State fragility and Separatist Agitations: Exploring the Opportunities of Strategic Peacebuilding for National Cohesion

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Abstract

This Study Explores Nigeria's Deepening State Fragility, Evidenced By Separatist Agitations, The Boko Haram Insurgency, Violent Clashes Between Herders And Farmers, Banditry, Kidnappings, Corruption, Leadership Crisis And Ethno-Religious Conflicts. It Investigates The Dynamics Of These Issues, Including The Push For Ethnic Sovereignty, Through Content Analysis And Systematic Review Of Existing Literature, Using Complex Adaptive Systems Theory As A Framework. The Research Highlights The Main Factors Fueling Separatism, Critiquing The Gap Between The National Rhetoric Of "One Nigeria" And The Reality Of

Strategic Peacebuilding Efforts. It Suggests That Nigeria's Security Challenges Reflect The Political Elite's Failure To Promote Inclusive State-Building. The Paper Recommends Strategic Peacebuilding Initiatives To Mend Socio-Political Rifts And Cultivate National Belonging. It Concludes That Strategic Peacebuilding Is Crucial For Nigeria's Unity And Presents A Plan For A Cohesive Society.

Keywords: State fragility, ethno-religious conflict, Strategic peacebuilding, insecurity, separatist agitation

Introduction

Beyond economic stagnation, endemic corruption and leadership crisis, Nigeria has consistently faced heightened security challenges manifesting in Boko Haram insurgency, farmers and herders' violent relationship, banditry, kidnapping for ransom, unknown gunmen, and ethno-religious conflict, and communal violence. The situation is complicated by the continuous challenge of the sovereignty of Nigerian state by ethnic separatist agitation.

Nigeria stands as the most populous black nation on the globe, boasting an estimated population of approximately 227 million people as of 2024, which accounts for about 2.86% of the total world population (**World Population Review, 2024, Worldometer, 2024**). This demographic prominence is matched by a rich tapestry of over 371 ethnic groups each with its own distinct language, culture, and social systems **(Mansoor, French, & Ali, 2020, Reed & Mberu, n.d., Ayatse & Akuva, 2013)**. These groups were historically segmented along geographical, religious, and linguistic lines, long before the advent of British colonial rule **(Eric, 2016, Akanmidu, 2018).**

Historical records suggest that interactions among these diverse ethnic nationalities were often characterized by conflict rather than diplomatic or social unity **(Etefa, 2019)**. Each group developed its own socio-political systems, tailored to their unique environmental and social needs **(Eric, 2016, Kolodko, 2022).** However, the British colonial government's amalgamation of these disparate nations in 1914 was a move driven by administrative efficiency and economic motives **(Ezeogidi, 2020, Ajayi, 2022).** The unification was designed to consolidate

colonial economic policies and facilitate exploitation, often overlooking the inherent disparities in size, geography, culture, language, religion, and socio-economic development among the regions (**Ajayi, 2022).**

Ikelegbe (1995) stated that:

> The amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates of Nigeria in 1914 marked a turning point in the evolution of the Nigerian state. In fact, Nigeria as a political entity was created in that year. The result was not to have a new territory per se, but was for economic exploitation.

"The forced amalgamation gave rise to a complex interplay of major and minor ethnic groups, fostering a legacy of unease, mutual distrust, and fears of domination, particularly among the three predominant groups: the Hausa-Fulani in the North, the Igbos in the East, and the Yoruba in the West" **(Eric, 2016; Alaba, 2014; Charles, 2014).** The introduction of the British "Divide and Rule" policy further deepened these divisions, deliberately preventing political and social cohesion between the northern and southern territories, especially among the majority groups **(** Maiangwa, Dan Suleiman, & Anyaduba, 2018**)**. This policy had lasting effects on the nation's unity and has been a significant factor in the historical and contemporary challenges faced by Nigeria (Yahaya, 2020).

At the independence of 1st October 1960, the seed of discord sowed by the colonial administration has firmly entrenched its roots to all facet of Nigerian socio-political and economic environment to the extent that all national issues are debated and contested along ethnic cleavages and bias (Paul et al., 2017; Abubakar 2017). This colonial vice which has turned out to become a national plaque and cankerworm which manipulates the diverse ethnic composition of the Nigerian state is responsible for the poor national integration, the disunity, lack of national cohesion and endemic separatist agitation in all the political zones of the federation. It in turn hinders and stagnate national development, impede peaceful coexistence of the citizens despite the lip-service and deceitful slogan of "One Nigeria" by the political elites which they proclaim for selfish aggrandizement.

Nigeria's ugly situation is complicated by bad governance and conflict-ridden policies which has made the efforts to bring the ethnic groups together as a

conscious unified and one indivisible nation to suffer setbacks as the citizens pay more allegiance to primordial sentiments which fan the embers of disintegration. It is within this understanding that this paper finds its expediency.

Given these continuous separatist agitations and national realities, some of the basic questions that come to mind are:

1. How has the historical amalgamation of diverse ethnic groups under British colonial rule contributed to the current state of ethno-religious conflicts and separatist agitations in Nigeria?
2. In what ways have the peacebuilding efforts in Nigeria been ineffective in addressing the underlying issues of state fragility, and what strategies could potentially bridge the gap between the national rhetoric of unity and the reality of socio-political divisions? ~~3. **~~
3. Considering the Complex Adaptive Systems Theory, what role do the political elite play in the perpetuation of insecurity and state fragility, and how can inclusive state-building initiatives foster a sense of national belonging among Nigeria's diverse ethnic groups~~?**~~?

These questions aim to delve into the historical, socio-political, and systemic factors influencing Nigeria's current challenges and explore avenues for strategic peacebuilding and national unity.

Conceptual and Theoretical Analysis

Peacebuilding and Strategic peacebuilding

Peace-building, a term widely accepted yet complex, is defined by scholars as a process aimed at addressing the root causes of conflict, such as structural violence, to prevent its recurrence (Tschirgi, 2013; Ryan, 2013). Galtung (1975) introduced the concept, emphasizing the need to replace 'antihuman conditions' with equity and symbiosis to achieve peace. The KROC Institute (2020) describes peace-building as fostering constructive relationships across diverse societal lines. Boutrous-Ghali (1992) popularized the term, outlining peace-building as establishing structures to solidify peace and prevent conflict relapse. Adenyi et al. (2021) further explain that peace-building encompasses rebuilding institutions and addressing economic, social, and political issues that fuel conflict. Adenyi (2016) notes that peace-building should be a continuous effort, not just post-

conflict, to transform societal challenges and achieve sustainable peace. The practice involves local assessment, connecting with global actors, and may include stopping warfare and promoting justice accountability for human rights violators, economic development, reconciliation, and resettlement of displaced people (Adenyi, 2016; Abubakar, 2017).

Strategic peacebuilding, however, takes a more holistic approach. It is a long-term process that aims to address the complex, interrelated challenges of building peace in a comprehensive manner. Strategic peacebuilding includes not only direct conflict management but also efforts to build the capacities of societies to manage their conflicts nonviolently and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development. It requires coordination among various actors and sectors, both domestic and international, to ensure that peace is not just the absence of violence but also the presence of justice and equity.

The difference between peacebuilding and strategic peacebuilding lies in the scope and intentionality of the efforts. While peacebuilding can be reactive and focus on immediate issues, strategic peacebuilding is proactive, aiming for long-term stability through an integrated, strategic framework that considers the complex dynamics of peace and conflict.

Ethnic group, Ethnicity and Ethnic Agitations

Ethnic groups and ethnicity, while often used interchangeably, are distinct concepts. An ethnic group is a collection of individuals sharing kinship, religious, and linguistic ties, making them distinct within a larger society (Cohen, 1974). They are characterized by a common identity, language, culture, history, and origin, which are socially constructed and defined by communal boundaries (Nnoli, 1978; Bos, 2015). Ethnicity, however, is a broader social construct affecting personal identity and group relations, encompassing values, institutions, and behaviors that reflect a people's history and worldview (Ford & Kelly, 2005; Nnoli, 1978). It is rooted in sentiments of origin and descent rather than geographic nationhood (Ataide & Enebong, 2020). Ethnicism, or ethnic loyalty, can lead to a sense of superiority over others and, at its extreme, borders on racism and discrimination (Pepple, 1985; Omu, 1996). Ethnic agitation, a form of public protest, is often a politically motivated struggle for inclusion, equality, and justice

by an ethnic group, which can expose societal ills but does not inherently threaten development or democracy unless it turns into negative ethnicism, which undermines national unity (Ataide & Enebong, 2020; Odum, 2018).

Theoretical Perspective

Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) Theory by John H. **Holland (2014)** is a framework used to understand the dynamics of systems that are complex, dynamic, and capable of adapting to changes in their environment. CAS are composed of multiple interconnected elements, called agents, which interact with each other in ways that are not always predictable. These interactions can lead to emergent behaviors, which are collective properties or patterns that arise from the individual actions of agents within the system **(Hasting, 2019, Snyder et al. 2011).**

In the context of Nigeria, applying CAS Theory can provide insights into how different elements within the country—such as political institutions, social groups, and economic factors—interact and influence each other. This understanding can help identify leverage points where interventions could lead to positive change and enhance unity. CAS Theory could be applied to enhance unity in Nigeria by identifying key agents and interactions. That is recognize the various stakeholders in Nigeria's socio-political landscape, including government bodies, ethnic groups, and civil society organizations to understand how their interactions contribute to the current state of unity or division. These identified agents are encouraged to adapt and learn from past experiences. This could involve reforming policies that have led to division and implementing new strategies that promote inclusivity and cooperation, while looking for patterns of behavior that emerge from the interactions of these agents. For example, if certain policies consistently lead to conflict, this would be an emergent behavior indicating a need for change and as well establish feedback mechanisms to monitor the effects of any changes made. This could involve regular assessments of peacebuilding initiatives to ensure they are having the desired effect on national unity.

This theory encourages and allow for a degree of self-organization within communities, local government, states, and region. This empowers local agents to address issues in ways that are culturally appropriate and effective for their specific context. Though changes may not always lead to immediate or predictable

results, but over time, they can contribute to a more cohesive society. Finally implement strategic peacebuilding initiatives that address the root causes of division, such as economic disparity, lack of access to education, and political dominance and disenfranchisement. These initiatives should aim to build trust and cooperation between different groups. By applying CAS Theory, Nigeria can develop a more nuanced approach to addressing its challenges, one that recognizes the complexity of its social and political systems and seeks to foster resilience and unity through adaptive and strategic interventions.

Previous Policies for Enhancing National Cohesion and their inherent Flaws

The Amalgamation

In Nigeria, the amalgamation policies have shaped the unity and division between the north and south, as well as among ethnic nationalities. The 1914 Amalgamation policy, intended for administrative ease, inadvertently deepened disunity by favouring the North demographically, politically and in land mass over other regions (www.wikipedia/.org, 2023). The federal system of 1954 further entrenched regional ethnic identities, often to the detriment of minorities. The British colonialists' divide and rule policy was designed to maintain control by fostering discord among the populace, thereby weakening collective opposition to their rule (Jordan & Preston, 2018; Grob-Fitzgibbon & Benjamin, 2011). This strategy has left a legacy of division, evidenced by the socioeconomic rifts between groups like the Igbo and Hausa, Yoruba and the Igbos and continues to influence governance in Nigeria, with leaders using it to maintain power and incite conflict (Maduegbuna, 2015).

The historical legacies of colonial rule created some challenges for nation-building in Nigeria. Colonial rule divided Nigeria into North and South with different land tenure systems, local government administration, educational systems, and judicial systems. While large British colonies like India and the Sudan had a single administrative system, Nigeria had two, one for the North and one for the South. It was almost as if these were two separate countries, held together only by a shared currency and transportation system. Many members of the Nigerian elite class in the 1950s and 1960s had their education and world outlook molded by the regional institutions. Some had little or no understanding of their neighboring regions. Under these conditions, it was easy for prejudice and fear to thrive.

During the period of the decolonization struggle, Nigerian nationalists from different regions fought each other as much as they fought the British colonialists. Nigeria never had a central rallying figure like Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Mahatma Gandhi of India, or Nelson Mandela of South Africa, instead, each region threw up its own champions like Awolowo (Western Nigeria), Nnamdi Azikiwe (Eastern Nigeria) and Ahmadu Bello (Northern Nigeria). From this historical legacy, therefore, regionalism has been a major challenge to nation-building in Nigeria. To their credit, however, the founding fathers of our nation tried to deal with this challenge by adopting federalism and advocating a policy of unity-in-diversity. Unfortunately, the lack of consolidation of Nigerian federalism around commonly shared values and positions means that this challenge of divisive historical legacy continues to undermine our efforts at nation-building. One current manifestation of this historical legacy is the division between "indigenes" and "settlers". This division has been a source of domestic tension and undermined our efforts at creating a common nationhood.

The Federal Character Principle

The Federal Character Principle in Nigeria was established to address the representational inequity stemming from the North-South divide and regional disparities. It aimed to ensure fair treatment of all states and ethnic groups, promoting national unity and preventing a few states from dominating the government. The Constitution Drafting Committee (1976) emphasized the importance of reflecting Nigeria's diverse ethnic origins, cultures, languages, and religions in public institutions to foster a sense of belonging among citizens. While the principle intended to integrate all components of the federation and mitigate political struggles, it has been argued that in practice, it may have been used to strengthen the northern region at the expense of the south **(Obiyan & Akindele**, 2001). Recruitment practices into federal agencies based on local government have been cited as an example of this imbalance.

The federal character regime in Nigeria contrasts with established definitions of national and territorial integration. **Ayoade (1984)** argues that it contradicts the process described by Haas (1987) where political actors are encouraged to shift loyalties to a new central authority. Similarly, Coleman and Rosenberg's (1987) definition of territorial integration as the reduction of cultural and regional

tensions to form a homogeneous community is at odds with the Nigerian federal character, which does not emphasize homogeneity.

Though the federal character principle has struggled to achieve its set objectives of national unity and loyalty. There are factors that make equitable distribution of public appointments difficult, which are beyond the powers of the Federal Character Commission. Despite its intent, the principle have not fully addressing the perceived marginalization of some sections of the country, particularly in the distribution of public positions. Moreso, the application of the principle in the federal civil service and the military has led to a confused balancing of the merit principle and the quota system, affecting discipline, morale, and overall effectiveness, rather it has encouraged dominance of the north in all the security sector because recruitment is on the basis of local government. In terms of e**ducational disparities,** the preference given to Northern States as educationally less developed has not significantly improved the educational status of the North, as the Northern elites have not effectively changed the attitudinal disposition of their youths.

The Quota System (QS)

The Nigerian Quota System is a policy designed to ensure equitable representation and opportunities for all regions of Nigeria, particularly for those areas considered educationally disadvantaged. The system is applied in various sectors, including education and public service, to promote national unity and development. Among the merits of this policy is that it promotes inclusivity **(Omeje, Egwa, & Adikwu, 2016).”** It aims to provide equal access to education and employment opportunities across different states and ethnic groups, and reduces regional disparities by giving preference to candidates from less developed areas, it seeks to balance socio-economic development, and encourages national unity. The Quota system is intended to foster a sense of belonging among all Nigerians by ensuring that no region is left behind. However, it presents potential for discrimination. Critics argue that the system can lead to reverse discrimination, where more qualified candidates from developed areas are sidelined. Besides, there is a concern that meritocracy may be compromised, affecting the quality of education and public service. while the quota system has noble goals, its application may need

reevaluation to ensure it achieves its intended outcomes without compromising educational standards or national unity.

Challenges of National Cohesion

Among the challenges of national cohesion in Nigeria is lack of consensus/ agreement. And there can be no agreement without genuine national dialogue. While some measure of relative peace has been achieved amidst ethnic tension and separatist agitations in the country, the component parts of the federation and the ethnic nationalities that constitutes the modern Nigerian state must come to the negotiation table to discuss and redefine political future of the country, in terms of power sharing and rotation between the north and south, reexamining the Nigeria federation base on revenue allocation and sharing formular. Rather than the rhetoric "One Nigeria" political elite across the geopolitical divide must come together to renegotiate the type of country they want to bequeath to the next generation. The relationship between the state and the centre in areas of policing and internal security; what system of government needs to bind and guide constituent units, and the redefinition of citizenship, settler and indigeneship status, and many more. Nigeria political elites should not be under the illusion that: Nigeria is one and that the unity of Nigeria is not negotiable" because the presence of unity as Babawale (1991) postulated is artificial.

The constant separatist agitation along ethnic divide in Nigeria reminds a careful observer of the prescient conclusion by Awolowo (1947), that "Nigeria is not a nation, rather a mere geographical expression. The word `Nigeria' is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not". This statement by one of the architects of Nigerian independence depicts the high contempt people hold on the experiment called Nigeria. It had a profound impact on the thinking of most Nigerian during and after independence. In a similar development, the then Sardauna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello, referred to the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates of Nigeria as "the mistake of 1914**" (Adekoya, 2019). Similarly, a** prominent Northerner elite, Malam Abubakar Imam, captured the mood of those times which is relevant in Nigeria today with the following remarks:

> "We despise each other, and we call each other ignorant. The south is proud of its western knowledge and culture – we are proud of

> our eastern culture. To tell you the plain truth, the common people of the north put more confidence in the white man than in either their black southern brothers (Dike, 2010).

The statements of the founding fathers of the country shows that they never believed in oneness of the country. In other words, in terms of social relationship and national identification, there are no true people or country called Nigeria, because the citizens did not believe or have faith in the oneness of the country. Hence a conscious effort should be made to rekindle the hope of the people in the country through strategic peace-building.

Achieving National cohesion through Strategic Peacebuilding

Crafting peace strategies for a fragile state with separatist demands involves a multifaceted approach that includes understanding the root causes of conflict, engaging with all stakeholders, and building a framework for sustainable peace and development. The challenges of national cohesion in Nigeria are multifaceted and deeply rooted in the country's complex history and diverse demographic composition. The lack of consensus or agreement is indeed a significant hurdle. This absence of a unified vision for the nation often stems from varied interests and perspectives among Nigeria's numerous ethnic, religious, and regional groups.

Genuine national dialogue is essential for addressing these challenges. It provides a platform for all stakeholders to voice their concerns, aspirations, and grievances. Such dialogue can pave the way for a more inclusive and equitable distribution of power and resources, which is crucial for fostering national unity.

Power Sharing

Power sharing is a governance strategy aimed at ensuring representation and stability in societies characterized by deep social divisions, whether they be ethnic, linguistic, religious, or otherwise (**Rustad, 2007).** The essence of power sharing lies in its ability to manage diversity and conflict through inclusive political processes and institutions. In heterogeneous societies, power sharing helps to prevent the dominance of one group over others, fostering a sense of belonging and reducing the likelihood of conflict (**Babalola & Onapajo 2024).**

Power sharing or rational policy between the north and south in Nigeria are all critical points of contention that require careful negotiation and compromise. The federal structure of Nigeria, with its centralized approach to governance, often exacerbates these tensions, particularly in areas like policing and internal security (**Rustad, 2008).** Power sharing can take various forms, such as federalism, proportional representation, and consociational arrangements, rotational presidency, and other elective position each with its own mechanisms for distributing power among different groups.

The sentiment that "the unity of Nigeria is not negotiable," as expressed by some, may overlook the genuine concerns and aspirations of various groups within the country. As Babawale **(1991)** suggested, the perceived unity might be superficial if it doesn't address the underlying issues that threaten the nation's cohesion. Therefore, it's crucial to engage in an open and honest dialogue that acknowledges the complexities of Nigeria's society and works towards a more harmonious coexistence.

Economic Development Programme

Economic development programs that target the root causes of separatism focus on reducing inequality and expanding opportunities **(United Nations**, **2020)** These programs aim to integrate peacebuilding with market development, fostering economic relationships that can bridge divides. By addressing economic causes of conflict and supporting local private sector actors, such programs work towards building trust, resolving economic disputes, and promoting peace. Economic development can play a crucial role in addressing separatism agitations in Nigeria by targeting the underlying causes of inequality and lack of opportunity **(Adibe, 2017, Nwangwu, 2023).**

For instance, the World Bank highlights the importance of inclusive development programs that give voice to marginalized groups, which can be instrumental in mitigating separatist sentiments **(World Bank, 2023)**. Similarly, the Brookings Institution points out that economic alienation and dissatisfaction among various Nigerian groups fuel separatist agitations, suggesting that addressing these economic grievances could be key to resolving the conflicts **(Adibe, 2017)**.

Furthermore, the Council on Foreign Relations notes that the resurgence of separatism in Nigeria is partly due to the federal government's failure to provide security and economic stability, indicating that effective economic development strategies that improve security and provide economic opportunities could help reduce separatist tensions **(Campbell & Quinn, 2021)**

In other words, economic development programs that focus on reducing inequality, expanding opportunities, and supporting local businesses can build trust, resolve economic disputes, and promote peace, thereby addressing the root causes of separatism in Nigeria.

Security Sector Reform (SSR)

Security sector reform (SSR) as a strategic peacebuilding in Nigeria for national integration can play a pivotal role in enhancing peace, ensuring national cohesion, and addressing separatist agitations. The process involves the transformation of the security sector, which includes all actors, their roles, responsibilities, and actions, so that they can operate effectively, efficiently, and in a manner consistent with democratic norms and principles of good governance, such as transparency, accountability, and respect for human rights **(Olayemi, Akinwumi, Akinwumi, & Esidene, 2022)**.

SSR is a process that aims to make the security sector more effective, transparent, accountable, inclusive, and consistent with human rights and the rule of law is essential in building peace, unity, and national cohesion in Nigeria **(Azoro, Onah & Agulefo 2021)**. It involves transforming institutions that are often politicized, abusive, or corrupt. The goal is to ensure that security institutions are operationally effective and responsive to the needs of citizens, preventing violations of human rights and contributing to a stable and peaceful society. Both economic development and SSR are crucial for creating an environment where all individuals feel safe and can prosper, thus reducing the appeal of separatist movements **(Azoro, Onah & Agulefo, 2021)**.

SSR can enhance Nigeria’s ethnic trust by address the root causes of conflict and insecurity, such as ethnic marginalization and regional disparities. By reforming the security sector to be more inclusive and representative of Nigeria’s diverse

population, it can help mitigate feelings of alienation and reduce the appeal of separatist movements. Effective SSR can help build trust between the security institutions and the public. When security forces are seen as protectors rather than oppressors, it can foster a sense of national unity and reduce the grievances that fuel separatist sentiments. Security Sector Reform (SSR) has the potential to alleviate ethnic mistrust in Nigeria by tackling the fundamental issues that lead to conflict and insecurity, such as ethnic marginalization and regional inequalities **Amalu, Jack-Rabin, Abdullahi & Adetu,(2022).**

SSR also underscores the necessity for accountability measures to curb misconduct by security personnel, addressing the concerns of communities who feel persecuted or suppressed by the government, often a contributing factor to separatist unrest. Additionally, SSR involves establishing communication channels between the security sector and civil society, including separatist factions, offering a non-violent avenue to resolve disputes and establish mutual understanding. The emphasis on training and professionalizing the security forces, ensuring they adhere to global norms, reduces the likelihood of human rights violations that can intensify separatist tensions. Lastly, an SSR approach that is attuned to the local context and conflict dynamics can prevent the security sector from being implicated in the conflict, thus preserving its role as an impartial mediator that can promote peace and unity.

Legal Framework

Developing legal frameworks that protect minority rights is crucial for Nigeria, a country with a diverse ethnic landscape. The protection of minority rights is essential to address the grievances that often lead to separatist movements. In Nigeria, there have been calls for more robust legal protections to prevent discrimination and marginalization of minorities. Such frameworks should provide for the protection of fundamental human rights and constitutional provisions that ensure minorities can participate effectively in governance and the private sector. This would help to build a common nationality and collective accord, which is vital for the stability of the country. **Monitoring mechanisms**

Establishing monitoring mechanisms is another critical step in ensuring the durability of peace agreements in Nigeria. These mechanisms can include civil

society's role in monitoring and verifying peace agreements, which increases their effectiveness by addressing commitment problems inherent in peace processes[6]. Programs like Engaging Communities for Peace in Nigeria (ECPN) have aimed to reduce violence by preventing and resolving conflicts, demonstrating the importance of community-level engagement and the inclusion of a broad range of stakeholders in the development of dispute resolution agreements.

Both legal frameworks and monitoring mechanisms are integral to creating an inclusive society where all groups feel represented and conflicts can be resolved peacefully, thus reducing the likelihood of a relapse into conflict. These strategies should be tailored to the specific context of the fragile state in question, and should be implemented with a long-term perspective to ensure lasting peace and stability.

Summary

This paper examines the socio-political and economic challenges faced by Nigeria since its amalgamation in 1914. It highlights the British colonial policies that have entrenched ethnic divisions and hindered national unity specially the "Divide and Rule" and how it left a lasting impact on the nation's unity, fostering a climate of mutual distrust among major ethnic groups. The independence of Nigeria did not resolve these issues, as national debates and policies continue to be influenced by ethnic biases, further complicating the country's socio-political landscape. Despite some constitutional reengineering to ensure peace and national cohesion through the introduction of FCP, Quota System and the likes, these policies have inbuilt structural defects that makes one section of the country to dominate others, hence the recurrent conflict, separatists' agitation, and clamour for the restructuring Nigeria. The paper concludes that building sustainable institutions in Nigeria, particularly in the face of separatist agitation and ethnic discord, involves creating political and social structures that are inclusive and representative of the country's diverse population through strategic peacebuilding policies.

Conclusion

Nigeria's struggle with national integration and unity is deeply rooted in its colonial past. The divisions sown by the British have grown into significant challenges that affect every aspect of Nigerian society. Despite the proclamation of "One Nigeria," the reality is a nation still grappling with the consequences of its

colonial history, manifested in ongoing ethnic conflicts and separatist movements. To achieve sustainable one indivisible country called Nigeria would mean establishing strategic peacebuilding plan of governance that allow for dialogue, through power sharing for fair representation of all ethnic groups, economic development of all the region and individual citizens and political interests. This includes security sector reforms, for inclusivity, electoral reforms to ensure free and fair elections, judicial reforms to guarantee the rule of law, and legislative reforms to create policies that address the needs of all citizens. The goal is to foster a sense of national identity and unity, while also respecting the diversity of the society. Thence, the paper suggests comprehensive action to close the gap through strategic peacebuilding by:

1. Implement policies that promote inter-ethnic dialogue and understanding to foster national cohesion.
2. Encourage educational reforms that include the teaching of Nigeria's diverse history and cultures to build a shared national identity.
3. Strengthen democratic institutions to ensure fair representation and address the grievances of all ethnic groups.
4. Invest in economic development programs that are inclusive and consider the unique needs of different regions and communities.

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