

## **THE FALLACY OF ETHNIC DIVERSITY IN NIGERIA: AN APPRAISAL OF THE FAILURE OF THE STATE AS ROOTED IN THE NOTION OF CULTURAL PLURALISM**

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### **Abstract**

The idea of Nigeria's ethnic diversity is no doubt fundamental, seeing that both the present geopolitical configuration of the country, as well as the problems that have given birth to the present strident calls for one or another form of restructuring, derive their impetus largely from the fact of Nigeria's diversity. These essentially anaclitic ties to ethnic groups emerged in the context of artificial scarcity, itself a bye product of the failure of the Nigerian state to provide for its citizens. However, ethnic diversity is not an exclusive preserve of the Nigerian state, albeit Nigeria is adjudged as one of the most diverse countries in Africa. Thus, the country's poor development is sometimes attributed to its diversity and population where many Nigerians think of themselves first and then their primordial publics, while the nation-state is often accorded the least priority. The problematic of this paper was addressed qualitatively by triangulating secondary sources obtained from textbooks, journals, newspapers, and the internet. The paper argues in line with the theory of cultural pluralism that although the management of Nigeria's ethnic diversity is a challenging issue, it is not merely the fact of the diversity but the failure of the state to manage the diversity, and the vast natural and human resource that the country is blessed with that essentially transform this diversity into a problem.

**Key Words:** Ethnic Diversity, ethnicity, State Failure, Cultural Pluralism

### **Introduction**

The notion of Nigeria's diversity has created mixed feelings among the citizenry. It is often supposedly seen as a blessing, at the same time some have attributed Nigeria's diversity as partly responsible for the current problems and agitations that are ravaging Nigeria's statehood. From the pre-independence period of Nigerian nationalism to the last stroke of military dictatorship in 1999, the tide of patriotism has been declining. In other words, the one voice that was used to rally Nigerians in the struggle for independence and the united effort put to rid the country of military rule have continued to assume dangerous dimensions due to series of ethnic and regional nationalism and agitations.

This is in concurrence with Mohammed's (2012) position that since the return to civil rule in 1999, contestations and myriad of concerns have been heightened from both the northern and southern parts of the country. Thus, some ethnic groups feel that the return to civil rule has offered them the opportunity to agitate for what they believe is their right to possess and partake in the development of their region, state, or community as the case may be. Thus, nationalism has been narrowed to primordial or ethnic nationalities and has come to replace civic nationalism among many citizens of the country.

The fact of diversity is not limited to Nigeria alone; neither is Nigeria the only diverse country practicing the liberal brand of democracy. History offers examples of democracy blooming amid racial or ethnic diversity, in countries such as the United States, France, Great Britain, Canada, Belgium, and Switzerland were and are highly diverse states (Beissinger, 2008). Thus, the United States which Nigeria supposedly models after in democratic practice is highly diverse and more complicated in terms of ethnic or racial composition. It has also been at the forefront of promoting and propagating liberal democracy which she believes will foster peace, especially when viewed from the prism of democratic peace theory. Accordingly, Ekeh (1975) acknowledges that the United States is the number one most important democratic country in the world, and the greater the extent to which democracy prevails elsewhere in the world, the more congenial the world environment will be to American interests generally and the future of democracy in the United States in particular.

As such, there are extremely diverse societies such as India, Papua, and New Guinea, among others that can be rated as successful democratizers. There are societies also with one or a few major ethno-cultural cleavages (including Israel, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Taiwan, and Turkey) that have produced relatively stable democratic polities (Beissinger, 2002). The question is; what makes the Nigerian context more challenging?. The issue of decline in patriotism, or the lack of it, can be traced to the Nigerian colonial social context. Like the case of other African countries, Nigerian modern politics had to a large extent followed the path set up by its colonial experience. Colonial masters were just interested in managing the state to maximise their interest and not to develop Nigeria. The Nigerian elites that emerged there from did not depart significantly from that path. They deployed all sorts of disregard for law and authority in their anti-colonial struggle. Ekeh (1975) notes that African elites accepted the principles in colonialism indirectly, but only rejected the foreign personnel that ruled Africa. They claim to be competent to rule but had no traditional legitimacy. As such invented the African bourgeois ideologies of legitimization in order to replace the colonizers and rule their people while maintaining the foundation upon which such rule was created and nourished.

With particular reference to the destructive strategy employed to sabotage the administrative efforts of the colonialist, African elites encouraged their followers to be late to work, to go on strikes for a variety of reasons, among others. An African who evaded his tax was a hero; the African labourer who beat up his white employer was given extensive coverage in newspapers. In general, the African elites, in and out of politics, encouraged the common man to shirk his duties to the government or else to define them as burdens; in the same breath he was encouraged to demand his rights (Ekeh, 1975:).

Given this historical truism and guided by insights from cultural pluralism, the paper argues that part of the challenges confronting the country is clearly laid down by the attitudes, work ethics, and value preferences encouraged by the emerging African elites in their anti-colonial struggles and carried over into the post-colonial context rather than the ethnic diversity of the country. Thus the paper examines the nexus between ethnic diversity, state failure, and development.

### **Statement of the Problem**

State failure is an occurring phenomenon among nation-states; however, its frequency among African states is comparatively higher. In the case of Nigeria, the failure of the state to provide for its citizens as against absolute incapability to sustain itself as a member of the international community is eminent. The reason for this is largely attributed to ethnic diversity which has continued to shape the country's politics since pro-independence harbinger by laid down attitudes, work ethics, and value preferences encouraged by the emerging African elites in their anti-colonial struggles and carried over into the post-colonial context. Albeit the management of Nigeria's ethnic diversity has been a herculean task, the return to democracy in 1999 further

offered many ethnic groups and regions the opportunity to agitate for what they believe is their “rightful possessions”. Consequently, while other diverse nation-states have successfully advanced policies of managing their diversity, providing for their citizens, and forging development, the Nigerian nation-state has continued to slide. Thus, the lack of adequate development and continuous decline in patriotism has also led to the current surge of agitations being that diversity is not an exclusive phenomenon of the Nigerian state. Therefore is diversity the cause of failure in Nigeria or a fallacy?

## **Conceptual Issues**

### **Ethnic Diversity**

Diversity can be measured across many variables such as age, race, sex, economics, climate (geography), religion, philosophy, ideology, culture, political beliefs, etc. which may also be termed heterogeneity in the context of this paper. According to Alesina and La Ferrara, (2005), one of the most salient dimensions of the term heterogeneity is ethnicity. Ethnic diversity implies heterogeneity in original or mother languages as the case may be, religions, races, and cultures (Alesina and La Ferrara, 2005). In common parlance, it is measured based on one’s country of birth, or of his/her parents. It coincides with a variety of norms, information sets, knowledge, and levels of ability (Hoogendoorn and Praag, 2012). This variety indeed affects the formation and performance of teams. Ethnic diversity would benefit team performance due to a more diverse pool of skills and knowledge that leads to complementarity and mutual learning. On the other hand, the costs associated with more ethnic diverse teams would be related to more difficult communication and coordination (Hoogendoorn and Praag, 2012). As a fallout from this, it could be reasonably argued that diversity when properly managed can become a major advantage in state construction and nation-building.

### **State Failure**

There is no consensus among social scientists on the meaning of state failure. Some; such as Carment (2003) Brooks (2005) and Conteh-Morgan (2006) view it from the inability of state actors or authorities to exercise control over the growth of criminals and violence and the inability of the state to exert control over their borders. The other category of state failure which is the main concern of this paper has to do with the state’s inability to provide her citizens with basic necessities (infrastructures) and exert control over her economy, which may or can degenerate into problems in the former category. Thus, failure according to Conteh-Morgan (2006), involves a process of rapid and basic transformation of the state and society’s relationship from one of a provider state to one of a more hands-off the relationship in terms of delivery of social services such as; education, health, roads, water supply, etc. and warfare. This results to individual, group, and societal increase in misery, and a simultaneous loss of authority, legitimacy, and cohesion within the state. Furthermore, it could lead to factionalisation of the state into social bonds or cleavages such as religion, language, class, clan, etc. As the state fails, its key institutions: civil service, police, and military, among others, become increasingly corrupted and unprofessional.

Similarly, Williams (n.d.), view state failure from two perspectives. In the first sense, failure is understood in terms of the inability of state institutions to control actors and processes within a given territory. In other words, state failure is seen in terms of the inability of government to control dissidents within its geographical area and whereby part of a state territory may be under the control of dissidents. The emphasis here is on territorial control from the violent armed group(s). In the second sense, failure means the ways in which states, either because of a lack of capacity or a lack of political will, fail to provide public goods to their entire population rather than favouring one or other particular segment of it.

### **Cultural Pluralism**

Cultural pluralism is a context connoting the existence of two or more cultural groups occupying one geographical area and participating in some common activity or activities, borrow elements of culture from each other, but continue to maintain their respective cultural autonomy. It is the co-existence of many dissimilar things or patterns of activities prevalent in a particular socio-political arena. In other words, we can say cultural pluralism is a system where different cultural groups co-exist and share a common cultural platform without losing their respective identity (Cultural Pluralism, n.d.).

### **Literature review**

State failure is not only common to Africa or Nigeria, but the phenomenon is felt in different parts of the world. However, the usage of the term “failed state” is attributed to Helman and Ratner (1993) who were among the first analysts to use the term. They were concerned about a spreading new phenomenon whereby a state was becoming absolutely incapable of sustaining itself as a member of the international community. They argued that a failed state would endanger their own citizens and threaten their neighbours with the problem of refugee flow, political instability, and random warfare.

Therefore, it should be reiterated that state failure in the context of this paper is with reference to the failure of the state to provide for her citizens and to harness her natural and human resources. However, the current security challenges ravaging Nigeria is quite acknowledged as a cogent threat to Nigeria’s peace and security and could lead to state collapse, but the concept of state failure here is treated in line with failure to provide where ethnic diversity is partly used as a yardstick for justification. In fact, the idea of statehood that dominates discussions about state failure was born in Europe with the birth of the modern state system and interrelation at the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 (William, n.d.). Similarly, Nnoli (1987) observes that the phenomenon of ethnicity and tribalism transcend Africa. Thus, what is of particular interest in the case of Nigeria is that, despite the vast human and natural resources that the country is blessed with, the largest population is still living in penury and abject poverty. This is also responsible for the interest in looking at state failure in terms of failure to provide than control as noted in that extant literature such as Conteh-Morgan (2006), Carment (2003), Brooks (2005), Collier (2009), Blok (n.d.) and Rotberg (n.d.). Here failed state is extensively viewed in terms of state’s inability to control her territory and dissidents within the state with less emphasis on state’s failure to provide for her citizens.

On the contrary and in line with this study, Rotberg (2002) and Rotberg (2003) argue that nation-states fail because they cannot deliver positive political goods to their people which can lead to arms conflict. Again, when they are consumed by internal violence and are unable to deliver positive political goods to her populace, it leads to the government’s loss of credibility and when this persists, a particular nation-state becomes questionable and illegitimate in the minds of its citizens. This situation leads to loss of confidence and patriotism in the state.

Admittedly, William (n.d.) notes that state failure on the African continent is a widespread phenomenon but the failure to promote human flourishing has arguably been greater than the failure to control. Nevertheless, it is important to note that both of these views of state failure are based on a particular conception of statehood: “the fundamental tasks of a nation-state in the modern world” and “the basic functions of the state” (William n.d: 2).

There are many causes of state failure as advanced particularly in Africa’s situation. However, William (n.d.) and Di John (2008) explained five main factors or ideas that paved literature on state failure. The first is the failure to meet up with development due to the influence of bad leaders. The second is predatory actors such as warlords and so-called “spoilers” which dominate the liberal view of war and violence, which posits that economic

liberalisation and democracy promote peace. A third view is bad economic policies which are anti-developmental and are purposefully constructed by elites to promote their interests in capital accumulation and maintaining power by promoting clienteles and the patrimonial notion of state. The fourth is the idea that the unraveling of states is closely related to the nature of so-called “new wars” which are made possible by bad environments leading to the proliferation and availability of armaments. The proponents of the “new war” thesis argue that contemporary wars are distinct from old wars in their method of warfare, causes, and financing. Fifth is the “resource curse” argument, which is the idea, that abundance of natural resources, and in particular oil, causes poor growth, and raises the incidence, intensity, and duration of conflict which has been an influential part of the state failure literature. While mineral abundance has long been considered beneficial to economic and political development, the recent poor economic performance of oil exporters and the growing incidence of civil wars and political instability in mineral-rich economies have revived the idea that their resource abundance may be more of a curse than a blessing.

Much of the blame for state failure has been heaped on Africa’s leaders, especially their leadership styles where political elites give priority to their ethnic groups rather than the nation-state. This attitude has affected the growth and development of statehood. In Africa and Nigeria in particular Ekeh (1975) notes that;

Most educated Africans are citizens of two publics in the same society. On the one hand, they belong to a civic public from which they gain materially but to which they give only grudgingly. On the other hand, they belong to a primordial public from which they derive little or no material benefits but to which they are expected to give generously and do give materially. To make matters more complicated, their relationship to the primordial public is moral, while that to the civic public is amoral. The dialectical tensions and confrontations between these two publics constitute the uniqueness of modern African politics (Ekeh, 1975:108)

Drawing from the causes of state failure and Ekeh’s submission, it is clear that state failure in Nigeria is not the unavailability of resources or ethnic diversity, but a vacuum of purposive leadership and poorly oriented masses. Nigeria’s so-called elites (political elites especially) on one hand and the masses, on the other hand, feel that their primordial publics (ethnic groups) are more important than the state. Therefore, the resources that are meant for the generality of the state should be channeled to the benefit of those whose members of the primordial public are at the helms of affairs at a particular time. But in the long run, even the ethnic groups gain little of the resources that are diverted by the elite. Admittedly Ekeh (1975) further submits that;

A good citizen of the primordial public gives out and asks for nothing in return; a lucky citizen of the civic public gains from the civic public but enjoys escaping from giving anything in return whenever he can. But such a lucky man would not be a good man were he to channel all his lucky gains to his private purse. He will only continue to be a good man if he channels part of the largesse from the civic public to the primordial public. That is the logic of dialectics. The unwritten law of the dialectics is that it is legitimate to rob the civic public in order to strengthen the primordial public (Ekeh, 1975:108)

This suggests that state failure is mostly blamed on the leaders, but the masses also have their share of the blame. Hence, state failure in this paper constitutes the generality of the people as the nomenclature suggests since the state incorporates everyone. Thus, the fact of the existence of multiple ethnic groups in Nigeria and the attitude of a typical or an average African or a Nigerian in this case as presented by Ekeh is quite a reality. Accordingly, Nnoli (1978) notes that; first ethnicity exists only within a political society consisting of diverse ethnic group.

Secondly, ethnicity is much more than ethnocentrism (love for one's ethnic group) and it is characterised by a common consciousness of being one in relation to the other relevant ethnic groups. Thirdly, exclusiveness is an attribute of ethnicity and fourthly, conflict is an important aspect of ethnicity. Similarly, Mazrui (1982) shares the same idea in his submission that;

A basic dialectic to understand in Africa is that while the greatest friend of African nationalism is race-consciousness, the greatest enemy of African nationhood is ethnic-consciousness. Modern African nationalism was born and prospered under the stimulation of racial solidarity and shared blackness. On the other hand, the struggle for viable modern nations within Africa is considerably hampered by acute ethnic cleavages, often separating Bantu from Nilotes, Ibo from Hausa, and the like (Mazrui, 1982:23-24).

On the other hand, the management of ethnic diversity has been quite challenging. Accordingly, Klaus, Ignacio and Wacziarg (2017) submit that; in poor countries that are often characterised by high level of ethnic diversity, there is this growing concern that groups with heterogeneous values, norms, and attitudes that are differentiated by culture may be unable to agree on policies, the provision of public goods and the broader goals of society. Similarly, Rotberg (2002) in an attempt to combine the justification cum nullification that multi-ethnic and religious states could constitute a basis for failure or sustainability of state and in line with the factors that cause state failure submits that:

The civil wars that characterise failed states usually stem from or have roots in ethnic, religious, linguistic, or other intercommunal enmity. The fear of "the other" that drives so much ethnic conflict may stimulate and fuel hostilities between ruling entities and subordinate and less-favoured groups...There is no failed state without disharmonies between communities. Yet, the simple fact that many weak nation-states include haves and have-nots, and that some of the newer states contain a heterogeneous collection of ethnic, religious, and linguistic interests, is more a contributor to than a root cause of nation-state failure. In other words, state failure cannot be ascribed primarily as the inability to build nations from a congeries of ethnic groups. Nor should it be ascribed baldly to the oppression of minorities by a majority, although such brutalities are often a major ingredient of the impulse towards failure (Rotberg 2002:86).

It is clear from Rotberg's submission that managing ethnicity is quite challenging and has constituted a problem, especially for post-colonial states. However, the failure of the Nigerian state to provide for her citizens despite her abundant resources may not be blamed on the country's diversity. In fact, the proponent of contact theory (Gordon 1954) proposes that racial and ethnic diversity can reduce stereotyping and prejudice by bringing individuals into direct contact with members of ethnic out-groups. Hence, direct contact between different ethnic groups has been shown to substantially reduce a broad range of attitudinal and behavioural measures of negative out-group evaluation (Sturgis, Brunto-Smith, Kuha and Jackson, 2014). This shows that Nigeria's ethnic diversity should be an advantage since the country is highly integrated by contact.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper adopts the theory of cultural pluralism as a framework for analysis. The idea of cultural pluralism was first advanced by Horace Meyer Kallen (1882-1974), a Jewish German-American Philosopher, although he did not use the term, "cultural pluralism" at that time in an article titled "Democracy versus the melting-pot", which appeared in a magazine, *The Nation* in 1915. Kallen's article was later reprinted as the second chapter of his book, *Culture and Democracy in the United States: Studies in the Group Psychology of the American People*, published in 1924. Although his idea of cultural pluralism did not become widely known

immediately after the publication of the essay in 1915, nor after the release of a book on cultural pluralism, it came to attract considerable attention in the late eighties and nineties, particularly within the context of the discussion over multiculturalism (Sunada, 1999).

The premise of Kallen's idea of cultural pluralism was based on his belief in the absolute nature of ethnicity. He believed that ethnic features were something fundamental and thus could not be altered. Seen through this prism, ethnicity is genetically inherited and, therefore, it is difficult, if not impossible to renounce an ethnic identity. Therefore, multi-ethnic society like the United States or Nigeria had to respect and maintain the differences of each group's native culture if harmony is to be achieved among the people.

Kallen's "cultural pluralism" was in sharp contrast with such concepts as the "Melting-pot" "Americanization," "Standardization", "Assimilation" and "Kultur Klux klan". He agreed with the notion of American democracy which he believed, protected each person's liberty. He wrote that "cultural pluralism is possible only in a democratic society whose institutions encourage individuals and guide them into a fellowship of freedom and cooperation" (Kallen, in Sunada, 1999:3-6). Based on this belief, he seriously attacked the notion of "melting-pot" that was advocated by Israel Zangwill (1864-1926) a Jewish-British playwright, and other Jewish American writers such as Jacob Riis and Edward Steiner who also wrote on the issue of immigration.

Another major concept criticised by Kallen's cultural pluralism was Assimilation. It was advocated by Mary Antin (1881-1949) a contemporary writer who was also a Jewish immigrant like Kallen. The differences were on the views regarding ethnicity. While Antin claimed that she could give up her ethnicity to become a good American through assimilation, Kallen considered that ethnicity would remain in the blood of immigrants and their descendants.

He wrote: "No matter how much an immigrant tried to become like an American, still remained the slave, the Jew, the German or the Irish citizen of the American State." (Kallen cited in Sollors, 1986: 275). Again among the populace neither he nor his children, nor his children's children lose the ethnic individuality. Precisely because of that, America needed to become a culturally pluralistic society so that people from different ethnic backgrounds could live in harmony and peace. Therefore, the strength and perpetuity of the forces of ethnicity is in its natural and biological origin (Kallen cited in Sollors, 1986).

He argued that America should be a "symphony of civilization in which all kinds of ethnic groups lived in harmony while maintaining their own distinct ethnic cultures." He also repeatedly argued against the "melting-pot" issue that the ethnic identity of an immigrant remains the same because "whatever he changes, he cannot change his grandfather; it therefore reveals that the boundaries of cultural pluralism were more fluid in life than in theory since in marriage a woman can renounce her ethnic and cultural heritage she had inherited from her family" (Sunada, 1999:7).

Drawing from the theoretical insight and the conceptualisation of the key words-ethnic diversity, state failure and cultural pluralism, it is imperative to state here that diversity is not a phenomenon that is particular to Nigeria. As such attributing the country's challenges to ethnic diversity would largely be fallacious. The theory of cultural pluralism emphasizes the need for a democratic atmosphere that will guarantee people's right irrespective of their ethnic affiliation, but to what extent has the Nigerian state lived up to this? How have the Nigerian elites been able to weaponise or instrumentalise diversity as a strategy of negotiating state power or reward system?

### **Echoes of the Failure: 1999 -2020**

The echoes of failure of the Nigerian state at meeting the basic necessities of her citizens predated the country's independence and it was inherited by the elites from the colonizers.

Ekeh (1975) accounted for how a serious division was suggested by the colonial masters to the African elites, which remains the red thread that runs through the whole of post-colonial African politics. It is a division within the elites along primordial ethnic lines. Both divisions-between the elites and the traditional chiefs and within the elite itself-have led to two sets of ideologies promoted by the African elites to legitimise its threatened status in post-colonial politics. Similarly, Akude (2007) argues that the protection of class interests by African elites implied the maintenance of colonial ethos and interests which precluded any impetus towards altering the marginal position of African states in the international politico-economic system. This has serious consequences for economic development and state institutional capacity and stability as the elites exploited state power to compensate for the lack of a material resource base. This in turn resulted from the commanding structures of their economies being controlled by firms from the colonising and other foreign states. The pursuit of economic development was, therefore, basically side-lined. Instead of contributing to economic development, development assistance policy was used to maintain these elites in power.

Therefore, the problem has been on prior to and through independence to the present dispensation. Paradoxically, it is expected that Nigeria by now would have parted from her colonial experiences but reverse is the case. Thus, the failure to forge ahead developmentally, has led to series of agitations that are confronting the fourth Republic. These may be termed as accumulation of grievance, demands and expectations from the Nigerian state. Consequently, the return to democracy has given different ethnic groups and dissidents the opportunity to unleash their demands even more forcefully. The leadership of the country on the other hand instead of harnessing the country's resources for effective development appeared to align themselves with different groups (ethnic, religion, class/elites, etc.) to gain and retain power and to further their particularistic interest.

One of such indicators of state failure in Nigeria is the current catalogue of agitations and insurgent groups that are overheating the polity from all parts of the Nigerian state. Particularly, the demand of the Independent People of Biafra (IPOB), insurgency activities in the North East, kidnapping and gunmen activities in the North West, the Middle Belt, and the Southern part of the country are very strong and loud. The IPOB agitation is not new; in fact, it can be argued that it climaxed in the 1960s with the declaration of the region as an independent country by its then leader- Ojukwu in 1967. The contemporary incident (1999-2020) follows series of events, prominent among which is the complaint of marginalisation or exclusion from the structure of governance of the country at the national level. Thus, following President Buhari's ascension to power, his health challenges, method of political appointment, and the herdsmen and farmers clashes among others, reawakened the politics of presidency and/or succession, which revolved around an assumed power-sharing arrangement between the Northern and the Southern parts of the country. This intrigue is a repeat of what happened when late President Umaru Musa Yar'adua from the North died before completing his term and was eventually succeeded by former president Goodluck Jonathan, a southerner from South-South.

In the present case, Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of one of the Biafran separatist groups, was detained for nearly two years on several charges that included treason, felony and operating a pirate radio station i.e. Radio Biafra. He was denied bail despite several court rulings granting him bail. His prolonged incarceration turned him into a prominent figure among his followers especially the Igbos Youths and number of prominent politicians. Consequently, the Biafra agitations ignited other separatist agitations in some parts of the country such as the North central (Middle Belt), and Niger Delta. This had the effect of seemingly threatening the survival of the country as a single indivisible nation-state. For example among the Yoruba, echoes of separatism come in different forms - from a direct call for the Oduduwa Republic to those championing for a Sovereign National Conference to decide if the federating units of the country still want to continue to live together, and, if so, under what arrangements. In the

North, there are intermittent demands for “Arewa Republic”, while some talk of the “North” as if it is a country within a country. In the Niger Delta, apart from the demand for the Niger Delta Republic, shades of separatism are embedded in the demands for resource control by regional activists. In essence, there is a fairly generalized feeling of alienation and dissatisfaction among the various constituents of the Nigerian federation, a situation that has also deepened mistrust and incentivized separatist agitations (Adibe, 2017).

The separatist agitations took a new turn in June 2017 when a group of Northern youths under the aegis of Coalition of Arewa Youths in what they termed “Kaduna Declaration” gave the Igbos until October 1, 2017 to leave the 19 Northern states. They also said an inventory of assets owned in the North by the Igbos would be taken and confiscated at the expiration of the ultimatum. Although the quit notice was later criticized by the Federal government, Northern governors forum, Afenifere, etc (Alechenu, *et al.*, 2017), nonetheless, the “Kaduna Declaration” further heightened tensions among Nigerians. In a swift reaction to the “Kaduna Declaration”, the leaders of the Middle Belt and other minority ethnic groups in the north under the leadership of Professor Jerry Gana urged the Federal Government to commence immediately the implementation of the 2014 National Conference Report to address the agitation for restructuring the country into 12 regions as federating units and 54 states (Adesulu, 2017). At extreme, the group further stated that even if Nigeria breaks up, the Middle Belt as defined by them will not remain with the North.

Another important echo of failure that demands attention in this paper is the diversion of resources by the Nigerian Political elites at the expense of the welfare of the masses, particularly civil servants. By the provision of the 1999 Constitution or the Civil Service Act, a civil servant is supposed to work for 35 years of service or 65 years of age after which he/she retires from active service except otherwise. In the past civil servants would retire and earn their gratuity and pension depending on the rank and the nature of the job that one retires from. Incidentally, the coming of President Olusegun Obasanjo into power in 1999 and a follow-up introduction and implementation of the monetization policy, the pension and gratuity that recently employed workers will benefit will have to come from deductions from their salaries and contributions from the government. On the contrary, politicians that manage to win or rig election and serve for just four or eight years as the case may be, leave the office with huge pension and entitlements.

Vanguard (2017) in a special report narrated how 21 states spent ₦37.367 billion naira on 47 ex-governors and deputies as pension and other entitlements which included; provision of houses, staff, and motor vehicles replaceable between three and four years. The payment over a four-year cycle was highest in Bauchi, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, and Lagos States with former governors drawing ₦23.18 billion, ₦2.795 billion, ₦2.043 billion and ₦1.606 billion, respectively. Aside from these payments, there were provisions for medical expenses for the former chief executives which run into hundreds of millions per former chief executive in many cases. Apart from these provisions, there is also a prescription of the Revenue Mobilisation, Allocation and Fiscal Commission, (RMAFC) that provides 300 percent severance for the governors as stated in the Certain Political Office Holders and Judicial Officers Remuneration Act. Under the act, former governors are treated like lawmakers, which accorded them 300% of their basic salary of ₦2, 223,705 amounting to ₦6, 671,115 as severance pay. The provisions also stipulate the provision of vehicles renewable every three to four years, accommodation at the state capital and sometimes in Abuja, 30 days paid for a holiday outside the country, and free medical treatment for the former governors and their immediate family members. For the purpose of implementation, many state Houses of Assemblies have passed State pension law that provides the governor certain amount of money as pension and other huge expenses as noted earlier. For example, Sokoto state voted ₦200million every four years, Gombe provided for 300million per term of each of the governor that served the state, Yobe state provided for

200 and 150 million respectively for governors and deputies while Kwara provided for 300 per cent of the governors salary etc.

In line with these provisions and how state governors have succeeded in manipulating state lawmakers, Alabelewe in an investigation by *The Nation* (2017) submits that; "...in 13 representative states shows that most of the state governors in Nigeria have managed to acquire what can be described as effective control of their Houses of Assembly. As a result, in the majority of the states investigated, there is no rancour as most executive bills are passed in atmosphere of celebration with little or no alterations, a development that has led to description of some assemblies as mere rubber stamps."

Apart from the fact that political office holders manoeuvre their way to secure approval of pension in addition to other luxurious expenses, they still recontest elections or secure appointments at higher levels of government and still enjoy the entitlement that was due to them in their previous offices and other pension allowances as civil servants. A few examples cited by Onumah (2017) included Amaechi who was speaker of the Rivers State House of Assembly from 1999 to 2007 and governor of Rivers State from 2007 to 2015. He is most likely to be entitled to severance package as ex-speaker, and may be an outrageous pension. He is also collecting a mouth-watering pension package as ex-governor and currently collects salary, allowances and other entitlements of office as "honourable" minister of transportation.

Onumah (2017) further reveals that ex-president Goodluck Jonathan, if his public jobs as education inspector, lecturer, and environmental protection officer is ignored, before he was elected deputy governor of Bayelsa State in 1999, he is entitled to pension as deputy governor, governor, vice-president and president. Likewise the incumbent president, Muhammadu Buhari, he was a former military administrator, ex-minister, former head of state, and a retired general in the Nigerian Army. Same for David Mark, also a former military administrator, ex-minister, retired army general, former president of the Nigerian senate. These are among many examples.

The avaricious life of Nigerian leaders unites the political elites, irrespective of party, religious or ethnic affiliations. Once they are in power, they use the instrumentality of the state to feed fat, robbing their states and the nation at will (Onumah 2017). Drawing from the discussion so far and the theoretical framework, it is obvious that ethnic diversity is part and parcel of the Nigerian state and no matter how the country is balkanized, another form of identity will spring up. Therefore, following the argument of cultural pluralism, it is the failure of the democratic government of the Nigerian state to meet the basic necessities of the masses due to greed, selfishness and the corrupt nature of most leaders. Correspondingly, Aluko in Adetiba (2013), in describing the character of a typical Nigerian wrote that, first, a typical Nigerian thinks of self before others and when he thinks of others, he or she thinks about members of their nuclear and extended family. From that level, a typical Nigerian thinks of people from his/her native town or village and then to the level of his or her ethnic group, finally, he thinks of his nation last. This kind of mindset has dampened the thought of development and has weakened the spirit of patriotism among Nigerians.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The phenomenon of ethnic diversity and ethnicity is not an exclusive preserve of the Nigerian state, neither is it historically traceable to only Nigeria. However, other countries with a similar setup, colonial and post-colonial experiences, and consequences have been able to forge developmental agenda and foster unity among its populace. Thus, drawing from the position of the theory of cultural pluralism, it arguable that the inability of the Nigerian state to design and implement developmental agenda is to a large extent a problem of leadership. Most Nigerian leaders over the years are less concerned with the issue of development and the unity of the country. Accordingly, the resources that are meant for general development and welfare

are often diverted by the elites for personal gratification with some flowing to their ethnic groups. In this regard, the masses are also part of the problem because they press and make sure that elites from their ethnic groups are only accepted because of what they get from them. The political elites on their part have also succeeded in amending the country's constitution to favour them unduly. Through these amendments, they have been able to allocate huge pension allowances and other entitlements to themselves. These attitudes have contributed significantly in weakening the spirit of patriotism among the citizens. Thus, both the elites and the masses are responsible for the failure of the Nigerian state to adequately provide for her citizens, but the political elites are more implicated in the problem. The following recommendations are noteworthy on the subject matter.

1. Ethnic diversity should be a source of strength for Nigeria and not a disadvantage. Thus it is important for the leaders to positively exploit Nigeria's diversity and resources for development rather than division. The masses too should not allow themselves to be manipulated by the elites. This can be achieved through adequate sensitization.
2. There is need for the Nigerian state to strengthen her institution by making politics less attractive. This can be done through purposeful leadership and by making sure that creditable people are voted into power especially the legislators at the state and federal levels who will checkmate the excesses of the executives.
3. The spirit of patriotism is declining due to lack of confidence in the country's democratic system. It is further exacerbated by corruption and poor representation. This may be ameliorated by ensuring that ethnic and religious affiliation are not criteria for electing public office holders.
4. Similarly, the Nigerian constitution should be amended to strengthen provisions that seek to eliminate corruption, particularly at the institutional level and the judiciary should be strengthened to be prompt and decisive on corruption allegation cases

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