

Review Article

Cultural Diversity and the Challenge of Inter-Ethnic Conflict In Nigeria

Mashood Omotosho Ph.D, Lawrence Ihekuna and Opeyemi Fakoya

Department of International Relations Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife, Nigeria

Article History

Received: 06.06.2020

Accepted: 15.06.2020

Published: 24.06.2020

Journal homepage:

<https://www.easpublisher.com/easjhcs>

Quick Response Code



Abstract: In the last two decades, intra-racial tensions and conflict with ethnic undertones have littered the political landscape of Nigeria which has resulted into blood-shedding and the greatest human and material destruction. The menaces of inter-racial conflict and pervasive ethnic hostilities in different parts of the country have posed serious threats to the survival of the Nigerian State. This could be seen in the crises between the Biroms, Anagutas, Afizeres and the Hausa-Fulanis in the Middle Belt, Umuleri and Aguleri in Anambra State, Ife-Modakeke in Osun State, Ijaw and Itsekiri in the Niger Delta. The South West also witnessed intractable, interpenetrated ethnic strife stretching between the Yorubas and the Hausa settlers in the Shagamu, Ogun State, the Ijaw and the Ilaje people in Ondo State. However, the instrumentalisation of cultural differences and belongings is often seen as one of the dominant causes of conflicts in the country. Based on experiences of communal and intra-racial conflict in the country, the study explores cultural diversity and the challenge of ethnic conflict in Nigeria. It also seeks to enrich our understanding of the role played by cultural expressions and identities in triggering or exacerbating conflicts based on factors of nationality, ethnicity and language. The study further explores a set of methodological proposals for the elaboration of indicators on cultural diversity and conflict prevention. The study also examines the viability of tools and resources available to foster intercultural dialogue between different ethnic groupings in the country. More precisely, it makes suggestions on how cultural diversity could be seen as an asset in conflict prevention and peace resolution in Nigeria.

Keywords: Cultural Diversity, Intra-Racial, Ethnicity, Conflict, Settlers, Mediation, Resolution

Copyright © 2020 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution **4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0)** which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.

INTRODUCTION

Prior to the colonialism era in Africa, the geographical area called Nigeria today was inhabited by different peoples, empires, tribes and kingdoms. And, these people have different cultures, traditions and religion (Nwegbu, Eze, and Asogwa, 2011), but, the British government turned a blind eye to the diverse cultural identities and combined culturally and traditionally separate, district ethnic groups and autonomous tribes and peoples into one entity called Nigeria. The Nigeria state which consists of more than 400 different ethnic groupings, with the inclusion of the three dominant religions, that is, Islam, Christianity and traditional animist religions' who are not natural allies and whose relationships had long been characterised by suspicion and mistrust. In other words, colonialism was the singular most important factor that brought about identity conflicts in the country. Nigeria presents a complex web of individuals as well as crisscrossing divergent ethnic groupings of which the ethnic and sub-ethnic (communal) are the most salient and the main basis of various conflicts in the country. (Udoidem, 1997; Ikubaje, 2002).

It is worthy to note here that, culturally diverse countries or heterogeneous societies have tendencies to face far greater challenges in nation-building process than homogeneous societies, an example of which Nigeria is characterised with many identity based conflicts, such as; intra (communal) and inter (state) ethnic conflicts, ethno-regional conflicts, ethno-religious conflicts and ethno-cultural conflicts respectively, and the splitting of Nigeria into regional identities (that is, North and South) is a structural creation of the British government during their colonial adventure in Nigeria, an action which started the ethnic majority-minority syndrome and the majoritarian basis of politics which took roots as a result of these structures, hence Nigeria remains divided on socio-political and economic issues as a result of the complex and diverse ethnic groups, religious, and regional divisions in the country (Osaghae and Suberu, 2005).

Besides, all these tensions and divisions, that is; ethno-religious conflicts, political problems and socio-cultural conflicts have been played up,

manipulated and mobilised for political reasons by external powers, indigenous leaders, political parties and militant groups, resulting in incessant conflicts which have undermined the nation-building process in Nigeria since 1999 to date. Some of the recent intra and inter-ethnic conflicts experienced in the Nigerian society are between Biroms, Anagutas, Afizeres and the Hausa-Fulani in the Middle Belt, the Umuleri and Aguleri in Anambra State, the Ife-Modakeke in Osun State. There is a high level of competitive ethnocentrism in Nigeria which has discouraged a peaceful co-existence of the various cultural and ethnic groups in the country, because, some ethnic groups see themselves more superior to others. Hence, they violently compete for supremacy over leadership and rulership over what is not.

Geographically speaking, the heartland of ethnic and religious conflict in Nigeria are Plateau, Bauchi, Kaduna, Kano and Taraba States in the Northern parts of Nigeria and some parts of Niger Delta. In the past and now, ethnic conflicts have been labelled religious, easily seen in such line as ethno-religious and ethno-political interest group sentiment, such as Ogoni group and Ijaw group in the Niger Delta (Jekayinfa, 2002). With ethnic and religious conflict constantly re-emerging and acting as defining characteristics of Nigerian society, scholars have asked if it is possible for Nigeria to build a strong national identity. Similarly, some traditional rulers have been involved in triggering ethnic tensions and intra-racial conflict by creating in the minds of their loyal followers a false ethnic identities history and sentiments that had triggered their hatred for the other existing groups, all in the bid to ensure their continual reign and achieve their hideous selfish interest. Politicians, political parties and religious groups are not left out too, predominantly in the Northern, Southern parts of the country and a very few cases in the Eastern region (Igbuzor, 2003).

It should be reiterated that, besides, extreme ethnic or racial consciousness which could be seen in the indigenous people of each ethnic group pay more allegiance to their local ethnic authority and society at the detriment of a national identity of all ethnic groups and the nation building, and this has resulted into ethnic prejudice and mistrust. This study therefore explores cultural diversity and the challenge of inter-ethnic conflict in Nigeria. It also seeks to enrich our understanding of the role played by cultural expressions and identities in triggering or exacerbating conflicts based on factors of nationality, ethnicity and language. The study further explores a set of methodological proposals for the elaboration of indicators on cultural diversity and conflict prevention. In our final analysis, the paper makes suggestions on how cultural diversity would be seen as an asset in conflict prevention and peace resolution in Nigeria.

Conceptual Overview of Cultural Diversity

Cultural diversity refers to a society with separate people of different ethnic roots that have different mode of dressing, arts, languages as well as other traditional or customary practices which are either similar or different in most cases from one another. The people of each ethnic group highly valued and admired their traditional practices and would not compromise their traditions for any reason what so ever, and as such, pay more allegiance to their ethnic authority. Cultural diversity has also been referred to mean multiculturalism by some scholars, and multiculturalism therefore, it literally to a plurality of cultures, which is simply a case in Nigeria (Udebunu, 2011).

To an extent, the taxonomy provided by Watson, Kumar and Michaelsen (1993) on the issue of culture is very relevant to our study, especially when viewed from the perception of a social comfort. After all, sharing a similar culture with others is precisely what defines societies. Nations would not exist if people did not coexist culturally. They further argue that, there would be no societies if people do not share heritage and language, and civilization would cease to function if people do not agree to similar values and systems of social control. Another scholar on Cultural Policy and Cultural Identity, Sassatelli, (2009) posits that, culture is preserved through transmission from one generation to the next, but it also evolves through processes of innovation, discovery, and cultural diffusion. We may be restricted by the confines of our own culture, but as humans we have the ability to question values and make conscious decisions.

Bennett also identifies three major theoretical approaches towards the interpretation of culture; first, the functionalist perspective acknowledges that there are many parts of culture that work together as a system to fulfil the society's needs. The functionalists view culture as a reflection of a society's values. Second, he identifies the Conflict theorists and sees culture as inherently unequal, based upon factors like gender, class, race and age. Third, the interactionist perspective which is primarily interested in culture as experienced in the daily interactions between individuals and the symbols that comprise a culture. Various cultural and sociological occurrences can be explained by these theories; however, there is no absolutely "right" view through which to understand culture. Another author, Isar (2006) argues that cultural diversity emerges as a concept and an issue in a particular phase of the multiculturalism debates and specifically as an anti-essentialist claim against all too reified notions of culture and ethnicity. In the Anglo-Saxon context, multiculturalism is understood as a set of precariously and always provisionally integrated discourses which claim to assemble the wide range of dissident social movements under a common political and societal horizon.

This normative aspect is even more visible in the on-going process of legally recognising the international value and contribution of cultural diversity. Starting from a redefinition and broadening of the notion of “cultural heritage”, which now also includes non-material, intangible goods and elements, especially the UNESCO’s essentialist, static and elitist definition of culture which has evolved to a more inclusive one, which redefines cultural heritage in terms of changes, mixtures and diversity of cultures and people (UNESCO, 2003). Thus, in its “Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity”, approved in Paris in 2001 specifically as a reaction opposed to the expansion of U.S. cultural and media pre-dominance, cultural diversity is defined as “the common heritage of humanity”, according to which “culture takes diverse forms across time and space. This diversity is embodied in the uniqueness and plurality of the identities of the groups and societies making up the humankind. The source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for the humankind as biodiversity is for nature” (UNESCO, 2003).

As rightly pointed out by Earley and Mosakowski, (2000) and also corroborated by Tajfel (1982), nationality, race, and ethnicity have been among the most common social categories by which we can identify people, for instance, social categorisation of in-groups and out-groups can be quick and long-lasting in multinational teams. Finally, culture is associated with such deep differences in perspectives and cognitive frameworks that people from different cultures bring very different sources and means of information processing to a team (Lane *et al.*, 2009; Hofstede, 2001). The generic effects of diversity are thus likely to be magnified when the source of diversity is culture.

Geertz (1963) identifies the distribution between primordial ties, which are basically inscriptive and based on the ‘givens’ of life (tribe, kinship, ethnicity etc.) and civil ties, which hinge on society type aggregations like class, political party affiliation, interest group membership and so on. He states that the prevalence of primordial ties in Africa, and this development has made it difficult, if not impossible for the integrative revolution, which entails the erosion of primordial ties by civil ties. Hence, the criticism with Geertz’s scheme, however, which is a means presenting civil ties and primordial ties as mutually exclusive categories, it creates a false dichotomy between them, because, in reality, there is no way the prevalence of supposedly primordial ties like ethnicity and kinship can be understood in isolation of class and other civil tie, since identities based on “givens of life” are constructed and unnatural. It is also not true that class and other civil ties are equality oriented, especially where they are recursive with ethnicity and other supposedly primordial ties. Notwithstanding these

shortcomings, Geertz’s distinction provides a useful schema for summarizing the complexity of identities into manageable categories. In the recent past, other ‘primordial’ identities that have gained wide currency and greater political significance, especially in contestations over citizenship, are those of ‘indigenes’, ‘non-indigenes’, ‘migrants’, and ‘settlers’.

Donald Horowitz (1985) also argued in his famous work, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, that, “ethnic conflict is a worldwide phenomenon”. In furtherance of his argument he declared that, in multi-ethnic state and where there is persistence or immigration of strong ethnic or racial groups make conflicts along ethnic lines quite likely. Such conflicts are central feature of contemporary social life and have been for centuries in places where heterogeneous populations live, or people from different ethnic or racial groups come into contact. Another approach to the issue of cultural or ethnic affinity is the politicised identities. Young (1976), Kasfir (1976) and Rothschild (1981) are some of the leading proponents of this ideology. They argue that, ethno-political violence is a deliberate political strategy by desperate groups intended to effect change in the political system that marginalises ethnic groupings.

Cultural Diversity and its Intricacies in Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria

Given the multiple cumulative ethnic contradictions and tensions built into the colonial experience, military dictatorship and the present democratic dispensation in Nigeria, it is not surprising that at different points in time we have witnessed major instances of intra and inter-ethnic violence in different parts of the country. There are various instances of intra-ethnic clashes in Nigeria, an example of; Aguleri-Umuleri conflicts in the Igbo state of Anambra, Ife-Modakeke conflicts in the Yoruba state of Osun. And, other intra-ethnic conflict dyads that we have witnessed in the country includes: the wrangling between the Adoni and Ogoni, Ijaw versus Ilaje; Ogoni versus Okoloma; Okrika and the Eleme; Okrika versus Ogoni; Urhobo and Ijaw against the Itsekiri; and Ijaw versus Itsekiri (Kalejaue and Alliyu, 2013). With the emergence of democratic governance in 1999, the first conflict occurred in Sagamu in Ogun State on 17th July 1999, where fighting broke out between the Yorubas and Hausas over the death of a Hausa woman who had allegedly desecrated the Oro festival. The crisis led to reprisal attacks in Kano where many Yorubas were attacked and killed. Again, on 26 November 1999, Yoruba and Hausa traders clashed over the control of the strategic Mile 12 market in Ketu, Lagos (Attoh and Soyombo, 2011; Osaretin, and Akov, 2013). While most of the crisis in the Middle Belt region since 1999 has been between the Jos ethnic groups and the Hausa/Fulani, conflicts have also erupted between Middle Belt groups jostling for political and economic power. Also in Nasarawa State, there were violent

clashes between the Azare and Tiv over issues of political domination in June 2000. The Tiv were also engaged in conflicts with the Jukun in October 2001 over politics and control of land. The bloody clashes that ensued led to the destruction of whole communities, notably Zaki Biam in Benue State.

It should be noted that, one of the sociological problems of building Nigeria as a nation is the multi-ethnicity with its concomitants such as multi-lingualism and competitive ethnicity. In a multi-ethnics state like Nigeria, flexibility is necessary for a popular democracy would be lacking, this is against the crux that the country is profoundly divided along religious, ideological, linguist and cultural diversified ethnic or racial ties. Majority of Nigerians belong to three major ethnic groups; the Hausa-Fulani in the North, the Igbo in the South-east, and the Yoruba in the South-west, however there is also a multitude of minority ethnic groups struggling to gain political relevance and influence against the major three dominant groups. The minorities who often times feel marginalised and protested for equal right with the dominant ethnic group, this has always been done violently, leading to bloodshed and loss of properties. The ethnic and other communal groups that felt marginalized by the major ethnic groups (Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo) are forced to adopt constitutional and extra-constitutional means to challenge the hegemony of the major ethnic groups (Alubo, 2009). Poverty and socio-economic marginalization of the minority ethnic groupings often lead to aggressive behaviour that can take on cultural and ethnic connotations that cannot be overemphasized. The interplay of ethnic nationalism has created persistent threat to political stability.

Furthermore, the predominance of the spirit of ethnic nationalism also gave rise to the emergence of ethnic militias all over the country, for instance: the Odua People's Congress (OPC) for the Yoruba nationality, Arewa People's Congress (APC) for the Hausa/Fulani nationality, the Bakassi Boys for the Igbo nationality, and the Egbesu Boys for the Ijaw nationality. The emergence of these ethnic militias has also aggravated the level of political violence, riots and conflicts in the country. Again, the interplay of ethnic nationalism has also made the sharing of the national revenue a much more volatile and sensitive issue. Finally, the interplay of ethnic nationalism has also divided and fragmented the Nigerian state. As a result of ethnic chauvinism the civil society has been relatively weakened. Plateau is the second most ethnically diverse state after Adamawa in Nigeria, and it is important to note that, the problem is not the diversity in the real sense of it, but the management of the cultural diversity in the country (Alubo, 2009). Besides, all citizens in the country are all equal before the law by right, but the disposition of the government machineries in the country do not always reflect true

equity and justice between divergent ethnic groupings in the Country. Nigeria is silent on the issue of indigene and settlers, as access to opportunities, political appointments and economic resource in most communities depends on whether one is an indigene or a settler, hence, conflicts ensued as a result, and this has undermined national unity in Nigeria (Attoh, and Soyombo, 2011). Therefore, there is need for citizenship criteria to be based on equality before the law rather than collective ethnic identity, to avert the situation to get to a point where many would only be citizen of their ethnic or regional locations and not of others within the country's jurisdiction.

Inter and intra-ethnic conflicts is mostly caused by two powerful factors, that is, potent identity based factors (based on differences in race, religion, culture, language etc.) and perceived imbalance in the distribution of economic, political and social resources in the country (Igbuzor, 2003). Furthermore, issues such as state support of ethnic militarism overtime, intensification ethnic nationalism by political leaders, excessive and corrupt security agencies, lack of the rule of law and justice system and the weakness of Civil Society groups in the country constitute threats to national security and socio-economic development in the country. Nigeria being a heterogeneous society is faced with the problem of ethnicity at the national level and the problem of ethnicity has eaten too deep into the fabrics of politics in the country (Attoh and Soyombo, 2011). Ethnic and socio-political conflicts have continually undermined the economic growth and development process, necessary to pull Nigerians out of poverty-stricken citizenry. Nigeria is abundantly endowed with numerous natural resources, and remains the most endowed African country with natural resources in Africa, and West African sub-region in particular, it has abundant natural and human resources, yet has nothing tangible to show for it in terms of development, which is due to the incessant ethnic tensions and social conflicts that has characterised her society, as these resources are being wasted through the destruction of lives and properties resulting from ethnic tensions and social conflicts, as well as, squandered by the corrupt politicians in government (Kalejaiye and Aliyu, 2013).

The political leaders, who supposed to quell the ethnic tensions and social conflicts, are using the medium to amass national resources, wealth and power for themselves and members of their ethno-cultural, political, ethno-religious, economic and social group at the expense of other tribes and ethnic groups in the country. Nationalism sustains cultural diversity in a heterogeneous society, in other words, the collective traditions and experiences of a nation shapes its political culture and helps its people to progress collectively in all facet of their national life (Cozic, 1994). More so, a non-aggressive collective nationalism

can help nations develop distinct cultural identities and promote tolerance among different cultures, but, nationalism is also capable of affecting the progress of a state if not well handled, especially if it is pursued in line with ethnic differences or on racist terms, as it is capable of causing ethnic chauvinism, which then brings about ethnic conflicts.

A multicultural society like Nigeria can successfully harmonise disunity and diversity if it does not mistake national unity with uniformity of all ethnic society, and if, she comprehensively and mutually seeks cultural unity among all the ethnic groups in the country. Therefore, there is need for the Federal government to continuously reiterate through its various policies and activities that Nigeria belongs to all her citizens and not just the three dominant ethnic or religious groups in the country. Once this is done, Nigeria will thereafter gain a lot from its well of diverse human and natural resources scattered all over the country, and be proud of citizens who are ready to defend Nigeria's national unity. As a multicultural nation with more than 250 languages and several ethnic groups, Nigeria is such an excellent ground where the various powers and riches of these groups can be orchestrated (Udebunu, 2011).

There are various ethnic and cultural groupings with their divergent or different identities, political and religious beliefs in all the six geo-political zones of the country namely; the North-East, North-West, North-Central, South-East, South-West and South-South. In each geo-political zones exist many inter and intra ethnic groups with their separate identities exhibited in their beliefs, cultural values and identities, language and dialect, territorial boundary, traditional rulers, deity, mode of dressing among other things, rather than allowing our differential identities to unite us into a formidable national forces, we have allowed our differences to further separate us into near oblivion. Nigeria under the military and civilian had experienced series of inter and intra ethnic crises which has religious and political undertones, for example, in 1976 Murtala/Obasanjo regime witnessed a riot between Chamba and Kuteb in the now Taraba State over alleged manipulation of electoral wards, in May 1986 Babangida's regime saw the clashes between Bassa and Gbagyi against Ebira over land in Nasarawa State, also in August 1999 during Obasanjo's civilian regime, there was a clash between Ijaw and Ilaje over the oil rich land in Niger Delta and in November 1999 Ijaw Youth were accused to have killed 12 policemen at Ode (Bayelsa) in the Niger Delta and the government of Obasanjo retaliated by deploying soldiers to the area which led to the massive killing of unrecorded number of local people in the area, similarly in May 2000, a crisis ensued between Urhobo and Itsekiri near the oil rich town of Warri in Niger Delta (Igbuzor, 2003).

Various ethno-political conflicts have tremendously undermined the nation's building and a united Nigeria till date. Also, natural resources found in some locality or region has separated rather than unite the various intra and inter-ethnic groups in that region. Even our diverse cultural beliefs and heritage that are supposed to beautify our country and unite us as a nation have been seen causing inter-ethnic violence and crisis. For example, the traditional Yoruba festival called "Oro" (A traditional festival in towns and settlements of Yoruba origin) caused a serious crisis between the Yorubas and Hausas settlers in Sagamu on 18-19 July 1999. During the 'Oro' festival, it is expected that those who are not involved in the festival are to stay off the street, it is an abomination for any woman to come out of their domain during the festival, but the Hausas settlers refused to respect and tolerate the acclaimed Yoruba tradition as they defiled the instructions of the Yoruba elders regarding the 'Oro' festival (Kalejauye, and Alliyu (2013). This development eventually led to clashes between the Hausa settlers in Sagamu and the Yorubas that are indigenes. Several Hausa people were killed in the attack in a Mosque by Yoruba youths. It was also reported that there were burnt corpses on the streets and buildings were set ablaze. In retaliation, the Hausa people in the northern city of Kano, a commercial centre with a population of over one million, on July 24 and 25, 1999, also started killing the Yorubas residing in Kano. This was a reprisal attack meted out against the minority Yorubas when victims of the violence in Sagamu returned back their homes in Kano.

To solve the problem of inter-ethnic and intra-racial conflicts that have bedevilled Nigeria in the past and at present, a lot of measures must be put in place which is capable of ensuring the peaceful co-existence between and among te various ethnic and religious groups in the country. The Federal government of Nigeria should set out true national policies that will check the excesses of all the ethnic groups, as these would bring about the much needed national unity and identities of all racial groupings found in all the six geo-political zones of Nigeria. Besides, it must be a mechanism that will be unbiased and discouraged sectionalism and the quota system in the polity but embrace a defined regional structure embedded in a true federal system of government which is the best and only structural framework that suits Nigeria, considering the cultural diversity of the different ethnic groupings, the political and religious landscape and above all, the need for national unity, national identities, traditions and cultural values.

The first identified mechanism is the need to review the Nigerian "*constitutional provisions*", as the Nigerian constitution have been accused to be either silent or biased on the issue that borders on the political and economic right of the settlers race scattered all over

the country, most especially in the northern parts of the country, the southern parts and the few in the western parts of Nigeria. In the north the Fulanis were regarded as settlers in the region and as such they have been discriminated upon the ownership of land and equal right in traditional positions of authority in comparison with the dominant Hausa in the majority, a situation that have caused a bloody tensions between the two races. In other words, the Fulanis were being treated as the Jews in Nigeria, therefore, there is the need for constitutional amendment, our constitution should state in clear terms the concept of settlers and national identity that will enhance unity in diversity in the country. In addition, a special educational framework should be established in our educational system which is capable of correcting the numerous wrong narratives and present shared conception of every race, culture, religion, and values in the country. This could be achieved through what is called "Catch them Young", it is expected that the curriculum in all levels of education should teach what is good about and the relevance of every culture with the need to respect other peoples traditions. With this the future leaders presently in various schools will grow up to know how to make policies that have national and not only regional in outlook. National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) is not sufficient even though it is indeed a step forward to foster national unity between and among Nigerian elite youths, it must be strengthened and well-funded by the Federal Government.

Also, every politically elected positions and appointments, no matter how insignificant should have meritocracy as its rather than being based in the line of ethnic consideration or demeaning quota system which have created a lot of loop holes in our polity and has also promoted square pegs in round holes, a situation that have undermined our national economic growth and development. Besides, this will give room for every tribe and race to have a taste of the dividends of good governance and reduce unhealthy competition that could result into ethnic tensions or social conflicts especially when a particular tribe keeps dominating strategic or key positions of authority, this could be appalling and extremely detestable to others, thereby capable of arousing tensions of all kinds.

Lastly, all established parastatals and the ministry of Culture and Tourism should be strengthened to further the course of ethnic unity which will eventually translated into national unity and the celebration of the identities of diverse ethnic culture in Nigeria. With such achievement, foreign investors as well as tourist would be lured for investment. Also, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism at all levels of government to ensure the inculcation of cultural and moral values of different ethnic groups into educational curriculum in school children at all levels of education in the country, by this, we can have citizens of diverse cultural values and heritage.

CONCLUSIONS

We have delimited how ethnicity and diverse cultures endangered inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic conflict in Nigeria and what likely measures should be taken to curb the menace of ethno-religious and ethno-political crisis in Nigeria. Government in Nigeria has a lot to do regarding the formulation and ensuring the implementation of policies that will only benefit all and sundry and not a fractional part in the country The Federal government should adopt policies that will enhance inter-ethnic dialogue between conflict ridden parties at the grassroots and the need to build capacity and political literacy especially for the youths who are the vulnerable group during ethnic tensions. In fact, our cultural diversity remains a blessing and not a curse to us as some have argued in the past. Of course, there are diverse culture, intra and inter-ethnic conflict in Nigeria, it has not separated us even though it has posited a lot of divisions and ethnic tensions, we have a whole lot of things that unite us as a country, and that is, the defence of our territorial boundary, sovereignty and identity as Nigerians especially diasporas Nigerians.

There is need to recognise and tolerate the right of every ethnic nationality groups or individuals to exercise its cultural and religious right, not only that, economic, social and political rights of every individual ethnic groups should be respected more than any form of socio-political construct. Similarly, granting and enhancing autonomy for the constituent regions or states will certainly create an enabling environment for each region or group of nationalities to develop its culture in a framework where differences are recognized, tolerated and respected.

Of course, we all want a true one Nigeria, we must not forget to honor and respect one another's source of being, and that is the cultural environment that each ethnic groups in Nigeria derives its relevance, identity, meaning and purpose for existence, because, this is simply the recipe for Nigeria's economic growth and developments. Also, there is the need for government and its institutions to know and recognize the fact that, the various ethnic groups, big or small in the country do not share a uniform dream about Nigeria, because, their expectations from the political leaders, notions of government, moral standards, perceptions and understanding of religion, ideas of how to live and regulate their lives, goals and missions as individual ethnic groups, are extremely different in most cases.

Above all, this paper has clearly demonstrated that cultural identities and ethnic nationalism have ferment violent conflicts in different parts of the country, and, Nigerian government and its leadership should be more committed to the issue of ethnic conflicts in the country, by formulating and ensuring

the implementation of policy that will benefit all and sundry and not a fractional parts or groups in the country. Nigerians as well as people in any culturally diversified or ethnically mixed society must be able to maximize the opportunities by fostering "unity in diversity" instead of manipulating the diversity against the unity of their various societies, for selfish purposes. There is serious lack of co-ordination of Nigerian cultural heritage between the Federal government and the Ministry of culture.

REFERENCES

1. Attoh, F., & Soyombo, O. (2011). The politics of ethnic balancing in Nigeria. *International journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 3(2), 40-44.
2. Bennett, T. (2001). *Differing Diversities: Cultural Policy and Cultural Diversity*, (Strasbourg: Council of Europe.)
3. Cozic, C (1994), *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict*, (San Diego: Greenhaven Press.)
4. Earley, P. C., & Mosakowski, E. A. (2000). "Creating Hybrid Team Cultures: An Empirical Test of Transnational Team Functioning", *Academy of Management Journal*, 43(1)
5. Geertz, C. (1963). "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Patriots in the New States", in Geertz, C. (ed), *Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa*, (New York: The Free Press.)
6. Hofstede, G. (2001), *Culture's Consequences*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.)
7. Horowitz, D. L. (1985). *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, (Berkeley and London: University of California Press.)
8. Ikubaje, J. (2002). Report of Survey of Ethnic and Religious Crisis in the Fourth Republic, (Lagos: Centre for Democracy and Development.)
9. Isar, Y. R. (2006). "Cultural Diversity", *Theory, Culture and Society* 23 (2-3)
10. Jekayinfa, A. A. (2002). "Implication of Competitive Ethnicity in the Process of Nation Building in Nigeria" *Nigeria Journal of Social Science* Vol. IV
11. KALEJAUYE, P. O., & Alliyu, N. (2013). Ethnic Politics And Social Conflicts: Factors In Nigeria's Underdevelopment. *Journal of International Social Research*, 6(27).
12. Kasfir, N. (1976). *The Shrinking Political Arena: Participation and Ethnicity in African Politics, With a Case Study of Uganda*, (Berkeley: University of California Press.)
13. Lane, H. W., Maznevski, M. L., DiStefano, J. J., & Dietz, J. (2009), *International Management Behavior: Leading with a Global Mindset*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.)
14. Nwegbu, M. U., Eze, C. C., & Asogwa, B. E. (2011). "Globalization of Cultural Heritage: Issues, Impacts, and Inevitable Challenges for Nigeria" *Library Philosophy and Practice* 2011, Accessed Online at <http://unllib.unl.edu/LPP>. on 2nd September, 2013
15. Ogoh, A. (2009). *Citizenship and Identity Politics in Nigeria: Conference Proceedings* (Lagos: CLEEN Foundation, Nigeria.)
16. Osaghae, E. E., & Suberu, R. T. (2005). (2005), "A History of Identities, Violence, and Stability in Nigeria". *CRISE Working Paper No.6 January 2005*. Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford, United Kingdom
17. Osaretin, I., & Akov, E. (2013). Ethno-religious conflict and peace building in Nigeria: The case of Jos, Plateau State. *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 2(1), 349-349.
18. Otite, O. (1976). *Concept of Nigerian Society in Ethnic Relations in Nigeria*, (Ibadan: Caxton Press (West Africa) Ltd.)
19. Otiye, I. (2003). "Nigeria's Experience in Managing the Challenges of Ethnic and Religious Diversity Through Constitutional Provisions" *Ethnic National Council, Union of Burma*. Accessed Online at <http://www.enburma.net/index.php/feature/54-feature/166-nigerias-experience-in-managing-the-challenges-of-ethnic-a-religious-diversity-through-constitutional-provisions.html>
20. Rothschild, J. (1981). *Ethno Politics: A Conceptual Framework*, (New York: Columbia University Press.)
21. Sassatelli, M. (2009). *Becoming Europeans: Cultural Policy and Cultural Identity*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan.)
22. Tajfel, H. (1982). "Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations", *Annual Review of Psychology*, 33
23. Udebunu, C. (2011). "Nigeria and the Dialectics of Multiculturalism", *A New Journal of African Studies*. 8 (1), 2011.
24. Udoidem, S.I. (1997). "Religion in the Political Life of Nigeria: A Survey of Religious Related Crisis Since Independence" in Okafor, F.U. (1997) (ed.), *New Strategies for Curbing Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in Nigeria*, (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers.)
25. UNESCO. (2003). "Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage", Paris: UNESCO.
26. Watson, W. E., Kumar, K., & Michaelsen, L. K. (1993). "Cultural Diversity's Impact on Interaction Process and Performance: Comparing Homogeneous and Diverse Task Groups", *Academy of Management Journal*, 36(3).