

## Pan – Africanism and the rising ethnic distrust in Nigeria: An assessment

\*<sup>1</sup>Ngozika Anthonia Obi-Ani & Paul Obi-Ani<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of History & International Studies

University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria

\*Correspondence to: Obi-Ani N. A. Email: [ngoziika.obi-ani@unn.edu.ng](mailto:ngoziika.obi-ani@unn.edu.ng)

### Abstract

**Background:** Pan - Africanism entails the oneness of peoples of African descent both within the continent and in the diaspora. This envisages support of peoples of African descent for one another in times of difficulties whether political, economic or social. This love for one another is supposed to be deep-rooted but since the exit of the colonial overlords in the 1960s, Africans have turned their swords on one another.

**Objectives:** The aim of this paper was to understand the current level of the spirit of Pan-Africanism among Nigerians. The study also sought to examine if the flame of Pan-Africanism has withered with the attainment of independence.

**Methodology:** This study made use of secondary materials such as books, published journal articles, newspapers and magazines.

**Result:** The result of the study showed that there is currently a decline in the spirit of Pan Africanism. Rather, most Nigerians interpret national issues within the context of religious and ethnic affiliations.

**Conclusion:** The spirit of Pan Africanism has gradually paved the way for ethnic and religious divide in Nigeria. Most Nigerians do not hold oneness of the country sacred.

**Unique contribution:** This study has highlighted the current situation of unity in Nigeria. This information will be useful for policy formulation and implementation vis-à-vis national unity.

**Recommendation:** Further studies should explore ways of promoting national unity in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Pan-Africanism; ethnic distrust; Nigeria; colonialism

### Introduction

Pan-Africanism arose out of tribulation of slavery and colonialism. Africans in diaspora suffering from centuries of slavery, particularly in the United States of America and West Indies came together in a series of congresses to forge a common front to find solutions to their problems. Thus, Pan-Africanism was a protest against slavery, dehumanisation, lynching, segregation and discrimination against peoples of African descent in Americas, West Indies and Europe. In the beginning Africans, particularly in the diaspora felt a longing, a kind of nostalgia for ancestral homeland before European and Arab penetration and denuding the continent. This longing for pristine Africa marked the beginning of oneness of African peoples. Unfortunately, this back to Africa movement came at the peak of European scramble for and partition of Africa, and ultimate colonisation. Despite the brick wall mounted by some colonial authorities against Afro-Americans from returning and resettling in their ancestral homeland and lack of adequate provisions for the returnees, several successful landings were made. A good example of colonial authorities' hostility to the growing consciousness of African-American descendants' quest to return to Africa was the treatment meted to Chief Alfred Sam, an Asante trader in the United States. Capitalising on the frustration of African descendants in the United States, Chief Alfred Sam bought a ship, the Liberia, to promote emigration and trade. In 1914 the ship carried some 200 returnees for resettlement on the Gold Coast. The British colonial authority forced the ship to spend seven weeks in Freetown harbour, in addition to demanding a special tax of £25 per

head. The colonial administration in Accra, Gold Coast was equally hostile. All these bottleneck resulted in only sixty of the returnees being settled permanently while the rest of them found their way back to the United States of America (Esedebe, 1980).

Thus, the enthusiasm for the back to African movement was stifled by colonial policies and unfavourable environment in Africa. The chief proponent of the movement, Marcus Garvey, with enduring slogans such as 'Africa for the Africans', 'Ethiopia Awake', 'Back to Africa', 'A Black Star Line', was roped in a crime of misusing the United States mail, imprisoned and shortly thereafter deported to his 'native' Jamaica (Esedebe, 1980). It is perilous for the weak in the world and the black race is the weakest of the human chain. Is the fault only in our colour? How does the black man excel to avoid being the oddities of humanity? It is painful to observe that the descendants of African diaspora could be requested by alien colonial authority to pay special tax before being allowed to settle in her ancestral homeland. This is partly due to Blackman's weakness, partly as a result of technological inadequacies, poor sense of solidarity and nationalism and poor leadership initiative. In 21<sup>st</sup> Century Africa, there is no law in any African country guaranteeing automatic citizenship to any black migrant willing to settle permanently in a new country as long as he conducts himself properly before the law.

### **Pan-Africanism- mere rhetoric or key to oneness?**

Pan-Africanism means different things to different people. At the height of European imperialism and colonialism, it was a clarion call for people of Africa descent the world over for solidarity, unity and oneness. Many scholars have, however, tried to define or conceptualise Pan-Africanism from varying perspectives. According to Boahen (1985), Pan-Africanism connotes a sense of identity of black man the world over. This is the crux of the matter. Does that sense of identity among black people still exist? If so why the incessant strifes in various African countries or was it a mere rhetoric to drive away European overlords? Before addressing these questions, let us take into consideration the views of scholars. The Senegalese scholar, Alioune Diop, considers Pan-Africanism as more or less synonymous with the concept of 'African personality or Negritude' while J. Ayodele Langley avers that it is a protest, a refusal, a demand and a utopia born of centuries of contact with Europe. A German historian, Immanuel Geiss, dismissed Pan-Africanism as an irrational concept, a matter of vague emotions (Esedebe, 1980b). Other writers see it as a racial movement concerned solely with the aspirations of black man all over the world or in terms of independence of African countries south of the Sahara. However, Esedebe (1980:14) summed up the concept of Pan-Africanism thus:

Pan-Africanism is a political and cultural phenomenon which regards Africa, Africans and African descendants abroad as a unit. It aims at the regeneration and unification of Africa and the promotion of a feeling of solidarity among the people of the African world. It glorifies the African past and inculcates pride in African values.

The question is why did this flame of African identity and solidarity extinguished? What could be done to ignite the flame of oneness of the African peoples? It appears as if African peoples need a common foe to identify with one another. Under the yoke of European imperialism, they rallied together to dismantle the bastion of colonial domination in various parts of Africa. Even the white minority regime in South Africa capitulated through the relentless attacks from independent African countries at various fora. Since the collapse of apartheid regime in South Africa, peoples of Africa have relapsed into their various ethnicities, championing primordial

interests and igniting ethnic strifes in many countries especially in sub-Saharan Africa. How to reawaken this sense of identity and solidarity among peoples of Africa since independence is a huge task confronting African leaders and statesmen. We are inclined to believe that a recourse to ethnicity is retrogressive and self-defeating. The application of the concept of universal brotherhood by black Africans would strengthen that sense of identity and solidarity as espoused by Pan-Africanism. This concept presupposes that every Blackman whether living within his ethnic group or not, but who is law abiding, and responsible regardless of his political or religious persuasions, shall be accorded same rights as bonafide indigenes of the ethnic group within one year of residency. The irrational sense of one protecting a felon because he is from one's ethnicity is at the root of African's underdevelopment.

Indeed, we are tempted to agree with Geiss that Pan-Africanism is an irrational concept, a matter of vague emotions. The concept was elitist, reserved for the few educated African nationalists that canvassed for the liquidation of colonial bondage. At the height of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States and the nationalist struggle for decolonisation, Pan-Africanism was like a national anthem for African new elite and their descendants in the diaspora. Unfortunately, it lacked mass following across Africa and the common man was hardly affected by its sentiments and emotions. With the wave of independence, especially in Nigeria, the nationalist leaders turned ethnic champions sought the primacy of their ethnic groups over the rest of the people. The seeds of ethnic distrust were planted and watered in a curious but debilitating scheme to site projects often against feasibility studies recommendation in the regions and appoint people to high offices where they are unsuited. As Afigbo (1988,132-133) aptly posited:

In thirty years of independence Nigeria has not produced an Nkrumah with a marked interest in philosophy and political ideas nor a Jomo Kenyatta with a sustained intellectual interest in the cultural and sociological roots of nationalism. In independent Nigeria statesmanship concerned itself with plain political power-mongering and brokerage aimed at amassing for the individuals concerned as much material wealth as possible. Whereas Nkrumah believed that if you sought first and won the kingdom of political independence all the rest would be added unto you, his Nigerian counterparts believed politics was about the sharing of national cake. In other words, the central plank of Nigerian politics and political theorising was nothing but cupiditas. The result was pragmatism of the drabest sort, the politics of hand-to-mouth existence, of kleptocracy and unrelieved deceit.

The black man appears to identify with one another only when besieged by external forces. Once the external threat is overcome they turn their swords against one another. The gospel of Pan-Africanism appears ephemeral and not deep-rooted. After independence in 1960, Nigeria, a people of one racial stock, suddenly got afflicted with ethnic virus, thus stoking division instead of oneness. What it means is that the message of African identity, oneness, solidarity did not touch the ordinary people. What was even worse there was no effort by officialdom to promote our racial identity and punish hate speeches by desperate politicians seeking ephemeral power. Thus, ethnic distrust began to manifest in our body politics and gradually the message of Pan-African faded from our collective memory.

## The rise of ethnic distrust in Nigeria

Ethnic distrust had been simmering in Nigeria before independence. The British colonial authority adept at divide and rule allowed the smouldering discontent to linger thereby perpetuating the distrust among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria. In March 1953, Chief Anthony Enahoro moved the motion for independence in 1956 in the House of Representatives. The Northern People's Congress, NPC, led by Sir Ahmadu Bello, suggested "as soon as practicable" thereby defeating the motion (Olusanya, 1980). The Northern leader felt that the North would be disadvantaged if independence was to be granted in 1956 as the Southern Regions would dominate them. Subsequently the Lagos crowd booed the Northern legislators while depicting them as "stooges", "kolanut men" and "His Majesty's voice". The Action Group's tour of the North to explain its position on self-government triggered series of riots in Kano that lasted for four days, resulting in the death of 50 people with over 200 wounded (Olusanya, 1980).

The Hausa-Fulani appear to be too sensitive to any attempt to demean its leadership. The Lagos crowd's caricaturing of Northern legislators for trying to protect Northern interest was not necessary. There is room for lobbying and persuasion to resurrect any defeated motion. Although self-government was so seductive, ridiculing partners in the march towards independence portended serious hiccups ahead. However, the North's penchant at shedding blood over minor denigration had been taken too far. Kano is now synonymous with rioting and endangering lives of fellow compatriots on flimsy excuse. The incidence of 1953 shows that the gospel of Pan-Africanism was not skin-deep. If nationalists fighting against British colonial domination could not understand each other and promote the black consciousness, oneness and solidarity, little wonder that post-independent Nigeria is riddled with strife.

The January 15, 1966 *coup d'état* destroyed all semblance of hope of rebuilding trust among ethnic groups in Nigeria. The five Majors (Chukwuma Nzeogwu, Don Okafor, Wole Ademoyega, Emma Ifeajuna and Chris Anuforo) out of inexperience over the governance of a complex and heterogeneous country like Nigeria set the nation on fire. Agreed that the politicians faltered here and there, their solution was replete with misinterpretations. The killing of Sardauna, Sir Ahmadu Bello, Premier and most powerful Northern Nigerian Politician with a cult-like following, had terrible consequences for nation-building in Nigeria (St. Jorre, 1972). The young majors with personal grievances, destroyed the *esprit de corps* in the army when they massacred their senior colleagues for fear of career progression and other mundane considerations. Some of them may have genuine interest in strengthening our political institutions but murdering colleagues and political figures was inexcusable. The consequences of what these "hot heads" did in January 1966 still reverberates across the country. The Igbo adage that what an elder seated would see even a young man at the top of an iroko tree would not be able to see applied to the hasty attempt to overthrow the government. General Aguiyi-Ironsi's hesitance in court –marshalling the coupist further lend credence to the propaganda that it was an Igbo attempt to take power through the back door. The backlash has created chasm. The North in their bitterness over what transpired in the barracks and sloppiness of Ironsi's government, descended on ordinary Igbo residents in Kano, Kaduna, Zaria and other major towns, murdering, looting and burning. In the words of John de St. Jorre (1972, 59):

The police tried to intervene, but could do little as the mobs were swept by murdering, looting, burning. The army stood aside and did nothing. Placards carried by the civil servants and students proclaimed 'A Raba' ('let us secede'), 'No unitary Government Without Referendum', and 'Down with Ironsi'. Those who had witnessed the anti-Ibo riots in Kano in 1953 noticed a similar pattern: peaceful demonstrations escalating into massacres, the elite setting the pace and organised groups of armed thugs, plus casual hangers-on, rushing in and finishing the job.

Whatever sentiments people may have of one racial stock, same identity died with the upheavals that followed the January 15, 1966 military putsch. Unfortunately, no Nigerian leader ever since then has made tangible effort at rebuilding trust along the divide. Initially, the Igbo were singled out as troublesome but virtually all other ethnic groups are at daggers drawn with government unable to devise any credible plan to solve the problems. Again, if Pan-Africanism has taken root in Nigeria, maybe our politics would have been issue based and conflicts a kind of class struggle rather than ethnic consideration. In this 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Nigerians living and working outside their ethnic or geopolitical zones are branded settlers and threatened with violence should they desire to exercise their franchise during elections even in mega cities like Lagos and Kano, though they may pay so much tax and contribute to the development of the cities. Little wonder Nigeria remains underdeveloped and retrogressive.

Let us quickly consider some of the major crises areas in Nigeria. The Tiv-Jukun crisis has lingered on since the introduction of party politics in the country. The Jukun assert indigeneship over Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State and portrays the Tivs as settlers although they have been living together in the same area since the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. The Tiv are numerically far populous than the Jukun. Thus, the Jukun would not want the Tiv to participate in any election to control the Wukari Local Government Council or be appointed to any political position in the Council. Again, the Jukun do not want the Tiv to be represented in Wukari Traditional Council even though they are in majority. The conflict revolves around land, traditional rulership, political authority and differences and fears of domination and marginalisation (Best, Ehiraim and Shehu, 2004). The conflict had been on and off and tends to be intense during elections or struggle for elective positions. The 1990-1992 crisis was barbarous. A study observed as follows:

The methods by which the two sides killed each other were at best heartless. Road blocks were mounted by each side and 'the enemy' was identified and slaughtered or shot in the nearby bush. Often, victims were set ablaze. Beheading was a common method of killing (Best, Ehiraim and Shehu, 2004:86).

Former United States President Barack Obama has purportedly averred that Africa does not need strong leaders but strong institutions. The Tiv-Jukun crisis still festers on because even our constitution is ambivalent on who is a citizen and citizenship rights of Nigerians. A perceptive scholar blames the Nigerian Constitution for fostering communal violence. According to Adell Patton, Jr (2003:12-13):

It would appear that the Nigerian legal concept of citizenship fosters communal violence and ethnic-religious conflict. The colonial legacy of conserved "tribalism" is enshrined in the constitution. The provision of "...belongs or

belonged to a community indigenous to Nigeria” does not solve the problem but re-enforces the problem of” WHO IS A CITIZEN IN NIGERIA?”.

It is pathetic that Nigerians are treated as strangers or settlers outside their ethnic enclaves. How would that sense of patriotism and nationalism be aroused among Nigerians when even the constitution categorises its people as strangers, settlers, landlords and indigenes from one region to the other? How would a Tiv man, Igbo man or Fulani man hounded around see other Nigerians as people of same racial stock and vice versa? Our institutions have the same fault lines. And it is the elite seeking for political power and relevance that continue to promote this divisiveness. The police, the army, the judiciary are all bedevilled by this demon of ethnicity. Strange enough even in urban centres with mixed population, people continue to assert “territorial imperative”. According to Robert Ardrey, a territory is an area of space which an animal or group of animals defend as an exclusive preserve. It is within such territory that the basic needs and interests of such animals are gratified. These needs include security of space and food, identity, prestige, etc (Best, *et al.*, 2004). This primordial animal instinct predominates among Nigerians. In the age of advanced capitalism, where some of those that instigate communal violence across the country could own and did own properties in United Kingdom, United States of America, USA, Dubai, Saudi Arabia among others unmolested, Nigerians residing in some parts of the country are often reminded of their settler status, threatened and very often killed without any repercussions.

The Tiv-Jukun crisis has remained unresolved because of the lip service paid by our leaders to the issue of citizenship. If an ethnic group fails to reproduce as high as its neighbour it loses its majority. Democracy is a game of numbers. Power could be exerted in other spheres of life. A minority group can dominate an area economically; and leverages on its economic power to control the majority politically. The Jews in USA, though less than 5% of the population exacts enormous influence due to their economic power. Their control of major media outlets also enables them to shape opinion in the world without recourse to violence or even self-pity. The world has moved beyond entitlement as landlord or” territorial imperative” of our ancestors. The Tiv-Jukun crisis reared its head again in 2001 when nineteen (19) alleged peace keeping soldiers were abducted by Tiv militias and murdered in Zaki Biam (Obi-Ani, 2008). President Obasanjo ordered the army into Zaki Biam and other Tiv settlements where they left a trail of tears and devastations. This decimation of the Tiv was supposed to be a solution to the lingering crisis between the two warring Nigerian Peoples.

Ethnic groups are supposedly the building blocks for African unity. Yet, the same ethnic groups are riven with mutual suspicions and across the length and breadth of Nigeria, there is hardly any ethnic group not nursing grievances against another. Thus, the necessary harmony and understanding needed to promote racial identity and solidarity is lacking. Take for example the Zangon Kataf crisis in Kaduna State. The crisis erupted over the local council decision to relocate Zangon Kataf market from its site to a more spacious site. Some of the reasons adduced for the relocation include that residential houses were encroaching on the old site, making it difficult to expand the market. The old site also lacked public conveniences and it was also inaccessible. The new market would enhance revenue generation for the council (Akintoye, *et al.*, 2004). It is painful to observe that one Mr J.K. Apple in an interview on Federal Radio Cooperation of Nigeria (FRCN) Kaduna had threatened that “there will be bloodbath if the market is ever moved” to the new site Akintoye *et al.*, 2004). And on the 6<sup>th</sup> February 1992 the day of the commencement of business at the new market site, bloodbath spilled over to other

parts of Kaduna State with religious undertones. The critical issue is that somebody could use a Federal Government of Nigeria Radio station to threaten mayhem without being arrested shortly after making such provocative statement by the police. We wonder what the police public relations unit does? Should it not be part of the police job to monitor media outlets for inciteful statements, hate speeches etc.? The police must be proactive in nipping in the bud such smouldering discontents. Life of ordinary Nigerians does not matter to the government. Thus, some religious bigots and “outsized” big men openly incite rebellion without any consequences to them. Every riot, strife and disturbances leaves so many embittered people along the way who may have lost beloved ones. Though we have institutions purported to instil national cohesion in Nigeria, such as the National Orientation Agency (NOA) and several government owned media houses, yet the country is more divided than ever.

The federal government deliberately sowed seeds of discord among ethnic groups through some of its policies. The concept of abandoned property after the Nigerian-Biafran Civil War was intended to put a wedge between the Igbo and their immediate neighbours, Efik-Ibibio, Ijaw, Ogoni etc. The government threw a bait at the Eastern minority ethnic groups particularly in Port Harcourt, Calabar and Uyo, to appropriate Igbo properties in the cities and thus estrange them from their Igbo neighbours. They fell for the bait and rationalised the seizure of Igbo properties on the ground that “we cannot be strangers in our own state” (Obi-Ani, 2002). The intendment of the policy was to sow distrust among peoples of closely similar cultural affinities and racial identity. Fortunately, the Igbo have continued to relate with their neighbours while putting behind the abandoned property blackmail of the central government of General Gowon.

The Pan-African sentiments would remain superficial unless African government particularly Nigeria takes nation-building seriously. No nation can survive on injustice, inequity and discrimination. Nigeria federation is stifling. Powers are unduly concentrated at the centre. The constituent units are not empowered to develop at their pace. There have been strident calls for modernization and devolution of powers to other levels of governance to little avail. This non-challant attitude of political leaders has resulted in social movements advocating for resource control, outright secession and ethnic group primacy etc. These social movements appear to be misunderstood by those benefiting from what Professor A.E. Afigbo described as ramshackle federation. For instance, the agitation by the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni people, (MOSOP) led by the environmentalist, Ken Saro-Wiwa over the ecological devastation of Ogoniland, the impoverishment and marginalisation of the area and the need to grant Ogoni people political autonomy were misinterpreted by the General Sani Abacha regime (Fiakpa, 1999). It is unfortunate that government prefers encouraging rival groups against genuine agitators to attending to the identified problems. Ogoniland was polarised into two: the pro-government group and those advocating for political autonomy. In the confrontation that ensued between the two groups in Ogoniland, prominent Ogoni leaders alleged to be subverting Ogoni quest for self-determination were murdered by angry Ogoni youths. These pro-government figures killed are: Chief Edward Kobani, Chief Albert Badey, Chief Samuel Orage and Chief Theophilus Orage. The government swiftly arrested the president of MOSOP, Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight of his supporters. And after what amounted to a kangaroo trial in a tribunal, Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni leaders were sentenced to death and on November 11, 1994 they were hanged despite international plea for reprieve (Agakameh, 1999). Ogoni, one of the oil bearing communities in the Niger Delta has had its environment destroyed through the oil exploration by Shell Development Company. Their attempt to right the wrong has resulted in distrust and grief among the people.

In Igboland, there appears to be a deliberate government policy to stagnate and retard their growth. The federal government since the end of the civil war always found one pretext or the other not to site major industries in Igbo heartland. The few infrastructures like roads are in total disrepair while the youths felt hindered by government policies like quota system from getting job opportunities in federal establishments across the country. What is worse, they are usually the first target by Islamic fundamentalist in Northern parts of the country where their businesses are vandalised and many of them killed in what appears to be with tacit support of both the federal government and the affected state governments. This frustrating situation has given rise to a renewal of their quest to revive the state of Biafra. Thus, in 1999, Ralph Uwazuruike, formed the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra, MASSOB. The Igbo having been denied political power, their businesses hindered by suffocating government policies, felt that a separate country in the form of Biafra would ease some of their frustrations. This is the extreme with which people of the same racial stock could go due to the stifling environment and none inclusiveness in both the security and political architecture of Nigeria. A properly restructured country will defuse all these agitations. As Tamuno (1998,105-106) has observed:

...it is, for us, a matter of pleasant surprise that Nigeria has lasted this long since the colonially-inspired 1914 Amalgamation. In recent times, other multi-cultural states with serious and ancient nationality problems, such as the USSR, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, were not so lucky. There lie useful lessons for Nigeria concerning her political future. These lessons, if learned, plus timely reforms might give Nigerians little cause to fear concerning their future, political or otherwise.

In 2017 this clamour for secession reached a crescendo when the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra, IPOB and MASSOB called for a sit-at-home by the Igbo people all over the country in remembrance of those that died during the civil war on 30 May 2017. Surprised by the sit-at-home was observed by the Igbo people in all walks of life throughout the federation. Unexpectedly many Nigerians were irked by the audacity of the Igbo who control a sizeable portion of commerce sub-sector of the economy to withdraw services for a day to mourn the dead. The notion that the Igbo love money more than honour was for once dispelled. However, the Arewa Youth Consultative Forum, AYCF, a coalition of socio-political groups in Northern Nigeria, issued a three-month quit notice for all Igbo in the 19 northern states to vacate the region. The group went further to insist that if the Igbo failed to leave by October 1, 2017, it would apply force to evict them (Haruna,2017). At a press conference in Kaduna, AYCF, national president, Yerima Shettima, claimed that a successful sit-at-home protest organised by Igbo groups, was a threat to the country's national security (Oji,2019). This incident indeed proved that there was no basis for unity in Nigeria and would remain a weapon for separatist groups to point at where socio-cultural groups speak for the government. The Arewa Youths appropriated the sovereign rights of President of Nigeria, issuing threats of expulsion to those considered security risk to quit their own region of dominance. Although many Nigerians including Ohaneze Ndigbo called for the arrest of Mr Yerima Shettima, the body language of the political leadership appears to encourage such chaos and turmoil. Assuming the Igbo are the proverbial prodigal son, would expulsion have been the best alternative. Pan-African sentiments



have not percolated down to the ordinary Nigerians. Where is the sense of oneness among Nigerians?

The Igbo appear to be the battering ram in Nigeria political spectrum. Though scattered in large numbers throughout the country they are the most distrusted ethnic group in Nigeria. Reason being that, they are mostly into business seeing opportunities where others see difficulties. This little success attracts envy of other Nigerians who use every opportunity like religious disturbances to loot their businesses. In politics outside Igboland they are mostly forbidden from exercising their franchise. In 2019 governorship election in Lagos State, political thugs threatened Igbo residents not to come out and vote during the exercise. This is an election in which no Igbo aspirant was vying for governorship under any party platform. Yet, Lagos is supposedly the melting pot of politics and commerce in Nigeria. It is also rightly assumed that Lagos harbours the most enlightened crop of Nigerians. Unfortunately, the more educated a Nigerian is the more parochial he becomes. Thus, it is difficult to inculcate the ideals of Pan-Africanism on an average Nigerian. In the Lagos governorship election of 2019 in which the two major contenders were all Yoruba, the fear that Igbo voters might be sympathetic to the opposition candidate of the People's Democratic Party, PDP, earned them hostilities of mainstream Yoruba sympathizers of the All Progressive Congress, APC. In the words of Okechukwu Madukaife:

That's why they are intimidating us. Well, we have been intimidated.

The thugs have succeeded, but what they don't know is that not every Igbo man will vote for Agbaje. Some of our sons are in the cabinet, some are teachers and government workers in the state. Why should the political thugs and their godfathers disenfranchise us? We have been denied of our franchise in a state where we live in (Adwokiya, 2019).

This kind of attitude hardly promotes unity among Nigerians. The politics of "do or die" apart from being a whirlwind that does nobody good is retrogressive, outmoded and a harbinger of instability, corruption and underdevelopment. Let us promote politics based on class not ethnicity, on competence and not on blood ties etc.

### **Conclusion**

Lack of self-identity and oneness has been a major setback to African development. It was this poor sense of judgement and consciousness of racial identity and solidarity that contributed to our acquiescence in the Atlantic Slave trade and Trans-Sahara slavery. The Europeans and Arabs have realised our lack of sense of patriotism and nationalism and exploited it to our collective regret. The stigma of slavery is so depressing that blackman no matter his position in life still feels that sense of inferiority vis-à-vis other racial groups of the world. Raising this Pan-Africanism sentiments among black people the world over is seen as a major step to African renewal and development.

Nigerians play divisive politics of ethnicism and acrimony. Ideas they say rule the world. In Nigeria, it is primordial sentiments that derive its politics. Elections generate crisis much more than ideas on how to develop the nation. Thugs maim and kill citizens without any consequences. It is as if government has abdicated its responsibility to the citizenry: security of lives and properties. Any citizen killed without the government bringing the perpetrators to justice breeds distrust and disillusionment on the people. Thus, fellow citizens genuinely contributing to the development of cities and state are routinely scared away from exercising their franchise during elections because they are non-indigenes or settlers. In this 21<sup>st</sup> century

black man cannot change residency or citizenship within sub-Saharan Africa without being tagged a settler even when he has no blemish. Until we recognise one another based on competence and contribution to society and not on where one comes from development will continue to elude us. Even if it requires turning Nigeria into a “police state” no citizen’s life should be taken without due legal diligence.

What fuels ethnic distrust most in Nigeria is the wanton destruction of lives and properties by gangs of herdsmen, ethnic militias and religious fundamentalists. The government appears to be in collusion with this semester groups as there is no decisive action against them. The Fulani herdsmen’s attacks against farmers in various parts of Nigeria is being misinterpreted because of government inaction. Maybe because President Muhammadu Buhari is Fulani the security forces are being restrained from apprehending them. Some people have even seen it as an agenda by Fulani to grab land at the expense of farmers across the country. If this has tacit government support it would be most unfortunate as it further divides the people instead of building bridges of cohesion. The Boko Haram insurgency and Fulani herdsmen attacks have grown into the dreaded hydra-headed monster. Recently, former President Olusegun Obasanjo has heightened tension in Nigeria when he alluded that it was an agenda by the Fulani to Islamise West Africa. According to Obasanjo:

It is no longer an issue of lack of education and lack of employment for our youths in Nigeria which it began as. It is now West African Fulanisation, African Islamisation and global organised crimes of human trafficking, money laundering, drug trafficking, illegal mining and regime change (Adwokiya, 2019).

It would be unfortunate if this accusation has any element of credibility. It will only create ethnic distrust which in the long run will consume those hatching the plot to Islamise Nigeria or indeed Africa. In Nigeria, adherents of Islam behave as if they have been ‘chosen’ to fight for the Almighty God. God is all powerful, omniscience and omnipotent. This attitude of Muslims scares away those who might wish to examine and be converted to Islam. Africa should not be polarised by religion. Freedom of worship should not be hindered by any group. Let the ideals and sentiments of Pan-Africanism flourish among Nigerians as it would enhance harmony, bring development and political stability.

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