

CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA

BY

YUSUF O. ALI ESQ; SAN

INTRODUCTION

The choice of this highly important, sensitive and every topical issue as the theme of this year annual lecture by the Post-Graduate Students' Association of University of Ilorin could not have come at a more suspicious time than now, of the democratic dispensation of May, 199, more so when Nigeria marked 43 years as a sovereign Nation recently.

You will agree with me that Nigeria as a Nation right from independence is bedevilled and inundated with a legion of crises which are rooted in politics, religion, ethnicity, Niger Delta oil producing areas' persistent rifts, strike actions by the labour union among others.

In this paper, we will examine the isolated and specific causes and manifestations of these crises, which we strongly believe are capable of threatening the corporate existence of this country as a Nation. We shall conclude this paper by making recommendations and/or suggesting ways in which these lingering crises could be checked.

ETHNICITY CRISIS

It is an indisputable fact that the entity called Nigeria is an amalgamation of diverse and distinct ethnic nationalities with unique background and cultural orientation. Without

mincing words, one may be tempted to agree with the sentiment being expressed in some quarters that it was a grievous and monumental error perpetrated by our colonial master (the British) to bring together these diverse sets of people under the guise of amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates in the year 1914.

Sir Peter Smitters, who was the parliamentary private secretary of state in the then British colonial office between 1952 and 1959, confessed of which openly in the year 1999 the confession was published in the, that it was a palpable and regrettable committed by the British to force diverse ethnic groups into one, he asserted as follows:

“During the debate for independence of Nigeria, the view of the secretary of state at that time, with which I agreed, was that in Nigeria we should attempt to put together a large and powerful state with ample material resources which play a leading part in the affairs of the continent and of the world. This was attractive but it involved forcing several different ethnic and cultural groups into a single political

structure.... In exculpation, it must be said that we did not then have the examples of the collapse of Yugoslavia and/or of the Soviet Union before our eyes. It should now be clear for all but the wilfully blind to see that it is extremely dangerous to force diverse radical and social entities into a single rigid political structure.”

From the excerpts above, it is settled beyond peradventure that the genesis ethnicity crisis in Nigeria has its root in the amalgamation of 1914 which eventually culminated into Nigeria as a sovereign Nation in the year 1960.

CAUSES OF ETHNICITY CRISIS

There is no gainsaying the fact that the major of ethnicity crisis in this country is the feelings by some ethnic groups that the successive governments are insensitive to their plights and/or outright neglect. Such ethnic groups persistently cry of disparity or unequal treatment by the government or state with their counterparts in the polity. They formed the impression that they are denied their fair share in the areas of political participation, social-economic advancement, infrastructural development and employment opportunity to mention a few.

In essence, these ethnic groups are usually vehemently opposed to the policies of the government of state, sometimes violently, which usually assume dangerous dimensions capable of threatening the stability and peaceful co-existence of the Nation. It is worthy of mention that this violence or resentment by the

aggrieved ethnic groups is most cases politically motivated.

Some of our selfish and desperate politicians exploited the ethnicity crisis to their advantage at the polls. Recourse should be made to the period of Colonial rule where the indirect rule system was introduced in North, because the colonialist felt that the Northerners had on ground a well established way of governance peculiar to the ethnic group by the use of the Emirs to rule out some of the minority tribes. After independence, the successive government borrowed leaf from the colonial master and perpetrated the power play of ethnic group against the other which adversely affected the political development of the Nation.

This negative trend is manifested in the feeling that one ethnic group is superior to the other ethnic groups. This inferiority or superiority complex usually erupted into conflicts and chaos in the bid to preserve this perceived superiority, while the other ethnic groups would want to resist being dragged to the wood and extinction in their country.

It is common in African countries for rulers or politicians within a Nation to exploit ethnocentrism with a view to strengthening their political base or frontiers.

The evil effect of ethnicity can further be demonstrated in the way and manner Nigerians exercise their franchise during

any general election in this country. It is apparent that political parties especially during the first republic, are formed on ethnic lines and even voting is not done on the bases of the ability and capability of the contestants but rather on ethnic bases. The ethnocentrists are more concerned about the promotion of their agenda at the expense of other groups.

The evil effect of voting along ethnic lines was graphically demonstrated by **Rev. (Dr) Peter Bauna Tanko** in his article titled **Ethnicity, Religion and the Survival democracy in Nigeria**” where he laments thus-

“.....the integrity of the leader they may vote for may not matter to them as long as he/she is one of their own. In a situation such as this, the building of broad based parties in a country becomes more difficult from our experience, ethnic based political parties eventually become sources of corruption by granting positions and favours to their own ethnic group no matter how ill equipped the person may be for those positions.

THE EMERGENCE OF ETHNIC MILITIAS

It will not be out of place to say that, albeit, what seem like ethnic army is not totally strange in the history of Nigeria, but then the rise of ethnic armies became very pronounced and ubiquitous during the dark and accursed period of military era, especially the regimes of Babangida and Abacha.

The NADECO was formed to force the military junta out of power and to see to the actualization of June 12 presidential election:

Afenifere the Yoruba social-cultural group was also formed to protect the interest of the Yoruba.

Several ethnic nationalities are now springing up and asserting their identities with the use of force and venom which threatens the cooperative existence of this country as a Nation. But the most dangerous dimension it now assumes is the danger posed on innocent lives and properties of the members of other ethnic groups.

The emergence of these militia groups across the country is sequel to persistent yearnings and aspiration of ethnic nationalities. These aspirations are often expressed via the instrumentality of these groups prominent among which are Oodua peoples’ Congress, Egbesu, Yandaba, APC and MASSOB.

Oodua Peoples Congress as the name implies has its origin from the South Western part of the Nation. This group claim that they protect the interest of Yoruba and are also clamouring for Oodua Republic.

Egbesu is an armed group of Ijaw youths established or sponsored to champion the cause of the “Ijaw Nation”. There is also Ijaw National Congress amongst others in Ijaw areas which claim to be feathering the aspiration of the Ijaw people.

Also in **Ogoni Land and Niger Delta area**, it is common occurrence for the youth at

various times to organise themselves into armed group to protect the interests of the community. They usually condemn in its entirety what they call the oppression of their society and people.

It is not uncommon for the youth to abduct foreign nationals working in the oil companies. They are fond of vandalizing oil pipelines and destroying any other thing which tends to symbolize the oppression of their society.

The Yandaba group in Kano is another very violent though unorganised group of Hausa/Fulani youths meant to basically carry out reprisals for alleged killing against other ethnic groups, especially the Ibos and Yoruba. The members of this group are usually the unemployed youths and Almajiri.

Arewa People Congress (APC)

In the year 200, some groups of people came together to form what they call the Arewa Peoples Congress. No doubt the formation and/or emergence of the group was inspired or motivated by the desire of the people of the North to call the bluff of the OPC which they believe was launching premeditated onslaughts on their ethnic group residing in the Western part of the country especially Lagos.

MASSOB

Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) is another group in the Eastern part of the country which was formed to bring into reality the **BIAFRA REPUBLIC**. The sudden re-emergence of this pursuit for BIAFRA REPUBLIC portends a great

danger for the Nation if not unconnected with the feelings by the people of that part of the country that they are being cheated in all ramifications be it political, social-economic and infrastructural development etc. they don't feel the sense of belongings in the scheme of things as part of this nation.

The manifestations of the upsurge in ethnic crises since the inception of that current political dispensation in 1999 could be captured in the various ethnic violence that erupted in different parts of this country immediately after the civil government inauguration in May, 1999.

SHAGAMU MAYHEM

In July, 1999, there was a serious clash between the Yoruba and Hausa communities in Shagamu Ogun State. We were told that the clash was occasioned by the brutal killing of a Hausa woman by Oro masqueraders (the traditionalists) her offence was that she ran foul of the rules of Oro. The carnage that emanated from the killing of the woman left several people dead and over 50 houses were burnt or destroyed. This rendered inhabitants of the area homeless and in the state of despondency and despair. The killing of Hausas in Shagamu expectedly snow-balled into a grievous violence when the survivors of Shagamu crisis returned to their respective homes in the Northern part of the country and relayed their harrowing

experience. The Yandaba and Almajiri amongst other social miscreants embarked on a reprisal attack. They took to the streets of Kano and unleashed havoc on the Yoruba in the city. They killed, maimed and destroyed properties of the Yoruba.

It was reported that over 100 people lost their lives to the fracas while several others were rendered homeless. The onslaught lasted for almost a week.

In Lagos, in September 1999, the Odua Peoples Congress was alleged to have clashed with Igbo at the sea port in Apapa over the leadership of Maritime Association, what started like a minor misunderstanding escalated and the crisis claimed the lives of five people.

AJEGUNLE CRISIS

In November of the same year, twelve people were reported killed in the bloody clash between the OPC and Ijaw youth in Ajegunle Lagos while many others sustained injuries and properties worth millions of Naira were destroyed. The mayhem lasted for about four days. Report has it that the clash was initially between the Ijaw and Ilaje, it subsequently led to a full scale ethnic war when it spilled over to Ajegunle in Lagos. A militant faction of OPC was said to have aligned forces with the Ilaje to deal with the Ijaw people in Lagos.

The aftermath of this attack by the Ilaje and OPC was the ultimatum given by the militant Ijaw youth to the police to affect the release of their arrested kinsmen and that the Yoruba living in the Niger Delta area should quit or face

the consequence. It should be noted that there was no reprisal attack on the Yoruba suffered untold psychological trauma. Many of them vacated Bayelsa State Capital, Yanogoa, while some sought refuge in police and military barracks.

MILE 12 CRISIS

December, 1999 witnessed another violent ethnic crisis between OPC militant group and the Hausa community in Mile 12 market, Ketu in Kosofe Local Government of Lagos State. The remote cause of the crisis was that the Yorubas complained of long domination of the Hausas in the activities of the Shukura Yam sellers Association, especially the organisation and leadership control. We were told that the Yorubas mobilized the OPC to wreck havoc on the Hausas traders. The police reported who claimed to witness the brutal crisis said the death toll was more than 200 while the entire market was razed down. Thank God that there was no reprisal attack in the North like that of the Shagamu crisis early that year.

From the foregoing analysis of manifestations of ethnic crisis in Nigeria, it can be seen that this crisis resulted from the overzealous of these military groups. It will not be out of place to examine why these groups with ethnic coloration are very much in place and more active than before. Some people have the conviction that; the mobilization of opposite against

the Abacha dictatorship in the South-West was hatched and done along ethnic lines. It is their belief that the pro-democracy and human rights activities in the South West, acutely aware of the potency of ethnic solidarity among the Yoruba people, appealed to these sentiments and galvanised opposition to force the junta of power which led to the formation of OPC.

It was argued that after the demise of Abacha, the refused to go into extinction and it has become increasingly difficult to demobilize them. They liken its continued existence to the Frankenstein monster which is devouring its creators.

Another plausible explanation given to the proliferation of ethnic groups is that people are utilizing the advantage of democratic governance now in place to its fullest by expressing their opinion and dissent views. We all know that during the military era it was a taboo or grievous offence which attracted incarceration without trial or even sudden death. The argument was that during the military era, dissenting view was forcefully suppressed, opposition to any draconian law or policies was silenced and injustice and oppression were common place, people now seized the opportunity of this democratic experiment to pour out their grievances and malcontent which they have lived with for a considerable period of time.

However, it must be said that whatever the motive behind the emergence of these ethnic groups might be, their activities are capable of

affecting the corporate existence of Nigeria as a Nation if their activities are not checked and brought within the confines of the laws of the land.

RELIGIOUS CRISIS

Another important cause of serious crisis that is capable of tearing this country apart is the burning and sensational issue of religion. It is amazing and puzzling that some people claiming to be religious faithful either as Christians or Muslims are seen to be perpetrating heinous crimes against humanity by killing their fellow human beings and carrying out wanton destruction of properties under the pretext of religious riot. I wish to state without mincing words that, no religious doctrine preaches or encouraged such dastardly acts. Such killings maiming and destruction of properties in the name of Islam or Christianity are usually deeply rooted in politics and power play.

There is no gainsaying the fact that, Nigerians have witnessed several devastating religious crises in the past such as in Kano, when Rehard Bonkey visited the state and Sango Kataf crisis among others.

But for the purpose of this paper we shall briefly examine and do some analytical appraisal of few of the crisis after May, 29, 1999 in some parts of Nigeria consequent upon the extension for the application of the Sharia legal system.

At this juncture, it must be stressed that most religious crisis witnessed in this country have political undertones, in some cases where the crisis occurred, it would still be hijacked by some disgruntled elements to facilitates the achievement of their selfish interest or personal aggrandizement.

It could be argued that different interest groups have at one time or the other employed or deployed religion as a political instrument for their mobilization.

Yusuf Bala Usman while condemning the manipulation of religion by those he called the intermediary bourgeois said thus:-

“.....What I am getting at is that the intermediary bourgeois cannot appear as what really is in political economy of Nigeria. He has to find a cover. He cannot claim political leadership openly on the grounds that he is, or wants to be, an exporter, a contractor, commission agent, shareholder, renter, or rich bureaucrat. He has to take cover as a Muslim or Christian. He has to take cover as an Ibo, Hausa, Idoma or Efik; he has to take on disguises. He has to posture as a “majority” or “minority”. The manipulation of religion in Nigeria today is essentially a means of creating the context for this fancy-dress ball, for this charade of disguises. This game of masks.”

KADUNA STATE

Sometime in February 2000, the state Governor made attempts to adopt Sharia legal system in the state in answer to the yearnings and aspirations of the Muslims for Sharia to govern

their existence as Muslim. But their Christian counterparts vehemently resisted the move. The Christians trooped out in large number under the aegis or auspices of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) to protest against the system. The protest according to reporting was peaceful until 12.00pm when violence erupted at the central market. What precipitated the violence was not ascertained; the Christians claimed they were attacked first by their Muslim counterparts, while Muslims asserted that the Christians started the crisis by killing a Muslim and burning of a mosque situated at Kano Road.

For three days, there was a total breakdown of law and order in the state capital and at time 24 hours curfew was imposed on the capital and its environs. The fracas was characterised by killings, maiming, arson and looting throughout the period in the capital except Barnawa settlement in the southern part of the state capital which was spared.

The crisis spread to Zaria, Kachia and other towns in the state. The police disclosed that 609 people lost their lives to carnage while about 100 persons were injured.

The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) said mass burial was given to unidentified bodies totalling 325 Christians who lost their lives in the mayhem. Apart from this

figure, it was reported that some of the victims were buried by their relations while some were burnt beyond recognition and some thrown into river Kaduna. The Muslim community claimed that over 100 Muslims were killed in the crisis.

It's worthy of mention that, when the bodies of some of the victims arrived at their hometown in the eastern part of the country, reprisal attacks were unleashed on other ethnic groups especially Hausas. Aba was the starting point of the attack, it later spread to Umuahia, Owerri and Uyo. About 300 persons mostly of refuge in the military barracks throughout the eastern region when the crisis lasted.

The police commissioner for Kaduna state while giving his report before the judicial commission of enquiry set up to investigate the mayhem said a total number of 1,944 buildings, business premises and hotels were burnt. Also lost to the crisis were 123 Churches and 55 mosques. 746 vehicles were also destroyed Red Cross Association also reported that about 120,000 persons were displaced who became refugees in 27 centres across the state.

It is beyond argument that the effect of the violence in Kaduna could be perceived by the reprisal attacks in the Eastern part of the country and there was the fear that the entire country may be engulfed. This culminated into sporadic mass movement of people to their places of origin. In Kaduna itself, the Christians were seen relocating towards the Southern part of the state, while the Muslims were moving towards the North.

SOKOTO/DAMBOA

After the Kaduna crises, similar crises occurred in Sokoto, where four churches were said to have been burnt and people lost their lives on an account of the Sharia protest.

Usman dan Fodio University was closed down following the involvement students in the riot.

Also in Borno state especially Damboa local government, riot not broke out on account of the location of a place of worship which left several properties destroyed.

The fall out of this crisis was a fresh call for the restructuring of this country as a Nation by some people, who hold tenaciously to the view that we are not compatible as a people of living together under one umbrella called Nigeria. Unexpectedly, they questioned the unity and co-existence of the diverse ethnic groups and renewed the call for the convocation of a sovereign national conference to determine what they termed fraudulent relationship of the Nigerian federating units.

It the Eastern part of the country, a meeting of all the, Eastern States Governors was called on March 7, 2000 and after the appraisal of the events, it was reported that the Abia State Governor warned that he could not guarantee the security of the lives of northerners in his

state, if the killing of Igbo's in the North continues unabated.

A prominent Igbo **Ohanaze ndi Igbo** led by former vice president Alex Ekwueme on a visit to president Obasanjo also called for a National conference to determine the continued corporate existence of the Country.

But the principal officers of legislative houses in the federal and states assemblies openly withdraw from the call for federation, they pitched their tent with those who favoured the practice of true federalism.

In the North Central states, the Middle Belt Forum denounced any further links with the far North and also joined the supporters of the clarion call national conference. The Archbishop of Kaduna after the crisis was reported to have clamoured for the splitting of Kaduna state along religious lines.

It is our candid view that the hues and crisis generated by the extension of the application of the Sharia legal system in parts of the country are quite uncalled for let alone degenerating into a was lie situation. I believe that if Muslims want to be governed by the doctrine of Sharia legal system, so be it, in as much as the rights of the Christians will be affected thereby in any way. Non-Muslims cannot be compelled to accept the system and it will not be made applicable to them in a nutshell, I reiterate my belief that the religious crisis witnessed in Nigeria cannot be said totally free from ethnic cum political influences.

POLITICAL PROBLEMS

The political imbalance in the country constitutes a serious threat to the continued existence of Nigeria as a Nation. These problems would be better understood or appreciated if we go back memory lane and reflect on the crisis that befell the first republic, how the defunct political parties like AG; NCNC, and NPC among others plunged the country into seemingly political quagmire and crisis, which eventually paved the way for the January 15, 1966 coup d'etat and the collapse of the first republic.

The immediate and remote causes of the event that culminated into the collapse of the first republic were graphically and pungently analyzed by **Adewole Ademoyega** when he said:-

“There was no doubt that 1965 was a year of political gloom through out Nigeria. Generally, people had been disillusioned and disaffected with the Balewa Government and the rulership of the Balewa/Akintola Sardauna clique of the NNA. Economic, social educational and political problems were not solved. Corruption was rife and nepotism was the reposed in such institutions as the courts, the census commission, the Electoral Commission, the police and finally the Armed forces.

But the sanctity of those institutions was being politically assailed, assaulted and dragged in the mud, so that they were

losing their credibility. It became obvious that the leadership was nearly at collapse and that the ship of the nation was heading for the rocks..... The October 1965 election into the Western House of Assembly was to decide, once and for all, whether the people of the West endorsed all that Sir Abubakar had done for them since 1962 and whether they accepted the rulership of Akintola. The people were loud and clear in rejecting Akintola and the NNDP at the polls. However Government did publicity interfere with the results of the election. In very many cases, AG candidates who held certificates that they were duly elected in their constituencies, later heard their names mentioned as defeated candidates throughout governmental news media.....

It could hardly be overstressed that Western Nigerians were highly sophisticated in politics, among them, democracy was not an imported political idea or practices it had been the food with which they were nurtured, even from their mothers' wombs. By November, 1995, the people had started to fight the unpopular Akintola Government. They sang war songs and sought on the streets. They invented the "Wetie" (meaning "soak him up"), only the intended victim suffered. By December, 1995,

there had been a total breakdown of law and order in western Nigeria."

It should be noted that, prior to the election of 1965 in the Western Regions, there was the census exercise of 1963 which was outrightly rejected on the premise that the Balewa Government manipulated and/or inflated the figures for the Northern region. What the Balewa Government did was to ensure that NPC perpetuated its power at the centre by announcing 55 (fifty-five) percent population figure for the North.

The Federal election held in December, 1964 also almost created unrest in the country, because the then president of the country, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, had refused to call any party to form a government, consequent upon large scale malpractice that characterized the conduct of the federal election. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe of blessed memory later called on late Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa to form a government after the intervention of the Chief Justice of the Federation. Sir Adetokunbo Ademola, and Chief Justice of Eastern Nigeria, Sir Louis Mbanefo. A six formula was adopted as a basis for the agreement between the political parties which were as follows:-

1. The reaffirmation of the belief in the unity of the federation of Nigeria, in which every citizen shall have

opportunity and no one shall be oppressed.

2. A strict observance of the constitution until it is amended according to law and the will of the people.
3. A broad based national government should be formed on the results of the last election so as to avoid chaos.
4. The legality of the present election should be determined by the courts and the results of the elections should be upheld except in certain constituencies where the number of voters was so small as to make a mockery of democracy.
5. Arrangements should be made within six months to review the constitution and the machinery of election. This should be in the form of a commission of eleven constituted as follows one to be appointed by the presidents, two to be appointed by prime minister, and two by each regional.
6. Dissolution of the legislature of Western Nigeria to enable the people of that region to express their wishes as to who should govern them.

It must be emphasized that while the western region was deeply plunged and enmeshed in the aftermath of the election in 1965, the prime minister deliberately felt unconcerned because he knew that with the NNDP in control appointment of electoral officers, the selection of Obas, local government functionaries and the regional police. When the Western region

electorates took to the streets, the prime minister found himself in a dilemma, he had to choose between the devil and the deep blue sea. If he was desirous of maintaining peace and order in the Western region, he must remove the NNDP leader from office which option will be inimical to his interest of maintaining dominance in the west and perpetration of his party in governance.

Another alternative he could employ was to deploy the military to the western region but he discovered that the soldiers favoured UPGA. He therefore decided to keep quiet as the matter would sort itself out. He was preoccupied with the commonwealth Conference where the political issue of Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) Unilateral Declaration of independence (UDI) was being discussed.

The prime minister was toying with such a matter of public importance to the annoyance of the attentive public and the army; hence the following day after the conference ended i.e. 15th January, 1966 Nigeria witnessed a coup d'etat.

It could be seen that the collapse of the first republic was occasioned by the political gambling of the civilian leaders and perpetuation of ethnic chauvinistic interest rather than ensuring or aspiring to achieve the unity of the federation, whereby equal opportunities and sense of belonging will be guaranteed at all times. As rightly put

by Leo Dare in his article titled: 1964 Elections and the Collapse of the first Republic:

“...despite the interpretations of the structural frame, if the political actors had been more accommodating, it would have been possible to work out an arrangement which would be guaranteed to all, a sense of participation. The rigid posture of the ruling party, and his dictatorial tenderness alienated the Eastern, Western regions. The federal government because more a party attempted to isolate its rivals from fair competition. Each region was in fact a one party regime. Nigerian political parties failed to build bridges across ethnic and linguistic line and instead reinforced existing societal cleavages. They could not perform the integrative functions which political parties must perform if the federal experiment is to succeed.”

JUNE 12 ELECTION/MILITARY INCURSION

No doubt we are all conversant with the events that led to the annulment of June 12 presidential elections, which was wisely believed to be won by late Chief M.K.O Abiola. We went to avoid belabouring the events culminating into the annulment and the attendant consequences

which nearly plunge this country into another civil war, for the purpose of this paper, we want to stress that military incursion into the political scene is itself a crisis.

It is not an overstatement that, the crisis the successive military regimes plunged this country into during their prolonged regimes leave much to be desired. It can be rightly said that probably, if the military had not taken over since independence, Nigerian politicians might have learnt how to play the game according to the rules. It is said that after 43 years as a sovereign Nation we are still a toddler and only trying to put in place and enduring democracy, our national psyche was bastardized by the prolonged military rule. We do hope that our nascent democracy will survive these heaps and avalanche of crisis.

Amongst the legacy bequeathed to Nigerians by the successive military regime is **corruption and misappropriation of public fund.**

Corruption is a serious crisis ravaging this country and is capable of shaking the co-existence of this Nation. Corruption has assumed a dangerous dimension in this country and it has become a pandemic. Those that were enriched into various political offices seem to be more concerned with how to enrich themselves over-night with public funds rather than formulating policies or making laws for the betterment

of the entire citizenry. You will agree with me that, where there is good governance, whereby there is no corruption and the income from our natural resources properly harnessed, there will be employment opportunities for all, living standard will be improved, production of social amenities will be carried out and life will be more meaningful to the downtrodden masses. There would be no basis for the endless clamouring for Odua Republic, Biafra Republic and the call for sovereign national conference.

If our leaders are corrupt free and have the interest of this Nation at heart, Nigeria will be a better place for all to live.

The effect of the annulment of June, 12 Presidential election by the erstwhile junta, of Ibrahim Babangida will linger for long in our memory. The election which was regarded as the freest and fairest election ever conducted in the history of Nigeria was annulled suddenly for no justifiable reason(s).

The concomitant effect of the annulment inter alia was a massive protest by the people of the west especially in Lagos led to killing of several protesters by law enforcement agents. Many lives were lost and properties destroyed on account of the annulment. It would be recalled also that the aftermath of the annulment was the formation of pro-democracy group such as NADECO Afenifere, Group of 24 with the aim of forcing the military junta out of power and the actualization of June 12.

2007 GENERAL ELECTIONS

It is observed that the last general elections were almost thwarted by the 2nd term syndrome of the elected political office holders. The

2nd term bid was seen by virtually all the incumbents as a do or die affair. To this end, thuggery, violence, killing and arson characterised the Campaign and events that preceded the general election. Kwara State is a good example of a place where these condemnable acts were perpetrated by the politicians.

It is now a common occurrence to see people placing advertisement on behalf of their political mentors for one post or the other at the 2007 elections. It beats one's imagination as to why some people, either by themselves or by the instrumentally of some unscrupulous politicians started this shady move for an election which would take place in the year 2007 when we are still in 2003.

Our democratic experiment will suffer a drastic setback if our political office holders are shifting their attention to the 2007 election instead of working assiduously to ensure the success of this political dispensation. We should be more concerned with programmes that will better the lots of the electorates, and to formulate policies to foster peace and unity in the federation. It is a misplaced priority for any political party to set machinery in motion

toward 2007 elections, when our country is still grouping in the dark and suffering from serious economic hardship.

All and sundry should contribute their own quote either directly or indirectly to the success of our political experiment. It is by this that the continued existence of Nigeria as a Nation will be guaranteed.

NIGER DELTA CRISIS

The cause(s) of persistent pandemonium and hullabaloo in the Niger Delta area cannot be far fetched. We all know the mainstay of our economy is oil, these oil producing area believe they are being marginalized and subjected to untold hardship from environment degradation by the multinational oil companies operating in the areas. They often complain of neglect by the government and lack of adequate compensation by these oil companies.

Shortly after the inception of Obasanjo regime in 1999, there was a total breakdown of law and order in the era. There were reports of kidnapping and hostage taking of expatriates and Nigerians working with the companies in the areas. Another noticeable crisis is that of Ijaw-Itsekiri, Urhobo communal conflict in Warri area, the genesis of this lingering communal conflict in the area is territorial rivalry and claims and counter-claims over access to and control of resources as well as claims over political space and corresponding power and privileges. The hallmark of these crises is wanton destruction of properties worth millions and loss of lives.

In November, 1999, it was reported that forty seven people were killed including four children, in a communal clash between Oleh and Olomoro communities in Isoko South Local Government Area of the state. The fight between the communities was sequel upon the sharing of used pipes from Ole/Olomoro flow station. Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) gave them those pipes to share.

In the oil producing areas of Cross-River and Bayelsa States, the Warri dimensions witnessed in the area usually between the indigenous communities themselves on some occasions and at times between the Egbesu youths in particular and multinational oil companies operating in the area, are quite horrendous.

In River State, there was a conflict in October, 1999 between Choba community and Wilbros Nigeria Limited (WNL), an American oil serviced company operating in the area. The indigenous of the communities were raising an eyebrow over neglect of the town by the government and Wilbros Nigeria Limited.

They seized the premises of the company on October 17, 1999 and refused to vacate the premises until the government used a combined operation of the military and police to dislodge the militant Egbesu youth. This incident led to the death of four

indigenes of the area and others were injured. Another serious crisis of restating is the Odi episode in the Kolkukuma/Opokukuma Local Government of the state. It will be recalled that Kolkukuma/Opokukuma Local Government of the state. It will be recalled that the Egbesu boys clashed with some oil companies which resulted into the killing of twelve policemen including the DPO of a diversion. Irked by the killing of the policemen, the federal government drafted soldiers with a view to restoring order in the area and effect the arrest of the perpetrators of this heinous crime. But the military overzealousness resulted into disaster. The entire Odi town was almost wiped off. We saw how some of the ignoble solders were raping both old and young women in the area as captioned in some of the daily newspapers. The carnage according to the report claimed to fewer than 250 lives. The crises in Warri area continues unabated. Just of recent, the area witnessed another serious crisis in which some of the foreign staffers of oil companies were held hostage and kidnapped by the angry youth. This action led to the arrival of foreign security personnel in the area, but the Delta State Government sharply condemned the deployment of foreign security personnel to meddle into what it described as the internal affairs of the state. The crisis lasted for almost one week. The crises in the oil producing areas and the call by them for autonomy will persist until decisive actions are taken by the Government

to answer the grievance of the oil producing areas. The Niger Delta communities argue that the oil producing areas. The Niger Delta communities argue that the oil that sustains the national economy is being produced in the area. They contend that the areas suffer neglect and that the state has refused to carry out its responsibility of developing the area. While development projects are not carried out. The oil companies continue to devastate and pollute the environment. The communities no doubt suffer untold hardship as it became increasingly difficult to carry out their traditional economic activities which are mainly fishing and farming. Any of the inhabitants in the area are displaced and rendered homeless consequent upon oil spillage among other disasters in the area.

The way forward

With the attempt made so far in this paper to identify the crises that are laden in Nigeria, we need to look at the qualities that our leaders must possess to be able to manage these crises and take us out of the tunnel of depression.

Firstly, our leaders must be focused and be able to identify these problems and see them as real problems that need very urgent attention.

The leaders must have and exhibit deep and sound knowledge of the various problems confronting us as a people. `

To be able to tackle these problems, our leaders must show and demonstrate religious bigotry will not advance our national cause a jot. It will be stating the obvious to require honesty and transparency from our confronting nation.

The exercise of self restraint and ability to listen to other by our leaders are qualities that are indispensable in solving the problems confronting our country. Self opinionated leaders, leaders that believe they have answers on their own to all the problems will not likely succeed in attenuating these problems.

RECOMMENDATION CONCLUSION

1. Religious leaders of the two main religions should preach and demonstrate tolerance with a view to accommodating others not practicing their religion. In addition, they should not allow themselves to be used by some disgruntled and unscrupulous politicians for the attainment of their selfish political agenda at the expense of the corporate existence of Nigeria as a Nation.
2. The adherents of the religions should adhere strictly top the tenets of their religions. They should uphold at all times the sanctity of human life. Freedom of religion mutual co-existence.
3. The continued existence of Nigeria as a Nation can only be guaranteed in an atmosphere devoid of suspicion of one ethnic group by the other feeling of segregation or marginalization in the scheme of things. Therefore equal

opportunity should be given to all for the participation in politics and strict observance of federal character as entrenched in the constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria should be encouraged.

4. Ethnic groups like Egbesu, Bakassi boys, Oodua peoples Congress, Arewa Peoples' Congress should be made to operate within the confines of the laws of the land.
5. The ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) should thread softly and culminating in the collapse of the first republic.
6. Political office holders, at all levels of governance should be dedicated. They should concern themselves with the making of laws and policies that will better the lots of our people rather than strain their hands by getting involved in corrupt practices.
7. The Constitution imbalances alleged by some ethnic groups in the country. The entrenchment of rotational presidency amongst the six geo-political zones in the country would go long way in dousing political tension and cry of marginalization by some ethnic groups in Nigeria.
8. The police should be better equipped and enforced so as to rise to the challenges posed by crime

rate in the country. We believe that, if the police are alive to its responsibilities, the involvement of the ethnic groups like the Bakassi boys, Egbesu and OPC in the enforcement of law and order would not arise. In same vein, the call for regional police or state police which is viewed in some quarters as the beginning of disintegration of this entity called Nigeria wouldn't have arisen in the first place, if the police performed up to exceptions.

9. All Nigerians no matter our status should desist from discrimination on the basis of ethnic, religious and political lines or affiliations. We should endeavour to build across ethnic and religious divides.
10. The 13 percent derivation formula should be reviewed upward and with the establishment of OMPADEC we do hope that the oil producing areas/Nigeria Deltas areas governors will utilize their enormous income from the federation account to uplift the standard of living of their people. I have the feelings that if this is done, the Niger Delta will lead to a crisis free Niger Delta.
11. The oil companies operating in the oil producing areas should always honour any agreement reached between them and the host communities. It will not too much if qualified indigenes of Niger Delta area are offered employment opportunities by these companies.

12. The Sovereign National Conference should be employed as the last resort if all attempts fall to achieve the desired result of restructuring the polity. We should strive to achieve true federalism in the interest of our Nation.

All said and done, the recommendations or solutions proffered in this paper are not exhaustive, but most importantly we wish to include by saying that the destiny of this country is in our hands. We could turn around what seems to be the misfortune of this country by a change of attitude.

I think a very fundamental vice which is the root of all vices is corruption, especially if perpetrated by those in the helms of affairs. I enjoin all and sundry to shun corrupt practices like a plague.