Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflicts: A Global Discourse

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Introduction

Thousands have died in the seemingly endless battles between two very Semitic people, the Jews and the Arabs. The English and the French glare hostilely at each other in Quebec; Christians and Muslims have renewed their ancient conflicts on the Islands of Mindanao; Turks and Greeks nervously grip their guns on Cyprus; and Celtic and Saxons in Ulster have begun to imprison and kill one another with all the cumulative passion of a thousand years' hostility (Greeley, 1974:10).

In times past, ethnicity was not necessarily in the picture of the global eyes because it was considered an outdated symbolic representation of the global past; a phenomenon also considered to be associated with the primitive and the savage. As aptly captured by Campbell, (1997:1), "In the West, African tribalism has traditionally been seen as the epitome of primitive savagery. The expression conjures up images of ghastly mobs baying for blood, with heads cut off and stuck on poles. Even today every newspaper and television commentator has a list of African atrocities - Rwanda, Somalia, Liberia-ready to hand whenever they wish to illustrate the barbarism". For this reason, both in scholarship and in policy framework, ethnicity did not matter to the world. In fact, its appearance in the literature was more an appeal for modernisation to take its toll on ethnicity so that it does not survive the precincts of development in the modern world. This is because developed peoples and developed societies did not have to waste their time talking about what did not matter - ethnicity. It was as a result of this thwarted notion that ethnicity was only tolerated in relation to discussing backward and primitive societies (Geertz, 1963; Bates, 1983). The discourse on ethnicity tilted towards persuading backward societies especially in Africa and Asia to forget about their savage and primitive past and embrace modernity. Therefore, theories of modernisation flooded the literature in the late 1950s and the early 1960s for Africans to larch their scholarship and policies on so they could develop. Instead of singing the requiem mass of ethnicity, modernisation and its theories have only helped to strengthen the

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visibility of ethnicity (Nairn, 1998). As Kaufman (n.d.) rightly puts it: "With the advent of modern integration through print capitalism, roads, telecommunications, mass education, mass conscription, taxation, and bureaucratisation, many primary ethnic groups became nations". As a result, languages and symbols became national standards, while people were sharply divided along 'insiders' and 'outsiders' (Fearon and Laitin, 2009).

However, today, if modernisation theories are any relevant, it is not only Africans and Asians that need them in order to overshadow the problems of primitive behaviour; the West also needs such prescriptive solutions especially with the experiences of post-Cold War in Eastern Europe, which illustrated the fact that bestiality is a fact of humanity and not of race. Srebrenica, Kosovo and Yugoslavia have become empirical undeniable attestations (Frckoski, 2000). Today, ethnicity has become a social cancer that affects every nook and cranny of the world.

Presently, studies have shown that two-thirds of the world's conflicts have to do with ethnicity and this is because ethnicity has become an instrument of identity construction and expression (Gurr, 2000). Experiences like in Rwanda, Kenya, Nigeria, Bosnia/Herzegovina, Belgium, Libya and Afghanistan have shown that ethnicity is now a pervasive phenomenon. Even in the USA and the UK people now like to be identified with their ethnic origins. For example, in America, citizens are described as German Americans, Afro Americans, Italian Americans, Latino Americans, Polish Americans and the like (Mindel and Habenstein, 1981). This goes to show that America is no longer a melting pot where every other ethno-cultural identity melts. Glazer and Moynihan (1970: xxxiii), came to the conclusion that "the adoption of a totally new ethnic identity, by dropping whatever one is to become simply American, is inhibited by strong elements in the social structure of the United States", and this is because, as the two scholars contend, "Ethnic groups (Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish . . .) have become largely political, economic and cultural interest groups" (Glazer and Moynihan, 1970: xxxiv). The same observation was made of Nigeria and Nigerians by Coleman (1958) when he aver that urbanisation, instead of erasing the ethnocultural identities of Nigerians has only reinforced ethnic consciousness.

It must be emphasised that there is nothing wrong with ethnicity in itself as an end product of cultural identity expression. The problem with ethnicity arises when humans decide to make ethnicity a means to an end for the actualisation of individual and group interest in a negative way. Unfortunately, though, globally ethnicity has become a portent instrument in the overzealous quest for the control of politics, economics and geographical spaces.

**Ethnicity: A Conceptual and Theoretical Discourse**

Jack David Eller is of the opinion that many people who employ the use of ethnicity in their daily discussions care to define the concept (Eller, 2000). But even if many would care to define the term, ethnicity is too fluid a concept to be gagged by a singular universal
definition. Because ethnicity is a concept in a state of flux, it is mutable and unfixed; it is transient and elastic. Human societies choose to define ethnicity either as descriptive or ascriptive phenomenon (Barth, 1969). Nigeria provides a classic laboratory of illustrating the fluidity of conceptualising ethnicity when groups can define themselves as belonging to an ethnic group because of shared language and culture and the same groups would perceive themselves as different irrespective of belonging to same language and cultural affinity. At the macro level, for instance, the Yoruba of south-western Nigeria tend to define themselves as belonging to one ethnic group if they are contending with the Hausa-Fulani and the Igbo but at the micro level see themselves as belonging to different irrespective of belonging to same language and cultural affinity. At the macro level, for instance, the Yoruba of south-western Nigeria tend to define themselves as belonging to one ethnic group if they are contending with the Hausa-Fulani and the Igbo but at the micro level see themselves as belonging to different ethnocultural identities such as the Ijebu, the Ijesa, the Ife, the Egba, and so forth. This fluidity is further compounded by the theoretical modulations on the very concept of ethnicity. Basically, there are three theories of ethnicity - primordialism, constructivism and instrumentalism.

**Primordialism**

In a nutshell, primordialism means going back or the retention of ancient tradition rooted in cultures and symbols that are sometimes unchanging and fixed. Primordialists look at culture and not politics or economics as conditions for social relations amongst peoples. Culture is very paramount as a defining factor of ethnic identities. For the primordialists, ethnic identities are fixed and naturally given, and cannot be negotiated. One cannot choose the family they are born into, the language, the culture, the blood and kinship ties, sometimes even the religion and the territory cannot be negotiated. That is why the primordialists are also referred to as the 'essentialists'. According to Clifford Geertz (1963: 109):

> By a primordial attachment is meant one that stems from the 'givens' - or more precisely, as culture is inevitably involved in such matters the 'assured givens' - of social existence: immediate contiguity and kin connection mainly, but beyond them, the givenness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of language and following particular social patterns. These congruities of blood, speech, custom, and so on, are seen to have an ineffable, at times overpowering, coerciveness in and of themselves. One is bound to one's kinsman, neighbour, one's fellow believer...

The point that Clifford Geertz is trying to make clear is that people cannot construct their ethnic identities at will as if they are constructing and reconstructing a machine or a social identity like changing a club or a school. It is at this point that the essentialists disagree with the social constructivists that ethnicity can be constructed and reconstructed as shall be further discussed.

**Constructivism**

Unlike the primordialists, the constructivists believe that ethnic identities are borne out of social construction. At any given point in time, it is people who decide to construct ethnicity as an identity badge. Several scholars (see, Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983; Hasting, 1997; Anderson, 1991; Laitin, 1998; Posner, 2004) belong to this school of thought. These
scholars drew their inspiration from the works of Jean Paul Sartre on the social construction of race in France. In his two classic works, Sartre (1948/1995 and 1982) clearly gave examples of how the French people constructed racism mostly against the Jews that marked the beginning of anti-Semitic movement against the Jews in France for crucifying Jesus Christ. In his works, Terence Ranger particularly devoted a lot of time in trying to factor missionary activities and colonialism in the construction of ethnic identities in the East and Central Africa, and even in the Southern Africa (Ranger, 1991, 1996). The social constructionists insist that there is nothing natural or given about ethnicity, it is the construction of the human society by mystification of communities and traditions.

**Instrumentalism**

The Instrumentalists do not bother themselves over the complex debate about ethnicity either being essential of a construction. As far as they are concerned, ethnicity remains an instrument in mostly the hands of the elite for achieving personal gains. Richard Sklar (1967), for example, sees ethnicity as "a mask of elite privilege". Again, Nigeria depicts this position. The political elite in Nigeria use ethnicity mainly as an instrument of electoral victories. Since pre-independence era, ethnicity has continued to be an instrument of political mobilisation (Osaghae, 1998, 2003). As Chazan (1999: 108) would note, "Ethnicity as a subjective basis for collective consciousness gains relevance to the political process when it spurs group formation and underpins political organisation".

Despite the difficulty of underpinning the concept of ethnicity, scholars have come to the conclusion that the manifestation of ethnicity stems from the demarcation of boundaries of identification in both descriptive and ascriptive manners. The distinguishing equation is "We - They; Them - Us". The very moment people are able to classify and characterise themselves as different from others in spite of shared language and culture, ethnicity is at work.

**Ethnicity and Nationalism**

Ethnicity and nationalism can be regarded as Siamese twins in the sense that they share similar characteristics as shown in the table below.

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<th>Ethnicity</th>
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Nationalism is a verb literally meaning the process of making a nation, derived from the noun nation. Scholars like Ernest Gellner have insisted on making the literal interpretation the bedrock of analysing the concept of nationalism. For Gellner (1983) nations are the consequential aftermaths of nationalism. The idea of a nation connotes homogeneity, with same people who share same language, culture, historical background, and so forth. This is also true of the primordial understanding of ethnicity. This is why most African states cannot qualify to be regarded.
as nations because they are the products of decolonisation and not borne as a result of nationalism (Hall, 1999).

Anthony D. Smith, though tutored by Gellner dissociated himself from his teacher’s narrow conception of nationalism when he expanded the meaning of the concept to incorporate other sub-national identities in the struggle for the actualisation of interests other than the formation of nation states (Smith, 1999). Furthermore, Eriksen (2002), and Hobsbawm (1992) have all introduced ethnicity in the understanding of nationalism. Simply put, ethnicity is the catalyst of nationalism. Most nationalist movements are likely to rely on ethnicity to provide the energy for the potency and survival (Brubaker, 2002). In Nigeria as indeed several other parts of the word, ethnicity has been adopted as a potent instrument of the struggles for recognition, political participation and fair economic distribution. According the Anthony Smith, therefore, sub-ethnic groups guided by common ideological interests can in fact embark on nationalism or sub-nationalism.

**Colonialism and Ethnicity**

Okwudiba Nnoh posits that colonialism is the cradle of ethnicity in Africa (Nnoli, 1978: 3). This position has been reinforced by the submissions of scholars like Aidan Campbell (1997); Osaghe (1998) and Manidani (2003). However, the ‘blame it on colonialism' position has for long polarised African scholars on the role of colonialism in African development. For example, Professor Ade Ajayi in one of his seminal works of 1969 concluded that colonialism in Africa was a mere episode, an experience come and gone just like the experience of slavery (see Ikime, 1991). Many Africans are wont to blaming colonialism as the bane of peace and development (Danjibo, 2008) but for how long can this argument be sustained? Must everything evil on the African soil be blamed on colonial administration in Africa? In fact, to continue to harp blames on colonialism is to continue to accept the fact that Africans lack the capacity for self actualisation. Ajayi (1969: 508) concludes by saying "This is why the colonial impact cannot be fully understood except in the context of African history. Thus it is difficult to agree with Professor Stengers that there could be ‘a political entity brought into being on African soil completely by the will of the European’. . . . the colonial period represents only one episode in a long and eventful history" After all, the experience of Africans today in the hands of their fellow Africans (internal colonialism) is worse than that experienced under colonial administration. Moreover, Africa was not the only continent that was colonised; several other continents including the Americas went through colonial experiences. At the time of its independence in 1960, Nigeria alongside China, India and Brazil were the four developing countries that were expected to join the comity of the developed nations in no distant time. Today, the story is sour for Nigeria as the other three nations have gone past. In fact, the colonial plan and prospect of development for Nigeria is far higher than the post-colonial development initiatives, if there are any at present.

In 1980, Peter P. Ekeh had the opportunity to contest Ade Ajayi’s position by...
insisting that colonialism is an epoch and not an
episode (Ekeh, 1980). His position was hinged
on the fact that although colonialism had come
and gone, it has left ineffable legacies that
cannot be ignore, ranging from education,
bureaucracy, the legal system, the army, the
police, etc. The description that an African is a
white man in black skin fits this position.
Africans have to function in everything
bequeathed to them by the colonialists, and
as such the legacies have remained enduring.
This is what Ekeh says:

My view of colonialism is that it constitutes an
epochal era in Africa. It represents a
congery of events and consequences which
can be equated in significance to an epoch .. .
A corollary of this attribute is that epochs
represent crises in human experience. As the
poet would put it, 'things fall apart and the
center no longer holds'. . . With epochs, the
central parameters of society, the central value
assumptions on which society rests, are never
the same again with those whose times and
regions are captured by epochal movements
(Ekeh, 1983:6 & 7).

In terms of ethnicity, apart from the 1884
Berlin Conference which shredded African
identities across colonial boundaries like the
Yoruba in Nigeria and their folks in Togo
and Benin Republic and the Zabarmawa scattered in
Nigeria, Niger and Benin Republic, colonial land
use acts and indirect rule policies have
contributed in no immense measure in
exacerbating conflicts. For example, in Northern
Nigeria, colonial indirect rule policy created two
classes - that of the ruling emirs as the 'citizens'
and the commoners as the 'subject' (Mamdani,
2003). Again, British colonial administration
adopted and imposed the Emirate system
popular only with the Fulani and the conquered
Hausa states on non-Hausa-Fulani groups
(Campbell, 1997; Danjibo, 2008).

Ethnic Conflict: A Global Perspective

Since ethnic conflicts are responsible for two-
thirds of the world's conflicts, it is important to
discuss them in the light of their causative
factors. As earlier mentioned, no part of the
world is immune from ethnicity and ethnic
related conflicts. This section will be devoted to
discussing and analysing some cases of ethnic
conflict, drawing lessons from different parts of
the world.

The Basque Question

The Basque people are famously known for
sheep raising or herding just like the cowboys.
This activity was a common practice in such
places as Montana, Colorado, Oregon and
Nevada. A group of sheepmen migrated from
the Basque to California in search of gold.
There they mixed with Americans and
gravitated to sheep herding after the American
civil war. Today, the original Basque people
are divided across France and Spain but had
engaged both countries in series of violent
clashs as a result of the quest for a separate
state. This is because, as Dinnerstein, Nichols
and Reimers (1990: 213) have observed:

Historically, Basque have been independent
and have maintained their separateness from
other groups near whom they lived. The
Basque country of the Iberian peninsula in
Europe was divided and incorporated into
France and Spain in the early part of the
nineteenth century, but the Basque always
favour their own culture and never quite fit in
with either the French or the Spanish.
The Quebecois Movement in Canada

Canada was said to have first been colonised by the French and later by the British who conquered the French and re-colonised Canada. However, the French in Quebec have refused assimilation into the British language and culture; they want to retain their French identity by preserving their language and culture. Ethno-cultural nationalism in Quebec has taken long frustrating years to actualise. At some point in history, nationalism in Quebec took a violent dimension, but the greater part of the struggle remained peaceful through the systematic and sustained pressurising of respective Canadian governments to recognise Quebec as an autonomous entity. Presently, Quebec is now an autonomous province in Canada where administration is governed by French rather than English language.

The Kurdish Movement

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the Kurds found themselves scattered all over the Middle East states such as Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria and Jordan, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Cyprus (Leonard, 2006). They are considered to be the fourth largest ethnic group in the Middle East without a state of their own. There are about 800,000 Kurds presently living in Germany. The Kurdish ethnic conflict began since 1925 at the early stage of the Turkish republic as a local uprising and transformed into the Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan (the PKK) or the Kurdish Workers' Party in 1938. The Kurdish movement was formed to demand a separate state for the Kurds and the PKK was formed to actualise this need. The PKK is considered to be a terrorist movement because of its militant approach to struggle. Thus far, conflict between the government of Turkey and the PKK has claimed over 40,000 lives and cost the government of Turkey over a hundred billion dollars (Orttungu, 2006; Akcapar, 2006). The leader of the PKK was captured and imprisoned since 1994. In April 2013, he has called for a cease fire, persuading his followers to embrace dialogue rather than take to violence. Right now, the PKK fighters have started withdrawing from the mountainous region of northern Iraq from where they have been operating (Al-Jazeera News, 8/5/13).

The Hutu and Tutsi Crisis

Both groups are found in the present day Rwanda and Burundi. These identities emerged as a result of Belgian colonial construction of identities that used physical features and wealth to classify the people into two ethnic categories. The Tutsi were the tall, Negroid, with pointed noses and herds of cows while the Hutu was the broad faced and mostly farmers. This categorisation was reinforced by missionary activities which registered people both in churches and in schools with either Tutsi or Hutu identity (see Campbell, 1997). Though, the population is mostly Catholic, the army, the police and the bureaucracy was polarised by ethnicity. The Hutu constitute about 85 percent of the population, the Tutsi 13 percent and the Twa 2 percent. Belgian colonialist decided to hand over power to the Tutsi who ceased the opportunity to dominate the army, the police, and the bureaucracy to the exclusion of the Hutu. All attempts by the Hutu to redress the situation was met with force and massacre until in 1994
when the opportunity came for the Hutu, which crisis popularly referred to as the Rwandan genocide where close to a million Tutsi were massacred (Mamdani, 2002).

Election and Ethnic Conflict in Kenya

Kenya is said to have about 40 ethnic groups dominant among which are the Gikuyu, Luyha, the Luo, the Kalenjin, the Kamba and the Kisii. Despite the British colonial administrative policy that segregated the ethnic groups into eight provinces, the people lived together side by side and even intermarried without any major outbreak of ethnic hostilities. Since Kenya got its independence in 1963 and Jomo Kenyata became the first president, political and economic power rested majorly in the hands of his fellow Kikuyu. After Kenyata's death and Daniel Arab Moi became the president, political and economic power shifted from the Kikuyu to Arab Moi's fellow Kalenjin group.

As Yieke (2011: 9) observed:

Large-scale inter ethnic violence is a new phenomenon in Kenya. The proximate causes of violence are intrinsically related to democratisation and the electoral cycle . . . As the move to multipartyism (sic) became increasingly probable, senior politicians in many political rallies issued inflammatory statements and utterances, asking for people to go back to their ancestral lands or they be forced out . . . Ethnicity in this case was a medium of political violence, not its cause.

The December 2007 post-election violence took strong ethnic dimension to the extent of claiming close to 1000 lives within a short period. Worse still was the case of deliberate ethnic displacement where groups were forced to relocate from their abodes as citizens prior to the elections. As further captured by Yieke (2011: 13),

After the elections and ethnic violence escalated, citizens were told to pack up and go if they were perceived to be 'outsiders' in the places they had been residing in Kenya. Kikuyus in parts of the Rift Valley, Nyanza, Western and Coast provinces were forced out of their homes. Likewise, other communities, notable the Luo, Kalenjin and sometimes the Kisii were also forced out from parts of the central province.

Today, Kenyans have become more ethnic than citizens not as a result of primordial attachment but as a result of politics.

The Mindanao Conflict

The Mindanao movement is situated in the Southern Philippines. The region harbours the rebellion known as the Bangsamoro conflict. Before their incorporation into the Republic of Philippines in 1912 after large numbers of Filipinos migrated into the region, Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan were autonomous colonies consisting of about 30 ethnolinguis groups. The Bangsamoro people are predominantly Muslim, while the Filipinos are predominantly Christian. First, Philippines and its surrounding autonomous communities were colonised by Spain, and this led to a bloody war that lasted 333 years. In 1946, the United States defeated the Spaniards and restored independence to the Philippines but overlooked the ethnic complexity of the republic especially in the Southern region. In 1935, the people of Bangsamoro presented a protest declaration to the American
government saying that they should not be included in the independence to be granted to the Philippines because of their separate identities. The statement read: "we do not want to be included in the Philippines for once an independent Philippines is launched, there would be trouble between us and the Filipinos because from time immemorial these two peoples have not lived harmoniously together. Our public land must not be given to people other than the Moros . . . .\) (Philippine Muslim News, Vol. 2, No. 2, July 1968: 7-12).

In 1968, the Bangsamoro nationalism transmuted into the Muslim Independence Movement and took a more militant approach calling for a Jihad to achieve independence for the Southern region. In 1972, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), a militant wing of the Bangsamoro movement carried out series of coordinated attacks against several detachments of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, and on 28 April, 1974 it issued another declaration saying: "We the five million oppressed Bangsamoro people, wishing to free ourselves from the terror, oppression, and tyranny of Filipino colonialism, that had caused us untold sufferings and miseries by criminally usurping our land, by threatening Islam through wholesale desecration of its places of worship and its Holy Book . . . ." (cited in Kamlan, 2003). To this day, the Mindanao question has not been adequately addressed in the Philippines, despite the incorporation of some of its members into the Armed Forces of Philippines and the liberalisation of some policies to grant the region partial autonomy.  

Ethnic Conflicts in Nigeria

Perhaps in the entire African continent, no country can provide vivid and practical experience of ethnic conflicts than Nigeria. Apart from its large population size, nearing 200 million people, the country has more than 450 ethno-linguistic groups.

Umuleri Versus Aguleri

These are two Igbo communities in Anambra State in the South-East of Nigeria which have engaged themselves in a fratricidal conflict that have claimed the lives of several hundreds of people over land contest. Before the series of conflicts between the two communities, these communities had shared most things in common. For example, they shared the same motor park in Onitsha. However, as a result of the conflict, members of the same community could no longer board vehicles from the same motor park. They also could not share the same markets and their children could not attend the same schools until both communities agreed to resolve the conflict.

Offa Versus Erinle Conflict

This is more or less another communal conflict over the contest of land and the sighting of a Federal Polytechnic. The Polytechnic was sited on Erinle land and named after Offa community. Both communities belong to the general Yoruba-speaking group of South-West Nigeria. However, geographically, they are situated in North-Central Nigeria because Kwara State is one of the six states that make up the central zone. Offa community is encapsulated in Erinle land, but
it has a substantial influential people in government. So when the opportunity came for the establishment of the Polytechnic came, much of Erinle land was taken for the project. The government of Nigeria has a policy which states that 65 percent of the lower work force must come from the community where a project is sited. Though the Polytechnic was sited in Erinle, but because it was named after Offa community, it would then mean that the latter community would provide the greater work force for the Polytechnic. This undoubtedly brought about the exclusion of the real owners of the land from control of the affairs of the institution, which is causing the perennial conflict between the two communities.

**The Shaare Versus Tsharagi**

These two communities in the north of Kwara State are only divided by a tiny strip of road. The Shaare people are Igbomma Yoruba while the Tsharagi people are of Nupe descent. The two groups had lived side by side and had even intermarried and produced children of mixed genealogy. They share a common market, have farmlands across the communities, drank water from the same source and their children attended the same schools. The Nupe were said to be the earlier migrants to the land. In 2001, a violent conflict erupted between the two ethnic groups over farmland. A Nupe man who left the community for sometime came back and found a Yoruba man farming on his father's farm land. He demanded to have a portion of the land so he could resume his farming activities for the season but the Yoruba man refused to cede any portion. This was the reason behind the conflict that has severed relations between the two groups. The conflict has become protracted and at each confrontation, several persons would lose their lives.1

**The Tiv Versus Jukun Conflict**

The Tiv people originally inhabit communities such as Makurdi, Vandeikya, and Gboko in Benue State, while the Jukun are mostly found in Wukari in Taraba State. It was said that because the Tiv people are great farmers and because of their farming skills a large number of them were encouraged by British colonialists to migrate into Jukun land in order to grow Beni for export. The Tiv migrated into Wukari, increased in large numbers and even became numerically larger than the Jukun who are the original inhabitants of Wukari. The indigene/settler problem is compounded by political contests over time because each time an election is conducted, the Tiv are sure to win because of their numerical strength. This has brought ill feelings amongst the Jukun who accuse the Tiv of taking over what naturally belongs to them - farmlands and political positions. Again, several persons have lost their lives as a result of the intermittent conflict between the Tiv and the Jukun.

**The Yoruba Versus the Hausa in Sagamu**

The Yoruba have a custom of masquerade feast known as the Oro celebrated from time immemorial and had continued to be celebrated despite the culture of modernity. In 1999 shortly after transition from military to civil rule, the Yoruba in Sagamu town of
Ogun state, near Lagos were celebrating Oro festival. Culturally, women are forbidden to come face to face with the masquerade. There is a large concentration of Hausa migrants in Shagamu first as result of long time kolanut trade relations between the Hausa and the Yoruba and second as a result of the petrol depot. Two Hausa women who were oblivious of the Yoruba culture of not allowing women come in contact with the Oro were said to have defied the cultural rule and decided to take sight of the Oro. The two women were hacked to death. The Hausa community mobilised and launched attacks on the Yoruba to avenge the death of the women. The conflict between the Hausa and the Yoruba in Sagamu took another dimension when several Yoruba people were attacked and killed in Kano state in form of reprisals.

The Hausa-Fulani and the Sayyawa in Bauchi State

Most markets in northern Nigeria, even among non Hausa-Fulani indigenous communities are controlled by the Hausa-Fulani. More importantly is that fact that there are certain ecological niches that are considered to be the exclusive prerogative of the Hausa-Fulani. Butchering is one of those, because it has to do with religion. Most Hausa-Fulani are Muslims and Islam forbids the eating of meat more or less slaughtered without the invocation of the name of God. In Islam, the slaughter of animals must start with Bissimillabi Arahamani Abarim (in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the most merciful). It is for this reason that Muslims would prefer fellow Muslims to take charge of the abattoirs so as to be sure that the ritual of slaughtering is performed before the slaughter takes place.

There had been a major contest between the Sayyawa ethnic group and the Hausa-Fulani over the control of the abattoir in Tafawa Balewa local government area of Bauchi State. The Hausa-Fulani were in control of the abattoir and all efforts be the indigenous Sayyawa to get incorporated into the economy of the abattoir was rejected by the Hausa-Fulani. Pigs are considered haram (forbidden) in Islam because they are viewed as clumsy creatures. The Sayyawa were said to have gone to the abattoir and slaughtered pigs and spilled the blood in order to desecrate it. In 1991, a Hausa-Fulani man bought roasted meat from a Sayyawa. He was chided by another Hausa man who told him it was roasted pork he was eating. This was what led to the conflict that claimed the lives of hundreds of persons.

The Fulani Versus Other Farming Groups

Every year there is incessant conflict between the Fulani herdsmen and farmers across the many ethnic divide in Nigeria, especially the Hausa, Tarok, the Tiv, the Jukon, the Yoruba, the Igbo the Efik and Anang, etc. Usually, the Fulani herdsmen are nomadic and wander from the north to the south of the country in search of greener pasture for their herds. Along the line either by commission or omission, the herds wander into farmlands causing enormous damage to crops. This is the reason for conflict often leading to several deaths. It might not just be possible to put all the blame on the Fulani and this is because even the farmers are also not sensitive to the needs of the Fulani. Most farming communi-
ties do not observe grazing land to take care of the need of the Fulani grazers and their herds.

Conditions for Ethnic Conflict
There are several reasons provided by scholars as factors responsible for the rise of ethnic related conflicts and these include domination politics of group marginalisation and suppression, land, horizontal inequality, indigene-settler relations, Colonial legacy, elite interest and self determination.

Domination Politics/Relative Deprivation
This has to do with minority-majority relation whereby the dominant group dominates the minority group. The dominant group has nothing to do with the strength of number. An ethnic group can be numerically advantaged and yet remain a minority group. For example, the Hutu in both Rwanda and Burundi constitute about 85 percent of the total population of both countries and yet assumed the minority status in their relations with the Tutsi who constitute less than 15 percent; likewise the Fulani in northern Nigeria are a tiny minority and yet they are the dominant even before the post-jihad Hausa-Fulani assimilation (Danjibo, 2005; Mamdani, 2003).

Domination politics segregates groups into two categories - the included and the excluded. The dominant group usually takes control of everything to the exclusion of the dominated group. In a society where the politics of exclusion is obvious, the dominant group would automatically control the bureaucracy, the economy, the army, the police, and top government positions, and decision-making process. Naturally, the minority are excluded and become frustrated, and it is this frustration that leads to aggression. Gurr's (1970) frustration-aggression theory is derived from this practice. The attempt by the minority group to correct perceived imbalances is often met with stiff resistance by the majority group, and this automatically leads to conflict between the two categories (Horowitz, 1985).

Land
In peace and conflict studies, land is a resource but also a value. Therefore, land related conflict can be regarded as value-based. Globally, land or territory has accounted for several conflicts as it is the case with the Israeli-Palestinian question, China versus Tibet, Nigeria versus Cameroun and several others. At the intra-state level, perhaps no country would have an exponential experience of land-related conflicts than Nigeria. There is the Tiv-Jukun conflict, the Ife-Modakeke, the Umuleri-Aguleri, the Jasawa-Birom in Jos crisis, the Sayyawa/Hausa-Fulani in Bauchi, the Offa-Erinle in Kwara, the Shaare-Tsaragi in Kwara, the Okrika-Eleme and the numerous Fulani herdsman versus farmers conflict experienced all over the country (Otte and Albert, 1999). In Africa, the value for land is not just restricted to Agriculture but to other primordial metaphysical attachments such as funerals and worship. There is an umbilical cord between the living and the living dead and it is expected that unblemished Africans who have died must be buried with their ancestors. Therefore, to dissociate an African from his/her land is to deny them their cultural existence.
Elite Manipulation

Most of the ethnic conflicts in Nigeria and elsewhere have been exacerbated by elite manipulation. The elite often use ethnicity as an instrument for self aggrandisement. While Sklar (1967: 6) views ethnicity as 'a mask for class privilege', Osaghae (1991: 43) views ethnicity as 'an ideology employed by the elite to further their constitutive interests'. In Nigeria, where competition among ethnic groups is fierce, elite manipulation is rife. Right from the time British colonial administration amalgamated the country into one entity in 1914, ethnicity became the platform of completion for the control of the country. Since government is the only viable business that attracts wealth and status, the Nigerian political elite has used ethnicity to disillusion the masses into thinking that only when they vote for their own that development can reach them. Whereas, the truth is that the elite only uses ethnicity as an avenue to amass wealth.

The Indigene-Settler Question

One of the greatest triggers of ethnic conflict in Africa is the indigene-settler question. In the real sense of the fact, every group is actually a settler group given the fact of migration, but early settler have always identified themselves as the traditional owners of the land, distinguishing themselves from the later settlers who are often considered as visitors. The notorious protracted conflict in Jos between the Berom and the Hausa-Fulani, the Ife-Modakeke, the Tiv-Jukun conflict in Taraba, which have claimed hundreds of lives and damaged unquantifiable property are all egregious manifestation of the problem between the indigenes and settlers (Best, 2007; Danjibo, 2009; Otite and Albert, 1999; Mamdani, 2000).

Colonial Legacy

Most of the ethnic tension in Africa can ,be traced to colonial rule in the region. Colonialism not only brought together groups that were hitherto alien to themselves but also helped in dispersing groups that had ethno-cultural affinities to belong to different territories sometimes across international boundaries (Ekeh, 1980; Campbell, 2007; Mamdani, 2003; Osaghae, 2003). Prah (2004: 7) tells of his interaction with the local chief of Alao community in Ghana, who complained bitterly that in other to visit his subjects on the other side of the border (which runs along people's backyards on both sides of the border), in Lome (Togo) he needed a passport. Nelson Makanda (2010), in analysing the Kenyan society, attributes some of the colonial factors responsible for the politicisation of ethnicity in Kenya in a project titled "Ethnicity and Nationhood in Kenya". He identifies the following colonial policies as responsible for the ethnicisation of the Kenyan nation:

(1) Differential labour allocation: Colonial administrations in Africa evolved policies of labour segregation between or amongst the various ethnic groups in Africa. Accordingly, "The Kikuyu were perceived to be dishonest and therefore unsuited to domestic work, the Kavirondo were perceived to be morally upright hence good for domestic work, and the Somalis perceived to be adaptable and reliable with weapons and hunting,
hence useful as bodyguards”.

(2) Disregard for ethnic affinities in creating administrative structures: Provinces and districts were created by colonialists without due regard for language, culture and ethnic affiliation. In Northern Nigeria, for example, British colonialism, through the indirect rule system not only established emirate structures in non-Hausa-Fulani communities but in several instances imposed Hausa/Fulani as district heads and emirs.

(3) The acquisition of prime land which belonged to specific ethnic groups and the use of labour from other ethnic groups whose land were either unproductive or scarce. For example, land was confiscated from the Maasai, the Kikuyu and the Kalenjin and given to the Luo and Luhya for labour. The same policy applied in Northern Nigeria where land was confiscated from the Jukun and ceded to the Tiv by British colonialism.

(4) The suppression of minority ethno-cultural and linguistic identities and the adoption and recognition of the identities of dominant language groups. This was particularly the case in Northern Nigeria where colonial administration officially adopted Hausa as the language of commerce and administration.

Other causes of ethnic conflict include:

(1) Language Policy: Just like the case in Northern Nigeria where British colonialism adopted Hausa as the official language of commerce and administration, other language policies have further heightened tensions and aggravated ethnic conflict. Prah (2004: 14) stated that:

Undemocratic politics of language is never far from ethnic tensions. Cultural and linguistic Arabisation has been the ideological bone of contention of the Sudanese conflict since the late 1950s when with impending departure of British colonial power, African fear of Arabisation and economic and political dominance was ignited by the Torit Mutiny . . . The rejection of Afrikaans as a medium of education by South African youth in 1976 in Soweto proved to be a decisive turning point in the struggle against Apartheid and white minority rule in South Africa. A principal and underlying factor in Ethiopian conflicts... has been the revolt against Amhara cultural dominance within the contemporary Ethiopian state. Oromo linguistic and political resurgence has become the latest manifestation this fissiparous history.

Further still, ethnic conflict can be exacerbated by political marginalisation, cultural suppression, unfair distribution of resources, and control over the space of ecological niche and so on and so forth.

**The Management of Ethnic Conflicts**

Ethnic conflicts can be regarded as value-based conflict and can become very protracted. It should therefore not be taken for granted that there are visibly easy solutions to them. While some practical approaches to the problem of ethnicity and ethnic conflicts are commendable, others only help to exacerbate the conflicts. Though not in detail, we shall discuss the different approaches to addressing the problem of ethnicity and ethnic conflicts globally.
Elimination/Suppression/Assimilation

For most groups, ethnicity is all about competition and groups are willing to go far to make sure they survive. Groups that relate to themselves in a competitive manner would naturally outdo one another through elimination. McGarry and O'Leary (1993) have stated that the most common form of elimination is carried out either through genocide/ethnic cleansing or by assimilation. The experiences in Kosovo with the Croats trying to wipe out ethnic Albanians and Rwanda with the Hutu trying to wipe out the Tutsi, or even the extermination of six million Jews by the German Nazis during Adolf Hitler are practical examples of senocide/ethnic cleansing. The major intent is the complete annihilation or obliteration of one group from the pages of history, considered to be a threat.

A milder form of ethnic cleansing/genocide is ethnic assimilation. By this is meant a situation where the dominant group seeks to systematically bury the ethnic identity of another group. Assimilation can be done either by coercion or by subtle policies. For example, the forbidding of the Kurdish language by the Turkish government is a form of assimilation by coercion; whereas, the intermarriages between the Fulani and the Hausa evolve the Hausa-Fulani is a subtle form of assimilation (Danjibo, 2005). The Fulani in Nigeria carried out the jihad against the Hausa states, led by Shehu Usmanu Danfodiyo in 1804. The Hausa states were captured and politically subdued by the Fulani who sacked Hausa kings and replaced them with Fulani `mirs. The irony, however, is that though the Fulani had political/administrative control over the Hausa people, Hausa language conquered Fulfulde (the language of the Fulani) through intermarriages. It is therefore, not surprising today that many a Fulani person cannot speak Fulfulde but Hausa. In other words, the Fulani had been linguistically assimilated by the Hausa. In the case of the Kurdistan nationalism, Turkey had made it a crime for Kurdish to be spoken as an official language of the state. This was all in a bid to suppress the Kurdish identity that was officially declared a threat to the Turks. Further still, British colonial indirect rule policy which recognised Hausa language as the only language of administration and commerce and the subjugation of the numerous minority identities in northern Nigeria into the identity of Hausa-Fulani was an assimilation policy of British colonialism (Campbell, 1997; Mamdani, 2003).

Most pre and post independence African states have committed grave mistakes by trying to evolve one-party states because ethnicity was seen as antithetical to democratic culture, a thing of the past that should not have a place in the modern world (Thomson, 2000). The belief is that democratic values would be challenged by ethnic interests that would cast strains to nation building projects. Time has challenged this notion in the sense that it has become increasingly difficult to continue to suppress varied identities in the face of the quest to form a nation. Ethnic annihilation, suppression and assimilation have, in fact, compounded the problem of ethnic relations in most countries that had otherwise been expected. It was taken for granted that identities could easily be wished away, but identities, especially ethnic and
religious identities are very enduring. As Keller (2002: 6) has noted, "African leaders are increasingly realising that hegemonic control is not a prudent long-term ethnic conflict management strategy. Wherever this has been tried, it has failed”.

The Federal Option
Scholars of federalism such as Kenneth C. Wheare (1963) have outlined the conditions necessary for a federal union. First and foremost, the communities to the union must DESIRE to be part of the union. Secondly, they must also operate independent of the union in some matters and thirdly, they must have the capacity to make the federal system work (see chapter three). To this end, countries like the United States, Canada, Belgium and Australia have succeeded in operating their federal systems. In Nigeria, apart from the states creation exercise, the country, through painstaking experience has been able to evolve other federal mechanisms such as the federal character principle and the quota system in doing government business. This is expected to enable fair representation and eliminate ethnic and religious marginalisation in government (Ekeh and Osaghae, 1989; Osaghae, 2006; Onwudiwe and Suberu, 2005). The Nigerian federal system is, however, beset with a lot of challenges that are making the federal option near impossible to practice. In the first instance many analysts are of the opinion that strategies like states creation, federal character principle and the quota system have not been able to adequately ameliorate the national question (Osaghae and Onwudiwe, 2001).

Conclusion
It is natural, even from the primordial viewpoint, for ethnically plural states to witness tensions arising from ethnic expressions. Ethnicity in itself is not the trigger of conflict. People of different ethnic identities have co-habited for long times without the violent manifestations of ethnicity. However, ethnicity has presently become both the source and strength of many conflicts experienced in the world today. Such issues as political marginalisation, economic exploitation, language and cultural suppression, land contestations, have all become issues associated with ethnicity and ethnic conflicts. In Africa, the situation is compounded by colonial legacy, under-development and poverty as these experiences have become clear markers of identity segregation and expression. Different governments have evolved different mechanism in addressing ethnic conflicts and these range from assimilation to accommodation. Experience has shown that those who have tried assimilation processes have failed while those that have tried accommodation have succeeded. It is therefore, suggested that practical accommodation policies be adopted for the resolution of ethnic conflicts. Such active policies as proportional representation, affirmative action, language/cultural recognition, liberal land policies, would go a long way in addressing ethnic tensions and conflicts.

Endnote
1. In 2001, I was in the Shaare and Tsaragi communities on field research and discovered that members of the group no longer interacted
because they had separate markets and motor parks while their children could not attend school as the only school was under lock and key. It was also revealed to me that most men who married across the two ethnic groups had sent their wives packing as a result of the conflict.

References


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