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Ethno-Sectarian Division and the Predicaments of National Integration in Plural Societies: A Study of Nigeria and Iraq

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ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
History *Revised Format* *May 2016* *Available Online* *June 2016* **Keywords** *Ethno-sectarian* *National Integration* *Nigeria* *Iraq*	**Objective:** The purpose of this paper is to examine the problem of sectarianism in Nigeria and Iraq, as both countries provide typical examples of ethno-sectarian divided societies characterized by huge contrasts in social norms and religious values among the citizens. **Methodology:** Adopting content analysis, the current paper argues that ethno-sectarianism negatively affects political process in both countries which invariably undermines their effort toward national integration. The paper seeks to answer the following question: will restructuring the Nigerian and Iraqi federal relations contribute to resolving sectarian tensions? First, the paper examines the sources of sectarianism in both countries. The paper therefore examines how ethno-sectarianism shaped and molds the polity of both countries, where ethnic and religious values play major role in determining citizen's reaction to political phenomenon **Results:** Coordination mechanisms such as framework legislation and dispute resolution committees are also necessary to ensure that the transition to viable federalism occurs with minimal encumbrance. To respect the complex and diverse identities of nations, safeguards need to be established to protect the rights of sub-federal nations. For example, the political future of Iraq and Nigeria is not a return to failed approaches of division, but rather the construction of a viable modern federal state that promotes unity, political compromise, and consensus building. **Implication**: This paper therefore posits that there is a need for deep mental changes and social adjustment among the citizens of both countries where attributes such as tolerance, dignity of human persons and above all patriotism must be re-defined and this requires collaboration between political leaders, community leaders and religious bodies as the problem is societal bound.

1. Introduction

Nigeria as it is constituted today portrays a medley of a several nationalities which in all parlances confers on the nation an attribute of pluralism and division in social and political values, where diversity of norms, dialect and religious belief tend to play a significant role in shaping and molding the nature of the social and political affiliation in the country. As asserted by Abdullahi (2015) the heaps of social grouping inhabiting the Nigerian domain depicts one of the most complex web of human settlement in which every portion of the social settings constitute a self-sustaining natural group, with an identifiable social membership, geographical location, custom and language.

Retrospectively the Nigerian state was an upshot of the British colonial policy which saw the amalgamation of hitherto balkanized existing social groups into a unified social settings in 1914 consequently building up heterogeneous state characterized by pluralism which was profoundly established in cultural and religious diversities, in which even after 55 years of gaining political independence these acquired legacies continue to extremely appear in the nation's political scene. It is imperative to note that there are 374 ethnic groups in Nigeria with each having an unmistakable character, social and cultural attributes, subsequently ethno-sectarian division continue to greatly affect the political and social lives of the citizens (Angerbrandt, 2015).

The state of Iraq on the other hand, depicts a similar pattern of social and political configuration by manifesting three separate and distinct ethno-sectarian communities, namely Sunni, Shi'a, and Kurd that are largely geographically homogenous and mutually hostile. They have been confined under an artificial, Sunni-controlled state for eighty-five years which basically served as a pre-cursor to the post-Saddam tragic civil war (provide footnote). It is imperative to note that with the current political arrangement the Iraqi political issues will continue to be epitomized by profoundly held collective hostilities; the civil war is basically a result of this. Sectarianism figures among a large group of sub-national loyalties and solidarities which, as indicated by Lukitz (2014), have added to the indistinctness of Iraqi national character and the delicacy of Iraq as a state from its inception in 1921. With heavy reliance on secondary data principally on British Foreign Office records, Lukitz (2014) argued that the formation of the modern state in Iraq did not prompt national integration but instead the imposition of Sunni Arab dominion over a reluctant populace the lion's share of which compose of Shiʿite Arabs and Kurds.

According to her, "The institutionalization of Sunni dominance over the various ethnic, sectarian and linguistic groups … was meant to create a united and homogeneous society. But the nature of the process of forging an Iraqi national identity was a space of contestation among a mosaic of communal identities. This directs attention to growing resentment toward Sunni Arab hegemony among Iraq's other communities, especially the Shiʿites and the Kurds. Lukitz, moreover, traces the evolution of an educational system meant to promote Pan-Arabism as an element of cultural amalgamation in Iraq or a national doctrine. Hence, pedagogy, which went hand in hand with administrative centralism, sought to promote greater identification with the state by undermining particularistic communal solidarities. However, this "attempt to bring homogeneity through a monolithic education system did not elicit the expected response" (Lukitz, 2005, p. 145).

2. Objective and methodology

The objective of this paper is to critically analyze how ethno-sectarian division negatively affects the political process in both Nigeria and Iraq which invariably undermines their effort toward national integration. The paper therefore adopts a content and descriptive analysis in an attempt to review different empirical evidence from the existing literature.

3. Ethno-Sectarian Division

"Ethno-sectarian division involves the partition or decentralization of a state along ethnic and/or sectarian lines" (Williams & Simpson, 2008, p. 194). At the core of ethno-sectarian division argument is the so-called security dilemma. Great debate exists surrounding the definition and use of the terms "ethnicity" or "ethnic" and "sectarian." Some prefer the former, while others prefer the latter. From our vantage point, both appear to have valid arguments. To avoid this fray, we have intentionally chosen the term ethno-sectarian. Our intent is to use this term as broadly and inclusively as possible and to leave the nuances to those who are more versed in the subject. Therefore, for the purpose of this paper, the use of the term ethno-sectarian division refers to division of Nigeria and Iraq along primarily Muslim, Christian, North, South Sunni, Shi'a, and Kurdish lines.

4. National Integration

National integration includes the awareness of a common identity and solidarity amongst the residents of a nation paying little heed to the divergences in religions, locales, races, and dialects (Kessler, Mc Gonagle, Swartz, Blazer, & Nelson, 1993). It suggests the procedure of bringing together every one of the components units of the nation with a perspective to create a mindset of one country (Hassan & Umar, 2014). National integration rotates around capacity and the eagerness of residents to subordinate partisan and parochial loyalties to the unity of the country, the inclination and feelings of patriotism, the development and support Social, political and economic, solidarity (Miller, 2010). It also deals with the standardization of Common thoughts of life and basic code of conduct among the subjects. National integration means a mind boggling term which envelops social, religious, territorial, political

and financial measurements.

To accomplish national integration, a country ought to manifest three qualities in its political framework: (i) Structural equality: the framework must give equal chance to all particularly to the segment of the general public consider socially and economically disadvantaged. (ii) Cultural solidarity: the framework ought to guarantee the destruction of a wide range of discrimination in the areas of race, religion, as well as ethnic character. (iii) Ideological solidarity: the system ought to always attempt to emphasize the national interest and 'national objective' and the essential of national solidarity among the general population who hold disparate perspectives on political and religious issues. (Ladan, 2013).

National integration manifest an essential key for democratic consolidation and national flourishing, more so as all the political units that have succeeded in integrating into a unified entity have constantly shows a higher degree of prosperity, stability and peace (Pamir, 1997). While those immersed in common problematic inclinations among the uniqueness components of the general public have constantly show an attributes of state failure and vulnerability to disintegration (Drysdale, 2014).

To this end, national integration' essentially infer the procedure of uniting individuals with differing norms, values and ideological slants into one single element without parochialism and ethno sectarianism feelings. This speak to one of the key elements of a nationhood that is lost in Nigerians and Iraq since freedom, as there is basically unwillingness of the native to consider and see self, as a matter of first importance, as either Nigerian or Iraqi as the case may be, before relating to his or her ethnic group or sects, an issue that is by all accounts creating a loads of controversies accordingly overheating the respective polities.

5. The Challenges of National Integration in Nigeria

The most overwhelming challenge confronting the Nigerian state since independence is the task of blending pluralism keeping in mind the end goal to accomplish national integration (Ladan, 2013). The nation's intention toward building a united and resolute country out of the various nationalities with various worth framework have keep on constituting a gigantic problem. So complex are the ethno-sectarianism directing social interaction in Nigeria and so sharped are the distinction among such values that the issues emanating out of their contentions tend to generate serious national problem. They regularly have mal-integrative components which determinedly represent a genuine threat to the corporate existence of Nigeria as a country. They seem to constitute serious impediment to the nation's development aspiration by constituting a wheel of national advancement and improvement which in most case continue overrunning social solidarity in this manner harming both economic and social advancement.

The conflicting values among Nigerians in the areas of cultural norms and Religious beliefs tend to generate lots of controversies, where in most cases such controversies degenerate into a violent confrontation thereby disrupting social order and peace resulting to loss of innocent lives and destruction of properties (Bello, 2012).

The political scene in Nigeria since its inception has been encapsulated by lack of basic commonly held value occasioned by ethnic-based political affiliation. Case in point not long after independence, the nationalist struggle was unceremoniously supplanted by ethnic and prebendal politics characterized by power tussle among the three predominant political parties, Action Group (AG) championed by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, basically seen as the Yoruba party speaking to the Southwest; the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) championed by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe equally seen as belonging to the Igbos of the Southeast; the Northern People's Congress (NPC) drove by Sir Ahmadu Bello which is additionally seen as belonging to the Northern part of the country(Angerbrandt, 2015).

This issues of balkanization was resurrected again in the 1979-1984 political allotment famously known as the Second Republic with the rise of Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) under the initiative of Chief Obafemi Awolowo controlling the Southwest thus seen by numerous people as AG with new acronym, as in the party was ruled by the Yoruba individuals. The Nigeria People's Party (NPP), framed by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, and was additionally seen as new NCNC, as it has control of the Igbo states, where as the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) which despite the fact that has more national standpoint than the other two, it was still viewed as provincial as in the party had its significant supports base in the North and mirrored the legacies of the dead NPC (Drysdale, 2014).

In an endeavored to kill this provincial and ethnic connection in partisan politics in Nigeria, the military junta under

General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida came up with just two political parties the Social Democracy Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC) to participate in what numerous people portrayed as the deficient third Republic. The endeavor nearly appeared to have succeeded stamping out the monstrous situation of ethno-sectarianism issues in Nigeria; it was in any case, defaced by the shocking annulment of the Presidential Election of June 12, 1993 (Angerbrandt, 2015).

It is basic to note that such cancellation was one of the substantial blow on Nigeria mission for national integration as in Nigerians from diverse regions, ethnic and religious inclination appeared to have defeat the legacies of ethno-sectarianism by voting the SDP candidate MKO Abiola yet they were constrained at the end of the day by such annulment to limit their sight and put ethnic character in the first place, instead of their citizenship as Nigerians (Marcus, 2015).

The present fourth republic at first saw a few components of ethnic and provincial affiliations in political participation, for example, All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) and the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) all seen as ethnic base parties except for the People Democratic Party (PDP) (which was the ruling party before 29 May 2015). Nonetheless, the alliance between the ACN and CPC to frame an imposing power with the acronym APC appears to have driven an establishment for a new Nigeria as they have succeeded in uniting Nigerian from differing religious and ethnic foundation under a solitary umbrella with the trademark "change" by which they have succeeded in conveying to an end the 16 years of PDP stewardship by overcoming them in the March 28 2015 presidential race.

Be that as it may, this does not totally denote the end of the impact of the ethno-sectarianism on the nation's political issues particularly the communication amongst the youths on social networking such as Facebook and twitter where political deliberation continue to take ethnic, regional and religious colorations. This showcase the need to address the very establishment whereupon the Nigerian state was constructed particularly with respect to how to accomplish national integration regardless of ethno-sectarian division.

6. Ethno-Sectarian Division and the Predicaments of National Integration in Iraq

It is presently generally acknowledged that the post-intrusion policy of de-Ba'athification, as practiced, had various unintended outcomes that made building Iraqi civil society particularly troublesome after the U.S.-led invasion (Kirmanj, 2013). The U.S. approach to deal with this strategy is frequently evaluated as having great oversight by underestimating the threats of increased sectarianism in Iraq and the requirement for efficacious endeavors to oversee ethno-partisan divisions (Khan, & Kirmanj, 2015). The Iraqi government's strategy in dealing with de-Ba'athification was, in any case, considerably more dangerous because of its one-sidedness and partisan nature (Mikail, 2014).

However well intended, de-Ba'athification initially was as an idea; practically speaking it had various major negative issues. These issues escalated and turned out to be increasingly disturbing as the de-Ba'athification process turned out to be progressively commanded by the Iraqis and the American supervision of the program slowly vanished. Around then, it came to be seen as an instrument of requital and punishment by both the Iraqis that managed de-Ba'athification and those that were targeted by these policies (Osman, 2014).

A far-reaching review of Iraqi de-Ba'athification is fundamental before making any statements about the lessons of these approaches on ethno-sectarian division there in. Understanding de-Ba'athification starts with assessing the U.S. approaches and objectives in Iraq. After the toppling of the Saddam Hussein administration, the U.S. administration had a decision of executing restricted de-Ba'athification or looking for a substantially more clearing system. They initially resorted to the last option since it was considered particularly imperative to dispense with the last remnants of Saddam Hussein's administration to prevent a similar kind of government from resurfacing (Rashid, & Alobaydi, 2015).

In settling on this decision, proponents of deBa'athification indicated the historical backdrop of Ba'athist schemers ascending to control through invading government organizations and seizing power in undemocratic ways. This thorough approach however, made it amazingly troublesome for Iraq's Sunni Arab leaders to accept the post-war political framework. Numerous U.S. leaders became worried about this issue after some time, in the sense that there appears an enormous challenge in moderating Iraqi execution of de-Ba'athification policy (Shehata, 2014).

In spite of the time that has passed subsequent to the first decision on de-Ba'athification, these issues stay crucial for the eventual fate of Iraq. The Sunni Arab revolt that erupted after the U.S. - invasion strengthened the ubiquity of de-Ba'athification among a large number of Iraq's Shi'ite Arabs, in this way keeping the policy alive (Wehrey, 2013). Numerous Shi'ites likewise concurred with U.S. worries about the potential development of another Sunni-dominated administration that would at the end of the day seize and hold power. A semi-legitimate de-Ba'athification Commission is still on existing in Iraq and as of late plays a sensational part in disqualifying some leading Sunni candidates in the 2010 parliamentary election.

This commission could not have stayed significant without the backing of vital Iraqi politicians, including the present leader (Wehrey, 2013). In like manner, Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki captured vast quantities of alleged "Ba'athists" in 2011, in a matter of days before the last withdrawal of U.S. troops (Cordesman & Khazai, 2014). Under these circumstances, the legacy of de-Ba'athification and the eventual fate of this idea within the Iraqi political framework might yet have grievous impact on Iraq's capacity to develop a consolidated and prosperous state. Numerous Americans and Iraqis of different political orientations have contended that de-Ba'athification and the way of sectarianism in Iraq provide numbers of lessons from which other nations might wish to consider in the setting of future political transition (Terrill, 2012). This contention has discovered extensive reverberation among a few residents in the "Arab Spring" states where famous uprisings have unseated some long-serving tyrants (Sisk, 2013).

Significant numbers of the new revolutionaries consider Iraq's plight as a wakeup call that should be comprehended as they push ahead in setting up new political system. Specifically, it is presently comprehended that loyalty commissions championed by politician and set up to identify internal foes can assume their very own existence and turn out to be a piece of a country's political power structure (Shehata, 2014). Once this happens, such organizations are exceedingly hard to disestablish. Moreover, the fundamental unfairness of group punishment has again been underscored as machinery for indignation, disdain, and backlash. Alternately, the significance of effective and objective legal institution has additionally been underscored, as has the significance of maintaining a distinction between reprisal and equity (Ismael, & Ismael, 2015).

This bond of trust, collaboration, and cooperation can be utilized to pass on a number of messages beyond just only military issues. The greater part of the Arab Spring states might conveniently consider the potential bits of knowledge offered by the situation in Iraq, however the two Arab nations where the lessons of deBa'athification might be most important are Libya and Syria (Mikail, 2014). Libya is as of now sorting out a post-Qadhafi government, while Syria is experiencing a procedure of upheaval that appears to be progressively troublesome for the constituted authorities to tackle. In Libya, post-Qadhafi leaders are unequivocally worried about falling into what they consider as the slip-ups of Iraq which entrench sectarian violence. It remains to be seen whether they can do as such, or in the event that they fall into new webs of internal turmoil and new tyranny. Syria keeps up both a societal and a style of rule that has prominent likenesses to the Saddam Hussein government. Its future is profoundly tricky, as progressives battle against an, all around equipped and progressively edgy authoritarian regime that is additionally profoundly sectarian in nature (Katzman, 2013)..

7. Conclusion

Ethno-sectarianism has negatively affected the advancement of the Nigerian state in numerous parlances to be specific socially, politically, economically and bureaucratically. It is a tumor requiring consideration and earnest responsibility with penance from all Nigerians. To proffer enduring arrangement that realizes peace and encourage appropriate national integration, the opinion leaders, religions and political leaders must start to stress the need to imbibe peace at all expense. As the nation remains multi-religions and ethno-sectarianism, collaborative governance with total citizen participation in political decision is the best choice that can maintain peace and concordance. It is conceivable that if Nigeria was not colonized, the entrenchment of ethnic sentiments among the distinctive ethnic groups would have been extremely inconceivable. The federal government ought to firmly dishearten the soul of indigene-settler issues in the nation. Federal character principle must be entirely actualized both at the state and local levels of government. Obsession in religion must be de-accentuated so as to clear path for re-branding the Nigerian Society.

In the same vein in spite of the worries of the ethno-partisan divisionists, the way forward for Iraq lies not on the ethno-sectarian division and mistrust, rather the formation of a modern federal structure which shall be devise from Iraq's current political and legal structures in harmony with Iraq's complex historical feature. A stable political future

for Iraq starts with the basic position that Iraq requires a government structure based upon an eighteen governorate model as put forward in the Constitution. With the sub-government limits effectively drawn, Iraqi political leaders are in a position to delegate proper power to these units in a asymmetric and continuous way. With this power devolution, Iraq would profit by the improvement of frameworks of resources and revenue allocation to facilitate reasonable economic development throughout the federation.

Coordination mechanisms such as framework legislation and dispute resolution committees are also necessary to ensure that the transition to viable federalism occurs with minimal encumbrance. To respect the complex and diverse identities of Iraqis, safeguards need to be established to protect the rights of sub-federal entities and Iraq's many minorities. Thus, the political future of Iraq is not a return to failed approaches of division, but rather the construction of a viable modern federal state that promotes unity, political compromise, and consensus building.

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