

## **Evaluation of Hegemonic Struggle and Violent Extremism in Nigerian Politics: Analysis of Selected Cases**

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### **Keywords**

Evaluation, Hegemonic

Struggle, Violent,

Extremism, Nigerian

Politics.

### **Abstract**

Nigeria state has since independence been confronted by one form of political crisis to the other, which analysts and scholars attributed to the absence of rule of law, governance failure, corruption, class conflict, and unhealthy competitive interest within the ruling class. No necessary attention has been given to factors such as separate ethnic identities, and regional primordial tendencies to contest for and capture state power and use the power to promote their interest over that of others, which may have enthroned a pattern of conflict and sustained crisis in the polity. It is against this backdrop that this paper examines the factor of accommodating divergent interests, perceived hegemony, and violent tendency in Nigerian politics. The paper examined Nigeria's political records in newspapers, journals, textbooks, monographs, and transcripts from offline and online sources to establish that recurrent violent political extremism in Nigeria is a consequence of the perceived hegemony of one group over the others. Further findings showed that the colonial tendency of fractionalization of the elites through regionalization of politics in turn reinforced ethnicity/regionalism; and these sentiments often arose in elections, authoritative resource distributions, and appointments to privileged positions. Also, the colonial legacy ended up producing a weakly United State. The paper, therefore, joined the call for a balanced federation governed by rule of law and for national dialogue where all genuine geopolitical concerns could be addressed.

### **I. Introduction**

Nigeria is a federation with a population of over 200 million people and land area of about 924(923, 768) square kilometers- bounded to the north by Niger Republic, Atlantic Ocean in the South, the Republic of Benin in the West, Cameroun and Republic of Chad in the East. She has the seat of national government at the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, state government in capital city of the thirty six (36) states, and local

government in headquarters of the seven hundred and seventy –four (774) Local Council Areas of the Federation. Nigeria was a colony of the defunct British global empire before she later became independent and member of the British Commonwealth of Nations (BCWN) in October 1, 1960, was admitted into United Nations Organization (UNO) as 99th member in October 7, 1960 and became a republic in 1963. The North is dominated by Muslims while the South is majorly Christians, with some pockets of Muslims, Christians and Africa Traditional Religion (ATR) adherents 'resident on both sides of the divide. The political and administrative measure taken by British authority to effectively control Nigeria after conquest of pre-colonial states was amalgamation, through which the various Nigeria peoples (Igbo, Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba, southern, and northern Minorities) were brought together under one political and administrative authority. After the amalgamation, the British authority took a step to create an institution (Government) that made Nigeria, under the 1914, 1922, 1946 and 1951 constitutions, a unitary state with three regions and a capital territory and recruited predominantly Europeans to rule over the colonial state, without significant consultation with the people and without involving them in the conduct of state affairs. But subsequent political developments, particularly the Lyttleton Constitution of 1954 turned Nigeria from a unitary state to Federal state and from colonial to independent state in October 1, 1960. The elites united against British rule in the national independence struggle, but the alliance shifted or broke down as regional leaders contested for power to occupy juicy state offices created by the exit of colonial master. The elites from three federated regions, having emerged from the independent struggle, found it impossible to agree on the shape of post- independent Nigeria; they perceived each other's political move to have hegemonic intention. Thus, the phenomenon of violent reactions to perception of hegemony by elites of one section over the others that made up the new state seems to be a factor in the controversial reaction to independence motion and extreme violent case of Kano Riot in 1953 - the violence associated with electoral politics of 1959, 1964 and 1965, the January 16, 1966 military coup and July 29, 1966 counter coup d'états by the military elites (Ruth, 1970), the violence that resulted from the annulment of the June 12, 1993 election, the sack of the Interim National Government(ING), peaceful and sometime violent reactions to politics of state and local government creation, resource ownership and control, power structure, rotation of elective and appointments to national positions.

Different groups in the divide have expressed displeasure about the national politics. Social cultural organization in the south, Afenifere, the Pan Niger Delta Forum (PANDEF); Ohaneze and Southern Governors Forum(SGF) have claimed that from 1967 to May, 1999, successive northern military administrators have configured the country's political arrangement to favour their parts. While on the other hand, the Arewa Consultative Forum(ACF), Coalition of Northern Groups(CNG), Northern Elders Forum(NEF) and Northern Governors Forum have expressed displeasure over the South dominating the economy and educational sectors of the country. These states of affair appear to have triggered and sustained agitations for restructuring, resource control, secession threats, and self-determination movements in Nigeria which mostly took violent dimensions by militant groups nicknamed as ethnic nationalists, such as Odua People Congress (OPC); Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB), Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Avenger, Boko Haram, Islamic State of West Africa

Province (ISWAP), and Fulani Bandits. These groups challenged the authority of the state, launched attacks on government buildings and oil installations, abducted and killed expatriate and members of the public, and confronted government forces.

Cases of violent extremism in Nigerian politics have received public and international condemnations and their end is not in sight as efforts to address the issue appear defiled. The question here is how reactions to the perception of hegemony caused violent extremism in Nigeria Politics. Why did violent extremism continue to occur in Nigeria Politics despite widespread public and international condemnations? What are the implications for national political development? It is in light of this circumstance that this article examined the link between factors of hegemony and violent extremism in Nigerian politics.

## **II. Conceptual Clarification**

Hegemony is a concept in politics that connotes a political situation where one social class/group exerts power over others beyond what is accepted in law or standard operational procedure (Oxford Diction of Politics, 2003). The concept has its root in the Greek word Hegemon, meaning chieftain. In capitalist class society the concept is used to describe the bourgeois political and economic domination of the working class. In the international system, it is used to describe imperial domination and control of the developing countries by the major super power states of the world.

Generally, it is adopted to show power relations among social groups in a society – be it racial, religion, ethnic or states, the word connotes dominion of the strong over the weak; domination of the majority over the minority. The idea is used in this paper to describe situation of power relations in Nigerian Politics where one ethnic group or bloc seeks to permeate all organs of governance with the intention to dominate the others. So Hegemonic Intention is an attempt of one ethnic bloc, say the North, South West, South East, or South-South, to gain control of the Federal Government through regular elections or through military coup, with a view to perpetually dominate the others.

Reality has shown that in Nigerian Politics, attempt to secure control of the state power by any group, either ethnic bloc, political parties, factions or fraction of military elites have been perceived to have hegemonic intention and the groups that considered themselves as victim have reacted in different ways, in most cases, they have taken the dimensions of violent extremism as a way of seeking redress. Extremism refers to the utmost view or violent actions. Violent extremism is the opinion or political behaviour that gives no room for compromise between two political opponents that share a contradictory view, ideology or interests.

Violent Extremism is a state of affairs in Nigerian politics where compromise is difficult to be reached; dialogue fails and violence is applied in resolving contradictory interests. Under this condition, groups assume intolerant and violent behaviours toward one another. Rather than adopting civilized ways of resolving contradictions and ingroups interest, politics have degenerated into internal war in Nigeria. Groups are seen at dagger drawn among themselves and in some cases with the government in power.

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic state formed out of British colonial conquest and eventual amalgamation of the different groups that make up the country, for administrative convenience and ultimately for the advancement of British interests. Paul Unongo (2017), one time secretary of the Arewa consultative Forum (ACF), averred that “we came as an

amalgamation of different kinds of people into one state as many other countries have done including the United States and Germany, and administered together the culturally differentiated people". Thus, political decision-making in Nigeria after independence involves people from different ethnic backgrounds, faith, interests, norms and values.

The ethnic groups are presently politically organized into four major blocs (Northern, South West, South South and South East), with each having several pressure groups and affiliates that advance their interests over others: Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) for the people of north, Afenifere for the south west, Pan Niger Delta Forum(PANDEF) for the south –south, and Ohaneze for the south-east. These groups regroup or form an alliance in times of stiff political competition under the nomenclature Southern Middle Belt Forum versus the Arewa Consultative Forum and its affiliate like Northern Elders Forum (NEF), Coalition of Northern Groups (CNG); they issue a statement on matters that affect their interests.

The combination of wants of these groups and the scarce provision available for the satisfaction of their needs have sometimes led to some having and others not having much. This contradiction has often times degenerated into an internal war, orchestrated by those that felt relatively deprived. This state of affair has often times led to extreme cases of violent extremism in the conduct of the Nigeria state affairs. The Afenifere and the Ohaneze restructuring/ secession movement, PANDEF struggle for fiscal federalism/ restructuring, and Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) struggle to return to power after president Yaradua's death so as to maintain the northern political hegemony, have tacit support for OPC, MASSOB/IPOB, MEND/Avenger and Boko- haram/ISWAP, respectively. The violent postures of these militant groups are classic examples of extreme measures taken to redress perceived hegemonic intentions in Nigeria politics.

These groups have challenged the authority of successive Nigerian governments, launched organized attacks on government buildings, kidnapped Nigerians and expatriates for ransom, taken to terrorism, and had confrontation with government forces. This state of affairs in Nigerian politics has corroborated Plato's claim that human needs are insatiable and turn soon into greed, enmity soon arises among members of one group and among groups; as neighbours trample upon one another's interest and group against other groups interests, wars definitely occur.

### **III. Theoretical Framework**

The paper adopts the relative Deprivation and Frustration Aggression Theory to explain how one group's perpetual hold and use of state power to the disadvantage of the others fostered the spirit of relative deprivation led leaders to frustration and aggressive behavior such as verbal or violent attack in Nigerian politics. Nigerian politics is a contest for state power among elites of ethno-regional groups and human nature does impact on the ethnic group behavior. The Relative Deprivation (RD) and Frustration Aggression(FA) theories stated that people get frustrated when they observe that others have something they desire and is within their reach but unattainable; they become frustrated and vent their anger at the source of their frustration. The two theories account for why the northern region representatives who perceived domination rebelled against the motion for independence raised and supported by Southern representatives.

Similarly, the northern hegemony in Nigeria's Politics after independence fostered the feeling of relative deprivation by the eastern region, thus, the aggressive behavior

directed at the source of their frustration in form of the January 15, 1966 military Coup orchestrated by officers of eastern origin in the Nigerian Army. In a similar vein, the July 1966 counter coup was orchestrated in the same spirit of relative deprivation and aggressive response by northern military officers who felt dominated by the event of the coup and the unitary structure of government it brought to power.

The relative deprivation and aggressive behavior could also account for the declaration of Biafra State by the people of the eastern region and eventually the Nigerian Civil War; who felt dominated by the northern controlled military government. The entire south especially the Afenefere, Ohaneze, PANDEF, their affiliates and militant wings that also felt dominated and relatively deprived of power for a very long time have reacted violently at the source of their frustration in their aggressive pursuit of political restructuring, fiscal federalism, secession threat and insurgencies. They claimed the northern hegemony (both Military and civilian) in Nigeria politics from 1967 to the time of civil rule in May 1999 created the present structure of the Nigeria state, where the north has 19 states against the south having 17 states, more local government areas against the south having less, more federal constituencies against the south having less, more political wards and voting units against the south that have less and more political appointments against the south that have less, have provoked the feeling of relative deprivation in the south which could account for the regular agitations.

The theory could also account for Herder men and Bandit militancy in the entire Nigeria; they direct their aggression at the source of their frustration as they felt relatively deprived of power too long after the death of president Yaradua, Rural Grazing Area(RUGA) settlements and grazing rout, basic amenities and practice of Islamic fundamentalism issues. They raised Boko-Haram and ISWAP insurgencies as well as bandits to redress through aggressive reaction directed at the Nigeria State. The logic of these theories are applicable in understanding the nature of the Nigeria political groups and class that is full of greed for money, unbridle desire for power, stiff competitiveness and conflictual, as every politician wants power by all means, including election rigging and coup d'état, and seek a perpetual stay in power. The rest that felt relatively deprived rebelled.

### **Hegemonic Politics in Nigeria: A Colonial Heritage**

The Nigeria state came into being as a result of British conquest and incursion into politics of hitherto sovereign African nation's states and empires. The use of gunboat diplomacy and force of conquest formed the basis of British claim to colonial Nigeria state which decided to collapse structure of the pre-colonial African states into one-state through its amalgamation policy in 1914. First of all, the colony was ruled in three separate pieces, later reduced to two(north and south) and subsequently to one by 1914, but became three at independence and four after becoming a Republic. According to Nigeria Finder.com, Lord Lugard did not make any serious effort to bring the South and North Nigeria under one administration immediately after the amalgamation. Rather both North and South were ruled separately. This is what is referred to as the policy of divide and rule. The divide and rule policy operated side by side the Indirect Rule Policy and they were meant to dominate Nigerians in the conduct of the state affairs.

Similarly, Clifford did not make any significant move to bring the South and North Nigeria under a single administration but instead promoted the divide and rule alongside



the Indirect Rule Policy. He recommended that all administrative works be directed and coordinated by a single centre. Richard who succeeded Clifford promoted what appears to be unity by creating central legislature and administrative councils. But rather than strengthening the unity, this method further regionalized the country into: North, South west and South East.

After the rise to a place of hegemony in the colonial Nigeria state politics, the colonial elites placed authority to control major sectors of the state, including the power to determine who got what on itself, and they unilaterally ruled the country for about thirty-two years (1914-1946) without significant consultation with any of the groups that make up the state. The colonial state governed every aspect of life as the government decides access to health, education, employment, economy, and ownership of Natural resources and determine the persons that are qualified to participate in politics and governance. The Nigeria Council 1914 denied the indigenous elites the right to participate in the governance of the country, Clifford Constitution 1922 delineated the country into three provinces (North, East and West), the country's north and south were ruled separately to promote her divide and rule principle. This act of despotism bred unrest and perception of hegemony as a protest by local elites became a common place, though there were consultations with Nigerians in the making of the 1951 Macpherson, 1954 Lyttleton, and 1960 Independence constitutions. However, like the previous experiences, the hegemonic tendency was demonstrated in her divide and rule political practice.

As a colonial creation, according to Ibodje (2009), the Nigerian state was meant to attend to the requirements of British conquest and imperial domination interest. The hegemonic tendency of British authority demonstrated in her colonial policy was largely meant to keep everything under the British control including the resources (natural and manmade). In fact she kept the colonial people in political subjugation in order to promote easy exploitation of their resources. This explains why the colonial authority initially did not allow the indigenous elite to participate majorly in the colonial state politics and other official meetings, discussions, and decisions pertaining to the structure and conduct of the state affairs. Instead, the British colonial authority structured the Nigeria state into three regions and decided the interest the state was meant to serve, which invariably was hers. For that reason the colonial state was a structure meant for easy exploitation of Nigeria's resources, the controller of wealth, and a site for collection of rent; as such, it became the controller of easy access to status and wealth at independence. From the Marxist perspective the state was an instrument in the hand of the colonial elites who used it to achieve both British interest and their personal comfort.

Therefore, since the country's independence, the Nigerian elite of the different ethnic extracts both military and civilian have, just like the colonial masters, significantly taken over the control of the political economy of the country for their own benefits and sometimes used it to promote the cause of one political bloc over the others. According to Ake(1996), and Ibodje (2009:72) political independence brought change to the composition of the state elite, but the character of the state remained as it was in colonial days. Since the state provides an easy access to wealth and status, processes leading to its control have been marked by intense competition, conflict and deadly struggle among the different factions of the elite in Nigeria, while those that felt relatively deprived, got frustrated and rebelled(Ibodje, 2009:72). This state of affairs accounts for the emergence of and the protest of the National Council for British West

Africa (NCBWA) against colonial authority, as well, marked the beginning of national protests, colonial authority, and independence struggle in Nigeria.

### **Analysis of Selected Cases of Perceived Hegemony and Violent Extremism in Nigerian Politics**

The political history of Nigeria is filled with stories of attempts at each major group or political blocs to overtake and dominate one another. Alliances are sometimes formed to outwit and dominate one another as they contest for power after the exit of the British colonial government to control the Nigerian state. In an effort to acquire state power for domination, socio-cultural groups were transformed into political parties that acted as fronts to realize the geo-ethnic hegemonic interest, balance power and terror: Egbe Omo Oduduwa changed to Action Group (AG) with Chief Obafemi Awolowo as the leader; Jamiyaar Mutanem Arewa changed to Northern People's Congress (NPC) with Ahmadu Bello as the leader; while the Igbo State Union (ISU) adopted National Council of Nigeria Citizen (NCNC) by the virtue of the fact that its leader, Nnamdi Azikiwe was an Igbo man. In the Second Republic, all the political parties went into alliance namely, the Nigeria National Alliance (NNA-NPC and NNDP) and United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA-Action Group and NCNC).

Consequently, the cut-throat competition for the hegemonic control of the Nigeria state by the different factions of the elites degenerated into internal wars such as Kano Riot 1953, Census controversy 1962-64, revenue allocation disputes, Western Region Crisis 1962/1965. Military took over state power through January 1966 and the July 1966 counter bloody coups ultimately ended the First Republic. The northern military/civil hegemony controlled the state from 1966 to 1999 and changed the state structures from four (4) regions to twelve states (12) and subsequently to thirty six (36).

While those who felt relatively deprived of power, status, justice, and other valuables in Nigeria politics during the military era and under the current democratic dispensation created political movements such as Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), Odua People Congress (OPC), Movement for the Sovereign State of Biafra (MOSSOB), Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), Coalition of Northern Group (CNG), Fulani Bandits, Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP), and the Boko-Haram, to redress their discontent have most times resorted to and assumed the dimension of extreme political violence. Such extremities include Kano Riot in 1953, general election crisis 1964/65, Military coup and counter coup 1966, civil war 1967-1970, insurgencies, kidnapping and terrorism in recent time, with every seating government replying with equal violent measure.

### **The Motion for Self- Government and Kano Riot 1953**

It is apparent that the struggle for hegemony among political blocs in Nigeria resulted to violence, first was Kano crisis in 1953 which resulted from late Chief Anthony Enahoro motion for Nigeria Independence. Chief Enahoro from present day Edo State, a member of Action Group and a representative of the defunct Western Region in the Central House of Assembly moved a motion as cited in Obiajulu, Obi and Iwuoha (2016) that "this House accepts as a primary objective the attainment of self-government for Nigeria in 1956." According to them the motion was vehemently opposed to by the Northern Region representatives:

The Northern members flayed up in a total rejection of the idea, saying they were not ready for self-government. They claimed that if self- government was to come in 1956 as Chief Enahoro has called the North would be dominated by the South and that the North therefore rejects in entirety any invitation to commit political suicide.

More to the development in the central legislature is the Lagos crowd which pelted the Northern representatives with pebbles, verbal attacks and hate speech. According to Obiajulu, et al, lots of abusive language and name- calling were lavished on them, on the bases of which the North put up eight point secession agenda programme. Notwithstanding southern politicians led a delegation headed by late Chief Akintola to appease the North and to convince their leaders of the need to work together to wrestle power from the colonial masters but the movement sparked off the Kano riot of 1953, where many southern people were killed and properties worth millions of naira were destroyed (Obiajulu, Obi and Iwuoha, 2016).

Political conflict makes the north to perceive the independence motion by Anthony Enahoro from the South as an attempt to rush them into independence for eventual domination. The resultant squabble led to a secession threat by the North and the Kano Riot of 1953. The hegemonic perception also dominated and determined the outcome of subsequent Nigerian politics such as the pre- independence constitutional conferences that resulted to adoption of the federal political system in Nigeria. This impression was, according to Obiajulu, Obi and Iwuoha (2016), transferred from colonial era to the post- independence period and became a major determinant of our national politics:

Nigeria march to independence began not as a strictly united entity, a process which would make political integration even more difficult in the future. The acrimony and bitterness that followed the formation and operations of political parties and the debates on self- government left no doubt that Nigeria as a nation faced a difficult task ahead. Thus, according to Cheta Nwanze (2018), the underlying issue that caused the Kano Riots still exists in Nigeria today: fear of domination by others; a refusal to listen to, and try to understand other's point of view; the ready use of violence by politicians to press home their demands. For these political attitudes of state actors and culturally perceived hegemony, Nigeria has, since colonial era till present, being constantly under threat of civil violence and threat of disintegration. Obiajulu, Obi and Iwuoha (2016) note that the dimensions of a political hegemonic contest in post-colonial Nigeria manifested in form of North South dichotomy and ethnic conflict, the politics of vindictiveness, oppression and thuggery, Action Group Crisis of 1962, revenue allocation disputes, treason trial of Chief Obafemi Awolowo and other twenty members of the Action Group, the 1962-1964 Census controversies, the realignment of political parties before the 1964 federal elections, the 1964-1965 federal elections crisis, the dispute between the President and Prime Minister over the 1964 elections, the western region election crisis 1965, and the civil violence that followed.

### **Hegemonic Contest in 1962 Census, 1964 Federal Election, 1965 Western Region Election Conflicts and fall of the First Republic**

The political culture which emerged at Independence was a carryover from the colonial Nigeria state politics. The political situation at independence and the First Republic was that East was for the East, West was for the West and North was for the



North. Each regional government developed self-confidence and used its powers in various ways to advance its cause. Party leaders paid more attention to winning and consolidating her regional government.

Thus the major political parties (AG, NPC & NCNC) which were fronts for the region were engaged in the struggle not only to retain power but also to control the centre which was recognized as having all the dominant power and resources. Therefore, all available means were employed to grab power including, manipulation of census results, blatant rigging of the 1964 general elections and Western region elections. Those who were schemed out in the contest perceived hegemony reacted violently and thereby led to the fall of the First Republic, through military coup orchestrated by Igbo officers, which was viewed in another quarter as a continuation of the struggle for hegemony in a military dimension and appropriately responded by equal swift measure of a counter coup.

### **The 1966 Coup, Counter Coup and the Nigeria Civil War**

The first coup was nicknamed as Igbo coup because it was led by Igbo officer, Major Kaduna Nzeogwu and a counter-coup was staged by a fraction of the northern officers. Like the situation of politics before independence, the major political parties remained at the front of geo-ethnic blocs after Nigeria's Independence. They were engaged in the struggle not only to retain and control power at their region but also to control the centre which was recognized as having all the dominant powers and resources; and all available means were employed to grab power including blatant rigging of the 1964 general election, manipulation of census results, violence, arson and deployment of state apparatus such as the instigation of factions of military loyal to the ethnic region to take over government to further the interest of their region. Particularly, the January 16, 1966 military coup was widely adjudged as an Igbo coup and July, 1966 counter coup was widely adjudged as Hausa/Fulani coup; the secession threat by eastern regional government and the civil war of 1967-1970 was their reaction to the perceived domination by the north. Obiajulu, Obi and Iwuoha (2016) narrated the political events that led to the January 15, 1966 coup which they linked first of all to Action Group (AG) crisis in 1962. They claimed that the crisis started as a result of personal disagreement between the party leaders, the late Chief Awolowo and his deputy, the late Chief Akintola over whether to join the federal coalition of NPC/NCNC. This led to the federal government declaring a state of emergency in the western region in a partisan manner. After the state of emergency, Chief Akintola with the aid of NPC controlled federal government was returned as the premier of the region, and this time on a different political party platform – the Nigeria National Democratic Party(NNDP). As a result of this movement, AG lost its political base and Awolowo was sentenced to prison on the count charge of treason.

Secondly, the 1964 federal elections were contested by two broad coalitions: the Nigeria National Alliance (NNA) and the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA). NNA is the alliance of the Northern People Congress (NPC) and Nigeria National Democratic Party(NNDP) while UPGA is the alliance of National Council for Nigerian Citizens(NCNC) and the Action Group(AG). This election experience widespread malpractices in favour of the NNA; UPGA decided to boycott and Zik, the Nigeria President as well as a leader of

NCNC, refused to form a new government but did it later after much dialogue and compromise.

Thirdly, the 1965 Western Region election which came after the General election was also marred by malpractices that triggered violent agitation as sit tight attempt of the NNDP was violently resisted and anarchy was let loose (murder, arson, looting and free for all fight); a situation that continued till the Nigerian Military intervened in January 15, 1966. Nigeria Prime Minister, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the Sultan of Sokoto, Ahmadu Bello, Federal minister of Finance, Chief Okotie Eboh and Chief Akintola were killed during the coup. But the execution of the coup which was not fully successful, in words of Obiajulu, et al (2016), sowed the seed of a counter coup in July, 1966 and a Civil war in 1967-1970, which of course subsequent and present political crisis could also be traced to.

By January 16, 1966, Dr. Nwafor Orizu, the then acting president of Nigeria who incidentally was an Igbo in a radio broadcast announced that “the council of federal ministers have unanimously agreed to hand over the administration of the state to the armed forces,” an action which is perceived by elites of other ethnic group as a tacit support of the Igbo military officers led coup. Lockham (1971) noted that the leaders of the coup, about eight of them, except one (Major Ademoyega a Yoruba) and majority of the participant were Igbo. Obiajulu, et al observed that the pattern of killing appeared selective in tribal terms. Of the four regional premiers, the two that survived the killing were Igbos. While the Igbo officers led coup still left others unsettled, the military junta proclaimed the promulgation of decree No.33 and 34 of 1966. Decree 33 proscribed all political parties, tribal unions, and cultural organization and suspended the Republican Constitution, while the decree No. 34 turned Nigeria from a federation to a unitary state, where the regions became known as provinces for administrative purposes.

While this was going on, other Nigerians, especially the northern military officers, perceived domination attempt in the whole political drama and staged a counter coup, which saw the elimination of most Igbo officers, including General Aguiyi Ironsi. According to Obiajulu, et al, the coup was followed by the mass massacre of Igbo civilians in part of the north which caused the return of the Igbos to the East, while in swift reaction to the development, Colonel Ojukwu declared the eastern region a Republic of Biafra, the Gowon administration responded appropriately eventually prompting a civil war that lasted for thirty months.

### **The June 12, 1993 Presidential Election Results Cancellation and Associated Conflict**

The June 12 crisis resulted from the cancellation of election results that was popularly presumed to have been won by Chief Moshood Abiola, a southerner and candidate of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) in the June 12, 1993 presidential election contested also by Alhaji Bashir Tofa, a northerner and candidate of the National Republican Convention (NRC). This election came after a very long period of successive northern military to civilian and civilian to military rule, which have created perception of northern hegemony in the mind of southerners. Recall that after the July 1966 military counter coup by northern officers that forced General Aguiyi Ironsi out from power, successive Nigeria governments, with exception of General Olusegun Obasanjo (1976-1979), were headed by northerners. Gowon, a northerner, military regime (1966-1975) was toppled by Brigadier Murtala Ramat Mohammed. Murtala regime (July 29, 1975-February 13, 1976) was short-lived as he was assassinated in an abortive coup led by

Colonel Bukar Suka Dimka, but his second in command, General Olusegun Obasanjo, a southerner, transited to civil rule as he handed over to elected civilian, a northerner, Alhaji Shehu Shagari.

Meanwhile, the civilian regime (1979-1983) was overthrown on December 31, 1983 by a military coup headed by a northerner, General Mohamadu Buhari, while the Buhari administration (1983-1985) was toppled by General Ibrahim Babangida administration (1985-1993). The Babangida administration conducted the June 12, 1993 election which was adjudged to be the freest and fairest election to have been conducted in the post-colonial Nigeria that was annulled. According to Akinboye and Anifowose (2001:253), the June 12 election was regarded as a departure from the past troubled and turbulent electoral history which had favoured a particular section of the country:

The annulment generated intense ethnic, populist and regional antipathy particularly in the south west, where it was felt that injustice had been meted out by the power that be, they said

The annulment generated controversies, debates, and perception of northern hegemony in the mind of the southerners, and therefore “reinforced the belief that there existed a northern oligarchy ready at all times to resist any shift of power away from the north” (Akinboye and Anifowose). Consequently, the annulment of the election results enthroned and sustained public tension and restiveness in the Nigeria polity that forced the administration to step aside and handed over power to an Interim National Government (ING). The crisis was significant because some share the view that the public disturbances that result particularly the prolonged protest led by National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), influenced the concession of the 1999 election to the Yoruba.

### **The Niger Delta Crisis**

Due to the perceived fear of domination expressed by the people of the Niger Delta towards Nigeria's Independence, they demanded a separate region from the colonial government. Though the colonial authority acknowledged their fear, their request was turned down, instead, a recommendation of regional board (Niger Delta Development Board-NDDB) was made and created in 1961 to take care of their special interest till it became moribund could not solve the problem of the area. Similar effort includes the creation of Niger Delta Basin and Rural Development Authority (NDBRDA) in 1976, the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) in 1992, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in 2000, and later the Federal Ministry of the Niger Delta. These bodies have also failed to effectively address the development challenges; the issue of perceived marginalization in the government's distribution of revenue from Oil mineral located in the region triggered off violent agitation by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). The group sabotaged oil production activities in the region and took to hostage-taking and kidnapping for ransoms to press home their demands. The equal violent response measure of the government led to the loss of many lives and properties, with casualties from both sides. The crisis was of significance to the people of the region as it provided an opportunity for Goodluck Jonathan to be considered Vice president to Yaradua; also, it led to the declaration of amnesty and set up de-radicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration programme for the militant of the region in June 25, 2009.

### **The Boko-Haram Insurgency**

Boko-Haram is an Islamic sect based largely in Northeast Nigeria that demands for total entronement of Sharia system in Nigeria. Yusuf Mohammad was the leader until he was reportedly murdered by police. His death made members so aggrieved that they went on killing sprees, murdering both strangers and their kingsmen, attacking Christians and fellow Muslims, burning down churches and public buildings. They became notorious for kidnapping school girls (Chibok and Dachi) and have claimed responsibility for kidnapping and terrorist attacks across north east. In earlier outing, the group demanded the entronement of a full Sharia system in Nigeria.

In addition to earlier request, Boko-haram sect has put up sundry demands as conditions for peace, including the release of the report on the execution of its members, full implementation of Sharia, the trial of former Borno governor, Ali Modu Sherif, the resignation of the former governor, Kashim Shettima (Vanguard July 1, 2011:20), and asking President (former) Goodluck Jonathan to convert to Islam (Vanguard 27 February, 2012:41). Nnanna Ochereomo (2012:41), quoted former governor of Borno state, Kashim Shettima speech at a press conference organized in Maiduguri on Boko-Haram that insurgency is being caused by the total neglect of the people of Northeast who were left without social-economic wellbeing and education: over a period of thirty years, the ruling establishment abandoned common people. Gradually the poorest of the poor from Maiduguri and all corners of the Muslim North found themselves living in certain slums of the town. Nobody bothered about their education and health and nobody cared about how they made their living. Even the few that were able to acquire some western education increasingly failed to get jobs or decent means of livelihood. This was the ready-made situation that the late leader of Boko-Haram Islamic sect, Mohammed Yusuf capitalized on. He started organizing the youth procuring motorcycles for them for their transportation business and assisting them to get married at little cost.....at the same time he fed them with radical Islamic messages. Apparently, the group became convinced that the current ruling class would never on their own turn a leaf for the better.

Shettima's testimony presented logically the social background that gave birth to the Boko-Haram uprising. It shows clearly how the near abandonment of government obligation to the people created the gap that Yusuf Mohammad filled, which is supposedly the role of government, ensuring the wellbeing of the people. It implies that successive regimes failed in their social contract with the people. According to John Locke, government is entrusted with authority for limited purposes and is liable to removal if it exceeds or abuses power. It appears this was the justification for the Boko-Haram insurgencies, which sought the forceful replacement of the secular Nigeria state with the Sharia system. The socio-political conditions that brought the Boko-Haram insurgencies portrayed Yusuf as an alternative to the Nigerian state which they saw nothing good about and it should be rid of. It shows that the inefficiencies of the state are reasons the group rebelled.

It is logical to say that the common people felt relatively deprived of basic necessities of life as successive government failed to deliver on their campaign promises; governments' failures to meet up with expectations has therefore created a psychological state of frustration in the people, which them to become aggressive and rebelled. In addition to Shettima's testimony, other prominent northerners, especially



the former governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Mallam Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, and former governor of Niger state, Dr. Babangida Aliyu have corroborated the alleged claim of general poverty in the north as remote cause of Boko-Haram insurgencies. They both alleged that education and revenue systems structured in favour of the south are the cause of poverty in the north. Particularly, Sanusi linked the Boko-Haram insurgencies to poverty which he said arose from the lopsidedness of revenue to the south. While Governor Aliyu claimed that revenue allocation formula is skewed in favour of the south to the detriment of the north (Vanguard, 2012:5).

Contrary to the above claim there was a claim by conspiracy theorists that the Boko Haram menace was blown out of proportion by politicians and other vested interest in the north that felt politically deprived when president Yaradua died and his deputy, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan stepped into his shoe. This school of thought claimed that the feeling of the deprivation forced up a general perception in the north that south hold on to power for too long (1999- 2014) and that Boko-Haram was created to frustrate the Jonathan administration from power to give opportunity for the north to come back to power. So there were claims that Boko-Haram ended in 2009 with the death of its leader but only reawakened in 2011 after the presidential election to frustrate the Goodluck administration. There was this claim that book-haram rose from small band around a religious leader who was murdered by police into a movement. In light of the conspiracy theory, Baba-Ahmed, a columnist, has quoted Professor Jean Herskovits in the Vanguard Newspaper of January 11, 2012 to have said that “that the group name and tactics are now franchises used by criminal gangs and sundry interests who ape its penchant for attacking Christian church. It is now the cover for huge spending on security and for many criminal activities unrelated to its goals.”

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Nigerians and the political elites are products of different ethnic nationalities brought together by British colonialism to form one nation. The inordinate quest for hegemonic control of the state power among ethnic bloc to advance their personal and sometimes group interest has given birth to culture of recurrent violent extremism and political uncertainties in Nigeria. The violent extremism has hindered productivity and driven out investors. Like in the old, in the present times, the demand and approach of the various groups appear similar. The mentalities in Nigerian politics where a winner takes all breed intense competition for the control of state power and consequently, ethnic rivalries. Those who felt relatively deprived of state power, government appointments, employments, juicy contracts, justice, and fairness formed social movement to sought redress that often turn to extreme political behaviour such as expressed by MASSOB/ IPOB, OPC, MEND, and Boko-Haram, an indices that make Nigeria to be classified as fragile and failing state.

The 2019 Fragile State Index(FSI) ranked Nigeria as the 14th most fragile state in the world, which was as a result of its ineffectiveness in vital areas: inadequate security, inadequate government capacity, and of course a divided society. Such conditions led ethnic group associations to carry out the duties of government for their peoples and in so doing, resort to self-help for survival. They get themselves involved in cut throat competition for control of state power to allocate the inadequate resources of the state in favour of the ethnic group in power, to the detriment of those outside the corridor of



power consequently, secession; threat and violent responses are sometimes resorted to by those that felt relatively deprived.

It is apparent that perceived hegemony and the feeling of relative deprivation among Nigerians is the cause of violent extremity in politics between the north and south. These groups' grievances occurred as a reaction to the feeling of domination in their different aspects of life. Thus, it has become obvious that all the regions in Nigeria felt deprived of something they believed they should be entitled to: the South (East West and South -South) expressed the feeling of political deprivation as they complained of the lopsidedness of Nigeria political structure in favour of the north (which has more states and local governments) and the North's hold on power for too long; the North, on the other hand, has expressed the feelings of economic and education deprivations as they claimed that the Nigeria economy and education are dominated by the South. These deprivations have led these aggrieved groups to rebel and resort to perpetual struggle for the balance of power which arose and sustained rivalries and acrimonies in Nigeria's polity.

The perceived inequality and injustice that are expressed across the regions in Nigeria make them resort to violent extremism as a reactionary measure at the source of their deprivation. The perception of hegemony by either side has generated the anger that fuels violent extremism in Nigerian Politics. This shows that virtually every regional bloc of the country has accumulated grievances against the Nigeria structure, memory of hurt and feeling of injustice that are regularly expressed often in violent dimensions.

The paper found that groups on both sides of the Nigeria divide have the feeling of domination engraved in their consciousness, which its manifestation is political behaviour of aversive, nursing of the feeling and memories of hurt or perceived sense of injustice which are popularly articulated as "marginalization". With the kind of political behaviour presently shown by both sides of the political divide, it is obvious that the regions in Nigeria had always suspected each other's political intentions. However, successive administrators of the Nigerian state seem to struggle with the skill to conclusively resolve grievances by the various groups in the country. The paper, therefore, recommends for national dialogue where all genuine geopolitical concerns could be addressed.

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