



Nigeria In Search of Unifying Factor, Introduction of Festival of Interest as a Panacea

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Article Info

Keyword:
Love;
Nigeria;
Unifying factor;

Abstract: *It has been observed that Nigeria's National flag, coat of arms, anthem, Pledge and motto have not ignited much love for the unity of Nigeria and cohesion of nationalism required to ward off antics of some developed countries instigating discordance in Nigeria to benefit business interest. Nigeria has the largest population of any African country and as such, anything which may threaten its unity must be a concern to any discern mind of black race. This paper looked at what could serve as catalyst of love for the unity of Nigeria through the evaluation of the prevalent love exhibited during the struggle for independence which made Nigerians to see themselves not as Hausas, Igbos, or Yorubas, but as Nigerians in a common struggle against their colonial rulers and the love which was displayed for the unity of the country during the election that would have made Chief M.K.O. Abiola the president of Nigeria, but truncated. It was discovered that love for the country and the person was the key in the observed period and that annual national festival of interest would continue to stimulate sustainable love for the unity of Nigeria.*

Kata Kunci:
Rasa Nasionalisme;
Nigeria;
Unifying factor;

Abstrak: *Bendera nasional, lambang, lagu, ikrar dan moto belum cukup membangkitkan cinta negeri bagi warga Nigeria dan kohesi nasionalisme diperlukan untuk menghindari hasutan dari beberapa negara maju untuk kepentingan bisnis semata. Nigeria memiliki populasi terbesar di Afrika dan sebab itu, segala yang mengancam persatuan harus diperhatikan oleh ras kulit gelap. Makalah ini melihat apa yang bisa berfungsi sebagai katalis untuk persatuan Nigeria melalui evaluasi selama perjuangan kemerdekaan yang membuat warga Nigeria melihat diri mereka bukan sebagai Hausas, Igbos, atau Yorubas, tetapi sebagai orang yang sama. Perjuangan melawan penguasa kolonial dan rasa nasionalisme untuk persatuan negara selama pemilihan seharusnya bisa menjadikan Kepala MKO Abiola presiden Nigeria. Ditemukan bahwa rasa cinta negara dari warganya adalah kunci, berdasarkan pengamatan dan bahwa festival nasional tahunan yang menarik akan terus merangsang cinta yang berkelanjutan untuk persatuan Nigeria.*

Article History: Received; 2020-02-05 Revised; 2020-02-25 Accepted; 2020-02-28

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, which history recorded to have been coined by a British Journalist, Flora Shaw in 1890s but consummated by the creation of the borders of Nigeria in 1914 by the British colonial power, is yet to have a working symbol of unity. Love of many Nigerians for the unity of Nigeria as an indivisible nation is doubtful in view of incessant agitation for the disintegration of Nigeria at any given disagreement on issue of national interest. European colonial authorities introduced the nation-state to the people as a new thing (Gogoi, 2015). Therefore, this paper made use of library and documented works of scholars to look at what could be a catalyst of love of Nigerians for the unity of Nigeria.

According to Oluniyi the challenge of national unity and integration is as old as the birth of Nigeria in 1914. Although, the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914 would seem to have made these heterogeneous entities to agree to live together in harmony but, non-nationalistic upbringing of the tribes continue to create tensions and clashes at many times (Oluniyi, 2011). Nigeria is reported to have more than 250 ethnic tribes of which three, Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo are the most dominant. The other tribes like Fulani, Ijaw, Kanuri, Ibibio, Tiv, and Edo, just like the three dominant tribes, had separate culture and independent histories. Therefore, their coming together as an entity called Nigeria would naturally be fraught with challenges even if their coming together was their own making.

Many Nigerians are observed to be with problem that comes from his own uncontrolled emotions of selfishness, persuasiveness, jealousy, fear, apathy and hate. Therefore, there is a need to come up with what could assist to overcome the observed problems. This paper looks at what could be a unifying factor for Nigerians and come up with what could be a catalyst of love for Nigeria as indivisible entity.

RESEARCH METHOD

This paper adopted qualitative research methodology and made use of focus group discussion, historical facts, content analysis of visual and textual materials to come up with the recommendations in this paper. So qualitative research is research that leads to the conclusion that describes in detail the data and not produces the data in numeric terms. In line with the above definition, Kirk and Miller, through the words of Moleong, further described that qualitative research, in particular of the tradition of social science, is fundamentally dependent on observations in humans both in the region and in their terminologies (Pratama, Budiman, & Sarmiasih, 2019). In the section on the relevance of qualitative research for social care, reference was made to the contribution of qualitative research to explaining process and outcomes. Grounded theory aims to construct ‘middle range’ theories to explain processes and events (Moriarty, 2011). In this process of research must attempted analyze social life describe the unifying factor in the natural setting. In other word’s research Qualitative attempt to explain how an individual, describe or interpret the introduction of festival of interest as a Panacea (Teguh, 2001).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Their grouping into a single nation was not their making but that of their colonial master which interest was mainly business for the British. These various ethnic groups never considered themselves part of the same culture. Therefore, there is a general lack of Nigerian nationalism which often brings ethnically biased leaders into power and had at one time led to severe internal ethnic conflicts and civil war. Today, bloody confrontations between different ethnic groups continue and on many occasions, orchestration of dismemberment of Nigeria rends the air. Although, different measures and instruments have been used to restore a near confidence in living together as a single nation, those measures have not yielded much expected peace and unity for our nation to grow and develop. Nigeria, though, blessed with three main environmental regions of coastal wetland, tropical forests, and savanna, the natural endowment which should be a strong factor for togetherness has not been recognized as factor of unity in Nigeria. The coastal wetland for fishing and salt trade, the wet tropical forests for farming fruits and vegetables and the dry open grasslands of the savanna for cereal farming and herding.

Nigeria has the largest population of any African country and as such, anything threatening its unity must be a concern to any sensible black race. Therefore, we should evolve something that would, naturally be accepted as symbol of unity of our nation. Although, we have the country’s flag. Other national symbols include the national coat of arms, the national anthem, the National Pledge and Nigeria’s national motto: Peace and Unity, Strength and Progress, there is yet to be nationalism in our attitude and behavior. Therefore, Nigeria is in need of what could be a continuous satisfying symbol of unity that could bring all Nigerians together as citizen of one nation. As at today, only international football match involving Nigeria flag bearer provides such catalyst of unity. Since we have, at least, one unifying event (football), it then means there would be some other event yet to be discovered that could bring Nigerian

together as a real unified unit. Such event should be a self-determined event and also regular in actualization in each year.

To be able to come up with what could serve as catalyst of unity of our nation, we should consider what influenced our leaders in the past to come together to secure independence for our nation. The first and the only successful time that the ethnic groups in modern Nigeria came together under a commonly felt sense of national identity was during the struggle for independence which made Nigerians to see themselves not as Hausas, Igbos, or Yorubas, but as Nigerians in a common struggle against their colonial rulers. There were unprecedented levels of interethnic teamwork. Nigeria political movements, media outlets, and trade unions whose purpose was the advancement of all Nigerian, not specific ethnic groups, became commonplace. What was similar to this oneness of Nigerians was also echoed during the election that would have made Chief M.K.O. Abiola the president of Nigeria, but truncated.

All these suggest that we could still identify what could make our nation a united Nigeria in the real sense of it. As we know, the regional governments were drawn along ethnic lines because the antic of the colonial masters. With this, the idea of a long term unified Nigeria was laid on faulty foundation. Political parties were substantially formed along ethnic lines. This faulty foundation could be traced to the civil war.

Following the war, the military rulers encouraged a national reconciliation, urging Nigerians to once again become a unified people. While this national reconciliation succeeded in reintegrating the Biafrans into Nigeria, it did not end the problems of ethnicity in the country. In the years that followed, Nigeria was continually threatened by disintegration due to ethnic fighting. Many measures have been deployed to create the needed unity of our nation. According to Akpan (1990), for the purpose of illustration, it is pertinent to explain here that, the need to foster unity and national integration after the civil war informed the creation of Federal Government UNITY Colleges and the introduction of the National Youth Service Corp (NYSC). Furthermore, on 12th December 1991, the national's capital was moved from Lagos to Abuja which is a federal territory that does not belong to any State. Nigeria which is a country with more than 250 tribal languages also chose English as the only language of her official communication. All these have not been able to temper centrifugal-forces that continue to threaten oneness of our nation.

The recent development of establishing regional security outfit, such as Amotekun in the western region, to address the security challenges in the region calls for quick step to have a symbol of unity of our country called Nigeria. In the countries where such regional security outfits work perfectly with the national outfits, the unity of such countries were not in doubt as we currently have in our country. Kunna (2005) cited Elaigwu 2004 as saying that from the time of return to civil rule in 1999, there had been well over 100 ethno-religious conflicts leading to great losses of lives and poverty, what has so far happened between 2005 to date in terms of those kinds of conflicts and their attendant destructive effects can well be said to have quadrupled the indices so reported previously. The situation in the country in term of security and national cohesion keeps degenerating and worries keep growing.

Momoh (2010) says, we are witnessing in the recent months, the emergence of monumental threats to the country's existence as a single united entity with the emergences of several vicious centripetal forces and conspiracies. Adamu (2012) also says, that of the twelve indicators of a failed state, Nigerian has fulfilled ten. This kind of opinion and also what one America said that Nigeria would break in 2015 is nothing other what could instigate divisive propaganda. Therefore, we need to take step to bring about what could cement our love for one another and see our nation as none divisible nation. The need to foster national consciousness out of the myriad of ethnic particularities has always been a cardinal objective of education in African countries is, among other opinions, to address the problem at hand (Oppong, 2019).

There should be nothing too much to do to prevent conflict which may lead to disintegration of a nation. The destructive effects of conflict or war are overwhelming in term of killings of helpless, innocent civilians – men/women, children/elderly. Since they are not real wars, no trained combatants and no designated place of war. The consequential effect is planting of seed of permanent discord, distrust, suspicion, enmity and the entrenchment of hate.

We know that biographical/demographical characteristics, intellectual /physical abilities, self-concept/self-esteem and personality do influence behavior. This should not be a barrier to taking step that would make our nation a nation of all of us like what we have in some other countries like United State of America. It is not that they do not have challenges of leadership, but America as one nation is sacrosanct to every American.

Nigerians are similar in nature. Rivas, (2009; Specher 2014) say that many empirically supported friendship formation factors can be understood in terms of interdependence theory. One of the most widely recognized factors is similarity. Except in a state of mental disharmony, no human being enjoys a solitary life. Therefore, human beings are social animal who interact and mingle with each other in whatever manner. The interaction between human being, however has different dimension in term of factors forming the bases of interaction. Among these are blood relation, ethnicity, geographical location, gender connection, professional colleague, religion belief and social relations.

It is natural to be connected to those known to be blood relation because the connecting factor is blood which could not be severed but, ethnicity, geographical location, gender connection, professional colleague, religion belief and social relations connection are not as strong as blood relation and therefore, subject to deception whenever situation is unfavourable to its being displayed. According to Pikhart (2012), the coexistence of various cultures and races in multicultural society is not simple and brings many questions and needs appropriate solutions but, Eriksen (2007) in the latent risk in contemporary sustainability discourse 2018 says, it is very difficult to find exact barriers between particular cultures.

Therefore, culture and cultural identity has become in the course of centuries an important political tool. Intercultural communication means the social interaction of different cultures. Weig, Mensing (Lindebaum, D., Vesa, M., & den Hond, F. (2020)) says, culture is asset of factors giving a sense and value to human coexistence in a society. It includes religion, social and cultural values, art, education and science. Culture and social development influence each other. However, people often have a lot of prejudices and stereotypes. UNESCO report (2007) says, Culture plays a very special role within UNESCO’s mandate. Not only does it represent a specific filed of activities, encompassing the safeguarding ad promoting of heritage in all its forms (both tangible and intangible), encouraging creativity (particularly in the cultural industries), and facilitating mutual understanding through intercultural dialogue, it also permeates all UNESCO’s fields of competence.

Without such competencies, misunderstanding rooted in identity issues are liable to proliferate. The strengthening of these competencies is central to the recommendations of the present report, which governments, governmental and non-governmental organizations, the private sector and civil society should seek to implement as a matter of priority.

According to Josefova A. (2014), the openness, mutual respect and tolerance can lead to better coexistence of people in any multicultural society. Ironically, it is the same human being, not animal, that find it difficult to accommodate each other for friendly atmosphere that suffer the consequences which made one to find, who is this human being.

The origin of man had long been a subject of human speculation which, in spite of science, is yet to come up with a better explanation other than man was created by God in His original form which is still holding till date. Therefore, man must have been created with qualities such as personality, intellect, sensibility perception, feeling, willingness and decision to make within numerous choices. It is very unlikely that such qualities could still exist in any known creature except human being.

Majority of other creatures that were not given the qualities as given to human being engaged much in struggle of annihilation of others to have dominion on their resources because they could not anticipate expansion of their resources by the use of science, technology and cooperation among themselves. Human being have however developed ad expanded in knowledge to such an extent that what seemed to be inadequate in the years past, to satisfy certain number of people in a given area, is being multiplied though science and technology to satisfy multiple numbers of such people in the same given area.

Therefore, the concerned of a rational being that are in their right sense of rationality, should be how to multiply the needed resources rather than how to reduce those who need the resources. Engagement in disintegration reduces the number of those who make use of resources as well as resources being used. Generally, whenever I see a man in the thinking of disintegration as a veritable option for whatever benefit derivable economically or socially from separation, I feel and smell low level of intellect and shallow level of wisdom in such a person. Nigerian should bear in mind that those powerful countries in the world, whose economic interest is to see our nation disintegrated by making use of those who are of low intellect and wisdom among us to act against our national unity are still at work.

Interestingly, disintegration/war, as we could visualize, does not start except the head of community/country consents to it. Therefore, it should be a matter of serious concern to every peace lover to critically look into areas of human development that could develop man along the path of absolute peace in Nigeria to improve the lot of Nigeria and the cooperation existing between North, South, West and East. A peaceful society fosters progressive expansion in business and welfare. The beginning of disintegration/war is usually known, but the end and the extent of its eventual destruction is unpredictable. Rational human being would assume that uncertainty of the outcome of crisis should encourage head of any community/country to reflect critically on disintegration/war and resolve not to venture into it. This has been seen not to be the case in our current world, as we continue to see heads of communities/countries drumming and singing for disintegration/war.

Therefore, it may not be far from the truth that some of our heads communities/countries are with mentality that could not actually understand what is really good for those they govern at the supposed expense of other communities /countries at large. It is therefore imperative to search for a solution to the problem observed in the headship of some communities/countries that could engineer disintegration/war in Nigeria. To assist in this direction, curricular in our institution of learning should include all that could be taught on better living for all in the entire Nigeria as a nation where there is no disintegrated/war to direct the mind of the youth towards peaceful coexistence. Gundara (2007) says what should be done is to establish processes that would require and also prepare teachers to understand the difficulties of teaching and learning in socially diverse societies and to stress the need for the resolution of conflict through conversation and dialogue.

Therefore, let our generation bring about reconciliation through orientation of heads of communities to imbibe absolute peace. The power to change a situation in any given environment is embedded in the body of leadership of that environment.

Nelson Mandela of South Africa once said, “If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy who will then become your partner”. Since mankind is observed to be with problem that come from his own uncontrolled emotions of selfishness, persuasiveness, jealousy, fear, apathy and hate, there is the need to develop a curriculum of education that can assist human being to turn his back to animalistic instinct which makes him sees another human being as unwanted. It is instructive, if wild animal could be tamed by human being to live peacefully with human being and those other animals usually seen as prey, animal component in the composition of the body of some leaders could also be better tamed by a designed education and environment for such orientation.

Nigeria would not be left to disintegrate, government must, as a matter of urgency, put in place machineries that will bring about a better understanding of how good it is for a united Nigeria for those who get to the position of heads of communities but do not appreciate the benefits in the unity of Nigeria. There should be a festive day for Nigerian all over the world since there is none of our major religions: Christianity and Islam festival that brings the needed harmony as it were in the 60s/70s. Nothing brings people together like festivals. Festival play a pivotal role in nation-building; bringing people from every religious, economic and social background together, it promotes harmony, carry the message of the past generations to the present and future. Indeed, festival celebration promotes communal harmony.

CONCLUSION

Nigeria would not be left to disintegrate, government must, as a matter of urgency, put in place machineries that will bring about love for the unity of Nigeria, better understanding of how good it is for a united Nigeria for those who get to the position of heads of communities but do not appreciate the benefits in the unity of Nigeria. There should be a festive day for Nigerian all over the world since there is none of our major religions: Christianity and Islam festival that brings the needed harmony as it were in the 60s/70s. Nothing brings people together like festivals. Festival play a pivotal role in nation-building; bringing people from every religious, economic and social background together, it promotes harmony, carry the message of the past generations to the present and future. Indeed, festival celebration promotes communal harmony.

To this end, Nigeria should enshrine a day as Nigeria Day of Peace and Unity to be used as a ceremonial day to display all that could be of interest to all and give award to inventor of indigenous products that could be called Nigeria product. Some people may argue that Nigeria has gotten too much days in a year as holiday. The fact is, Nigeria is currently having 13 days in a year as public holidays whereas, countries like Germany, Japan and Malaysia has 18, 17 and 16 days respectfully as public holidays. Even though, United State of America and United Kingdom has 12 and 13 days respectfully as public holidays, research has not shown public holiday as the cause of economic woe of any of country. Peace and unity of Nigeria should not be sacrifice at any cost.

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