Public Policy and Governance Issues in Multi-Ethnic Society: The Predicaments of Policy Agenda Setting in Nigeria

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Abstract
It is an indisputable fact that Nigeria is a multi-lingual, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious country. It is also widely recognized that the country has an abundance of material and human resources due to its diverse population. But what was once seen and considered as a blessing has turned into a serious problem for governance and politics in Nigeria. This is because the determination of ethnic entrepreneurs to invoke the common consciousness shared by individuals who identify with a specific ethnic or religious group lies at the heart of a lot of governance and policy challenges in the country. Symbolic ethnic pluralism has been an element in conflictual group relations whenever there is socio-economic and political competition in the country. The objective of this paper is to examine how public policy agenda-setting and ethnoreligious consciousness intersect in Nigeria. The study used a qualitative approach, collecting data from the author's observations as well as a comprehensive analysis of the body of existing literature. The findings imply that the overlapping roles of power, perception, potency, and proximity in political mobilization and policy-making in Nigeria have an impact on the intersection of ethnicity and religion as well as the reduction of complex geostrategic and historical conflicts to ethnic strife. The study recommended that the country's current institutional arrangements and social norms be drastically altered.

Keywords: Public policy, agenda setting, governance, Nigeria

Introduction

Federalism's main proponents hold that it fosters harmony and settles disputes in multiethnic, and multi-religious societies (Gagnon & Tremblay, 2019). But new research from a few Asian and African nations suggests it has not lived up to expectations (Tremblay & Gagnon, 2023). While some federations have broken apart, others are about to fall apart. Global realities demonstrate that many federal governments are beginning to lose sight of these core principles of federalism. Consolidating unity among the ethnic nations that make up a federation is a significant difficulty that many governments throughout the world are confronting (Gagnon, 2021). In new forms of nationalism and self-determination, ethnic identities are erupting where sub-nationalism has surged in homogeneous states (Sofi, 2015).

Democratic politics are easily utilized to inflame political feelings and transform policy-making into conflicts in many severely divided federal societies. Social divides such as ethnicity, regional disparities, and religious beliefs can be quickly mobilized when issues of agenda settings are involved. In these communities, the combination of democracy with primitive politics can intensify conflicts and the politics of "us versus them" (Anstey et al., 1998).

In the majority of culturally diverse nations, policymakers are currently working toward achieving mutual accommodation among ethnic groups (Berry et al, 2022). To build a harmonious society, policymakers must now endeavour to evaluate and understand the situations and problems presented by the presence of numerous ethno-religious groups with varied value systems. Despite some key findings from previous studies on this topic, there are still gaps in knowledge. We are aware that

discrimination results in bad relationships as well as poor well-being (Carter et al., 2019), while intergroup contact may lead to more positive relationships (Paluck et al., 2019). It is also known that people have more peaceful cross-cultural interactions and more personal well-being when they can identify with multiple cultures and use the integration technique (Berry et al, 2022). It was further confirmed that in multi-ethnic societies, assimilation is the option when they want to avoid preserving their cultural identity and instead seek out regular connections with other ethno-religious groups. On the other hand, separation is the only option for people who value preserving their original ethno-cultural identity while also preferring to avoid social interactions with other ethno-religious groups. Integration is an option for people who want to maintain their original culture while still engaging in regular social interactions with other groups (Safdar et al., 2023). However, these results do not seem to address the issue in Nigeria, where people place high importance on maintaining their unique ethnoreligious identities whereas interpersonal relationships with people from other ethnic groups are primarily calculative when it comes to governance and policy-making, separation is therefore not an option in within this particular Nigerian context.

To this end, the reality that Nigeria is a multi-ethnic, and multi-religious nation cannot be denied. It is also common knowledge that Nigeria, with its diverse population, is endowed with an abundance of both human and material resources. All that is considered a society is a collection of individuals who coexist and have common laws and customs. However, individuals with diverse cultural affinities, values, and beliefs coexist in a diversified community. Mutual understanding or agreement may lead to the decision to live together. As with other African nation-states, it could also be due to other factors like colonialism. Issues about multi-ethnic, and multi-religious societies were not prioritized in our national life in the past. Something that was once a blessing has become a significant problem for the Nigerian state.

This is because central to the manifestations of numerous governance and policy problems in Nigeria is the decision by ethnic entrepreneurs to invoke the mutual consciousness shared by individuals who identify with a particular ethnic or religious group. Where in the presence of socio-economic and political competition symbolic ethnic pluralism has become a factor in conflictual group relations. This paper aims to investigate the interaction between ethno-religious consciousness and public policy agenda-setting in Nigeria. The central argument of this paper is not far from the argument made by Alesina et al., (1999) that societal divides are harmful because they impede the ability of the groups to come to a consensus over the best public interests. The relevant public goods may be the elected politician's probity or quality; the intergroup disagreement stems from the fact that each group wants its candidate to win, contingent on the latter.

Conceptual Clarifications
Public Policy
Depending on the context and meaning being given, there are as many definitions and interpretations of the concept of public policy as there are authors. In the words of Dye (1965), public policy is whatever governments choose to do or not to do. Dimock (1949), defined public policy as the process of deciding at any time or place what objectives and substantive measures should be chosen to deal with a particular problem" is how. According to Chandler & Plano (1988), Public policy is the strategic use of resources to alleviate national problems or governmental concerns. On his part, Brooks (1990) sees it as the dedication to a course of action or plan that has been approved by a group of individuals with the authority to carry it out. Daneke & Steiss (1999) view it as a proposed course of action of a person, group, or government within a given environment providing obstacles and opportunities which the policy was proposed to utilize and overcome. Public Policy is conceived by Dror (1973) as a major guideline for action.

The fundamental feature of a policy is that it entails a decision; that is, a significant decision made by people, groups, or organizations. This implies that multiple policy options are required. Second, policies are predicted sets of choices or suggested paths of action. Policies are assertions of what will

happen in the future or are prospective. Policies specify actions that will be taken or planned. It describes a planned or intended course of action concerning specific desired outcomes or events in the actual environment. Third, a policy has objectives. It aims to achieve specific end states or, more straightforwardly, goals. A policy aims to achieve specific goals. Fourth, policies address specific issues or problem domains. They connect to and are reactions to the difficulties and demands that come from a given context rather than being abstract concepts. In actuality, policies are frequently created to resolve current or potential issues or meet specific needs. Last but not least, a policy is a directive. It offers the path, the guidance, and the means to reach specific objectives. It offers the framework for decisions made about the present and the future (Philip & Peter, 2013).

Public policy is therefore the broad framework of ideas and values that governments use to make decisions and pursue actions or inaction concerning a particular issue or problem, made in the present and the future, chosen from a range of options based on specific circumstances.

Agenda Setting

Agenda could be seen as the collection of problems, understanding of causes, symbols, solutions, and other elements of public problems that come to the attention of members of the public and their governmental officials (Su & Borah, 2019). agenda can be as concrete as bills but also includes beliefs about what is a problem, how serious a problem is, who should address the problem and how. Agenda setting on the other hand is the process by which problems and alternative solutions gain or lose public and elite attention. Topics for discussion go through several types of agendas before these individuals may move them forward. Types of agendas might include:

1. Systemic agendas: Systemic agendas comprise all issues policymakers deem both worthy of note and in their realm of authority to address.
2. Institutional agendas: these agendas are formed from the content of systemic agendas. Here, policymakers analyze problems and their proposed solutions in a strict amount of time.
3. Discretionary agendas: these agendas address problems chosen by legislators that have not necessarily made it into the agendas mentioned above.
4. Decision agendas: Decision agendas are the finalized list of issues to be moved to the next phase of the policy-making cycle (Lorenz, 2020).

As the first phase in the cycle, agenda setting helps policymakers decide which problems to address based on two important factors which are national interest and the political will of the Government. However, in Nigeria, the absence of national consciousness makes it practically difficult to rationally assess problems based on national interest in the sense that the character and orientation of politicking in the country assume the analogy of a zero-sum game among the three major regions with a win-lose situation (Abbo & Bashir, 2020). For instance, observable evidence from media interaction indicates that a Nigerian from the south does not consider the federal government's efforts towards transforming the Almajiri school in the North as a national priority (Teke et al., 2022). Similarly, a significant number of northerners condemned the efforts of constructing the second Niger bridge by the Buhari Administration because it favours the south (Chilaka, 2023). This ugly scenario has invariably affected the emergence of the National agenda within the Nigerian state.

Concept of Governance

Certainly, since the beginning of the thirteenth century, the concept of governance has been in use. During that time, it was initially used in France, implying the seat of government. Its definitions ranged from being synonymous with governance (referring to the act or manner in which one governs one's position or power) to being morally upright or smart in one's general behaviour. The act of exerting (usually lawful) authority to control men's affairs in a certain territory, usually a State, is referred to as governance. It is essentially the way that a society or set of laws handles state affairs. Again, the "good" and "welfare" or "interest" of the people is assumed to be the necessary and sufficient condition of

governance and its legitimacy because of a generally implied orientation of people in favour of a democracy, which entails a government of the people, by the people, and for the people (Arora & Dharwadkar, 2011).

The word "governance" was formerly employed in a borderline sense of government, which is inappropriate for the modern-day conception in the sense that more than just upholding the law is involved in governance. To put it another way, we can describe it as a participatory system where those tasked with ruling on behalf of the people are driven to give it their all, assist and benefit the people, find solutions to their day-to-day issues, and improve the quality of their lives.

The use of political, economic, and administrative power to run a country's affairs is known as governance. It accepts any manner both good and bad that communities employ to allocate authority and manage societal resources. According to Frey (2023), the exercise of power in managing a nation's social and economic resources for development is known as governance.

According to UNESCO (1997), governance entails the process through which citizens' objectives and interests are expressed for the overall good of the society's social and economic growth and in the context of the common good (cited in Elfert, & Ydesen, 2023). Governance was defined for the first time by the World Bank as how power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources by the government (cited in Elfert, & Ydesen, 2023).

In general, there are three different dimensions of Governance:
 a) the type of political system in place, whether it be presidential or parliamentary, military or civilian, authoritarian or democratic
 b) the method used to manage a nation's financial and social resources; and
 c) the ability of governments to create, devise, and carry out policies as well as carry out their official duties (Cerutti, 2017). Governance, therefore, alludes to a political process that involves every member of society and helps shape citizens who actively participate in the social compact that unites them.

Materials and Method

The paper tries to investigate the nexus between policy agenda-setting and ethno-religious consciousness in Nigeria. The study used an inference from constructivist philosophy, which uses inductive inquiry aimed at providing an easily used and systematic set of procedures for analyzing qualitative data that can produce reliable and valid findings (Creswell, 2013). The qualitative data analysed in this work are mainly drawn from secondary sources such as journals and media publications. The usefulness of using already-existing data for research is growing in an era where vast quantities of data are being collected and archived by researchers worldwide, in addition to accelerating research, using pre-existing data sets removes the time, money, and measurement issues that come with gathering primary data (Doolan & Froelicher, 2009). The materials were subjected to content refinement and analysed to identify themes and build relationships. The selection of this method is influenced by the inability to conduct a close examination of the phenomenon under study. As a result, the study's conclusions and inferences are based on a variety of conceptual and theoretical contributions.

Analysis

In this section, the analysis will focus on the interaction among four important variables of power, perception, potency and proximity in policy agenda setting within the Nigerian context. Simply put, power refers to the power to persuade and to elicit action; perception, to the representation or impressions of an issue in the agenda list; potency, to the severity or seriousness of consequences of policy issue; and proximity, to the closeness or imminence of impacts of policy (Birkland, 2017). It is the conception of this paper that potency and proximity have indirect effects on agenda setting because they are filtered through power and perception.

Beginning with the first variable i.e. power, Lukes (1974), in his research on politics and society identified three dimensions of power in public policy. The fundamental idea is that a group's power and, by extension, effectiveness are determined by three different factors. In the first dimension, power was viewed as a "relation among people". One individual can compel others to comply by changing their behaviour as a result of the power being used. An illustration of this kind of authority in agenda-setting is when the state decides something that the whole public must follow, usually through legislation. This dimension involves open discussion where opportunity for challenge and consultation may be afforded to such decisions (Cairney, 2019).

The second dimension pertains to a system or circumstance in which power encompasses not just the ability to make decisions but also the ability to manipulate situations that drive those decisions. Stated differently, you can affect decisions if you can manage the environment in which they are made (Howlett, et al, 2016). Decisions made "behind closed doors" and in the "corridors of power," where it is rarely evident who is making the decisions and why, are examples of this in the development of policy agendas. In these situations, certain individuals possess the financial and intellectual capabilities to shape and even set the agenda for public policy. Their power is virtually "invisible to the general public, still, they have the power to influence who is elected, what gets put on the public policy agenda, and who passes away unexpectedly from their behind-the-scenes position. This may be interpreted as a "secretive face," when the decision-maker is not immediately apparent.

The third dimension deals with the aspect of thought control through psychological manipulation of all those impacted. The capacity to influence what individuals perceive to be "right" might result in the blind acceptance of prejudiced conclusions. Propaganda and the manipulation of ethno-religious feelings have a role in creating policy agendas by altering people's values and priorities. This dimension is more useful in explaining how agenda-setting works in Nigeria, where the pursuit of political power has increased competition among the nation's many ethnic groups, who are constantly engaged in a struggle for supremacy. This has opened up a channel for ethnic entrepreneurs to manipulate the shared consciousness of people who identify with a specific ethnic or religious group. These manipulations, which are typically accomplished by deception and propaganda, have an impact on citizen's impression of an issue in the agenda list i.e. perception of government policy.

Individual and collective assessments of the significance of the issues on the policy agenda are heavily influenced by perception. The human mind activates (or deactivates) emotive processes like agreement or disagreement, like or dislike, support or opposition, within the framework of this mechanism. This perception will vary depending on how the concerned individuals or groups interpret their power relationships with others. For example, in Nigeria, the ongoing rivalry and struggle for political dominance has pitted one ethnic group against the other, with disastrous results for the country's national unity and cohesion. For instance, the Igbos and the Hausas are more likely to disagree than agree on national issues such as political/economic restructuring, electoral Act amendment or revenue allocation. Such negative perception appears to influence how individuals from these ethnic groups interpret the severity or seriousness of the consequences of policy i.e. potency of public policy.

Potency has to do with how serious a policy's effects will be in terms of severity. This has to do with how a person feels about specific social and political issues and how it influences them. For example, several people from southern Nigeria first believed that the Boko Haram issue only impacted the northern part of the country (Ogbonna, & Jiménez, 2017). Potency is critical in mobilizing support for a particular policy agenda because it is the ultimate determiner of the feelings citizens have about closeness or imminence of impacts of policy i.e. proximity.

Agenda-setting relies heavily on the proximity of issues since people are far more likely to pay attention to issues that directly affect their own lives (geographically, religiously, and ethnically). The feeling of closeness intensifies the belief that something has to be done immediately to change the circumstances.

To this end, the intersection of ethnicity and religion, as well as the reduction of complex geostrategic and historical conflicts to ethnic strife, are all influenced by the overlapping roles of power, perception, potency and proximity in political mobilization and policy-making in Nigeria (Okeke & Idike, 2016). Decades after gaining independence Nigeria is still deeply divided along ethnic and religious lines when it comes to authority and decision-making over economic resources (Oni & Adebisi, 2020). One of her biggest downfalls, it may be argued, is the difficulties she faces in reconciling her various ethnic and religious differences with civic patriotism (Salihu, 2020). Ethnicity is fundamental to one's sense of personal identity in Nigeria in terms of public policy and governance and it has subsequently grown to be a significant factor in the individual's preference for policy options (Okeke & Idike, 2016).

It is important to note that Nigerian ethno-religious politics have not produced positive results. First, there is a crisis of legitimacy for a government that was founded on such a sentimental basis. This is because government policies and programs which are open to interpretation based on sentiments related to ethnicity or religion implicitly lack widespread support. It is known that in the past, people typically interpreted government policies and programs through these lenses (Muhammad, 2023).

Nigerian politicians have depleted the nation's resources to such an extent since independence that the nation's social and economic structures have all but crumbled. They squander public funds with impunity due to inadequate or nonexistent checks and balances by those who would rather view government policies via ethnic lenses (Ojie, & Ewhrudjakpor, 2009). Nigerian leaders take unfair advantage of these shortcomings by using questionable methods to bribe their way into political power, engage in widespread corruption, and amass wealth. Because of this, the country has not fully evolved because society is still based on religious and tribal loyalties that are based on excessive and unjustified regard for public officials and political officeholders.

Nigerian political class are dishonest, self-serving, and opportunistic individuals who prioritize their wealth over the welfare of the country as a whole. The aforementioned and more are the results of Nigeria's deteriorating infrastructure, our economy's stagnation, political and social unrest, and a general lack of progress and sustainability. The purpose of this section of the study was to investigate the conceptual and empirical consequences of ethno-religious politics on Nigeria's national agenda-setting process. To this goal, the following issues were established and deliberated:

Revenue Allocation

The politics of revenue allocation is one important aspect where ethnicity has become so pronounced in agenda-setting and policy formulation in Nigeria. It is crucial to remember that despite the establishment of a federal character clause in her constitution and the alleged equitable representation of all ethnic groups in her political system, there has always been agitation over revenue allocation in Nigeria. It is also the reason behind the current drawn-out democratic process in the country. At least five revenue allocation formulas were adopted before and after independence, however, none of them have proven satisfactory, and calls for their review have been made repeatedly, primarily by minority groups who feel marginalized (Ogu, 2023). Due to the intricacies of the revenue allocation system which was influenced by factors such as ethnicity, religion and regionalism number of revenue allocation principles had to be adopted, flawed, and abandoned. The cause of Nigeria's federalism's growing dilemma is this dialectic between revenue generation and allocation. To define and alter the fiscal interrelationships among the federating components, nine commissions, six military decrees, one act of parliament, and two decisions of the Supreme Court were made between 1948 and 2012 (Vande, 2021).

Election Administration

Election issues are another example of agenda setting where those who should man political offices are chosen. It is imperative to note that politics and governance in Nigeria have always been influenced by ethnic and religious concerns, and the 2023 presidential election is no different. There were public disputes and insinuations over the main party's vice presidential and presidential candidates prior to the election. While it seemed that the problem of the ethnicity of candidates and their deputies was resolved,

the subject of religious affiliation remained contentious, particularly for the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC). Stated differently, the APC failed to strike a balance between different ethnic and religious groupings when selecting its presidential candidate and running mate, while the main parties the NNPP, LP, and PDP were able to accomplish so.

Due to several political factors, the APC ultimately adopted a Muslim-Muslim ticket. That is, Kashim Shettima, a Muslim from the North East, was the running mate of Bola Ahmed Tinubu, a Yoruba Muslim from the South-West. Some Nigerians were outraged by this, with others urging the National Assembly to enact legislation requiring political parties to balance ethnic and religious diversity in their candidate selection process. The outcome of the election made it abundantly evident that only three of the parties running for president in 2023 had won at least one region of the nation. Nonetheless, the region's distribution according to ethnoreligious affiliation demonstrated the impact of attitudes related to ethnicity and religion. For instance, political and ethnic support contributed to the APC's victory in three of the six areas. The APC's success in the North-Central and North-West could be linked to the candidate's and his running mate's religious affiliation, while the candidate's ethnic affiliation can be attributed to the party's victory in the South-West.

In contrast, the party's defeat in the South-South and South-East (where the LP candidate prevailed) could be attributed to the regions' rejection of the APC's Muslim-Muslim ticket and acceptance of the LP candidate, particularly because the majority of the population in those regions are Christians and do not share the same ethnic background with the APC's presidential and vice presidential candidates. The PDP presidential candidate's significant influence in the Northeast may have prevented the APC from winning. It was a close second, though. This could also be interpreted as a reflection of the APC's vice-presidential candidate, who is also from the area, ethnic and religious affiliations.

In two of the regions, the Labour Party (LP) candidate also prevailed. Specifically, South-East and South-South, and the victory might be interpreted as a reflection of the dominating ethnic and religious feelings in the areas, particularly because Nigeria's geopolitical composition suggests that the majority of the population in the areas is Christian. The PDP only gained traction in one area, the northeast, and as was previously mentioned, this success may be linked to the candidate's political clout in the area.

Constitutionalism

The attempt to modify the 1999 constitution in 2006 is another instance of how ethnocultural and religious attitudes have influenced public policy and agenda-setting in Nigeria, even if the actors pretended to be promoting democracy. Indeed, an ardent watcher of Nigerian politics would quickly recall that the north-south struggle for dominance, which predates Nigeria's independence in 1960, has always been driven by the self-interest of the two regions, characterizing intergroup relations as marked by mutual suspicion and the desire of one group to dominate the other (Salihu, 2020). The traditional rulers who were closest to the grassroots in advancing their interests were typically coopted by ethnic and religious champions in an attempt to rally support from the general public. This turns the traditional rulers into important tools in the stoking of primal emotions and the fostering of identity politics (Eniemeh & Aliyu, 2021).

Participants in the fourth Northern Senators Forum in Kaduna in 2006 showed signs of this influencing behaviour when they waved placards mocking then-deputy Senate President, Alhaji Ibrahim Nasiru Mantu, who was also Chairman of the National Assembly's Joint Committee on the Review of the Constitution (JCRC). Dr. Sarki Dalhatu Tafida, the Senate leader, and Senator Umar Hambagba were accused of working against the North's interest in producing a president in 2007. It became clear that the majority of the opponents of the Constitution review were from the north, while the majority of the supporters came from the south. An Afro Barometer poll on the subject attested to this (Eniemeh & Aliyu, 2021, Muhammad, 2023).

Put another way, the strong opposition from the north, for example, may not have been unrelated to the calls for the return of power to the region in 2007. When answering a question during an interview, former Zamfara State governor, Sani Yerima emphasized this viewpoint as well. The North "should

have eight years," he said, because power "is automatically supposed to go to the North" (Muhammad, 2023). The South had taken eight years. These data primarily imply that racial and religious factors were significant in shaping the way people responded to the proposed constitutional change.

This is related to the fact that programs and policies are viewed through the prism of either ethnicity or religion, which forces the state to implement ethnic and religious balancing to lessen the impact of rivalry between the two religions (Salihu, 2020). This entails putting in place both extra- and constitutional measures to guarantee that the positive potentials of religious groups have a beneficial impact on the entire society process and that relations between ethnic and religious groups inside the state occur in an atmosphere of peaceful coexistence. This realization may have influenced the creation of the National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) program, Federal Character, and state involvement in religious affairs, including the creation of welfare boards for Christian and Muslim pilgrims and the declaration of an equal number of days for Muslim and Christian festivals, among other measures. But these initiatives have proved fruitless. Scholars have even criticized it, claiming that the state's engagement is fueling interethnic and interreligious conflict by promoting ethnic profiling of public policies (Salihu, 2020, Muhammad, 2023).

Politics of Farmers' and Herdsmen's Crises

It is apparent to every keen observer that the conflicts between Nigerian farmers and herders are rooted in environmental and economic issues but a few gullible Nigerians and some politicians have politicized it. For instance, under the Buhari administration, there seemed to be some desire to prevent future attacks by enacting the ruga policy in May, 2019 as a rural grazing area. The policy aimed to create grazing reserves in every state to increase livestock output and reduce tensions between farmers and herders. The federal government believed that the following objectives would be accomplished by putting the Ruga policy into effect: It would put an end to the disputes between farmers and herders and the detrimental effects that follow. Ruga was to eliminate the practice of long-term open grazing since it is incompatible with contemporary methods of animal management.

However, several southern states refused to accept the policy due to the sensitive nature of the issue, which was tainted by ethno-religious narratives which created an aura of fear, suspicion, apprehensions, mass hysteria and moral panic by people from the southern regions and some states in the North central. Many claimed that their lands would be expropriated to further Fulani's commercial interests, making the policy look unfair. Some believe it gives the Fulani more room to potentially dominate the south. What's even more concerning is that some Fulanis oppose the bill, claiming it violates their freedom of movement (Nwosu, 2017).

In the event that there is no comprehensive and well-coordinated national policy for grazing, anarchy may result, with each states determining their own course of action. One example is the anti-grazing law that Ekiti State passed. The Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association, the herdsmen's umbrella organization, had rejected the policy, which forbids grazing with firearms and outside of certain locations and hours.

The Ruga scenario above provides a clear picture of how ethno-religious sentiments are used in Nigeria to evaluate public policies. Therefore, the emergence of a national agenda is impossible in the absence of national identity and consciousness. Politics in Nigeria is seen by the populace as an ethnic power struggle. In the battle, the topic of feasible public policies is secondary to the belief held by the majority of Nigerians that the country belongs to the dominant ethnic group or religious organization.

A Decline in Social Cohesiveness

Not Nigerians' unwillingness to submit to authority, but rather the fact that surrender to competing authorities is predicated on racial and religious allegiances, is the fundamental issue with societal cohesiveness (Yakubu, 2017). Radical shifts in political inclination are necessary for social cohesion. It is an effort to alter citizens' fundamental loyalties and identities to incorporate different political groups into the country's political system (Abbo & Bashir, 2020). It would be challenging to create social

cohesiveness as long as there is opposition to a shift in fundamental ethnic affiliations (Yahaya & Bello, 2019). Nigeria now has a democratically elected government, but the racial and ethnic identities of its citizens have not been adjusted to fit the new system. As a result, the national government finds it extremely difficult to reposition its citizens. The aim to promote political engagement, socialization, and national consciousness among the population is thwarted by the enduring habit of provincial political activity. There is not enough national integration culture or evolving national identity attitude and emotion. Youths pick up knowledge through propaganda, observation, and imitation (Adamu & Etila, 2019).

The pupils swear loyalty to the national flag, yet there are stark contradictions between what they learn from their parents at home, from their teachers at school, and from what they see in society as a whole. Students in Nigeria chant the national anthem, repeat the names of the country's states and capitals, and extol the virtues of certain political figures. There is a practical disconnect between what students learn in school and what they observe/learn from their families and society. While patriotic virtues are taught in schools, narrative about disintegration and lack of cohesiveness dominated the society and the family. For instance, a study by Okechi et al. (2018) found a high positive link (p<0.01 rho=0.451) between political socialization at home and political engagement through cross-examination using the Spearman correlation coefficient. Additionally, the results showed a minor variation from the earlier findings regarding the political socialization at the school. Essentially, the findings indicate that children's family background has a greater influence on their motivation to engage in political activities. However, they also highlight the shortcomings of educational institutions in terms of their ability to socialize children into the political life of the nation. About 20 out of every 100 young people participating in political activities in the nation are influenced by family members.

The religious leaders, who are meant to instil in the public a sense of moral rectitude and respect for legitimate authority, have essentially turned their pulpits into platforms for campaigns against the government, cursing the government, and sowing seeds of distrust and animosity. However, the universities have not failed to generate Nigerian students with characteristics of mind and character that might influence every facet of human growth, but rather with roots in their cultural world of thought. The typical educated Nigerian does not think about development principles and ideals. In fact, he does not even think they are necessary, which leads to the development of a self-defeating and inconsistent personality. On the one hand, he presents himself as educated, but on the other, he continues to live by the stories and emotions of his ethnic and religious background (Abbo & Bashir, 2020).

Conclusion

The most fundamental conclusion drawn from the analysis is that ethnic entrepreneurs' choice to invoke the common consciousness of people who identify with a particular group when issues of national agenda are brought to public attention is fundamental to many examples of ineffective policies in contemporary Nigeria. Even when leaders have the best of intentions to use politics to promote growth, they frequently fail to establish and implement the policies that they believe are necessary for sustained economic growth because of ethnic and religious obstacles that prevent them from taking sound medical advice.

Because of the socioeconomic and political rivalry that exists among Nigeria's diverse elements, symbolic ethnic pluralism is inevitably a feature in conflictual group relations. Because of the political culture that prevails, the people of Nigeria do not find the political environment or arena to be very important or interesting. This is true because culture shapes and influences social action, and ethno-religious consciousness shapes and influences social behaviour in Nigeria and ultimately dictates the type and direction of state policy. In Nigeria, where policy-making processes are characterized by conflicts of subordination, rebellion, and hegemony, usually struggles for autonomy and freedom from exploitation, ethnic diversity has become an albatross, severely impeding the realization of equity and socio-economic and political development.

The paper makes no pretence whatsoever that its recommendations could solve all of Nigeria's policy and governance issues. There are several dimensions to the issues. It's deeply ingrained, therefore, its fibres must be penetrated by a combination of antidotes. The problem of resource distribution and agglomeration at the centre is the main contributor to Nigeria's policy agenda-setting encumbrances and the only entity in the country with the power to carry out this duty is the presidency. Unsurprisingly, ethno-religious groups vying for the presidency must engage in disputes and even confrontations with other ethno-religious groups to gain access to it.

To lessen its allure, the application of true federalism and resource control will redirect the various federating entities' diverted energies toward resource generation. In the short term, this should be the norm to ease the tension brought on by ethnic conflicts and struggles and establish the favourable sociopolitical conditions necessary for the establishment of a supremely powerful centre. Long-term, what is required is a robust presidential institution rooted in African culture devoid of all sorts of Eurocentrism. The country's existing structural arrangements also serve as contributing elements, the Nigerian government should not keep up recognizing and valuing ethnicity through initiatives like the Federal Character Principle and similar programs, instead, the focus should be on enacting and implementing robust national integration policy that would revolves around the breaking down of all discriminatory attitudes and ethno-religious jealousies" That is, to strengthen intercultural interactions by fostering mutual acceptance among all ethnic groupings. Two primary program components will be used to accomplish this purpose. The first is the cultural component, which should be accomplished by encouraging and supporting the cultural development of all cultural groups. The other is the social, component, which facilitates the exchange of cultural expressions between ethnocultural groups by removing obstacles to equal and full involvement in broader society's everyday activities.

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