



ISSN: 0975-833X

Available online at <http://www.journalcra.com>

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
OF CURRENT RESEARCH

International Journal of Current Research
Vol. 11, Issue, 10, pp.7850-7859, October, 2019

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24941/ijcr.36914.10.2019>

RESEARCH ARTICLE

IDENTITY POLITICS AND NATION BUILDING IN NIGERIA: A RETROSPECTIVE ANALYSIS OF GOODLUCK JONATHAN ADMINISTRATION, 2010-2015

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 14th July, 2019

Received in revised form

18th August, 2019

Accepted 25th September, 2019

Published online 30th October, 2019

Key Words:

Ethnicity, Tribalism,
Politics of Elitism,
Greed, Antagonism,
Civil Strives,
Corruption, etc.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the effects of identity politics on nation building in Nigeria with specific reference to Goodluck Jonathan Administration between 2010 and 2015. The pluralistic nature and character of the Nigerian state has led to several agitations; politically, socio-culturally and economically. The Goodluck Jonathan administration witnessed such agitations which are believed in one way or the other negatively shaped his very government and administration. This study is qualitative as well as descriptive in nature as data was collected through the secondary sources such as textbooks, journals, newspapers, periodicals and the internet. Utilizing the group theory as an analytic framework, the study interrogates the effects of ethnicity and religion on the nation building efforts of Goodluck Jonathan administration. Findings from the study revealed that, identity politics which are evident in religious alignment, ethnic sentiments as well as cultural differentiations have continually frustrated any nation building agenda in Nigeria. It was discovered that identity politics actually accounted for the ethnic based voting in Nigeria under Goodluck Jonathan. This study equally revealed that identity politics in no small measure heightened Boko Haram insurgency under Goodluck Jonathan. This study therefore recommends that the National Assembly should empower the election management body through the creation of a legal framework for the disqualification of any presidential candidate who or whose party engages in any form of propaganda that promotes one ethnic or religious group over the other. Finally, Nigerians must come to the realization that using violence to resolve whatever grievances they may have against the state and other persons or groups will only make her worse off as lives that were wasted cannot be recovered and property destroyed would take a long time to rebuild.

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Citation: Onwunyi, Ugochukwu Mmaduabuchi & Ezeifegbu, Vitus Ugochukwu. 2019. "Identity Politics and Nation Building in Nigeria: A Retrospective Analysis of Goodluck Jonathan Administration, 2010-2015", *International Journal of Current Research*, 11, (10), 7850-7859.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has continued to exist as an aggregation of several nationalities and therefore, from time immemorial, even before the advent of colonial masters, identity politics has continuously defined the scope of political intercourse in heterogeneous and pluralistic societies like Nigeria. Prior to the amalgamation of Nigeria, several entities such as Ibo, Hausa, Yoruba, Nupe, Tiv, Urhobo, Itsekiri, Jukun, etc. was on their way to nationhood, independent of one another but dependent socio-economic wise, thereby creating a chain of inter-relationships among the people inhabiting Nigeria today (Ademola, 2000). However, the amalgamation of these peoples, who are ethnically, religiously, culturally, and idiosyncratically different, coupled with the fact that structurally the emergent

regions before the amalgamation were practically of unequal sizes, unequal population, and operating as many systems of government as there were ethnic nationalities created the historical antagonistic centrifugal forces that have always worked to the advantage of the originators of the amalgamation. This is not only to the disadvantage of the amalgamated peoples (Nigerians), but may have well turned out to be at the expense of the corporate existence of the amalgamated peoples. In addition, the antagonistic centrifugal forces heralded and entrenched monsters that have always consumed Nigerians and their collective desires for unity and development as manifested in the form of ethnicity, tribalism, politics of elitism, greed, antagonism, civil strives, corruption, etc. However, the debate over this phenomenon has regrettably acquired an ethnic exclusion of several ethnic groups in corridors of power. Lord Lugard aptly gives this picture when he stated that:

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“... on my part I later had a second thought I could not explain how and why I sent such a memo to London. But what is both puzzling and battling was the decision of the thirteen egg heads in the commonwealth office to consent and approve the amalgamation, but be this as it may, beyond a mere human wish.”

The 1914 amalgamation exercise embarked upon by Lord Lugard of the areas of North and South of the River Niger and Benue was a unification without unity or at best unity in diversity. In the absence of a national ideologically oriented political structure representing defined interests of Nigerians across the ethnic divide, ethnic based political movements have filled the void to challenge the present distribution of power and wealth, demanding a restructuring of political system in such a way that will grant them equitable access to these properties.

For example, Afenifere and the Odua People’s Congress represent the Yoruba ethnic group, while the Ibos are represented by Ohanaze Ndigbo. The Arewa Consultative Forum has emerged as the defender of northern interests who feels threatened by the challenges to their power and identity, while the south-south people’s assembly speaks for the Niger Delta states. Even in the Niger Delta, we have contending ethnic organizations vying for their particular ethnic interest which are not always in confluence with the universal interests. On both sides of the Niger and Benue, competing ethnic political movements and Para-military brigades have been established to advance the courses of their respective ethnic interest. Competing ethnic nationalisms, challenge the sovereign of a state.

It is quite intriguing that after many years of independence, Nigeria is still characterized as a deeply divided state in which major political issues are vigorously and/or violently contested along ethnic lines of the complex ethnic, religious and regional divisions in the country (Smyth & Robinson, 2001). With a population of over 180 million (NBS, 2017), scattered around over 370 ethnic groups (Otite, 1990), Nigeria could be said to be the most plural country in the African continent (Osaghe & Suberu, 2005). The majority ethnic groups are the Hausa-Fulani in the North (29%), the Yoruba in the southwest (21%) and the Igbo in the southeast (18%) (Paden, 2008). It therefore follows that all other ethnic groups in the country can comfortably fit into the minority category, with varying degrees of political influence. From the religious point of view, Nigeria is divided into three main groups, namely the Muslims, Christians and African Traditional Religion. The prevalence of African traditional religion notwithstanding, Christianity and Islam are the dominate religions, with nearly equal representation in the country (Lewis, 2011). It is truism that in Nigeria;

“ethnic and religious divisions often unite. The Hausa-Fulani and other communities residing in the Northern Nigeria are mainly Muslims, while South-South minority areas and Igbo speaking South-East are predominantly Christians. The Middle Belt (or North Central Zone) is a mixture of Christian and Muslim populations, while the Yoruba speaking communities in the South-West are half Muslim and half Christian” (Okpanachi, 2010:6).

These ethnic differentiations underlies the North-South cleavages (in terms of the North being predominantly Muslim

and South predominantly Christian), and sharpens ethnic as well as religious tensions in the country especially in the North as aptly capture by Paden (2007), that “the all-consuming nature of Islamic identity does eclipse other identities and religious differences play major part of ethnic differentiations” Thus, it would be an act of political folly for any statesman or academic to disregard the dynamics of majority – minority ethnic conflicts in their respective states. If there is any time to address the ethnic question in Nigeria again, it has to be now. A nation held hostage to preventable events of tragic nature and at the front burner repeatedly are questions we have refused to face squarely: Who we are, where we belong, what we represent, what does Nigeria mean to us, do we want to remain one, and how (Dickson, 2013).

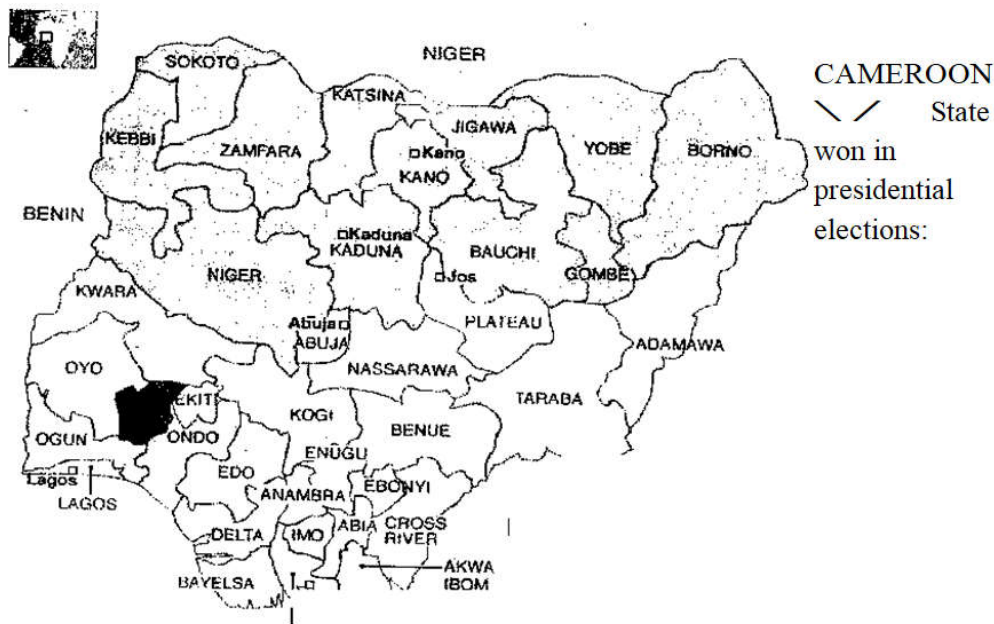
The question of nation building in Nigeria has continued to be frustrated as a result of these ethnic and religious differences commonly referred to as identity politics. According to Wonah (2016), a man loves habiting in a community with his fellow men for self and collective actualization cum fulfillment. However, this communal life is threatened by the ever-conflicting interest of men which can be settled by established means of social justice, equity, tolerance, and equality especially in terms of participation and involvement in the decision-making process.

These entrenched means can contribute immensely in calming the political system, thereby provoking the cohesion of the various competing groups in a society (Ota, 2014). These concerns raised becomes evident when different social groups in the society feel dominated, marginalized or discriminated against in accessing the dividends that power or authority provides which ultimately provokes the creation of socioeconomic and political divisions along class, ethnic, religious or regional lines and which in turn creates sensitive tensions, mistrust, conflicts that ultimately threaten national unity and development.

The more these conditions saturate a given society the more it undermines the push for collective chauvinism and common vision which create an atmosphere in which social groups become more self-conscious, politically oriented, assertive and ultimately define themselves as ethnic groups with a sense of solidarity of consciousness characterized by congruity with their own values, symbols, myths, customs, symbols, birth and blood, beliefs, common ancestry/enemies and historical attachment to a particular territory (Horowitz, 1985; Ake, 2000). These various social groups begin to position themselves with the resolve to push for political power with the result that in most countries in Africa such as Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Togo, Kenya, Ghana, Cote d’ Ivoire, ethnic competition tended to characterize the peoples socioeconomic and political relations, thus making the quest for power intense and prone to all sort of arbitrariness and violence, hence, having a devastating effect on nation building in Nigeria. It is against this background that the study aims at examining the impact of identity politics under Goodluck Jonathan and its consequences for nation-building in Nigeria.

Conceptual Literature

Identity Politics: Identity politics is derivable from two words, identity and politics. Accordingly, identity presumes the situation or eminence of being identical, or the same. It follows that a group of persons may have certain traits, features, cultural realities, economic status etc. that bind them



PDP Goodluck Jonathan (President) 22.5 million votes (59.6%) CPC Murtammadu Buhari (former military ruler) 12.2 million votes (32.3%) ACN Nuhu Ribadu (former anti-corruption fighter) 2.1 million votes (5.6%)

Source: Independent National Electoral Commission Nigeria (2013). <http://www.nigerianmuse.com/20110419040622zg/sections/general-articles/details-of-2011-presidential-election-results-in-nigeria/>. Accessed 02/03/2019

Figure 1. Performance of the first three candidates in the 2011 presidential election

Table 1. Major Candidate of the 2011 Presidential Election and their profile

Candidate	Political Party	Religion	Ethnic Group	Geopolitical Zone
Goodluck Jonathan	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Christian	Ijaw	South-South
Muhammadu Buhari	Congress for Progressive Change (CPC)	Muslim	Hausa/Fulani	North-West
Nuhu Ribadu	Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN)	Muslim	Hausa/Fulani	North-West

Source: Author's compilation

together (Wonah, 2016). Such features distinguish one group from another and place such group on a diverse plinth depending on how it asserts its identity in its relationship with other groups. The assertion of the group's identity may not be a wishful thinking, it finds expression within the context of the group's identifiable interest and it is concretized and actualized by not only the availability of resources at the group's disposal, but also the effective and efficient mechanism of resource distribution. Nwanegbo (2015), holds that "our identity is something we uniquely possess: it is what distinguishes us from other people". To Hogg and Abrams (1988: 2), identity is "people's concepts of which they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others". Yet on the other hand, identity also implies a relationship with a broader collective or social group of some kind. It is in the opinion of Deng (1995:1) "the way individuals and groups define themselves and are defined by others on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, language, and culture". When we talk about national identity, cultural identity, or gender identity, for example, we imply that our identity is partly a matter of what we share with other people. Here, identity is about *identification* with others whom we assume are similar to us (if not exactly the same), at least in some significant ways (Nwanegbo, 2015). On the other hand, Wonah (2016), in an attempt to explain politics, sees it as the allocation of resources through institutionalized means for the synchronization and fortification of varied welfare in a social formation. By implication, all the groups are in steady struggle for the acquisition of the limited resources in order to protect its interests and assert its identity.

The social formation is characterized by competition among the various groups which, when not properly and fairly regulated, can destabilize the political system and threaten the corporate existence of the various interest groups. From the above explanation, one can assert that identity politics has to do with the struggle by the various groups (ethnic or religious) which make up state in a bid to lay hold and consolidate the scarce resources at the disposal of the country. While buttressing this fact, Wonah (2016), argued that identity politics is nothing but the conscious efforts made by a group to protect its interest and assert its identity. To him, it equally means that political arguments that focus upon the self-interest and the perspectives of social minorities or self-identified social interest groups and the way in which people's politics are shaped by certain aspects of their identity such as race, class, religion, sexual orientation, or traditional dominance.

It appears to be more glaring that a group tends to assert its identity when in most cases there is an oppressive mechanism usually in the form of a political structure designed to oppress, subjugate, exploit, and relegate it to the background. This view was succinctly captured by Young (1990), when he said that identity politics, as a mode of organizing, is intimately connected to the idea that some social groups are oppressed. Consequently, it can be seen as the politics of group based movement claiming to request the interests and identity of a particular group, rather than policy issues relating to all members of the community. Collaboratively, Mbasili (2017:32), posits that identity politics "involves political wiles that focus upon the self interest and perspectives of

self-identified social interest group and way in which people's politics may be shaped by aspects of their identity through race, class, religion, gender, ethnicity, ideology, nation, sexual orientations, profession, hobby or any other loosely correlated yet simple to intuit social organization". More so, Ambe-Uva (2010), argues that identity politics is a political activity of various ethnic, religious and cultural groupings in demanding greater economic, social and political rights or self-determination. To him identity politics claim to represent and seek to advance the interests of particular groups in the society, the members of which often share and unite around common experience of actual or perceived social and economic injustice, relative to the wider society of which they form part and exist in. In this way, the identity of the oppressed group gives rise to political basis around which they may unite and begin to assert themselves in the society. Ambe-Uva (2010), further argues that identity politics means more than the sole recognition of ethnic, religious or cultural identity. He stresses that identity politics seeks to carry these identities forward, beyond mere self-identification, to a political framework based upon that identity. For example, Modern Jewish Zionism was originally secular (and marginal) within the Jewish community, but became driven by its own form of identity politics upon the formation of the State of Israel in 1948. Likewise identity politics played a major role in the creation of Central Asian states in the aftermath of the demise of the Soviet Union (Osaretin, 2013). Accordingly, Nwanegbo (2015), argues, that

“when we have political arguments that focus upon the self-interest and perspectives of self-identified social interest groups and ways in which people's politics may be shaped by aspects of their identity through race, class, religion, gender, ethnicity, ideology, nation, sexual orientation, culture, currency, information preference, history, musical and/or literary genre, medical conditions, profession, hobby, or any other loosely correlated yet simple to intuit social organisations (Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 2011), we regard that as Identity politics” (Cressida, 2012).

Identity politics as a political concept refers to the political activity of various ethnic, religious and cultural groupings in demanding greater economic, social and political rights or self-determination. Identity politics claim to represent and seek to advance the interests of particular groups in society, the members of which often share and unite around common experiences of actual or perceived social and economic injustice, relative to the wider society of which they form part and exist in. In this way, the identity of the oppressed group gives rise to a political basis around which they may unite and begin to assert themselves in society (Zweiri & Zahid, 2007).

Nation Building: Eme and Onyishi (2014), sees nation building as “the process of winning for the political system, the loyalty and commitment of its subjects. Nation building refers to the process of bringing together culturally and socially discrete groups into a single territorial unit and the establishment of a national identity”. By implication, nation building therefore assumes the idea of the existence of an ethnically divergent society like Nigeria, in which each group is characterized by its own language or other self-conscious cultural qualities, but the problem may also exist in a political system which is made up of once distinct independent political

units with which people are identified. Nation building thus refers specifically to the problem of creating a sense of territorial nationality which overshadows-or eliminates-subordinate parochial loyalties.

Akoto (2010), defines nation-building as the;

“conscious and focused application of our people's collective resources, energies, and knowledge to the task of liberating and developing the psychic and physical space that we identify as ours. It involves the development of behaviors, values, language, institutions, and physical structures that elucidate our history and culture, concretize and protect the present, and insure the future identity and independence of the nation. Nation building is deliberate, keenly directed, focused energetic projection of national culture, and collective action to develop a political and economic system”.

According to William (2014), nation building has two perspectives; political and economic perspectives: from the political point of view, it is in the area of budding and instituting a democratic policy. From the political standpoint, “nation building entails the ability of the nation-state to sustain itself as a sovereign by giving freedom and liberty to its people to use a well laid mechanism or system of leadership recruitment and leave a legacy or culture of smooth succession of power to future generation. Economically, nation building entails the greatness of individuals through the success which a nation makes in industrial development for improved production of goods and services. It improves the standard of living of the people and builds the mind of the people together to want continued existence as one nation”. Gambari (2008) elucidates this by saying that;

in reality, the greatness of a nation has to be earned and is not determined just by the size of its population or the abundance of its natural resources. China and India have the largest populations in the world, but they are only now rising as important global players. On the other hand, Japan has few natural resources, but has long managed to turn itself into a global economic powerhouse... “In today's world, skills, industriousness, productivity, and competitiveness are the determinant factors of national greatness. Not even the possession of the nuclear bomb is enough to make a nation great without reference to the industriousness and creativity of its citizens.”

Identity Politics and Nation Building in Nigeria: Just as there is a link between one's sociological background and personal dispositions, so there is an inextricable link between group identity and political philosophy, especially in a plural society. In other words, in most plural states, voting and campaign, in some cases, are based on religious, ethnic, racial or class sentiment. While religion best serves as a means through which people commune with the super natural, Familusi (2012), argues that it could be used politically, either to canvass support for a candidates or dissuade the electorate from voting for the candidate. This is why some Muslims will not support Christian candidates and vice-versa. On this, Johnstone (2001:134) opines that:

A widely recognized point of religious influence over politics is that of peoples' voting preference and behaviour

...Such interest gives very explicit recognition to the correlation that exists between religious affiliation and commitment, on the one hand and voting behaviour, on the other. That there should be a correlation is exactly what would be expected, of course, if religious affiliation and commitment mean anything at all.

Implicit in the above statement is the fact that religion and politics are inseparable. However, he failed to explain the nature of this correlation between religion and voting behaviour. However and ideally, religion should not be a matter of any importance in politics and distribution of power in a modern state, more so in a multicultural one that professes secularism. If religion is understood to mean spiritual interaction between individuals and whatever represents God for them, then both the electorates and the candidates should not incline to it in deciding electoral outcome, ipso facto governance is to solve social and mundane problems facing citizens. Sekoni (2014), was particularistic in his analysis when he averred that citizens in a mono-religious space such as Saudi Arabia or most South American states would have no reason to think in terms of religion when choosing a candidate or when a candidate that subscribes to the territory's only or dominant religion canvasses for votes. The import of his argument is that religion is an indirect deterministic factor in politics since the voters are unconsciously conscious of the fact that the candidate subscribes to the only or dominant religion in the land. It therefore follows that in a plural religious society, both the politicians and the people recline to religious subjectivism in power politics. Little wonder (Sampson, 2014:336) cited in Omilusi (2015:8) argued that:

The elite have always used religion as a tool of exploitation to achieve selfish socio-economic ends, while politically deploying religious fanaticism and favouritism to polarize the people and sustain unhealthy tension in the country. To date, public officials use public funds as a tool for political patronage, thereby generating resentment and outrage from rival religious groups.

In an empirical study which compared the impact of social cleavages and attitudes on voting patterns in Canada and Great Britain, Anderson and Heath (2000), argued that those who regularly attend religious services are more authoritarian and more likely to vote for right-wing parties than those who seldom or never attend religious services.

Considering that religions are usually socially conservative to at least some degree (e.g, they are anti-abortion, anti-gay rights, procensorship etc), it is sensible to expect that only those who hold similar attitudes would regularly attend religious services. Although none of the regions under study have parties specifically representing religious interests, in every region the right parties are more likely to cater to the religious than any other parties (Anderson and Heath, 2000:7).

One can argue further that it is not only religion that determines voting behaviour in Nigeria or multi-plural societies. Postulating further on the influence of tribe or race on the voting behaviour of the people, Anderson and Heath (200:7), argued that:

In all regions, compared to whites, visible racial minorities are more left in terms of attitudes and vote. The basis for this hypothesis is that ethnic minorities are more likely to be

discriminated against in the job market and elsewhere than others. It follows that left-leaning policies, such as laws ensuring equal opportunity and income distribution, are in the interest of racial minorities. Since it is rational to want to improve one's position, one would expect racial minorities to be generally more left-leaning in terms of attitudes and vote than the majority population.

Summarily, the study came to a logical conclusion that race has bearing on the voting pattern of people. This was illustrated further by the fact that the Democratic Party's greater emphasis on the concerns of black is clearly reflected in higher support they receive from blacks than experienced by Republicans in American elections (Onwuanabile, 2015). In the Nigerian political process, identities have historically been significant in both colonial rule, as well as in the post-colonial dispensation. Under colonialism, administrative exigencies warranted the nurturing and exacerbation of an "us" versus "them" syndrome Muslim versus Christian; Northern vs Southerner; Hausa-Fulani versus Yoruba versus Igbo etc (Okpanachi, 2010 in Onwuanabile, 2015). Religious, regional and ethnic differences were given prominence in the convincing and implementing social, educational and economic development policies and projects under the indirect system of colonial administration favoured by the British. Thus, the differential impact of colonialism set the context of regional educational, economic and political imbalances which later became in the mobilization or manipulation of identity consciousness in order to effectively divide and rule, as well as in the politics of decolonization and in the arena of competitive politics in the post-colonial era (Jega, 2000). In a collaborative view, Olayode (2015), argued that party politics in Nigeria during colonial era was based on ethnic factor and one can assert that the seed of ethnic politics was sown at this period, germinated in the first Republic and the products started spreading in during the 3rd and 4th Republics.

Theorizing on how ethnicity controls political outcomes in Nigeria, Lewis (2007), argued that ethnic identification is presumed to be the most salient and consistent source of social identity upon which political competition is organized in Nigeria; and is regarded as central for collective action, and could sometimes have a corrosive influences on democracy.

Taking a different view, Enwerem (1995), contends that religion has always been important in Nigeria and in Nigerian politics. "The intensity of religious identity in Nigeria is regarded as one of the highest in the world" (Paden, 2008). This claim is supported by the fact that Nigerians are more likely to define themselves in terms of religion than any other identity. Indeed, according to the authoritative May-June 2006 survey on Religion and Public Life conducted by the Pew Forum on "Religion and Public Life", 76% of Christians say that religion is more important to them than their identity as Africans, Nigerians or members of an ethnic group. Among Muslims, the number naming religion as the most important factor is even higher (91%). In effect, Christian and Muslim identities have been the mainstay of religious differentiation and conflict, with Nigerian Muslims much more likely to evince or articulate a religious identity than Christians (Lewis and Bratton 2000; Lewis, 2007). It is in view of this that Archbishop Onaiyekan to describe the country as "the greatest Islamo-Christian nation in the world" (Onaiyekan, 2008 in Okpanachi, 2010:5). The deficiency in the opinion of these scholars is that they did not tell us how ethnicity or religion empirically affects political decision making in the country.

Drawing a nexus between, religion and elections in Nigeria, Kukah (1994) draws our attention to the electioneering campaign of 1983 in the North, during which Alhaji Dankwaro composed a song enjoining Muslims to vote for Shagari and the N.P.N. The song, which was intended to permeate the minds of the Muslims North is as follows: -

Since the time of Ahmadu Bello, there has never been another leader with power, except Alhaji Shehu Shagari, the trusted one. He is the grandson of the servant of God. He is a servant of God- Bawan Allah. My happiness is that, our flag, which has been lying down in Mecca, the reign of Alhaji Shehu Shagari, has raised it up. In the face of Islam today in the world, Nigeria is first (Kukah, 1994:153).

The result of the elections revealed that religion alone could not determine the electoral outcome. Although Shagari was declared winner of the election, but it was ethnicity which played a key role in his success, as Yoruba Muslims did not heed the call of voting for the "grandson of Allah". Rather, they voted for their own son and brother, Obafemi Awolowo not minding that he was a Christian. In his own contribution, Familusi (2012) contends that the failure of Muhammad Buhari in the 2003 presidential election had a religious undertone. According to him, Major General Buhari, of the All Nigerian Peoples Party, was criticized for his stand on religious matters and this, no doubt, worked against his political fortune. As a perceived advocate of the Sharia law and fundamentalist, he was quoted to have said that Muslims should not vote for Christian candidates. It was in realization of the influence of religion on the voting behaviour of the people that Onapajo (2012:55) averred that Buhari "devised a strategy to opening up to the Christian community by selecting Pastor Tunde Bakare as his running mate and on several occasions paid official visits to influential Christian clerics during the 2011 election". Unfortunately, the 2011 presidential election went beyond religion as many Muslims voted for Jonathan.

In an empirical study by Olasile and Adebayo (2016), on 'the Strength of Ethnicity in Voting Behavior in the 2015 Presidential Elections in Nigeria: The Case of Ibadan, Oyo State', they opined that the resurgence of voting pattern along ethnic identities during the 2015 presidential election didn't come to any average Nigeria as surprise. The structure of Nigerian politics has always been premised on prehistoric factors that keep defining who gets what, how and when. The work examined the ethnic coloration in the voting pattern of Nigerians during the election. It employed primordial theory of ethnicity to explain the strength of ethnicity in voting behaviour. Their research exploits qualitative and quantitative components comprising questionnaire and content analysis of two dailies and review of literature as secondary data. A sample size of one hundred respondents in Ibadan, Oyo State was analyzed on the considerations such as ethnic identities: language, religion, region, and custom among those that participated during campaign, those that voted and those that served as INEC ad hoc staffs. The outcomes showed that 86.4% of the respondents with Hausa ethnic identity and 72% of the respondents with Igbo background agreed that some variables such as ethnicity and religion were strong factors that influenced their voting behaviour in the election.

In a collaborative view, Egobueze and Ojirikaon (2017), in a study on Ethnicity, Religion and Voter's Behaviour: The

Experience of the 2015 Presidential Election in Nigeria opined that the need for political stability and virile democratic culture in Nigeria is a great concern to all Nigerians and the international community. Since the advent of the Fourth Republic in 1999, several elections have been conducted, but the 2015 election is very significant to because it exposed the undaunted role of ethnicity and religion in the voting behaviour of different segments of our society. We adoption of Rational Choice Theory was evident on the conceptual framework. it interrogates the influence of ethnicity and religion in the voting behaviour of the Nigerian electorates and recommends that voting behaviour should be based on party ideology and competence and reputation of the candidates and not ethnicity and religion.

Furthermore **Egharevba and Iruonagbe (2015)**, gave a historical discourse on the relationship between ethnicity and voting behavior using Nigeria as its case study. Looking at the early evolution of Nigeria, after the amalgamation of both the northern and southern protectorates during the era of colonialism, one issue that has been mind boggling within the historic-socio-political discourse of Nigeria is the paradigm of ethnicity which many from the academia tend to see it as having a great impact in the way and manner elections are conducting which ultimately affects the voting pattern of the people as well. Using historic-descriptive method in which secondary data are mostly used in order to come up with this correlation between ethnicity and voting behaviour in Nigeria, the study noted that the former has significant impact in the way and manner political leaders are elected or recruited. 'Afro-barometer (2014) and Freedom house (2015), argued that there seem to be a causal relationship between ethnicity and voting behaviour in Nigeria. This is usually attributed to the diverse nature of the Nigerian society in which there are over 450 local languages, in which each ethnic group, wants a stake in the body polity. This ethnic divisions, played a latent role even in the composition of the various political parties in the country in which right from independence to date, none of the political parties actually, have a national outlook, but rather they are all structured and are operated towards ethnic and religious lines. Thus, with this type of party structures in the society, the 'ethnic' factor most often influenced, voter's choice, because most Nigerians, tend to opt for candidates that represent their ethnic origin rather than vote based on merit, ability or to a candidate that would provide the needed dividends of good governance.

While scholars vary on their view about which identity influences voters' behaviour, what is clear however is that most times, if not all times, ethnicity and religion rarely exist or operate in isolation. Rather they interact with one another as well as with other variables such as region in a complex sometimes conflicting way. In other words, there is always a tendency for religion and ethnicity to coalesce to a level that an identity with a particular ethnic group means an identity with a particular religious group. For example, an identity with Hausa/Fulani ethnic group usually means an identity with Islamic religion while an identity with the Igbo ethnic group implicitly means identity with Christianity. Although Olayode (2015), argued that ethnicity informed voters' decision-making during the 2015 election, there was no in-depth attempt to see how religion equally played a role in the election. It is in realization of this fact that the term ethno-religious identity has been coined to capture the tendency for the boundary between ethnicity and religion to coalesce as determinants

of the voting opinion of the people during the 2015 presidential election. This study adopted the group theory as the basis of the analysis. The group theory primarily deals with groups rather than individuals as the major component of the political system. It emphasizes the fact that the society is made up of different groups which are not just a collection of individuals but a web of interactions. Different groups, according to David Truman, are based on the notion of interest (Truman cited in Ray 2003: 19). The shared attitudes constitute the interest. Every group is basically an interest group. Therefore, it becomes evident that the taproot of every group is the interest of the members it protects. In the course of protecting their interest, the groups assert their identities and strategize on how best to have access to state resources. Oftentimes, these interests clash and if there is no adequate institutional arrangement hoisted on democratic values, it can degenerate to conflict. Identity politics is seen as the conscious efforts made by a group in relation with other groups to protect its interest and assert its identity. Thus, within the purview of group dynamics, the reality of politics is hidden below the surface of the properly constituted and recognized organs through which decisions are articulated. It is hidden in the continuous struggle for power and influence upon which groups are constantly engaged (Ray 2003:19). Consequently, the struggle for power, influence, and the protection of different groups' interests makes the political system volatile and more susceptible to conflict.

The relevance of the group theory to this study can be seen from the fact that Nigeria is a plural society that is made up of different ethnic, religious as well as cultural groups that are constantly struggling for power, influence, and the protection of their group interests. This struggle became more devastating given the divisive tendencies inherent in the colonial policies of indirect rule and isolation. The sudden amalgamation of the different ethnic groups in 1914 became a 'marriage of inconvenience', which heightened the fear of domination and suppression among the groups. Identity politics thereby became a real source of resource conflict as well as power struggle which has continued to invalidate the very idea of creating a country with common features. In the light of this fear, the different groups shrank into their various groups in a bid to protect their interest and assert their identities. This was further demonstrated by the ethnic formation of political parties. Thus, rather than playing the traditional role of interest aggregation nation building, political parties by virtue of their formation and intents, became agents of disunity. From another perspective, the State and its apparatuses in Nigeria are seen as means of protecting selfish and sectional interests. The political elites formulate policies and make laws that deny people a sense of belonging. Moreover, the domination of Oil Companies in Nigeria, Federal Institutions, and some agencies especially at the management level, by some ethnic groups explains a part of the structural imbalances that characterize the Nigerian State and hence the need for other groups in the country to vehemently assert their identities and make their presence felt often create undue tension that have negative effect on nation building in Nigeria. The above instance have been given in order to show that the activities of a group in relation to the activity of other groups in a plural society go a long way in understanding the dynamics of a political system, especially as it concerns its efforts towards achieving national cohesion.

Identity Politics and Ethnic Based Voting Behaviour in Nigeria under Jonathan's Administration, 2010-2015:

According to Olayode (2015), Nigeria is a plural society made up of over 250 ethnic groups with many sub-groups. The three major ethnic groups in Nigeria are;- Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo and thus they dominate the political landscape while other ethnic groups are regarded as minorities. This has created sub-nationalism. Ekeh (1973), argued that identity politics has flourished because the Nigerian elite who inherited the colonial state have conceptualized development as transferring resources from the civil public to the primordial public. The administration of Goodluck Jonathan lasted between the period of 2010 and 2015. During this period, Nigeria witnessed two presidential elections 2011 and 2015 of which our test of hypotheses is hinged on. Identity politics played a vital role on the voting behavior of the electorates due to the background of each of the candidates. In 2011 when Goodluck Jonathan won the election, it took identity politics on the basis of religion as well as ethnocentrism to ensure his victory in the poll.

Olayode (2015), in a study on Ethno-Regional Cleavages and Voting Behaviour in the 2015 General Elections: Issues and Challenges for Democratisation and Nation Building argued that ethno-regional cleavage and voting behaviour in the 2015 general elections is significant, not just for analyzing political participation, but also for its potential consequences for democratization and nation building. The study argued that where ascribed ethno-regional loyalties are strong, they 'generate party systems reflecting rigid group boundaries and tend to exacerbate ethnic conflict'. This tendency has not only hindered the development of national parties, but also the development of national identity. Ethnic groups competing for political positions could easily evoke ethnic-focussed conflicts with dire consequences for democratic stability and national survival. Nigeria general elections have always been characterized by identity based politics with has continued to jeopardize any national building agenda of the government. However for the purpose of our study, the 2011 general elections witnessed a high degree of identity politics. With the demise of Alhaji Umar Musa Yar'adua, some people in the North began a strong movement in the bid to forestall any attempt at allowing the vice president Dr. Goodluck Jonathan who hails from the Southern part of the country to assume office as the president.

The then new emergent parties on contest like APGA was seen as Igbo party; ACN as a re-incarnation of A.G. or UPN which is Yoruba based, CPC and ANPP were seen as the party of Hausa/Fulani affiliations. While the PDP, to some extent seems to have national outlook but the insistence of the Northerner to produce the 2011 presidency had shown that identity politics have continued to plague the politics and unity of Nigeria as a sovereign state (Olayode, 2015). The 2015 Nigerian general elections turned out to be as acrimonious and a bitter experience. Ahead of the elections, ethno-regional and religious sentiments were stirred up across the country, threatening the very survival of the Nigerian state itself. The incumbent president rallied around himself ethno-regional supports of his minority kinsmen and the larger Igbos. Dangerous provocative and unguided statements were released, which heightened the tension across the country. Some of the rehabilitated ex-warlords of the Niger-Delta threatened to 'burn up the country' and returned back 'to the creeks to take up arms struggle' against the state, should their own son lose out of power. The incumbent presidents also sought supports from various ethno-regional groups like OPC,

Afenifere, Egbe 18 Igbimo Agba Yoruba, among others.

The former president equally paid several visits Igbimo Agba Yoruba, among others. The former president equally paid several visits to many Christian organisations across the country to mobilise faithful voters to 'identify with their Christian brother'. Chukwuma (2018), contends that the 2015 general elections were seen as a fair-haired prospect for the Northerner to wrestle back power, which they felt had been unjustly, denied them after the untimely demise of late President Yar'Adua. The South-south minority groups also rallied behind the incumbent president to secure a second term of office for him. The Yoruba of the South-west who felt marginalized under the incumbent president were quick to rally behind the opposition party that adopted their own son as the vice presidential candidate. Across the length and breadth of the country, ethno-religion sentiments flared up and the presidential candidates of the leading political parties were prevailed upon to become signatories of an accord (Abuja Peace Accord), committing themselves to maintaining peace before, during and after the elections (Olayode, 2015). The table below highlights the results of election in 2011 and 2015.

Table 1 above articulated the major presidential candidates in the 2011 general election as well as their political parties, ethnic background, religion and geopolitical zone. The table equally stated that of the three major presidential candidates, two are from the same region, while the other one is from an entirely different region and religion. By implication, due to identity politics, Jonathan was able to outwit the other two candidates who had to share votes from their region. While Jonathan eventually got the ticket of the ruling party, the main opposition party, the ACN picked Ribadu as their candidate. Muhammad Buhari opted to contest for the third time (having done so in 2003 and 2007) but this time, under a new political platform, the CPC (Onwuanabile, 2015). At the end of the contest, the incumbent, President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, from the impoverished and politically marginalised Niger Delta region, won comfortably, and was certified by the chair of the INEC, Attahiru Jega, as duly elected on 18 April, two days after voting, amidst violent protests in some northern states (Gberie, 2011). Of more significant importance to us here in this study is the fact that the voting behaviour of the people was somewhat informed by ethnic and religious identity, albeit not as the First and Second Republic. The voting pattern of the people is summarily captured by the picture below:

By winning the highest number of votes (59.6%), and garnering 25 per cent of the votes in more than two-thirds of the 36 states, Jonathan fulfilled all the electoral requirements and was thus declared winner and returned by the electoral commission. But the map above reveals that the ethno-religious identity of the electorates was manifested when he failed to win a single state of the 16 main northern states, which his opponent Buhari comfortably carried (even though Jonathan did appreciably well in these states). Buhari, for his part, failed to carry or even poll significantly in any of the southern states, who are predominantly Christians.

2015 Presidential Election and Identity based voting: The 2015 presidential election marked a new height of identity politics in Nigeria. From the electorates to the political actors themselves, the language in most people's mouth was 'would power return to north or would the south consolidate?' In other quarters, the contestation was between Christians and

Muslims. Critical issues such as security, economy, education, power etc received little attention. As Olayode (2015:17), captured it, the election turned out to be as acrimonious, bitter and a hateful play of brinkmanship as that of the first republic. Although fourteen (14) political parties contested the election (CPPA, 2015), it was a parallel race between two familiar foes - incumbent President, Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP and Gen. Muhammad Buhari (Rtd.) of the All Progressive Congress (APC). Suffice it to say that before the election, the AFC was formed in February 2013 as a coalition of four opposition parties: the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP), and a faction of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) (Thurston, 2015). The major reason for the merger of these three political parties was to form a formidable force that could challenge the ruling party (PDP) who had been in power since 1999. With this in mind, both political parties (PDP and APC) had somewhat national outlook.

It was surprising therefore, that ethno-religious sentiments were stirred up across the country, threatening the very survival of the Nigeria state itself. The Muslim North saw it as an opportunity to reclaim power while the South-South geopolitical zone strategized day and night on how to ensure their continuous stay in power through Goodluck Jonathan. To them, it mattered little whether Jonathan had performed creditably well to merit another tenure or not, *ipso facto* he is of the Ijaw kingdom and a Christian. As a matter of fact, some vocal voices from the Niger-Delta threatened to 'burn up the country' and returned back 'to the creeks to take up arms struggle' against the state, should their own son lose out of power (Lunn & Harari, 2015). The South-East states equally declared their support for Jonathan whom they saw as one of their own. Both candidates appealed to the consciences of the people to support them. They traversed all the six geopolitical zones soliciting for votes. The cardinal point of Buhari's campaign was "change" while Jonathan was banking on the 'giant' strides he has made on the economy through his policies. At the end, it became obvious that the voters made their choices on the basis of identity with the candidates.

Table 2. 2015 presidential results in South-East geopolitical zone

State	APC	PDP
Abia	13,394	368,303
Anambra	17,926	660,762
Enugu	14,157	553,003
Imo	133,253	559,185
Ebonyi	19,518	373,653

Source: Compiled from INEC (2015)

Table 3. 2015 Presidential election results in South-South states

State	APC	PDF
Akwa-Ibom	58,411	953,304
Bayelsa	5,194	361,209
Cross-River	28,358	414,863
Delta	48,910	1,211,405
Edo	208,469	286,869
Rivers	69,238	1,487,075

Source: Compiled from INEC (2015)

The South-East and South-South were basically seen as Jonathan's stronghold. The reason is simple; Jonathan is a Christian, from the Ijaw ethnic group of the South-South zone. It has to be emphasized that the Ijaw ethnic group was part of the old Eastern Region.

Table 4. 2015 Presidential election results North-East Geopolitical zone

State	APC	PDP
Adamawa	374,701	251,664
Bauchi	931,598	86,085
Bornu	473,543	25,640
Gombe	361,245	96,873
Taraba	261,326	310,800
Yobe	446,265	25,526

Source: Compiled from INEC (2015)

Table 5. 2015 Presidential election results North-West Geopolitical zone

State	APC	PDP
Jigawa	885,998	142,904
Kaduna	1,127,760	484,085
Kano	1,903,999	215,779
Katsina	1,345,441	98,937
Kebbi	567,883	100,972
Sokoto	671,926	152,526
Zamfara	612,202	144,833

Source: Compiled from INEC (2015)

Table 6. 2015 Presidential election results North-Central Geopolitical zone and FCT

State	APC	PDP
Benue	373,961	303,737
Kogi	264,451	149,987
Kwara	302,145	132,502
Nasarawa	236,838	273,460
Niger	657,678	273,460
Plateau	429,140	303,376
FCT	146,399	157,195

Source: Compiled from INEC (2015)

Table 7. 2015 Presidential election results South-West Geopolitical zone

State	APC	PDP
Ekiti	120,331	176,466
Lagos	792,460	632,327
Ogun	308,290	149,222
Ondo	298,889	207,950
Osun	383,603	251,368
Oyo	528,620	249,929

From tables 12 and 13 above, the APC candidate, Muhammad Buhari performed woefully in both zones. As a matter of fact, he failed to secure 25% in all the states apart from Edo where he polled 208,469 (45%). His performance in Edo State is quite understandable, not because the APC was the ruling party in the state but because a large section of the state are Muslims. In another APC controlled state, Imo, where he got little vote, he could not still amass the required 25%.

Because these states were purely of Jonathan's ethno-religious group, they decided to identify with him overwhelmingly. The South-West zone presents the most neutral of the six geopolitical zones. All the people of the zone are of the Yoruba ethnic group while religiously they could be said to be equally divided (Okpanachi, 2010). Suffice it to say that in the 2011 election, Goodluck Jonathan won overwhelmingly in all the states apart from Osun where Nuhu Ribadu of the defunct ACN emerged victorious. However, table 7 shows that even though the 2015 presidential election was a close contest, Jonathan this time around lost in all but one state (Ekiti).

Conclusion and Recommendation

Having critically reviewed the works of various scholars on the subject matter of identity politics and nation building in Nigeria under Goodluck Jonathan, it is evident from the foregoing that identity politics, apart from the fact that it generates the much-needed consciousness in redressing the rift of sociopolitical and economic differences existing among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria arising from the dysfunctional structural imbalance of the political system, on the other hand, constitutes some internal and external contradictions which militate against the quest for nation building. The internal contradiction manifests itself when ethnic chauvinists appeal to ethnic sentiments only to protect their personal interest, thereby deepening the crises of identity politics. The external contradiction can be seen when the different ethnic groups, conscious of the structural imbalances, shrink into their 'ethnic cocoons' by raising ethnic consciousness for the protection of their interest. This obviously places a knife on the 'chord' that binds them together.

Based on this the study recommends that; there is the need for the National Assembly to adequately empower the election management body through the creation of a legal framework for the disqualification of any presidential candidate who or whose party engages in jingle that promotes one ethnic or religious group over the other. Hence, there is an urgent demand for the state to muster the right political will to make laws that stipulate stiff penalty for individuals, groups and organizations with underline philosophy that preaches division and hatred amongst the various groups that constitute the Nigerian nation either on the platform of religion or ethnicity.

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