth to the Odua People's Congress (OPC) and the group's perception that Chief Abiola was denied ascendancy because of Yoruba ethnic identity resonates the extent of ethnic insecurity felt by the three major ethnic nationalities in Nigeria.

As an opportunity to make Nigeria based on a shared democratic imagination that dismantled primordial barriers, the outcome of the June 12, 1993, Presidential election signposted the resolve of the subjects in the post-colony to transcend fabricated ethnic and religious barriers and finally resolve the national question. This was evident in the wide support enjoyed by the winner, Chief MKO Abiola, across the length and breadth of the country in a loud expression of acceptance of his candidacy despite the fact the his political party fielded two Muslims as Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidates. However, as a missed opportunity and short-lived victory for the people, the initial national resistance and condemnation of the annulment soon got reduced to an ethnic agenda. Subsequently, the Yoruba became to perceive the annulment as part of a grand design by the Hausa-Fulani power bloc represented by Ibrahim Babangida to prevent a Yoruba person from becoming the President of Nigeria.

A reflection of ethnic insecurity coloured the views of leading figures from northern Nigeria after the annulment of the election. Albert (2007:248) reports that Sheikh Gumi Abubakar, a northern Islamic cleric of note, argued that: "political power in Nigeria belongs to the Hausa-Fulani in view of the fact that southerners controlled the Nigerian economy." This was recently attested to in an analysis by Adeniyi (2013) that showed that Nigerians from the south (south-west; south-east and south-south) controlled more oil wells than their northern counterparts. Also, the first civilian governor of Adamawa State, Abubakar Saleh Michika, opined that: "... though he had much admiration for the person of Chief Abiola, he was not one of those Nigerians who believed in the idea of a southern president". The same opinion was expressed by Alhaji Maitama Sule that: "Yoruba are good administrators, the Igbo are good businessmen and the Hausa-Fulani, ordained by God to rule Nigeria forever" (Albert, 2007:249). Also, the deposed Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Dasuki, called on Chief Abiola to forget the election and embrace the new interim government that was a contraption of Ibrahim Babangida after he had to hastily leave office which Adebanwi (2008: 83) described as: "The termination of a tragedy." The preceding speaks to a morbid feeling of ethnic insecurity caused by what scholars of British colonialism in Asia and Africa have described as: "British-supervised indigenous colonialism or sub-colonialism (Ochonu, 2008: 97) which can be seen as aimed at sustaining what Bayart (2000:222) refers to as *extraversion*.

A similitude of a people's struggle that was truncated and destroyed largely due to ethnic insecurity was the January, 2012, occupy Nigeria movement. Obadare and Adebanwi (2013:4) provide the trigger of what seemed likely to midwife a Nigeria based on civic activism:

The immediate provocation was President Goodluck Jonathan's announcement of the federal government's resolve to remove the "remaining" subsidy on petroleum products distributed in the country. With that seemingly irreversible decision, the pump price of petrol was to rise from

765 to 7141 per liter, an increase of more than 100 percent.

This led to the declaration of industrial action by Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) the umbrella body of labour which took an unprecedented turn as Nigerians from all walks of life including the elites who participated actively in open rallies in many state capitals across the country with the gathering in Lagos being the largest of such mammoth peaceful assemblages characterized by musical and theatrical performances and joint prayers by clerics of all faiths including Africa Traditional religion under the auspices of NLC and the Save Nigeria Group (SNG).

Obadare and Adebani (2013:5) lament that after a while the: "perennial demons of Nigeria's political history – ethnicity, class, religion" once more asserted their fractious presence as the protests lost steam gradually based on a narratives from the government side that opposition figures like Muhammdu Buhari of the defunct Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) and leading figures in defunct Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) were out to frustrate the administration of Jonathan because they lost during 2011 presidential election. In sympathy and spirit of neighbourhood solidarity, the South-easterners (Igbo) states of Ebonyi, Abia, Anambra, Imo and Enugu rationalized their opting out of the industrial action on the fact that they have always paid more for the pump-price for fuel prior to the increment. Those in the south-south also lost the steam and the interest to continue owing to the opinion that their son was in office therefore, they should not be seen as joining others to undermine his administration. Apparent in the trajectory and fizzling out of the resistance against the hike were issues of ethnic insecurity masked as ethnic solidarity; state-society relations; Governmentalities of the Nigerian state and the limitations or impossibilities of social actions based on civic engagements. The preceding resonates with the views of Jega (2000:31) on the choices open to Nigerians anytime the legitimacy of the state came under doubt which has forced citizens to: "increasingly retreat from their Nigerian identity . . . into communal, ethnic, religious and other forms of identities."

Also, at the inception of the fourth-republic there was the setting up of the Nigerian Human Rights Violence Investigation Commission popularly known as the Oputa Panel. The initiative was well received by many members of the public. Reasons for its popularity could be traced to a number of factors prime amongst which are the profile and antecedent of members of the panel. They included Justice Chukwudifu Oputa, Bishop Mathew Hassan Kukah and other members. The motivation for the setting up of the commission was reiterated by President Olusegun Obasanjo that:

. . . my first duty is to reconcile the people of this country and heal their wounds. I have no doubt in my mind that everyone in our ethnically diverse society has suffered in many ways from the unacceptable and undemocratic manner in which we have been governed for so long (Albert, 2004: 349).

The long years of collective torture under the military shaped post-1999 Nigeria as a post-traumatic state (Albert, 2004:349) based on shocking memories of the past cases of gross human rights violation. The emphasis on reconciliation by President Obasanjo and the caliber of membership of the panel raised hopes that the fault lines of ethnicity, religion and cultural cleavages would begin to experience transformation leading to a newly imagined Nigeria. The activities of the Commission resulted in brokering peace in some cases and, at the end, it produced an eight volume report of 15,000 pages covering areas

such as human rights infractions committed during the military era and was submitted to the Government in June, 2002. After six months of waiting, the Federal Government that instituted the platform also quashed it hinged on the premise of a Supreme Court judgment in January, 2003. Therefore, the Commission may be described as another bungled opportunity at imagining Nigeria considering accruable gains of reconciliation which President Obasanjo underscored as one of the main intentions for the setting up of the Commission. Also, the 2006 census, rather than bringing about a Nigeria commonly shared and owned by the ethnic nationalities in the country, also bred age-old animosities that warranted independent repetitions of the exercise by some states of the country that felt they were undercounted and its political and economic implications.

From the preceding, the hope of an imagined Nigeria gets increasingly blighted as all avenues at making such a reality have been thwarted by ethnic insecurity or ethnic security dilemma. Young (1996) quotes Chinua Achebe as bemoaning in 1983 that: "We have lost the twentieth century, are we bent on seeing our children also lose the twenty-first?" Cognizant of the optimism of Adebani (2001) that Nigeria remains an aspiration and that aspirations are often stubborn even in the face of negating realities, it can be hopefully stated that a newly (re)imagined Nigeria can replace the present one whose name and original anthem were based on the imagination of British women (Young, 1996). We need to ask: can the nation be reborn, redeemed and resurrected? If yes, where, when and how will this materialize? This article finds cautioned optimism in the fact that in the word of Achebe, "There was a Country", as implied in the title of his last work, therefore, we can posit that there can still be a country and on that premise, it is the position of this article that a Nigerian nation is an achievable aspiration.

The first step is to appreciate the gravity and complexity of the challenges of managing fault lines which promote this sense of ethnic insecurity. While reflecting on a similar concern, Amuwo (2010) draws attention to the strain and cost of integrating only two linguistic groups (French and English) for one to appreciate the complexity of the problems facing African countries cognizant of years of slavery. We must also reject determinism because no country is destined to suffer crisis because of its societal diversity just as no nation is guaranteed peace (Herbst and Mills 2012). Also, we must accept that there is a difference between Nigeria as mere "geographical expression and a durable national idea" (Lewis, 2012:19).

Agential Diagnosis of the Present

The current state of ethnic insecurity has been traced theoretically to the lack of a social contract owing to a tradition of incredible elections (Kew, 2010). However, in identifying what sustains continuous eruption of fault lines culminating in ethnic insecurity, Mamdani (2010: 32-33) traces this to the application of two contradictory laws or rights; the rights of being an autochthon or indigene and the rights of being a Nigerian. The stage for an interaction defined by competitive antagonism owing to migration of largely the poor as the case is in places like Jos and Kaduna, to mention a few. This overtime sets up the indigenous poor against the poor non-indigene and the competitive antagonism further sets the rich indigene against the rich non-indigene in a conflict whose bestiality is supplied by the poor on both sides. Mamdani (2010) argues that countries often have the opportunity to change rules after major crisis citing examples of the United States where rights were defined by blood prior to the civil war which subsequently changed after the civil war. This attests to the argument that wars have the potentials of both state and nation-

making depending on how post-conflict peace and reconciliation are pursued (Sorensen, 2001).

In post-Biafra Nigeria, there has been both formal and informal ways of managing clashing rights. Formally, these include the federal character, federal institutions, electoral rules and party systems revenue allocation and informally by the economic and political cartel constituted by politicians, serving and retired military officers, top bureaucrats, traditional rulers, local notables and leading businessmen (Lewis, 2012: 29). However, ethnic insecurity has not abated as there are still core issues in contention which makes the reimagining of an egalitarian Nigerian nation beyond what their minds or intellect can comprehend. Wilmot (2007) opines that the members of this cartel are not capitalists because they lack the puritan ethic of Weber in the *Spirit of Capitalism* they are not communists, socialist or social democrats because they do not care for the people and they consider accountability as presumptuous and criminal. This underscores the need for the task of reimagining of Nigeria for the birth of a nation to be led by intellectuals.

The Agency of the Intellectuals and the International Community in Imagining Nigeria

In the words of Octavio Paz, "thinking is the only obligation of the intelligentsia" and it is in the light of this that the intellectual of the 21st century occupies a prime position in the search for nationhood in Africa's biggest democracy. Wilmot (2007: 100) defines the intellectual as one: "evolved to lead and guide towards physical, psychological and moral objectives and so advanced that his ideas have relevance across physical and spiritual borders." In this context, the production of such individuals is not limited to any particular race and this reinforces the need for Africans nay Nigerians to look inward first in exploring options for solution to the threat of ethnic insecurity in the 21st century mindful of the imperialistic words of Hegel who prided himself as the greatest philosopher and denigrated Africa when he opined that:

Africa is no historical part of the world; it has no movement to exhibit. Historical movement in Africa – that is in its northern part belongs to the Asiatic or European world . . . what we understand as Africa is the unhistorical, underdeveloped spirit, still involved in the state of nature . . . The history of the world travels from East to West, for Europe is absolutely the end of history, Asia is the beginning (Wilmot 2007:103-104).

A similar view was expressed by Lugard when he described Africa as "pathetically dependent on European guidance."

While the living condition of majority of post-colonial subjects in Nigeria have been reduced to penury by the combination of factors, forces and a succession of leadership that has proven to be more destructive than hurricanes, earthquakes, volcanoes and monsoons added together. Realities on ground demand that Nigerian intellectuals start thinking beyond regional, ethnic and religious cleavages because the future: "would have no pity for those men who, possessing the exceptional privilege of being able to speak words of truth to their oppressors, have taken refuge in an attitude of passivity, of mute indifference and sometimes of cold passivity" (Wilmot, 2007:106). Therefore, it has become imperative for the Nigerian intellectual to differentiate between being a palace, religious or ethnic or presidential intellectual and being a rational and humane intellectual. Much as Nigerian intellectuals have documented ways out of the current morass, it is

important they do not allow fatigue or weariness overwhelm them despite the recalcitrant nature of the cartel and a section of the intellectual class that has constituted itself into palace intellectuals.

Also, the international community must begin to engage African countries and especially elections in a more nuanced approach. Adebani and Obadare (2011:312) draw attention to usurpation of the people's will and the ascendance of *hybrid* regimes as enunciated by Larry Diamond in which features of autocracy and democracy are simultaneously present. This has become an African phenomenon as pointed by Collier and Vincente (2008) after a country-wide study sequel to the 2007 general elections conclude that the: "African wave of democratisation . . . may have introduced a new form of democracy in which illicit electoral behaviour is often unrestrained." This informs the view of Kew (2004) that elections that are not credible are increasingly becoming acceptable. Acceptability in this contexts smacks indulgence and connivance from the metropole based on the West's politics of expediency hinged on economic interests and the attendant risks of "radical transformation" that comes with transparent elections (Adebani and Obadare 2011: 315). It must be emphasized that good governance and all its precepts will remain worn-out clichés until respect for the will of the electorate is sanctified, which will also produce a valid social contract and government and in the views of Jose Mart, an hero of Cuban independence, all stakeholder must bear in mind that:

"To govern well, one must see things as they are. And the able governor in America is not the one who knows how to govern the Germans or the French; one must know the elements that compose one's own country, and how to bring them together, using methods and institutions originating within the country, to reach that desirable state where each person can attain self-realization and all may enjoy the abundance that Nature has bestowed on everyone in the nation" (quoted in Deng 2009:1)

In reaching the stage painted by Jose Mart and transcending ethnic insecurity, democracy remains the best option. However, it is incumbent on local and international stake holders to ensure that optimum respect is accorded to electoral choices emerging from popular and credible electoral processes and not to indulge in electoral heists on the excuse of stability in Africa. This is because of the potentials of credible elections to bring about the basis for gradually overcoming the scares and fears of ethnic insecurity.

Eventualities of Ethnic Insecurity: Going Baghdad or Kabul?

Mindful of the skewed pattern of voting in the 2011 presidential elections in thickening the fault lines in Nigeria and the electoral heists that have been perpetuated since 1999, the 2015 presidential election is also beginning to gather ominous cloud of discontent, fragmentation and general tension symptomatic of ethnic insecurity. Just as acrimonious and adversarial exchanges served as the prologue to the 2011 presidential election, a similitude of that is gathering dramatis personae and the stage is gradually being set based on happenings and exchanges in the polity.

A leading northern figure Alhaji Isa Lawal Kaita had this to say on the 2015 presidential

election: "it is our turn, our right and our time to produce the president of this country" and when asked if it is a must for the north to produce the president in 2015, he retorted: "As far as I am concerned, it is a must. My own thinking is that the president must come from the North in 2015 ..." (Mmeribeh, 2013: 16 & 17). Similarly, ethnic leaders from the south-south where the incumbent hails have been insisting on the inalienable rights of the incumbent to seek re-election in 2015 without which there will be chaos and anarchy from a region whose recent history has been that of armed struggle with the Nigerian state since the days of Isaac Adaka Boro given that the capacity to actualize such may not be lacking. This article considers these clashing hard stances as confirmation and a validation of the ethnic insecurity thesis of this article.

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