

Politics of Ethnic Exclusion: A Pitfall of the Nigerian State Towards Nationhood

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Abstract

The Nigerian polity is profoundly made up of a conglomeration of deeply heterogeneous ethnic groups and fatherlands. Hence, the mechanism of its political engagement consists of a constitutional democracy that recognises the plights of all and sundry – which reflects its divergence for meaningful inclusiveness. The flexibility of its democratic principles is such that makes it congenial for ultimate authority to be vested in the common people where public policy conforms to their will or interests. However, the sad reality of the politics of the Nigerian state is that her form of democracy is seen not to satisfy democratic ideals. Rather than power domiciled in the people, irrespective of their culture or creed, her version of democracy is seen to favour mostly a few privileged cliques of the major ethnic nationalities and dominant religions. This group of persons are viciously recycled in all elective and appointive positions in every electioneering circle, with a stereotypic form of governance, which precludes the so-called minorities and the disadvantaged group from participatory governance. There is no doubt that the political culture and the leadership criteria in Nigeria are faulty. The nation's political pattern is such that is marred by a poor democratic culture that enthrones mediocrity, impunity, recklessness, lack of vision, corruption, etc., built on certain parochial exclusivity. Using the critical and expository methods, the paper seeks to examine the problem of political exclusion and the leadership criteria in Nigeria, to provide alternatives for the need to harness the nation's diverse human potentialities through participatory politics for nation-building.

Keywords: Nigeria, politics, leadership, ethnic exclusion, nationhood.

Introduction

Different nations of the globe are seen to have adopted various forms of government based on some peculiarities and aspirations, and the choice of any system that is best for a modern municipal society depends largely on these dynamics. Certain congruent factors such as tribe or common descent, which often exhibit relative

homogenous identity are unified to form a nation-state that is characteristically a territorially bounded sovereign polity. Hence, Nigeria is a sovereign state in which most of the subjects are united by factors that define a nation. Like most of the countries within the West African sub-region, Nigeria emerged in the mid-twentieth century not merely for territorial ascendancy, but with a vision to build a nation-state with democratic principles that bring all the various cultures together with clear objectives and common aspirations.

Nigeria is indeed a sovereign polity that consists of a conglomeration of ethnic groups and fatherlands that are unreservedly heterogeneous in many aspects. The nation's choice of collective engagements since independence reflects the principles of a constitutional democracy; a mechanism of political engagement that supposedly caters for its divergence for meaningful inclusivity. The ideals of a democratic process are such that permit certain flexibilities in governance, in which the will and interests of the masses often count in the running of the general political affairs. The democratic ideals are often seen to satisfy certain moral and social conditions; they spell out clearly the worth of every individual and accord basic liberty to them. It recognizes the autonomy of each person within the society and defines what rights each lays claim to and the basis that leads to such entitlements. Perhaps, such privileges are only possible on a “just” pedestal that respects all human persons.

This expresses a level playing field that roughly exhibits fairness in which, not every citizen is made to succeed, but that they both have the same set of rules opened to all – like in the theory of the 'original position' in Rawls.¹ This represents the fundamental essence of politicking that appears to be progressively lacking in Nigerian society over the years. What plays out among Nigerian political actors can be likened to 'state capture' by a privileged few and ethnoreligious champion rather

1. See J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (USA: Harvard University Press, 1971); J. Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (USA: Harvard University Press Books, 1993).

than true politicking. The public scheming within the Nigerian political space is such that it builds more strong men, with increasing weak structures of the society. This suffices to say that Nigeria, as is the case with most African countries, has succeeded in building more people with unquestionable powers at the expense of having solid political systems or structures that characterise modern civilized societies. Rather than seeing Nigeria's diversity as a blessing, and harnessing it for its progress towards nationhood – as it is the case in other climes – the situation here exhibits the character of a cursed society, where political actors are increasingly seen to be taking advantage of the fragility of its divergence. The experience of the political activities in the past few years exhibits a deep exclusivity in Nigeria more than ever before; it has indeed shown in recent times the general attitude of “us and them”. The political engagements hinged basically on ethnic-religious inclination, rather than on genuine democratic principles of equal playing field.

By so doing, competent and genuine leaders with more potential are denied the opportunity to be involved in the affairs of the nation, where certain parochial exclusivity enthrones visionless leaders, mediocrity, impunity, recklessness, and corrupt privileged clique by separating the nation within ethnoreligious divide. The political actors continually cash in on the nation's feebleness at the expense of its progress. It is based on these that the paper seeks to offer alternatives for the situation, by advancing the need for an inclusive political culture that aims at harnessing the nation's diverse human potentialities through participatory politics for nation-building.

The Nigerian State and the Problem of Nationalism

There is no doubt that Nigeria is an amalgam of over 300 ethnic nationalities; it is indeed a country with “diverse – but congruent – groups of people with strong affiliation and allegiance to different identities such as tribe, religion, customs, and

whatnots.”² Conversely, the Nigerian nation-state possesses inherent complexities primarily characterised by ethnoreligious dynamics. If not effectively handled, these complexities have the potential to result in its untimely dissolution. The founding fathers were very much aware of these dynamics and sought to incorporate various mechanisms to protect its unity at the nation's formation stage. The length and breadth of the nation are deeply segmented from various fronts, resulting from factors of historical evolution, dialectal pluralism, multi-religion, socio-political and economic formation, educational attainments, social norms and disproportionate population sizes.³ This probably must have given rise to the political conjuncture where the doctrine of integration through its formative stages features a semblance of a weak regional authority with overburdened centralised supremacy.

Considering the meaning of the concept 'nation' is not as simple as it appears; it is a strenuous task that requires a full elaboration to resolve certain conceptual nuances to capture all its concerns. However, the term nation is a collection of groups of people who are united by common descent, with common historical, cultural, or linguistic antecedents, who are conscious of their identity and belonging. On the flip side, a state is construed to be a sovereign political entity with an organised government and definite borders, which can make laws within its territory.

To understand the conceptual combination of the word 'nation-state' therefore, something more than a mere definition is required to show certain fundamental cognitive processes to which the idea is mentally synthesised to generate a composite or a higher-order concept. A nation-state is construed to be “a large type of social organisation where a collective identity has emerged from a combination

2. 10 Problems of Nationalism in Nigeria and Possible Solutions, <https://infoguidenigeria.com>

3. C. C. Okpoebo. and V.S. Kabuk, “The Principle of Justice and Equality: An Appraisal of John Rawls Principle of Democracy” in *Kaduna Journal of Humanities*. 10, No.1(2017); 119.

of shared features across a given population, such as language, history, ethnicity, culture, territory and/or society.”⁴ The term nation-state is deeply rooted in people's culture or shared core values that may be taken as their 'national soul', which incorporates fundamental elements of their identity. In other words, a nation-state is often construed as an assemblage of peoples with shared core values who are determined to build up an institution using other governmental parameters, like the constitution and other governmental structures, to form a state. Its meaning is deeper than the notion of a country; it implies a collection of people who are conscious of their cohesive and coherent unit based on shared cultural and historical exigencies. It is perhaps a cultural-political community which has become conscious of its autonomy, unity and particular interests.⁵ The concept of the nation-state hence is irreducible to the idea of a state and is not envisioned as synonyms either theoretically or in the general social discourse.

Every nation-state has a unique spirit and character known as nationalism. Nationalism is undoubtedly the identification with one's nation and support for its interests, that is, a sense of national consciousness to promote the culture and interests of one's nation. It could be described as an ideology based on the idea of people's loyalty or devotion to the nation-state above other interests. This is acknowledged as a form of a widespread feeling that shapes both public and private aspects of life, directing them toward cultivating a unique spirit that every nation ought to possess, if they must share a fundamental value known as their national identity. Perhaps, this is consistent with the idea of the eighteenth-century German philosopher, Johann Gottfried Herder, often considered a precursor to modern nationalism. Herder expressed the significance of culture, language, and shared history in shaping a nation, and each nation possesses a unique spirit (*volksgeist*).⁶ Conversely, the diversity of these spirits contributes to the richness of humanity. It is

4. “Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopaedia,” <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/nation>

5. A. D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (MA, Blackwell, 2005), 17.

6. M.D. Clerk and M.N. Forster, ed., *Herder Philosophical Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

probably from this context, that later philosophers such as E. Renan, B. Anderson, J.S. Mill, and J.J. Rousseau developed their concepts.

Presently in Nigeria, a growing number of individuals prioritise their allegiance to their ethnic or regional identities rather than acknowledging their Nigerian nationality.⁷ The current political landscape in Nigeria deeply exhibits ethnic loyalty in the scheme of things rather than in the nation-building process. The political culture is such that it damages the aspiration towards preserving the nation-state. The various regions that make up the Nigerian state appeared to prioritise their own interests over the national interest, as each sought to gain advantages from the 'national cake' rather than contributing to the development of a robust and cohesive nation. Certainly, this has impeded its progress in development over the years. Ethnic allegiance or regional self-interest disregards the essence of nationalism, sparking ethnic disparities and tribal/sectional animosity as each group strives to claim what it believes is rightfully theirs, while others become imagined enemies.

Problems of Ethnicity and Exclusionary Politics in Nigeria

There is no doubt that scholars hold diverse perspectives on the interpretation of the concept of ethnicity. However, the most commonly used in socially related contexts is the basic idea that ethnicity is a politically neutral concept, and distinct from race; it refers to a social grouping based on shared cultural traits, language, common identity, or history, and a common geographic origin. According to Hervé Varenne:

Ethnicity refers to the identification of a group based on a perceived cultural distinctiveness that makes the group into a “people.” This distinctiveness is believed to be expressed in language, music, values, art, styles, literature, family life, religion, ritual, food, naming, public life, and material culture. This cultural comprehensiveness—a unique set of cultural characteristics perceived as expressing themselves in

7. V.S. Kabuk, “Understanding the Politics of Zoning System in Nigeria: A Purview of John Rawls” in *Basey Andah journal*, Vol 7-8, (2014-2015): 146.

commonly unique ways across the sociocultural life of a population—characterizes the concept of ethnicity. It revolves around not just a “population,” a numerical entity, but a “people,” a comprehensively unique cultural entity.⁸

Varenne's view is comprehensive enough to capture all that concerns the concept beyond the notion of race or other unique physical and biogenetic characteristics of a population. Conversely, there is more to the notion of ethnicity; it is a socially constructed notion, and the criteria to identify a group by its ethnic composition varies across various cultural and historical contexts. However, its basic components include identity, cultural traits, ancestry, and common history.

The politics of ethnicity on the other hand implies the intersection of ethnicity with political structure and processes, including power dynamics like representation, decision-making, and other factors of political mobilization within a society. This however explains a sort of ethnic consciousness among people with shared historical antecedents, canvassing for equal representation and fair distribution of resources in society. There is a wide range of beliefs among various theorists that the deployment of politics of ethnicity may not be entirely negative, although, its impact can vary based on the specific context in which it is deployed.⁹ Hence, politics of ethnic identity is encouraged when it is done with the sole aim of identity recognition and inclusivity in any political arrangement or scheme of affairs of a nation; as it is part of the modern democratic principles for the rights of every ethnic identity to be recognised. No doubt, ethnic politics understood this way fosters inclusive and equitable societies.

Perhaps, the scenario differs in Nigeria, as parochialism and other commonplace

8. Hervé Varenne, “Ethnicity” in Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/science/anthropology/The-anthropological-study-of-education>

9. See James D. Fearon, “Ethnic Mobilization and Ethnic Violence” in *Oxford Handbook of Political Economy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

interests frequently interplay alongside the political trajectory through certain ethnic affiliations. This is often done to pursue a selective or exclusive power dynamic within the framework of the nation's affairs. The particular manner in which ethnic politics is often conducted in Africa, including Nigeria, is often viewed as a contentious affair due to its associated drawbacks. Hence, this perception is particularly held by those who carefully consider the adverse effects linked with ethnic-based political activities. Nigeria is a multi-tribal society with three major tribes, namely Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba. There are several other tribes within these ethnic groups numbering 371, with a display of unique cultures, dialects etc.¹⁰ However, individuals in Nigeria often prioritise their tribal identities and preferences over fostering a robust national spirit, hindering the development of a cohesive national identity necessary for building a strong nationhood. In other words, these ethnic groups pledge loyalty and prioritise the well-being of their nations over that of the entire Nigerian nation.¹¹ Hence, Usuh has this understanding and advances that:

Ethnicity is characterized by a common consciousness of being one in relation to the other relevant ethnic groupings. Exclusiveness is also an attribute of ethnicity. Ingroup and outgroup boundaries emerge with it and, in time, become marked, more distinct than before, and jealously guarded by the various ethnic groups. This fact of exclusiveness is usually accompanied by nepotism and corruption, merit is sacrificed on the altar of ethnic chauvinism and solidarity.¹²

Each geopolitical zone of the nation has developed certain political mechanisms for engagements, based on some epistemic orientations built over the years. These are

10. Zents Kunle Sowunmi, "Full list of all 371 tribes in Nigeria, states where they originate" in *Vanguard*, May 10th 2017, <https://www.vanguard.com>.

11. Kabuk, "Understanding the Politics of Zoning System in Nigeria", 138.

12. F. Usuh, "True Federalism as a Remedy for Ethnic Politics in Nigeria" in *The Oracle: International Journal of Culture, Religion and Society*, 2. no.2, (2006): 96-7.

often sectional consciousnesses aimed at excluding others from the general scheme of affairs, due to general distrust and mutual suspicion each ethnic group has over the other. Perhaps, these are often mundane tasks that routinely foster division based on religious and ethnic affiliations. For instance, in south-eastern Nigeria, the criteria for public appointments prioritise being Igbo and Christian over competence. In the West, the individual must first be a Yoruba, and then the question of the faith professed arises. While in the North, the person must first be a Hausa/Fulani Muslim and not a question of proficiency. This has led to the recruitment of mediocres in the public sector; people often prefer their own in the public space rather than having competent hands, thereby enthrone mediocrity. Nonetheless, the prevailing situation tends to recognise ethnicity and religion over competency.

This is evident in the unidirectional appointments between 2015 and 2023, where President Buhari's regime undermined the federal character principles as enshrined in Nigeria's constitution that encourages fair representation of every section and ethnic group of the nation. The nepotistic tendency of the era was alarming, in which the northern region had more than a fair share in political appointments and security structures. It cannot be denied that participating in ethnic politics marked by exclusivity is an unfavourable endeavour, often intertwined with other damaging elements such as religious affiliations. Perhaps, religion is often advanced to determine the political direction of the Nigerian state, despite its constitutional claim of secularity.

The nepotism that tainted the regime of Muhammadu Buhari included the appointment of his relatives squarely as his personal staff and other key offices, and also his wife's relatives in other strategic positions, which led to the formation of cabals within the presidential palace.¹³ Adetayo describes these cabals as: "...power brokers who exert influence without necessarily being elected. They decide who

13. O. Adetayo, "Return of cabals" in Punch, 1st November 2023, <https://www.puncng.com>

gets what from the government in terms of appointments and contracts. In some extreme cases, they even do a lot in the name of the office holder without his knowledge.”¹⁴ The wife to former President Buhari, Mrs. Aisha, claimed on several instances that cabals had hijacked the presidency and were controlling her husband at the expense of Nigerians.¹⁵ A situation Olalekan Adetayo saw differently because he believed the former first lady was rather the leader of a factional cabal, who probably must have been overpowered by her husband's faction.¹⁶ Former President Buhari alluded to the fact that a cabal must have hijacked his eight-year administration in an interview with the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA).¹⁷

The security architecture of the nation was managed virtually by the Muslim north, including the paramilitary. Conversely, whenever there was a change in leadership within agencies, it was widely understood beforehand that only a Northern Muslim would be considered suitable for the position at the expense of other ethnic groups. Despite the wide criticisms by Nigerians, all the appointees kept their jobs.¹⁸ The era witnessed unprecedented levels of corruption and incompetence among public officials, yet none of them faced accountability for their actions throughout the period, until the recent recovery of stolen assets and funds the present regime of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu is doing. Lasisi quoted Salaam Rasak who admitted that Buhari had the constitutional right to appoint whosoever he believed was competent, however, there is always a need for objectivity and inclusiveness, which every geopolitical zone is believed to have capable hands. Perhaps, a commonly

14. O. Adetayo, “Return of Cabals”,

15. Y. Akinpelu, “Cabals not controlling my government - Buhari” in *Premiumtimes*, 29th January 2020. <https://www.premiumtimes.com>

16. O. Adetayo, “Return of Cabals”,

17. M. Buhari, “Cabals must have hijacked my government”, in *Vanguard*, November 21st 2023, <https://www.vanguardngr.com>

18. See O.L. Lasisi, “Buhari's actions contradict nepotism comment” in *Businessday*, November 2nd 2022, <https://businessday.ng/business-economy/article/buharis-actions-contradict-nepotism-comment/?amp=1>

held belief is that “corruption encourages hiring based on nepotism, cronyism and patronage, not merit, therefore, reducing the quality of public institutions.”¹⁹ It is evident that nepotism was prioritised over meritocracy throughout Buhari's administration; this is believed to be the reason for the current economic woes the nation is experiencing. The finance minister (who was from the same geopolitical zone as the president) was seen not to be ingenious enough in her role of coordinating both monetary and fiscal policies. The nation, through her watch, depended squarely on foreign and domestic borrowings for its survival.

The preponderance of northern Muslims in the nation's security architecture never made any difference, the regime recorded the worst security situation Nigeria ever had; particularly in the north where insurgency and kidnapping were rampant, and military formations were also not spared by the bandits. People in their thousands were either kidnapped, killed, or made to pay compulsory taxes to the nonstate actors, particularly in the northwest region. The northern appointees were nonetheless involved in massive corruption scandals, notably, the Office of the Accountant General of the Federation, the ministries of Aviation, Humanitarian Affairs, Federal Capital Territory, and Justice, etc. The heads of the anti-corruption agency (particularly EFCC) were accused of being corrupt themselves during President Muhammadu Buhari's administration. The Central Bank chief who was a Christian Southerner was involved in an open corruption too, but was seen to be protected by the regime, since his nefarious activities appeared to have enriched the president's poor relatives.²⁰ These and many more are the evils associated with ethnic politics.

The same played out in Kaduna state, where the regime of Malam Nasir Elrufai excluded the southern part of the state, which is known to be educationally

19. O.L. Lasisi, “Buhari's actions contradict nepotism comment”,

20. See V.S. Kabuk, “Ethno-Religion Violence in Nigeria: The Bane of Nation Building”, in *International Journal of Theology and Reformed Tradition*. Vol.7, 213, 210.

advantaged and has more technocrats than its northern counterpart. The exclusivity of the region was both in appointments (federal and state) and basic infrastructures. During that period, the region (southern Kaduna) can only be remembered for instances of genocide and governmental oppression directed towards the indigenous population, which made daily headlines in the media.²¹ The deputy governor's slot was cruelly taken, and replaced with a Muslim from the region. There is a wide range of beliefs that this must have set the pace for what has today turned out to be a Muslim-Muslim ticket at the national level. As a sitting governor, he (Elrufai) confirmed his resentment against the Christian South in a recorded video circulating, when he gathered strictly Islamic clerics and was addressing them in his last days as the governor.

The regional resentment and division within the borders of Nigeria is heightened during these administrations. Although President Bola Tinubu is seen to be running a seemingly inclusive government where people of other creeds are seen to be involved in governance; it does not make people see the All Progressives Congress (APC) regime as less Islamic brotherhood because of the party's antecedents between 2015-2023.

Even though Tinubu's administration, unlike Buhari's, transcends religious inclination and recognises the nation's diverse faiths, it is accused of giving more than fair opportunity to people of his tribe and region. The administration is plagued with consideration of associates in which most of the appointees in the cabinet are said to have various degrees of corruption cases with the Economic and Financial Crime Commission.²² The parameter used for appointment by the present administration of Bola Tinubu is not competency, but purported to satisfy his political allies and their cronies.

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21. A. Adepegba, F. Olorok et al, "Carnage: outrage as gunmen defy curfews, attacked Southern Kaduna communities" in *Punch*, 26th July 2020, <https://punchng.com>
 22. Sahara Reporters, 2nd August 2023. <https://saharareporters.com>

Conversely, ethnic consciousness or ethnicity construed as a form of political association within the structure of the modern state – an informal interest group that aims for rational goal-oriented outcomes – has become a divisive tool for exclusive political engagement in the Nigerian context.²³ The politicisation of religion and ethnicity in governance has grave challenges in society. The challenges arising from ethnoreligious political practices in Nigeria have detrimental consequences that deter meaningful developments and peaceful coexistence among different ethnic nationalities. The Nigerian nation has deeply been divided through the years within ethnic and religious lines; in fact, the emergence of the APC-led administration has further exacerbated the situation, where there are mutual suspicions and distrust between the north and south – a legacy of divisiveness that had never been experienced to this extent. There seems to be no common front politically among the regions. Such politics of ethnic loyalty and sectional struggle or exclusiveness deaden the spirit of nationhood. Therefore, the identity-based politics in Nigeria has brought enormous drawbacks to the nation's development, where mediocrity and corruption are enthroned in the public space. By so doing, competency is being traded for preference which hampers the productivity of the nation since ill-fitted personnel are preferred due to ethnic and religious affiliations.

Politics of 'Inclusiveness' and the Build-up of a Sustainable Nationhood

The political engagement within Nigeria's society presents a prevalent distrust towards democratic institutions and processes through the years. Perhaps, there is a growing challenge in aligning citizens' needs and aspirations with accountable and representative political bodies. This represents one of the myriad challenges hindering the adoption of inclusivity, resulting in drawbacks towards the establishment of a sustainable national identity conducive to development. Nonetheless, the ideals of modern democracy require certain underpinnings of

23. Buba Galadima, "Some of Buhari's poor relatives have become billionaires" in *Punch*, 26th December 2018, <https://punchng.com>

social and political inclusion, which permit fairness in the participation and representation of all citizens in the process. This encompasses the basic idea that every citizen, regardless of class, age, gender, ability, group, culture and ethnic or religious background, should have equal rights and opportunities to contribute to the functioning of political institutions and processes.²⁴ This basic idea features in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which advocates for inclusive participatory politics and processes, leading to the construction of a sustainable national identity.

To foster the development of a sustainable national identity, society must cultivate trust through inclusive political practices. This encompasses the significance of integrating diverse voices, orientations or perceptions and deepening trust in the political process leading to a cohesive and equitable society. Over time, political inclusivity has demonstrated itself as the avenue for nurturing strong social bonds that advance democratic principles, which fosters a collective awareness of shared objectives that ultimately contribute to lasting stability and prosperity in the society. This encourages resilience towards dismantling some perceived barriers to inclusivity, which opens doors for the recognition of diverse voices in political engagements and decision-making for lasting harmony and development of society, irrespective of creed or ethnic affiliation.

Therefore, the cardinal features of inclusive politics include intercultural dialogue, collaboration, and consensus-building among people deeply segmented by ethnic and religious frontlines and other societal dynamics. Perhaps, there cannot be other means by which unity is fostered within a heterogeneous society than inclusiveness. This is where democratic ideals are consolidated for inter-ethnic compromise and peacebuilding. It is by this means that epistemic inequalities built over the years are dethroned, and social justice and equitable access to opportunities are promoted

24. Paul Cordenillo, "Political Inclusion is Vital to Sustainable Democracy" in *Supporting Democracy Worldwide*, June 24th 2017, <https://www.idea.int>

among diverse groups.

Indeed, sub-Saharan Africa has provided a catalogue of case studies of political exclusivities within religious and ethnic lines, which deterred meaningful progress within the region. Therefore, for the overall economic development and stability of any nation, the heterogeneity of such societies must be harnessed to their advantage, to strengthen democratic institutions and ideals for a strong and sustainable nationhood.

Conclusion

The developmental drawbacks observed in Nigeria stem from a multitude of factors, primarily associated with mutual distrust among the diverse cultural groups, arising from perceived irreconcilable differences between them. People are increasingly paying allegiance to their ethnic nationality rather than working for the collective interest of the nation in general. As observed from the foregoing, the discordance elicited from the ethnic and religious lines led to general distrust or suspicion between the different ethnoreligious groups. As a result, achieving the harmony necessary for meaningful development becomes unattainable, as each segment of the nation advocates solely for the interests of its own ethnic group, neglecting the basic principles of inclusiveness.²⁵ This could lead to the chaotic state of “*bellum omnium contra omnes*” (war of all against all) depicted in the Hobbesian state of nature.

For Nigeria as a nation to experience enduring peace, there is a need to design a roadmap for ethnic integration of the diverse ethnic groups, to dispel all forms of resentment and distrust in order that a spirit of national trust and harmony is built among them. This simply implies that inclusive politics strengthens democratic institutions by ensuring that diverse cultures are recognised by all, and harnessed to the advantage of the Nigerian society. Perhaps, citizen participation or inclusive

25. Kabuk, “Ethno-Religious Violence in Nigeria”, 166-7.

governance enhances the legitimacy and democratic system, leading to trust between the government and the governed. Hence, without espousing certain frameworks and practices that encourage equity, social justice and acknowledgement of cultural diversities, building sustainable nationhood in Nigeria through inclusivity is impossible.

It is a truism that an inclusive political culture that acknowledges diverse cultures and beliefs is not merely a moral imperative but encompasses a practical necessity, which overlays resilient, cohesive, and prosperous nations through intercultural dialogue, and capacity-building for the victims of historical injustice, leading to a collective aspiration. This is a major pathway for Nigeria, as a nation, to establish a basis for sustainable progress and a lasting legacy of a peaceful society.

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