OZUMBA'S INTEGRATIVE HUMANISM: IMPLICATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP AND SOCIO-CULTURAL DISINTEGRATION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The quest for socio-cultural integration has largely become one of the burning issues in Nigeria today. This has attracted tremendous attention among scholars, politicians and well-meaning citizens, whose desire is to ensure progressive sustainable Nigeria state. This has become increasingly laudable in the light of continuous agitation for cessation and the increasing multiplicity of separationist movements in Nigeria. Many aggressive socio-cultural groups have consistently alleged being marginalized and side-lined in the scheme of things, hence their persistent agitation for separation from the other groups. The Nigerian state has increasingly been under the threat of disintegration. The polarity and indeed conflict of interest among ethno-socio-cultural and religious groups in Nigeria have in no small measure threatened the unity of the country. The hegemonic struggle and conflict of supremacy and dominance between the various constituent ethno-religious and cultural groups has largely remained unhealthy to the existence of Nigeria as a heterogeneous state. This is because leadership – being a pivotal instrument of socio-political cohesion, progress, and sustainable development of any nation – is undermined by the peoples' struggle to co-exist. In other words, Nigeria lacks but needs effective leadership for its continuous survival as a nation state. This work uses analytical method of thinking to demonstrate through Ozumba's 'Integrative Humanism' that leadership remains an indubitable tool of socio-cultural integration and progressive development of Nigeria.

Keywords: Leadership, Conflict, Socio-cultural Disintegration, Ozumba's Integrative Humanism, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria as a heterogeneous society is a conglomerate of various distinct ethno-cultural and religious groups. The conglomeration of this distinct ethno-

religious groups provides an array of peculiar human and natural resources for a productive federation. In other words, various socio-cultural identities in Nigeria provide veritable grounds for intercultural relations, affiliations and productive co-existence. The multiculturality of the Nigerian state can be considered a national strength where it is galvanized for productivity, sustainability and progressive development of the nation. However, Nigeria has over the years experienced socio-cultural ethno-religious conflicts and crisis that are antithetical to peaceful co-existence and progress. The nation has increasingly been bedevilled with ethno-religious crisis, political instability and in fact insecurity. The increase in cessation movement has become alarmingly detrimental to the federation - Nigeria. The Nigerian state has palpably recorded damning hegemonic struggles and strives of dominance amongst the various constituent federating units. The truth remains therefore, that Nigeria is under the threat of disintegration and requires urgent intervention.

Leadership as a central-focal tool of development and national integration remains essential in the sustainable development and existence of Nigeria. However leadership in Nigeria has largely been characterized as being problematic in that it is beclouded by issues such as corruption, ethno-religious infiltration, egocentricism, and many other things that militate against good, and effective governance. And this consistently undermines the peoples' struggle to co-exist. In other words, Nigeria lacks but needs effective leadership for its continuous survival as a nation state. The sustainable progressivity and peaceful co-existence and integration of the various composite units is largely dependent on leadership. This work uses analytical method of thinking to demonstrate through Ozumba's 'Integrative Humanism' that leadership remains an indubitable tool of socio-cultural integration and progressive development of Nigeria.

From this outset, we clarify that philosophical analysis which is applied as a method of discussion in this work involves "rational act of breaking down constituent notions, concepts, and/or terms involved in a statement into the least possible and familiar notions or ideas in order to have better grasp of the statement" (Etokudoh 47). It clarifies concepts to offer meaningful theories, practices, and problem solving (Umotong 12). In this work, therefore, all complex concepts are broken down to simpler terms for clear rudimentary discussion.

THE CHALLENGE OF SOCIO-CULTURAL POLARITY IN NIGERIA

Ethno-cultural identity has predominantly become a thorny issue in the Nigerian Society. This is sequel to the dialectical struggle of existential predominance between various cultures and ethnic groups. The various ethno-cultural identities provide a beautiful interwoven-ness of cultural resources and indeed tremendous human and natural resources that can contribute to the meaningful progressive and development of the nation state. The symmetrical

interconnectedness of these ethno-cultural and religious identities is largely considered by many as a distinct constituent of strength and enormous potential that can be galvanized and harmonized toward the sustainable development of the country. However, Nigeria has been largely bedevilled by continuous and persistent ethno-cultural crisis, that has greatly polarized the state. One of the major causes of ethnic crisis and conflict in Nigeria is land. This is because land is considered as a huge capital that can be utilized by both individuals and communities. Various ethnic communities in Nigeria hold land in high esteem, as they utilize such for farming cultivation and other infrastructural facilities. In this light, this becomes a cherish commodity that cannot be undermined but utilized as generational heritage. Ethno-cultural conflict, emanates from conflicting interest (Ejeh 8). Various cultural groups strive to protect their interest in the possession of land and community valuables that cannot be compromised.

Ethnicity and Tribalism is predominantly a major issue to the existence of the Nigerian state. People largely identify with their cultural groups (Obatala 5), thus implicitly negating or down-playing their national identity. This ethno-cultural and socio-cultural consciousness batters nationalism, patriotism and integration, leading to habitual sabotage of national interest, escalating tension and conflict (Nze 450). The decline in national identity, nationalism, patriotism, unity and desire for national building has paved way significantly for ethnic polarity, cultural divisiveness and hegemonic struggle for supremacy and dominance. This divisive consciousness and ethnocentricity has immensely impacted the Nigerian state negatively. The quest for patriotism and national interest has been subsumed in ethnic strife and struggle for dominance. Many Nigerians affirm themselves to be more akin and attracted to their ethnic and cultural heritage than the Nigerian identity. The identity struggle therefore between ethnic affiliations and national interest has immensely denigrated the desire for national building. In this light therefore, national interest suffers tremendous setbacks as a result of ethno-cultural conflict. The conflict of interest between various socio-cultural units has led to several inter-tribal and cultural wars that remain visible in Nigeria history.

Suffice it to state that ethno-cultural consciousness in the Nigeria state, has overwhelmingly hampered on the principle of meritocracy, which is the driving force of all progressive societies. This principle has largely been substituted with mediocrity. Many in the herm of affairs prefer to give certain positions to members of their ethnic group, whether they are qualified or not. This negative trend has a boomerang effect on the productivity and progress of many sectors of the Nigerian state. This largely accounts for the ineptitude and effectiveness in the performance of certain responsibilities. The truth that Nigeria as a pluralized state can be largely categorized by its multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic and multi-religious configuration cannot be over-emphasized. What is disturbing is the fact that this Africa's populous black nation with over Million people and over 300

ethnic groups (Elaigwu 208), is largely divisive with the various ethno-cultural groups having their unique value system, goals and contentious claims to certain available natural resources. This multiple character therefore produces competitive ethnicity and religiosity, majority-minority questions, attempted secession leading to a civil war, ethnic militia and sectarian problems, among others thereby making the quest for peace, unity and stability elusive (Uembola Peter 40). More disturbing is the fact that is multi-cultural, Linguistic and religious disposition breeds the incubus of intolerance and social inequality, feelings of marginalization, majority-minority conflict and the hegemonic struggle for relevance and supremacy. This not only undermined the question of national identity but propels tension, disunity and conflict.

The ethno-cultural and religious differences and tension visible in the socio-cultural structure of the Nigerian state, engulfs and influences socio-cultural activities. In other words, political activities in Nigeria are immensely influenced by the socio-cultural and religious diversity of the Nigerian society. This in most instances increases political tension and crisis experienced in Nigeria. For instance, Nigeria is largely identified by the three major tribes and languages which constitute the nation- Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo. In this instance, the ethno-cultural and religious group of the Nigerian President and members of cabinet is often considered seriously as it can further propel conflict, thus leading to enormous civil unrest. Strongly attached to the culture of the people and indeed their value system, is religion. One cannot but affirm that religion has consistently remained a tool of disintegration and violence in Nigeria. Most socio-cultural crisis in Nigeria is often largely propelled by religion and remains a more destructive tool of disunity, than a tool of nation building. Olanrewaju (43) observes that:

> Socio-cultural interactions involve value contracts, which often lead to struggles or disputes in determining what is right, wrong, acceptable, or not. This is due to the fact that there is no universally accepted definition of what is right, wrong, and acceptable or not. People's peculiar belief, cultural religion and experience determine this definition, making them different from each other. These differences degenerate into conflict when not properly managed.

Socio-cultural, religious and ethnic polarity and differences has immensely been mismanaged in Nigeria. This is the case, where ethnic and religious affiliations are held supreme and placed above the rule of law. In this instance some criminals perpetrating evil and violence against other citizens are made to go free or treated with kid's glove in terms of sanction. This not only steers the wheels of disunity and conflict, but fans the embers of distrust against the leadership, who in many instances are culpable. Ilemobola Peter (50) observes that:

> Truly most of the violence Nigeria has experienced since independence is religious… horrible historic events are linked to religion: Pre-colonial Jihad, the Sharia law controversy, tensions arising from joining the organisation of Islamic countries(O.C) the incessant religious crisis especially in the Northern Nigeria (the Kano riots of the 1980s, Kano riots of 1991, Sharia riots of 2000, the Jos religious crisis of 2004, 2008, 2010) and ongoing war against the Islamic extremist group Boko Haram.

Ayuk (617) succinctly depicts Igwe, affirming that 'it is a shame that after independence, Nigerians are still attacking and killing themselves in the name of religion… Nigerians of different faith have not learnt to live, love, and tolerate one another. Suffice it to reiterate, that 'the Nigerian state is an aggregation of tribal unions, where these associations provided members of their ethnic group with social security and welfare generally denied them by the colonialists, and equipped them to compete with other members of other ethnic groups (Fatai 131). The predominant expectations, was that indigenous Nigerian leadership will provide good security, and the basic necessities of a viable state. Contrarily, the Nigerian state has experienced immense leadership failure that has affected the progression of the nation. In this light, failure in leadership has exacerbated disunity, socio political cum cultural instability and violence as well as fan the embers of ethno-cultural and religious extremism. Shuriye(50) affirms, that "Failure of the Nigerian leaders to establish good governance culminating in mass poverty and unemployment have served as recipe for the emergence of Boko Haram who have utilized government flaws in northern Nigeria to recruit young men ready to kill or be killed".

The absence of good leadership and effective governance stands fundamentally as one of the precursors of ethnic polarity, socio-cultural conflict, the struggle for supremacy, and ethno-religious extremism and violence. Poor leadership has left the citizens impoverished, uncared for, subjugated and breeds the feeling of being marginalized and segregated against. The unpleasant injustice, inequality, inequity in the distribution of public gains, infrastructural facilities and basic amenities have left many citizens with the feeling of not belonging to the common national identity. Many citizens feel cheated and poorly treated by government and many in the herm of leadership. This and many more, propels citizens close affiliation to their ethnic heritage. It is common knowledge that many Nigerians prefer their ethnic identity to the national identity. The feeling of marginalization by some minority groups in Nigeria steers the quest for cessation, disintegration and the desires for self-determination.

It is disheartening to note, that the socio-cultural polarity and hegemonic struggle, have over the year led to mindless killings, destruction of properties and destabilization of Nigeria's economy, polity and social development. The quest

for integration and inclusive Governance and leadership, becomes a major necessity for the healing process and stability of the Nigerian state. Suffice it to state, that the progressive, sustainable development and unity of the Nigerian state is largely dependent on its leadership. Leadership in Nigeria has hitherto been embroiled in the imbroglio of ethnocentrism, egoism, ethno-religious discrimination, corruption and other baggage that beclouds effectiveness productivity and togetherness. Little wonder, it becomes difficult people in authority to play a unifying role that can enhance nation building.

THE QUEST FOR SOCIO-CULTURAL INTEGRATION IN NIGERIA

The palpable desire of many Nigerians in recent times is the urgent quest for integration, unity, peaceful co-existence and sustainable development of the country. This has become an urgent necessity against the backdrop of crisis, violence, division and cessation plot of many ethnic groups. It becomes glaring therefore that the progressive and sustainable development of the nation is greatly hinged on the anchor of national identity, good Governance and togetherness. The fulcrum of socio-cultural integration is profoundly good leadership. Effective leadership becomes essentially pivotal in the actualization of national unity, integration and the common purpose of nation building.

Leadership in Nigeria must undeniably be free from ethno-centric commitment and bias. Leaders must be seen to stand above ethnic sentiment and divisive inclination. Although many leaders are from some specific ethnic groups with cultural and religious affiliations, yet they must rise above ethno-cultural cum religious sentiment. Leaders must never be entangled with favouristic bias and protection of members of one ethno-religious group above others. In this light Nigerians must treat all citizens as equal, irrespective of their ethno-cultural or religious groups. Nigerian leaders and indeed African leaders, must not be entangled in the ethnocentric commitment of the 'nearer the better and safer' where they treat people of their common origin who are close to them differently in a favouristic manner, irrespective of the crimes they commit and their negative actions against the common interest of the people. It is no gainsaying the fact that leadership in Nigeria must be neutral and, in this light, hold people to accountability irrespective of the ethno-religious affiliation.

Moreover, it is important to affirm that leadership in Nigeria must be devoid of corruption and allegation of corrupt practices. It is common knowledge that some African leaders and indeed Nigerian leaders are entangled with corrupt practices. Some are accused of misappropriation of public funds. In most cases it is difficult to separate their private and personal funds from public funds, as money meant for public infrastructures are sometimes converted to personal gains. This and many more corrupt practices has the capacity of truncating sustainable development. Leadership therefore must be corruption-free and leaders must display high level of integrity and accountability. Where this is

achieved there is bound to be a positive impact on the development of the nation as funds meant for public good will be fully utilized for sustainable development. Leadership must stand as a unifying category of national development. The leader must essentially promote public and general interest above his/her individual and private interest.

UTILISING OZUMBA'S INTEGRATIVE HUMANISM

Integrative Humanism is Godfrey Ozumba's comprehensive, complementary approach to human existential problems ranging from Ontology, Epistemology, Politics, Human relations etc. It primarily advocates the harmonious integration of various units of reality from their points of relevance. It derives its inspiration from an Igbo cultural world view – Njikoka Amaka – which means 'to integrate is better than to disintegrate'. It identifies distinctly various forms of reality with the intent of integrating same, for a purposeful prosperous and harmonious existence. Integrative Humanism is ratio-empirico-spiritocentric in approach as it explores physical and spiritual insights toward addressing pressing existential issues. As a philosophy of integration, integrative Humanism holds that reality is multidimensional and its multidimensionality can adequately be appreciated when all its units are perceived from their points of distinct relevance (Solomon 14)

For Ozumba, this philosophy enhances the management of relevant variable in a context dependent dynamic network for solutions of task that would rather prove difficult for non-sequestered and non-contextualized theoretical frameworks. It bridges the gap between one culture and another and between one philosophical tradition and another (Ozumba 6). Integration Humanism existentially provides a template of national integration, as it holds that various units of existence, irrespective of their differences and uniqueness can be properly integrated for a more meaningful existence. In this light therefore, Nigeria leaders must first appreciate the heterogeneity of the Nigeria state. The distinct ethno-cultural and religious identities of the various constituent groups must not be denigrated or undermined. Leaders therefore must view these constituent groups as valuable resources and units of existence, that can contribute meaningfully to the progressive sustainable development and existence of the Nigerian state. In this regards the various ethno-cultural and social-political and religious units must be properly integrated from their point of relevance and their unique contributions galvanized for a productive existence and prosperity of the state.

Each socio-cultural and ethnic group must duly be given a pride of place and sense of belonging. The consciousness of acceptance and relevance meticulously drilled into these groups will largely enhance national identity and patriotism. Constituent ethnic groups must be adequately carried along in the scheme of things. The distribution of commonwealth, must be equitable and fair. Infrastructural development must be shared amongst member states and ethno-

cultural groups. Suffice it to states that National Integration and Nation building can be achieved, where leaders promote social and legal justice, enthronement of the rule of law and the maintenance of law and order. The promotion of equity, national interest and identity, far above individualistic and ethno-cultural cum religious identity can largely build a progressive nation. Citizens, and indeed various ethno-cultural and religious units must be treated equitably and national identity must be upheld beyond individual and ethno-centric identities.

The harmonious integration and galvanization of the various constituent units for their strength, resources and complementary relevance remains essential to progressive prosperity of the nation state. Various ethnic units and states must be allowed to progressively grow and maximize their potentials. These resourcefulness, potentials and cultural relevance are immense instruments which must be tapped, integrated and utilized for the progressivity of the nation. Various ethno-cultural and socio-religious constituent groups must be meant to see themselves not as competitive groups of supremacy, but as groups of complementary relevance targeted at prosperous national building. National identity must remain supreme and individuals must be meant to promote patriotic activities. Effective leadership therefore remains key in the integration and national sustainable development of the Nigerian state. This brings the reiteration, that Nigeria leadership must essentially propel good governance, ethno-cultural and religious integration, peaceful co-existence, absolutization of rule of law, social justice, corruption-free perception, and economic recovery etc. The actualization of this, essentially enhances prosperity and sustainable development.

CONCLUSION

As conclusion, it is important to affirm that Nigeria as a nation has over the years been on a negative narrative of leadership crisis, poor governance, civil unrest, insecurity, high poverty rate, economic downturn and infrastructural decay. The nation has also experienced immense socio-cultural crisis, ethnic and religious tensions, which has claimed many lives and in no small measure, desterilized the peaceful co-existence of citizen. The mutual suspicion and hegemonic struggle amongst member states and constituent ethno-religious groups have remained unhealthy to the progressive development of the nation.

This paper affirms that effective leadership and good governance remains essential in addressing the diverse malady of the nation state. It asserts that leadership and indeed effective leadership remains pivotal to national integration and sustainable development. The progressive development of the Nigerian state therefore is largely dependent on effective leadership, good governance which will essentially engender national integration and progressive, socio-political, economic, and infrastructural development of Nigeria.

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