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The Political Economy of Ethnic Politics in Nigeria

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Abstract

Ethnicity is not evil; neither is ethnic politics generally bad, but it possesses elements that can hinder development in states with low national integration and political bias. This paper examined the impact of ethnic politics on the Nigerian political economy, considering the practices of ethnic interest that have tended to relegate the national interest to sub-ethnic interest, thus hindering the Nigerian state's growth and development. The Marxian political economy theory was adopted to understand the political economy of the ethnic political game playing out as a class of the politicians and the masses. The qualitative research method was used, and data were analysed using the content analysis method based on secondary data. The finding showed that what gave rise to and fueled ethnic bias politics in Nigeria are imbalanced structure and absence of good governance. This further created polarisation and problems of trust among ethnic groups. The paper recommended inclusiveness and fairness in formulating policies and allocating political cum economic values/resources among ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Keywords: Political economy, ethnic politics, ethnicity, marxian political economy.

Introduction

The human society grows and develops like an organism. It comprises people who come together to improve their living conditions and achieve a common goal. Politics fathom how the common goal can be achieved by instituting activities that involve making decisions and resolving conflict among different groups to attain a common goal and a peaceful society for all. The groups that make up the state could be distinct based on their way of life or ethnic practices. Ethnic groups are known by common affinity, which manifests in their conduct. The manner these different groups participate in the political activities of the state determines the conception of ethnic politics in such a state. In most plural societies, the word "ethnicity" pre-suggests a kind of prejudice and feeling of primordialism. Ordinally, ethnicity is not evil, nor does it carry negativity, but political actors in most developing countries have made it a variable of the divide. Nigeria is a multicultural state, with over 250 ethnic groups, each distinct in the language spoken, dressing mode, food, and even social settings (Ojo, 2009). Ethnic groups are often in

competition for scarce resources and recognition. However, the manner and nature of this competition must be streamlined to be healthy.

Ethnicity playout in politics is not new in Nigerian politics, though, before the amalgamation of 1914, various ethnic groups had existed and had little or no knowledge of each other. However, they were brought together during the amalgamation of 1914. The foundation problem of these coming together can be seen as what was referred to as "forceful marriage," thus creating a seed of discord, which instead of easing out, became a bedrock of manipulation by nationalist leaders, whom the colonial masters handed over power to at independent. Even after over 63 years of independence, ethnic politics did not phase out but has grown into a monster that negates all efforts to nationhood and continues to be a crucial factor in determining which ethnic group plays a vital role in the political economy in most instances. In the context of this study, the political economy of ethnic politics refers to the study of how political and economic factors interact with ethnic groups to shape political behaviour, policies, and outcomes and determine how people react to issues generally.

This paper examines the impact of ethnic politics on the political economy of Nigeria. The objectives centre on unravelling the causes and factors that trigger ethnic prejudice in politics, the implication of ethnic politics to the political economy and the management of ethnic politics in a plural state like Nigeria. Thus, the data gathered from this study will provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors that gave rise to ethnic politics, as well as how to resolve and manage the situation to create a political environment conducive to the advancement of development. Notably, the significance of this research also lies in its potential to enhance Nigerians' comprehension that ethnic politics is primarily driven by the ruling elite's pursuit of personal benefits rather than the interests of the governed class. This research will contribute theoretically to the existing academic discourse on issues of ethnic politics. Therefore, it will advance, encourage, and provide direction for future investigations within the specific subject area.

Review of Related Literature

The paper grapples with three concepts, namely, political economy, ethnicity and ethnic politics. This section reviews related literature in order to establish their inter-relatedness in the research problem.

Political Economy

This is multiple disciplines and focuses on analysing the interplay between political and economic systems of different states. It reveals the reciprocal relationship between political institutions, processes, and ideologies, and their corresponding impact on economic policies and outcomes. Put it slightly differently, political economy is an academic discipline that investigates the intricate relationship between political and economic dynamics. Originally, politics and economics were studied under one discipline called political economy but later separated into two fields in the late 18th century, political science (politics) and economics. Policies, which are products of politics, have economic implications, just as economic decisions have political implications. Therefore, properly running any system requires striking a balance between the two, as their harmonious relationship is a prerequisite for a smooth system. Politics is about "the authoritative allocation of values for a society" (Easton, 1957, cited in Ramaswamy, 2015, p.22), while Economics studies how humans behave/resources regarding ends and scarce means which have other uses (Robbins, 1935, cited in Khumalo, 2012). Both definitions emphasise how

resources are generated, how to allocate them, and the uses they serve.

The politics and economic relationship manifest in how government policies affect the market (economic decisions) and how economic conditions and factors influence government policies. According to Frieden et al. (2017), political economy serves the common goal of achieving a functional state. He noted that what happens in the economy is vital to the government, so economic forces influence governmental decision-making. Political economy involved in creating material wealth and the mode of production. It explores the intricacies of production and its relationship to the production process among individuals/groups in a given society. Also, it examines the allocation of a country's income and wealth in relation to factors like law, custom, and governance. It utilises a wide range of methodologies and approaches, primarily drawing from the disciplines of economics, political science, law, and sociology.

As noted by Frieden (2020), for a functional society, political and economic variables must be incorporated into any analysis of contemporary societal challenges. He stated further that Politics and economics are intricately and irretrievably intertwined as politics affects the economy, and the economy affects politics; thus, their relationship is natural. The above assertion has reinstated the fact that the field of political economy is a powerful tool for comprehending governments and societies; it is also a potent instrument for those interested in transforming governments and societies.

Ethnicity

This is generally the mutual sharing practices, way of living, and a belief of common descendants, thus, their group solidarity. The ethnocentric penchants are often imbibed and learned during infancy. When the child grows up, he/she exhibits similar in-group – out-group sentiment. According to Nnoli (1998), ethnicity is more or less a communal phenomenon allied with collaborative groups' uniqueness (informal) in a political system seeking to defend and push on their particular interest. To Nnoli, language is an essential variable in ethnic identity. They see themselves as one people, and others see them similarly because of shared ancestral origin. All group members do not often exhibit ethnic sentiment; however, some persons willingly allow themselves to be controlled by ethnic bias. These have been the case in most imbalance structures, imbalance in the sense that developmental structures are not the same across the different groups that make up the state and power allocation and economic resources put some at a disadvantage.

There are several theories of ethnic groups behaviours, some of these are: i; Primordialism. This theory is traced back to the work of British Sociologist Anthony D Smity (1938-2016), who noted that people's ethnic identities are inextricably intertwined with their biological, cultural, and historical backgrounds, making them stable and unchanging across time. This view holds that humans have an innate need to find and associate with those who reflect their personality, values, and traditions. ii; Instrumentalism. This also originates in the work of Anthony D Smith (1936-1916); according to this theory, ethnicity is artificially manufactured and kept alive for strategic, economic, or political ends. That is to say, people and organisations fabricate and exploit ethnic identities for their ends, such as political or economic benefit. iii; Constructivism. American sociologist Rogers Brubaker developed the constructivist theory of ethnicity in the 1990a. It was a response to primordial, instrumentalist, and ethnicist ideas that dominated ethnicity research. According to this idea, linguistics, culture, and symbols, all play a significant part in the formation of national identities.

From this point of view, ethnicity arises out of social interaction and discourse rather than

being an essential part of who we are as individuals. Through interaction and cultural sharing, ethnic identities are formed and negotiated. iv; Boundary theory. Norwegian social anthropologist Fredrik Barth developed the ethnicity boundary theory in his book, "Ethnic Groups and Borders" (1969). This theory says that ethnic boundaries are made and kept by how people interact with each other and how they represent themselves symbolically. From this point of view, ethnicity is not a fixed or static identity. Instead, it is a dynamic and fluid process that people and groups always negotiate and redefine. People must dialogue and make amends without resolving a conflict over valuable resources. This can be referred to as a harmonious conception of an ethnic group. v; Situational ethnicity. Mary Waters, an American sociologist, is the founder of the theory in 1990. This theory highlights the significance of social context and situational elements in forming ethnic identities. According to this theory, people's ethnic identities are conditional, meaning that they can shift based on the circumstances or the environment in which they find themselves. An example is where one has to claim and want to identify with others to escape a situation or make a gain in a given situation.

Ethnic Politics

Ethnic sentiment intersects with politics and influences political behaviour and decision-making. This is the mobilisation of ethnic identities and interests for political advantage. Ethnic politics can take various forms, such as the founding of ethnic-based political parties, the use of ethnic identity as a tool for political mobilisation, and the development of policies and institutions that cater to the particular demands and interests of ethnic groups. Positive and negative outcomes for society have been linked to ethnic politics. On the one hand, it can help marginalised ethnic groups gain more power and influence while leading to a more widespread acceptance of and appreciation for various cultural practices and traditions. But it also has the potential to cause strife and misunderstanding among people of different backgrounds and can result in the oppression and marginalisation of vulnerable populations. The challenges posed by ethnicity in current-day Nigeria date back to the colonial era.

According to Ako-Nai (2008), the imperialists were the architects of ethnic contention politics in Nigeria with their divide-and-rule approach. The divide and rule (partitioning of Africa between 1880-1914) define the colonial masters in most African states as breaking up the contending concentration of local people's authority, making them less powerful and less united (Wesseling, 1991). This policy's consequence manifested in colossal division among the local people (ethnic groups playing against each other). It gave the Europeans more power to dominate the regions for economic gains. This ethnic sentiment sold to the native people began to grow seed during the formation of political parties.

The Nigerian state gained independence in 1960, however, the ethnic sentiment sowed into the people did not phase out. Political parties were mainly formed and promoted alone ethnic lines. It was the manifestation of ethnic politics in the first republic that culminated in the political turmoil that crumbled the republic. Inherited ethnic politics of the First Republic still play out in the affair of things. New political parties that came into existence in the second republic (1978-1983) still bear the regional ethnic inclination in leadership and domination (Adegbami& Uche, 2015). The third republic's general election was ranked as one of the best. Unfortunately, ethnic sentiment and the military regime interest contributed to the annulment of the election. The military regime came to an end and power was handed to civilian authority in 1999, marking the beginning of the Fourth Republic. In the general elections of 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019, ethnic politics have reflected in parties' dominance and voting

patterns.

Taking a closer look at the 2023 general elections, eighteen (18) political parties were registered and participated in the general elections. Out of these parties, four dominated the political scene; the All-Progressive Congress (APC), the Labour Party (LP), the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP), and the People Democratic Party (PDP). The APC's support base revolves most in the north and southwest, reflecting the voting patterns. The LP has significant support in the south (southeast and south south). The NNPP, a recently formed political party, has its most support in the northern part of the country, in Kano State in particular. Also, PDP, which before now dominated the south (especially the southeast and south south in particular), had a challenge maintaining the region's dominance. This challenge resulted from one of her members (Mr Peter Obi), who was also a presidential candidate under the political party but had to decamp to the LP. This ushered in the obedient movement. The support given to the labour party indicated that the obedient movement rewrote Nigeria's political participation history during the 2023 general elections. It was devoid of sentiment and biased. The movement was spearheaded by the youth mostly and some other adult citizens who had lost hope in the current political landscape and leadership. These groups shunned ethnic bias, stood for the new order and leadership composition, and advocated for competence over the tribe. The social networking platform was the tool they used to organise themselves and encourage one another to take an active part in the elections, and this yielded many results, showing an impressive performance of the Labour Party presidential candidate.

Theoretical Framework

The Marxian Political Economy (MPE) theory was considered most appropriate for this study. MPE was propounded in the 18th century by Karl Marx (as cited in Dimmelmeier et al., 2018). It analyses society in its forms: the economy's nature and the politics surrounding it.The political economy of Karl Marx provides insight into the evolution and development of the society, class struggle, and exploitation inherent in a capitalist society. The owners of the means of production (bourgeois) and the labourer (proletariats) are opposing classes. Although an opposing class, the wage earner (labourer), has no option but to sell his labour-power in social relation to the owners of means of production for his survival. Man's survival is based on his ability to eat. Ake (1981) remarked that except man meets his needs starting with food, he cannot survive. Thus, man is a worker and produces to survive while struggling to improve his social relation in the production process. Understanding the working of political economy is very important in Marxist analysis because it explains how goods and services are produced. Most importantly, how surplus value is distributed and the outcomes (Gamble, 1999). MPE concerns commodity production and social relations regarding how goods and services are distributed and consumed in a capitalist society.

The implication of MPE theory in this study is based on its emphasis on commodity production. The ownership of means of production determines one's class in the production relationship. In Nigeria, the major player in the political economy is the state. The state owns the means of production and determines what to produce, how, when, and distribution of what is produced. It is essential to state here that the Nigerian state's concern is not on commodity production but the control of the means of production. The holding of public office is synonymous with owning the means of production. Therefore, there is a continuous struggle for power to control the means of production. In this quest for power, political actors consider the adoption of ethnic sentiment as a factor that aids their power struggle. According to Sklar (cited in Ndubuisi, 2013), ethnicity in Africa is derived from Marx's class struggles, where different

classes (ethnic groups) gather support for their interest. The state institutions need to be stronger, and national integration is low. Thus, the manipulation of ethnic classes becomes easy.

According to Marx (cited in Ramaswamy, 2015), "the state is but the management of the common affairs of the bourgeoisie." The state agencies are the appointees of the superstructure, resolute in protecting the dominant class's interest. In other words, the state becomes the instrument of political office holders to control production. Having benefited from their ethnic groups during the struggle for political power, they favour their ethnic relation in distributing goods and services. According to Omokri (cited in This day, June 17), President Buhari, during a speech on June 23, 2015, in Washington, said that having been voted at a ratio of 5% to 97%, there was no way he was going to treat the ethnic regions the same way in his development agenda. The aftermath reflects the northern Hausa/Fulani ethnic group's appointment domination over the others in the most strategic positions in the country today. As noted by Akhigbe (2017, November 17), President Buhari's appointment is skewed to the Northern part of the country where he hails. A reflection of his 5% to 97% manifests in his appointment, as about 81 out of 100 appointees come from the north zone. This has negated the spirit of national integration and has enthroned ethnic divide, conflict, and instability in the political economy, as groups now hold allegiance to their ethnic group before the country. This theory's relevance for this study is for the understanding of how these ethnic groups have constituted a class, seeking their interest without minding the consequence of the survival of the state.

Causes of Ethnic Politics in Nigeria

Scholars and writers have adduced several reasons as to the causes of ethnic politics in Nigeria. Before explaining these factors, Table 1 highlight some of the causes.

Table 1.1: Causes of ethnic politics in Nigeria

S/N	Causes of ethnic politics	Manifestation
1	Remote factors: Colonial legacy	i. Administrative divisions based on ethnicity ii. Indirect rule system iii. Economic exploitation (underdevelopment) iv. Manipulation of religious differences v. Language and educational policies vi. Legal system
2	Imbalance structure	i. Economic disparity ii. Regional disparity iii. Political imbalance iv. Ethnic and religious tension v. Lack of fairness in infrastructure and political appointments vi. Marginalisation of minority groups
3	Low socio-economic	i. Absence of economic diversification ii. Rise in unemployment iii. Inadequate infrastructure iv. Worsening insecurity

	development	v. Social inequality vi. Limited access to technology and energy vii. Limited access to quality healthcare viii. High crime rate ix. Food insecurity x. Poor quality of education xi. Poor social services xii. Hunger, and illiteracy
4	Absence of national integration	i. Secessionist agitation ii. Political differences and tension iii. Disparity in political offices and appointments iv. Ethnic and religious conflicts v. Marginationlisation of groups and regions vi. Language and cultural differences and superiority vii. Lack of common identity as a people
5	Capture and control of political power for personal gain	i. Electoral process and results manipulation ii. Corrupt practices iii. Nepotism and cronyism iv. Manipulation of state institutions v. Political dynasties vi. Authoritarianism and abuse of political power vii. Political patronage and embezzlement of public fund viii. Monopolies in vital sectors
6	Resource allocation and control	i. Absence of true federalism (revenue allocation ii. Budgeting) iii. Resource ownership iv. Equity and fairness v. Resource diversification
7	Lack of accountability in governance	i. Lack of transparency in office/project ii. Poor public service delivery iii. Weak legal and judicial systems iv. Mismanagement resources v. Failure to carry or execute project audit reports vi. Inefficiencies and duplication of offices/responsibilities vii. Impunity and fraudulent practices viii. Embezzlement of public funds, bribery, and kickbacks in government contracts

Source: Author's Compilation, 2023.

As presented in Table 1.1, lists of factors account for ethnic prejudice in the Nigerian states, which metamorphoses into ethnic politics. The identified causes manifest in different forms, allowing ethnic sentiment to remain dominant in the state. Notably, as shown in item 1, the remote cause of ethnic politics is older than the independent Nigeria. Ethnic politics dates to the colonial era in Nigeria. The colonial government laid the foundation of ethnic politics. Nigeria

was divided into regions and ethnic groups by the British colonial administration. Nigeria is home to various ethnic groups, and by pitting one group against the other, the foundation for ethnic politics was laid. Colonialism also manifested through indirect rule, which involved controlling via traditional and local authorities. Their frequent appropriation of local leaders from disparate ethnic groups to serve as go-betweens exacerbated social tensions among the different groups. Colonialism, in its manifestation, also undeveloped the Nigerian state. In order to enrich the colonial nation, colonial rulers frequently took advantage of the economic resources of their colonies (economic exploitation).

It is apparent that colonialism contributed to the underdevelopment of the Nigerian state, as colonial administrators only ensured the creation/production of primary (raw material) goods in exchange for manufactured/finished goods; this further limited the capacity for the economy to develop, which was necessary for the creation of employment for the growing population. This stunted growth and development resulted in increased unemployment, poverty and illiteracy. This made the people find more justification to be tied to their ethnic nationality in anticipation of reward when people of their ethnic origin are in power.

Consequently, the underdeveloped state of human and capital development has made most Nigerians poor, resulting in hunger and making most people vulnerable to the manipulation of political actors. According to Babangida (cited inUwaifo, 2016), extreme poverty caused by unemployment and underemployment has played a significant role in ethnic nationalism. In addition, the British implemented different legal systems and educational policies in Nigeria for different ethnic and religious groups. This led to unequal treatment of people and communities depending on their connections.

As seen in table 1.1, item 2, imbalance structure also accounts for causes of ethnic politics. In a multicultural state, fairness is an essential element to ensure peaceful co-existence; as such, its absence distorts the state's functionality. The imbalance structure in the Nigerian state manifests in economic and regional disparity and political imbalance, among others. These manifestations have a considerable effect on the people's hearts as it has made some citizens see themselves as more Nigerian than others, which is not ideal for developing the Nigerian political economy. This shows that an imbalanced structure promotes ethnic politics in Nigeria. Ethnic sentiment thrives the most, as people feel divided and often would not want to support the system as morally and legally required as a citizen. For instance, in a structurally balanced system, irrespective of size, there must be fairness in distributing and allocating goods and services. This fairness is necessary because ethnic groups are distinct from others, so in a plural society, needs must be harmonised, and fair treatment of all sections must be seen to be functional to enable the feeling of oneness to be a shared experience among the citizens.

In an imbalanced system, groups will seek to preserve and protect themselves in a way that might be detrimental to other groups in the state, thus leading to conflict and crises that could alter the system's stability. It has been noted that “ethnic politics has become the order of

the day as it is believed that an alignment with one's ethnic group enables easy access to resources" (Uhunmwaungho&Epelle cited in Majekodunmi, 2015, p.114). This brings home the point that one factor that has consistently given room to the increased ethnic politics in Nigeria is the manifestation of an imbalanced structure as it made different regions view most affairs of the Nigerian state differently.

Item 3, as listed in Table 1.1 above, indicated that the low socio-economic development of the Nigerian state is also a contributing factor that has caused ethnic politics in Nigeria. This

has made Nigeria's economy vulnerable due to the absence of economic diversification, increased unemployment, insecurity, and poor infrastructure and services. Though low socio-economic development has resulted in ethnic politics, ethnic politics has also limited the socio-economic development of the Nigerian state. According to Easterly & Levine (as cited in Adetiba, 2019), the low socio-economic growth, uncertainty in the political terrain, inequality, marginalisation, inequitable distribution of goods and services, and general insecurity in Nigeria is mainly owed to ethnic sentiment. Ethnicity in Nigeria even manifests in securing a job in both the public and private sectors. Today, most lucrative jobs are offered not based on being a citizen of Nigeria or competent for the job; instead, based on one's ethnic group.

As seen in item 4, table 1.1, the absence of national integration has caused further problems of ethnic politics. This has manifested in secessionist agitation across regions, political tension, ethnic and religious conflict, and claim of marginalisation. This shows that the citizens have little to no common identity; instead, their ethnic origin is the hold on identity reflected in their conducts. It is evident then that the absence of national integration has further allowed ethnic politics to thrive. The failure of those in positions of authority to promote the nationalist spirit is because of their continued exploitation of the ethnic divide for electoral gain. It has become obvious that most ruling classes have nothing to offer and cannot stand for elective positions without mobilising their ethnic groups for support. Therefore, their political career thrived on an ethnic divide, which justified their lack of interest in uniting the different ethnic groups. According to Hogan (as cited in Onyeakazi&Ejike, 2018), national integration is uniting people of different groups/cultures into one group to live harmoniously and achieve a common goal. It involves the ability of the government to control its boundaries and promote general attitudes among the people that will bring about the nationalist spirit to boost allegiance and loyalty and shun parochialism.

As indicated in Table 1.1, item 5, another contributing factor causing ethnic politics is the capture and control of state power. An average Nigerian politician wants to capture power with whatever means available. This struggle to capture power by all means has manifested in electoral fraud, nepotism and cronyism, manipulation of state institutions,and monopolising vital sectors. There has been this continuous push to capture power because the means of production in Nigeria today are embodied in the state. Therefore, whoever is in control determines what to produce, how, and even when. In light of this, politicians of different ethnic groups use ethnic permutation when struggling for power or appointment. Elections have been characterised by sentiment; people win and lose elections on ethnic grounds. Politics is a game of numbers; during the election, politicians adopt ethnic logic, appealing to their ethnic groups for support and promising benefits if elected. In this regard, the group respond and support their own in anticipation of getting a better share in allocating goods and services.

During the elections, most electorates preferred to vote for candidates of their ethnic groups. For instance, in the Nigerian 2023 presidential elections, most of Alhaji Atiku Abubakar of the People Democratic Party (PDP) votes were from the northern part of the country where he is from, and he obtained fewer votes from the Igbos and the Yoruba electorates. Maintaining the same pattern, Mohammed Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso of the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) received almost all of his votes from Kano (his state of origin). Similarly, the All Progressive Congress (APC) candidate, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, who was declared the election winner by the electoral body, obtained more votes from his Yoruba people. Though Peter Obi of the Labour Party (Party) had a youth support base spread across, votes as announced showed that he won all his eastern region (southeast) states but lost out in some other regions entirely.

As shown in item 6, table 1.1, resource allocation and control issues also have a share in factors causing ethnic politics in Nigeria. This has been the case due to the near absence of true federalism, equity and fairness. Ethnic groups and regions question how resources generated from their regions are appropriated and shared. This indicates that the quasi-kind of federalism (absence of fiscal federalism) being run in Nigeria has generally failed to address the different challenges facing regions of Nigeria today (Majekodunmi, 2015). The failure of Nigeria's kind (skewed) federalism has thus made ethnic politics thrive the most.

Item 7, table 1.1, shows that lack of governance accountability causes ethnic politics. Politicians feel they can have their way in public office. So, instead of being accountable and upright, they prefer to favour and make moral appeals to people of their ethnic national when the need matters. Thus, the absence of accountability has resulted in a lack of transparency in positions of authority, poor service delivery, a weak legal system, and mismanagement. It is sufficing to say then that the manifestation of ethnic politics in the political economy of Nigeria would not have been adverse if Nigeria's leadership had been accountable in public offices. The politics of accountability is a virtue that must not only be advocated but must be imbibed for good governance. Accountability makes the government responsive and responsible for actions taken. Accountability is a watcher placed on decision-makers or restrictions on using political authority, which requires leaders to justify their actions. Government accountability can be viewed through the lens of citizens (vertical accountability), state institutions (horizontal accountability), and non-state actors such as civil society and the media. "non-state accountability" is referred to as "diagonal accountability" (European Partnership for Democracy, 2022).

In constituency funds, for instance, each national assembly lawmaker is allocated about 100 million naira for a constituency project. However, these lawmakers fail to account to the people how this budgetary allocation was spent (Livinus, 2021, September 11). Also, the executive arm of government receives a security vote fund, which runs into billions annually; some of these governors use this budgeting allocation for purposes other than for which it was appropriated and never accounted for how it was spent (Nwachukwu, 2021, June 27).

Results and Discussion

Ethnic politics has much influence on the development of a plural state. Development can be affected both positively and negatively. Positively, ethnic politics can contribute to the promotion of diversity, inclusiveness, and representation in governance, which can increase social cohesion and stability. Ensuring that all parts of society are included in decision-making can create an environment conducive to progress. Contrarily, ethnic politics can also exacerbate tensions, rivalry, and even bloodshed between various ethnic groups, which can thwart development initiatives. Those in authority may unfairly distribute resources and opportunities when they put the interests of their ethnic group above those of other groups, which can cause resentment and disaffection among minority communities. Social discontent that results from this may impede development, discourage investment, and disrupt economic activity.

Political value and development are now much influenced by ethnicity; ethnicity affects resource availability, employment possibilities, social standing, and political influence. In Nigeria's backdating to when Nigeria gained independence, the country has not utilised the positive aspects of ethnic politics. The country has almost wholly looked away from the positive aspect of diverse cultures. There is much distrust among the different ethnic groups, which often manifests most during elections and resource-sharing.

Some specific effects of ethnic politics are:

***Polarisation and division*:**
Ethnic politics can cause societal divisions along ethnic lines. As diverse ethnic groups struggle for power and resources, this can lead to polarisation and political instability. For instance, during the 2023 governorship election in Lagos State, Nigeria (commercial capital of Nigeria and economic hug of West African), a Lagos State made popular Motor park leader (head of the Lagos state branch of the National Union of Road Transport Workers) by the name MusiliuAkinsanya (MC Oluoma) made a video, which circulated across the conventional and new media. In the video, he openly warned non-Yoruba that they should stay indoors and avoid coming out to vote during the state's March 18, 2023 elections. He made a threat that they will be attacked if they failed to adhere to this warning. He spoke more in the Yoruba Language, noting that Lagos is not for one Nigeria but for the Yoruba people. By that, non-Yoruba should not come out to exercise their franchise (vote). This also implies that non-Yorubas who are Nigerians with registered Permanent Voters Cards will not be allowed to vote and, by implication, do not have a say in the allocation of political values in the state (Lagos). The videos attracted much criticism, but the government never took any action to make him accountable for such an unguided statement. In respect of this statement, the Lagos State Force Public Relations Officer (FPRO), AdejobiOlumuyiwa, in a live interview, said the statement should be taken as a mere "joke" (Egobiambu, 2023, March 17).

Unfortunately, the threat was carried out on election day. Non-Yoruba were not allowed to participate in the governorship election held in the state freely. Some Yoruba whom they felt looked like the non-Yoruba (generally called Igbos) were also not allowed to vote. This notwithstanding, the political authority did not give a corrective directive, and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), with security officers on duty, proceeded to complete the elections. There was widespread violence; people were intimated, harassed, and ballot boxes snapped and destroyed. Others were beaten and even forced to vote against their wishes in the case of those who could access their polling units (Igomu, 2023, March 18). These notwithstanding, INEC declared Mc Oluoma's preferred candidate (H.E. Governor Sanwolu) the governorship election winner. This demonstrates how Nigerian leadership (politicians) has consistently manipulated ethnic groups for political gain. The consequence of this action, which has come and gone, is that it divides average Nigeria and spreads hatred.

***Discrimination*:**
Politics based on ethnicity often lead to bias and exclusion of some groups in the provision of infrastructural facilities, employment, education, and political representation. Following the manifestation of ethnic politics in Nigeria today, most people secure jobs, and others fail to secure such jobs, not merely based on competence but rather on ethnic origin. It has been alleged that people of some ethnic groups dominate most government parastatals from federal to state. There is general ethnic hatred across Nigeria. The Igbo people, who are from the southeast, have faced prejudice and marginalisation in various forms, including political exclusion, economic marginalisation, and violence against them in other regions. The Hausa-Fulani have also been discriminated against much in the southern part of the country; the situation has worsened following the recent clash between herders and farmers. The Yoruba, who reside primarily in the southwestern region of Nigeria, have faced discrimination and violence in various parts of Nigerian regions, where they are frequently considered outsiders. In general, there is discrimination against persons of non-indigenous ethnic groups in Nigerian states. Several states

in Nigeria have laws that discriminate against individuals of non-indigenous ethnic groups, particularly in questions of property ownership and political participation.

***Lack of trust and social cohesion*:**

Negative use of ethnic groups has the potential to weaken trust and social cohesiveness, making it more challenging to construct a society that is both unified and welcoming to people of all backgrounds. The ongoing cold war among the different ethnic groups in Nigeria illustrates a lack of trust between ethnic groupings. This conflict is rooted in historical conflicts and cultural and religious divisions. While the Hausa-Fulani is mainly Muslim, the Igbo are predominantly Christian. The dispute has produced bloodshed, displacement, and fatalities. Current happenings have also seen the Yoruba and Igbo exhibiting share hatred for each other. In addition to these disputes, incidents of mistrust between different ethnic groups can be found in the everyday life of Nigerians. For instance, some Nigerians could be reluctant to engage in commercial (business) transactions with members of particular ethnic groups, or they might be more likely to place their faith in a member of their ethnic group.

Violence and conflict:

As groups compete for dominance in political or economic spheres or resources, ethnic politics can occasionally lead to violent confrontations. One example of violent conflict between different ethnic groups in Nigeria is the struggle between the communities of Hausa-Fulani and Igbo which often play up. It similarly has also been alleged that before the 2023 general elections, Yoruba political thugs burned down some popular markets dominated by the Igbo and generally attacked people of Igbo origin (Okoli, 2023, March 10). Additionally, farmers and Hausa-Fulani herders have been involved in violent conflicts across Nigeria due to disagreements over the destruction of crops and the use of land for grazing. The Tiv and Jukun communities in Benue state, the Berom and Fulani communities in Plateau state, and the Yoruba and Hausa-Fulani communities in southwestern Nigeria are all examples of violent conflict between ethnic groups in Nigeria.

The marginalisation of minority groups:

The use of ethnic politics can lead to the marginalisation of minority groups, which can result in these groups being denied equal access to resources and opportunities and removed from the political process. Also, most ethnic groupings in the Niger Delta Area; have engaged in disputes with the government and global oil corporations over resource control and environmental destruction.Overall, ethnic politics can undermine social cohesion, political stability, and economic growth and development. In Nigeria, elections and census are manipulated on ethnic sentiment groups to outdo one another for ethnic interests against national interests. Ethnic prejudice has become synonymous with politics in Nigeria. If the pace at which it is developing is allowed to continue, it will create a divided country, which might not take long to go into more crisis and possibly lead to disintegration. Citizens, irrespective of their ethnic, religious, and ideological differences, must unite as one nation needing security and development and agree to work toward one goal. In resolving problems posed by ethnicity, one must bear in mind that in a plural society, groups have different cultures, and culture has some influence on the way of living and doing things. There is a need for the spirit of oneness to be integrated.

However, national integration goes beyond mere proclamation, as seen in Nigeria. It must be accompanied by a full commitment to get the desired result. Importantly, any government promoting the nationalist spirit among the people will only be singing a love song to a bereaved

man if he fails to ensure fair distribution of values. One-sided appointment only worsens the already poor situation, for instance, the statement by former President Mohamadu Buhari (as cited in Abioye, 2017, October 13) during a meeting with the then president of the World Bank Group, Jim Yong Kim, where the former president specifically requested the Bank to concentrate in the northern part of the country for their development projects. Promoting national interest cannot work where the number one citizen demonstrates sectional bias. Development should be need-oriented, not sectionally-based. In a nationalist spirit, the former president should have requested the World Bank Group to focus on parts of the country where their particular aid will be most needful instead of requesting concentration on the north without a specific reason. National integration has yielded fewer results because no one will integrate when they are being sidelined while less qualified individual/group is offered the opportunity.

The feeling of marginalisation and alienation must be addressed for the achievement of national integration. It is also crucial for the judiciary and the state agencies (particularly the security agencies) to be professional and neutral in their conduct. All these are prerequisites for the smooth running of the political economy to achieve democratic consolidation, the security of life and property, and general development for citizens' advancement. Some of the specific ways to address ethnic politics problems include: First, promoting education and awareness. Education and awareness efforts can advance tolerance, understanding, and respect for one another's cultural norms. As a result, prejudice and discrimination that leads to ethnic conflicts may be mitigated. Second, promoting inclusiveness in values and policies. Policymakers at all levels of government should work to ensure that all groups are fairly represented in government. Affirmative action, quotas, and proportional representation are all examples of policies that can help give underrepresented groups a more decisive say in policymaking. These must be well followed to ensure the desired result is achieved. Third, strengthening of the state institutions. The different levels of development witnessed across the country partly depend on the state institution. Functional institutions checkmate the excessiveness of organs and arms of government, including that of individuals and groups. Therefore, Institutions such as the judiciary, police, Independent National Electoral Commission, and media can be strengthened to ensure impartiality. This can contribute to creating a level playing field for all ethnic groups.

Fourth, empowering civil society organisations. Nongovernmental organisations, human rights groups, and community-based organisations can play a vital role in promoting peace and reconciliation. Governments should aid and empower these groups to work towards a more inclusive and peaceful society. Fifth, encouraging inter-ethnic dialogue. Promoting discourse between diverse ethnic groups can contribute to developing trust, comprehension, and mutual regard. This can be accomplished via community outreach programmes, cultural events, and public forums.

On a general note, the people must understand that ethnic politics is majorly promoted by Nigerian politicians and those in leadership positions for personal gain. On an average, Nigerians trade with one another and even intermarry; these people transact and live with one another peacefully. However, during elections mostly, politicians and parties who cannot win elections based on competence and merit begin to arrange meetings based on ethnic origin and equally mobilise them on the same line. If they lose an election, they begin to make provocative ethnic statements, pushing ethnic and religious fanatics to take to the stress in protest and instigating violence. for instance, about 800 people were killed in 2011 post-election violence, after some

politicians from the North ignited ethnic sentiment when President Goodluck Jonathan (a southern Christian) was declared the winner of the presidential election of 2011(HRW, 2011).

The Nigerian people must thus realise that these politicians are one; while sharing proceeds among themselves, the issue of ethnic groups does not come into play; they do these peacefully. They marry themselves, and all celebrate together; they are free to associate with new and old friends. If they do these, then ordinary citizens must rise to the reality that those who play ethnic cards do so only to profit from it and for the gain. Therefore, the masses must learn to see themselves as one and share empathy. For instance, during crises and violence, like in the case of Boko Haram, headsmen and unknown gunmen, the attackers do not know the ethnic group involved; they only strike, and anyone can be a victim. The people must come together and know that it is a struggle of class between the political class and the masses. Politicians care about their class, associate freely, and only play the ethnic game when needed. The masses, too, must come together and co-exist as they share a similar experience. When the masses visit the market to purchase an item, the items will not be sold based on ethnic group but on general and individual bargaining power. When the federal government and the Central Bank of Nigeria introduced a new notes swap, which resulted in cash scarcity, the people felt the pain similarly and not based on ethnic group.

During fuel scarcity (including subsidy removal), forex scarcity, the same experience is felt by the masses. Therefore, in light of these, the people must know and come together and ensure they live harmoniously and be able to know that the ethnic politics promoted by the political class is for their gain and not for the good of the people. Instead, they must know how to hold the politicians accountable and ensure they act based on the stipulations of the laws. Furthermore, during elections, people should be voted for based on merit, fairness and competence.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Nigeria's political economy development has suffered lots of setbacks owing to ethnic politics. This foundationally dates back to the region's creation and the federal structure. In recent times, the issue of poor governance coupled with unfair practices and lack of accountability among those in leadership positions has divided the people more and created further trust problems. However, ethnic politics in Nigeria is not natural (primordial) but situational. Thus, its manifestation is for the benefit and anticipated gain and has been promoted mainly by those in a leadership position. In this regard, the Nigerian society comprises two classes, the ruling place and the ruled class. The ruling class are constantly exploiting the ruled class using ethnicity. Immediately they achieve their goal; they withdraw their ethnic card and harmoniously associate with their fellow ruling class. At the same time, the division continues among the ruled class, which consequently makes them more divided and unable to hold the ruling class accountable, and this has made the ruling class corruptly appropriate the wealth of the state according to their discretion (not the law) to the detriment of national development which has resulted in poverty and unemployment and made the people more vulnerable for manipulation by the political class.

The way forward requires the Nigerian people (masses) to awaken to the consciousness that they are one class that must hold the other class (political class) accountable. The political class must realise the need for trust to be built; national integration is only possible when the people are convinced of fair play.

Recommendations

In specific terms, this research makes the following recommendations:

1. Promotion of educational consciousness in which emphasis should be placed on inter-ethnic, inter-religious, and inter-linguistic dialogue to promote tolerance, understanding, and regard for other groups. This can be initiated/sponsored by civil society groups and well-meaning individuals in town hall meetings, market places, religious gathering, including the social media platforms.
2. The state institutions must be strengthened. The consolidation of governmental institutions such as the judiciary, police, electoral board, and media in order to guarantee their independence. This will normalise the playing field for every ethnic group. Additionally, government policies and appointments must reflect the national interest and not be based on sentiment.
3. The citizens should ensure that public officeholders behave in the nation's best interests rather than advancing the interests of their ethnic group. The citizens should see themselves as a class that should demand accountability from those they have elected or in charge of managing their commonwealth (resources) of the Nigerian state. This will make the political class understand that the people's consciousness is awakened and need to rise to responsibility as required. This will bring about general development of the Nigerian state.

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