

## **Tribalism, Civic Culture and Political Integration in Nigeria: A Snapshot**

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### **Abstract**

*The paper examines tribalism, civic culture and political integration in Nigeria. To achieve this, the paper commences with the analysis of tribes, civic-culture and political integration, also considered were the behavioral and reformative policies of the successive regimes in Nigeria such as war against indiscipline, change begins with me among others. Through the use of secondary sources of data collection and analysis, the paper argues that going by the 18 years of uninterrupted democratic experiment, Nigeria can also demystify the socio-political strategies inherent in the success of western philosophies. It ultimately concludes inter-alia that Nigerian government in particular and Nigerians in general should embark conscientiously on moral rearmament and adhere strictly to due process in the discharge of public and private businesses which are necessary to attaining and sustaining the status of cultural civilism. Theoretically, Ethnic mobilization/conflict theory which is a combination of reactive/defensive mobilization, the resource competition and dominant class-action theories also constitutes part of the discourse as a framework of analysis in this study.*

**Keywords: Civil Culture, Political Integration, Tribalism, Nigeria**

### **Introduction**

The semantic problem introduced by the word tribe or ethnic has brought about fundamental issues such as regionalism, tribalism, nepotism etc. that border on enculturation and integration in an effort to building a virile, united and stable country. These issues are prevalent and visible in the accounts of the foundations of Nigerian state and its politics. Historically, the typical organization of mankind in its early configuration was tribe or ethnic. Today, and in many parts of the world, the tribal community is still a major form of human political organization. Even in advanced systems, traces can still be found of its influence. For example in Germany, some communities such as Bavaria, Saxony etc still maintain their identity since the days of the Germanic tribal settlements. In Africa, the tribe was and is still an effective community and a vehicle of political consciousness. Europeans and Americans talk of traditional Africa as a land inhabited by tribes. The contention among political scientists centers on the role of tribalism as a force ascribing events in new African states. To some, tribalism is the root of most political problems in Africa. As will be revealed later in this paper, a more balanced view is that today's educated leaders of political parties recognize tribalism's potential as a vehicle for mass support. Ironically, most of these tribal communities were aggregated as entities by colonial powers, a legacy that appears to be a mixed blessing in Africa. Perhaps, this development paved the way for subsequent amalgamation of different tribes such as that of the protectorate of Northern and the colony and protectorate of Southern Nigeria in 1914. This in fact was the bedrock of regionalism and its inherent anti-civic political culture in Nigeria. Ever since, the country has

been structured and restructured beginning with three regions, through 4 regions, 12 states, 19 states 21 states, 30 states to 36 states, a Federal territory and seven hundred and forty four local government councils and six geopolitical zones–North East, North West, North Central, South East, South West and South-South in the process of political consolidation (Imuetinyan, 2015:255).

### Some Theoretical Discussions

There are various and varied theories on integrative political culture. They are communication theory, functional theory, models on internationalization of internal conflicts theory, Ethnic mobilization/conflict theory and a host of others. In this paper, the Ethnic mobilization/conflict theories shall be the focus of analysis.

Ethnic mobilization/conflict theory: This is a combination of three theories–reactive/defensive mobilization, the resource competition and the dominant class–action theories. Noel (1969) posits that the reactive/defensive mobilization theory states that movements occur in countries where resources such as Wealth, power and prestige are inequitably distributed among the different ethnic groups. The basis of this theory includes the internal colonialism, the dual economy, the cultural division of Labour and the split labour market perspectives. Although, these perspectives have different interpretations, the common ground is that ethnic mobilization is the result of the social stratification of any society. In most cases, when the dominant ethnic group is located in a particular area or that they have a particular interest, the resource distribution can result into two sets of ethnic groups viz the core group(s) and the peripheral group(s). While in resource allocation, the former is bound to exploit and dominate the latter, thereby stimulating the peripheral groups to a collective action.

On the contrary, the resource competition theory contends that once different ethnic groups are brought together under the same polity, there is bound to be ethnic mobilization irrespective of the social stratification of the system. In other words, the theory maintains that conflict is inevitable in a multi-ethnic society which (Premdas 1991) describes as “the consequences of resource competition” in the society. While the reactive and competition theories focus on corporate ethnicity, the dominant class-action theory emphasizes the hidden dynamics of ethnic mobilization. According to (Ogbiede 1996), “ethnic mobilization occurs when ethnic leaders organize their respective populations for political power struggle (as the case of Nigeria) in order to enhance their own individual class privileges in the society”.

However, from the three theories, it is obvious that once ethnic groups are submerged under one political umbrella, they engage in competition among themselves for social resources and thus peace, unity and stability will become evasive when one group has hegemony in the allocation of societal resources at the expense of the other.

### The Six Geo–political Zones of Nigeria (States and Capitals)

NORTH EAST	NORTH WEST	NORTH CENTRAL	SOUTH EAST	SOUTH WEST	SOUTH SOUTH
ADAMA WA Yola	JIGAWA Dutse	BENUE Makurdi	ABIA Umuahia	EKITI Ado – Ekiti	AKWA-IBOM Uyo
BAUCHI Bauchi	KADUNA Kaduna	NIGER Minna	ANAMBRA Awka	LAGOS Ikeja	BAYELSA Yenegoa

BORNO Maidugu ri	KANO Kano	KOGI Lokoja	EBONYI Abakaliki	OGUN Abeokuta	CROSS RIVER Calabar
GOMBE Gombe	KATSIN A Katsina	KWARA Ilorin	ENUGU Enugu	ONDO Akure	DELTA Asaba
TARAB A Jalingo	KEBBI Birnin- Kebbi	NASARAW A Lafia	IMO Owerri	OSUN Osogbo	EDO Benin City
YOBE Damatur u	SOKOTO Sokoto	PLATEAU Jos		OYO Ibadan	RIVERS Port Harcourt
	ZAMFAR A Gusau				

Source: Researchers Compilation, (2017)

### **The Tribes, Civic Culture and Integration: An Overview**

A study such as this one attempting to analyze the magnitude of the recognition and involvement of people viz– a–viz the diverse ethnic groups with varied cultural backgrounds on political integrative development has to start with the conceptualizations of Civic Culture and Political Integration.

The concept of Civic Culture is Synonymous and nuance with civic political culture and shall therefore be used interchangeably in this paper. By civic culture, it is meant a political term characterized by most citizens' acceptance of the authority of the state and a general belief in participation (McClean, 1996:69–70). In other words, it is a concept in which majority of citizens accept the government of a state and participate fully in her activities. Also, it refers to the government that has the support of majority of its citizens and is accorded the opportunity to participating in the business of government.

Also, (Verba and Almond 1986) define political culture as the “broad pattern of values and attitudes that individuals and societies hold toward political objects”. These objects include institutions such as the executive, legislature, bureaucracy, Judiciary, Political Parties, Pressure Groups and also the individual's view of him or herself as a political actor and in relation to others. As Verba and Almond put it, political culture is one of the most powerful influences that shape a political system (Terhemba, 2006:154).

Again, (Jackson and Jackson 2000) contend that politics always reflects the culture of a certain time and place. Political acts are embedded in the wider culture of a society and can be understood only in that context.

In the words of Almond and Verba, “political acts reflect and exemplify society's deepest–held values. This concept was propounded by Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba. They were motivated by the realization of the problems of political stability in western democratic practice. As the proponents put it, is one to be involved in a political process and another to be involved in political participation. The civic culture therefore is a description of an allegiant political culture

with emphasis on the citizens' involvement in both political process and political participation civic political cultured regimes may be possible in a dual or multi – party democracies (Almond and Verba, 1963).

According to (Almond and Verba (1986), three broad types of civic political culture are discernable. First, Parochial where politics is not differentiated as a distinct sphere of life and is of relatively little interest, second, subject, in which individuals are aware of the political system and its outcomes but are relatively passive and third, participant, where citizens have a strong sense of their role in politics and responsibility for it (Terhemba, 2006:160).

Civic cultured governments can be identified in several ways. Some of them are: first, it is a civilian government; second, majority based support of citizens; third, guarantees citizens' participation, fourth, peaceful transfer of power from one party to another in a regularized way; fifth, it is a mass party oriented; and sixth, possible in dual or multi-party democracies.

For (Almond and Verba 1963), the following are the characteristics of a civic culture:

- Orientation towards political system in both the political and governmental senses;
- Pride in aspects of one's nation;
- Expectation of fair treatment from government authorities;
- Ability to talk freely and frequently about politics;
- An emotional involvement in elections;
- Tolerance towards opposition parties;
- A valuing of active participation in local government activities, parties and in civic associations;
- Self – confidence in one's competence to participate in politics;
- Civic cooperation and trust; and
- Membership in the political associations.

### **Political Integration in Nigeria**

It will be necessary to conceptualize national integration before delving into political integration in order to enhance its comprehension. For (Haas 1958), national integration means “a process whereby political actors in distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectation and political activities toward a new centre, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing nation state”. According to (Coleman and Roseberg 1964), national integration is the “progressive bridging of the elite-mass gap on the vertical plane in the course of developing an integrated political process and a participant community”.

Political Integration as used in this paper refers to the organization of two or more ethnic groups within a country with the aim of solving common problems together. These problems may be in the areas of Language, re-distribution of resources, market strategies, threat of external aggression, autonomy or freedom etc. Also, Political Integration implies a relationship of community among people within the same political entity. That is, they are held together by mutual ties of one kind or another which give the groups a feeling of identity and self-awareness. Integration therefore is based on strong cohesiveness within a social group.

Political Integration could be national or international. But the former is the focus of this paper. Modo (1999) identified ten factors that can motivate people to integrate. They are nearness,

homogeneity, transactions among persons, knowledge of each other, shared functional interests, the character of a group, the system of power and decision making, and the sovereignty–dependency status of the community. Others are the effectiveness of government and previous integrative experience (Modo, 199:18 – 21).

Indeed, these variables are mere enumeration of integrative factors. They are by no means exhaustive and established, but it will suffice to say here that the more the prevalence of these factors in a country, the higher the magnitude of their integrativeness. Interestingly, Nigeria inhere almost these integrative qualities and it is the hope of the writers that the indivisibility of Nigeria as an entity be maintained and sustained with all vigour, transparency, conscientiousness and secularity.

### **Factors Exacerbating Anti–Civic Political Culture in Nigeria**

There are very many factors militating against the enculturation of civic political culture in Nigeria. It is the belief of the writers that they stemmed from corrupt practices. Indeed, corruption manifests in various and varied ways in the socio–cultural development of every society. Simply, (Odekambi 1986) expatiates it as “asking, giving or taking a free gift or favour in exchange of the performance of a legitimate task or the perversion or obstruction of the performance of such a task or the performance of illegitimate task, collusive price fixing, smuggling, transfer–pricing, inflation of prices, election rigging, illegal arrest for harassment or intimidation purposes, abuse, misuse or non-use of office, position or power, dumping of obsolete machines or outdated drugs, illegal foreign exchange transactions, legal but obviously unfair and unjust acquisition of wealth, certificate forgery among others”.

For (Bayart 1986), he posits that corruption affects the configuration and stability of government, loyalties are fragmented by desires to satisfy self; it disorganizes the state structures especially when the deprived becomes violent which sometimes results to insecurity in the nation state. From these definitions, it is obvious that corruption is tantamount to indecent practices which are at variance with the civic culture of the nation. Examples of such indecencies are:

- 1. Election Malpractices:** These are manifestations of careless, illegal and un-acceptable conduct by person(s) in a professional or official position. Hacking, inducements, snatching of ballot boxes, intimidation of voters, falsification of results and a host of others are glaring exemplifications of anti-civilism.
- 2. Inaccurate Population Census:** This is another indecent practice. The enumeration of people in a country is borne and bound by economic motive but in most developing countries like Nigeria, population is one of the determinants of revenue allocation. Hence there is a deliberate attempt by some states to influence, manipulate and inflate the head counts of their citizens in order to put them on a placement of gargantuan fund from the national or federal government.
- 3. Godfatherism:** Is also an indecent act in a civilized society. According to Hornby (1995), it is a very powerful man in a criminal organization, especially the Mafia. Eke and Osaghae (2006) see Godfatherism as a phenomenon in which wealthy and powerful individuals in a society multiply corruption by installing their protégé in office. By these definitions, the society has been criminalized; the candidates no longer depend on their popularity with the people, but by the

whims and caprices of the Godfathers. Also, the people no longer have confidence in the electoral process because violence, intimidation and subversion of the rule of law become the order of the day hence any attempt to construct an ideal cultured nation appears foredoomed to failure.

4. **Regional Politicking:** This is also another perspective of corruption ‘in-built’ political strategy in the process of the democratization of a nation. It is the geographical polarization of a nation along ethnic lines. For instance, Nigeria as discussed in the beginning of this paper is structured into six geo-political zones. Five of them – North East, North West, North Central, South East and South West constitute a conglomerate of ethnic or tribal affinity. Only South-South has less tribal affinity because it spans from extreme South through East to the Mid-West now Edo State. Perhaps, the implication of this configuration in a democratic process is that political contestants garner more support from their respective tribal strongholds as exemplified in all the general elections in Nigeria. Obviously, the ill-effect of this strategic regionalization of politics is that it gives birth to tribalism, nepotism, favouritism, gerrymandering, ethnic chauvinism etc. which are anti-civilism in a political cultured dispensation.
5. **Abuse of Human Rights:** This is again a morally wrong behavior that is endemic in Nigeria which is diametrically at variance with the Linedments of a civic cultured society. Hornby (1995) posits human right abuse as an unfair, cruel and violent treatment of a person contrary to the privileges he enjoys not just as a human being but by virtue of his citizenship of a country. Put differently, it is the denial of or an infringement on an individual’s entitlements inherent in the entrenchment of his country’s constitution. There are numerous cases of abuse that negate the principles of a civic political culture.

## Conclusion

It has been shown from the discourse so far that the main ascription that negates the Nigerian Civic Political Cultural development as well as integrative tendencies is inherent in corrupt practices such as election malpractices, fictitious population figures, Godfatherism, tribalism and a host of others. To apportion blame on one government or the other now may seem like an exercise in futility. The question is how has and will these pluralistic people of Nigeria be integrated under a civic cultured government which this paper has been set out to examine. Unfortunately, in the history of political development of Nigeria, none of the democratic regimes can be said to be civic cultured. Worse still, with the persistence of moral rearmament by the successive governments and the different religious organizations, it is obvious that both have failed in their efforts at political integration and civic enculturation.

Certainly, one can posit that Nigeria is a republican country with 18 years of uninterrupted democratic system. The foundation of a civic cultured regime is being laid as evidenced by behavioural modifications and reformative policies of the successive governments in Nigeria such as War Against Indiscipline (WAI) and “change begins with me” to mention but two. Truly, there is scarcely any country both developed and developing that one can pinpoint as an ideal civic political cultured nation worldwide. Although, this study is not a comparative study, corrupt practices such as election malpractices are still visible in the advanced countries. Hacking which Hornby (1995) defines as to secretly find a way of looking at and or changing information on somebody else’s computer system without permission was alleged in European

election. The America accusation of Russia hacking in the 2016 Trump–Clinton Presidential election is tantamount to anti–civilism.

Obviously, corruption has become ingrained and appears a conundrum in the body politics of Nigeria. Hence the character and atmosphere of the nation inheres indecencies such as skullduggery, infamy, influence peddling, Godfatherism etc. which are in contradistinction to the enculturation of civilism.

However, it is palpable to say that the present government in Nigeria is one of civility. It is formed by the citizens and it thus has the majority support of the citizens. The transfer of power to the current government was not characterized by litigation and it was adjudged to be civilized as the predecessor congratulated his successor before the declaration and announcement of election result. This is a glaring demonstration of a civilized culture. Perhaps, if the government can vigorously pursue the above measures, the lines of demarcation between the six geo-political zones will eventually crumble and the citizens are likely to become more actively involved in the business of the state, then the various and diverse people are bound to be effectively integrated. Thus, this underscores the idea that a civic political cultured government no doubt is in a position to integrate diverse ethnic groups in a plural society like Nigeria.

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