

## **Conceptualizing Ethnicity and Nation Building in Malaysia: A Lesson from Nigeria**

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### ***Abstract***

*Conflict of ethnic origin keep presenting its ugly consequences to most of the developing and developed societies, with no much lessons learned. This ethnic conflicts usually starts with a mere complain or grievance that is most of the time ignored, this minor issues if not well tackled could metamorphosed into a widespread genocides, killings, maiming, destruction of valuable properties or in a form of social vices, like addiction, armed robbery, prostitution and host of other vices. Hence this paper presents a catalogue of the various ethnic conflicts that occurred in Nigeria from 1999–2002, immediately after the coming up of a democratically elected government in the country. The paper concluded that, the unassuming right provided by the Nigeria democracy might have contributed to the escalation of the conflicts, that has direct relationship with ethnicity. It also presumed that, the conflicts may also be associated with long military dictatorship in the country, which likely socialised the citizens to learn the act of intolerance, hostility and the act of violence. The lessons drawn from Nigeria experience were married with the recent happening in Malaysia, so that it will serve as a lesson to Malaysia to act fast not to allow its issue degenerates to an uncontrollable stage. This paper, therefore, make use of documented records from both official documents and eyewitnesses records to generates all its data and argument for this presentation.*

*“Tribalism is the bane of independent Africa...There are 2,000 language Groups of which 50 are prominent, and countless more subdivisions of tribe and clan. This complex heritage has been only slightly eroded by inter-marriage and the drift to the cities. Nor have the efforts of African*

*leaders to impose a national identity on their diverse peoples, assembled within borders inherited from colonial days, worked well. African state builders tread a narrow path between the fact of tribal loyalties and the need to minimize inter-tribal hostility.”*

*“Tribalism in Africa,” The Economist (September 10, 1994), pp. 46, 48.*

Keywords: Conceptualization, Ethnicity, Nation building, Lesson

## **INTRODUCTION**

Ethnicity, whether in the form of genocidal ethnic cleansing or of the low-intensity conflicts, have become part and parcel of the present day and indeed our contemporary politics since the 1990s. When ever a case of genocide is mentioned the, Rwanda, Somalia Bosnia, and Liberian incidences came to memory, which in a way, represent one of the ugliest face of this phenomenon (Morris, 1994). The Nigeria transition from military to civilian rule since 1999, seem not to be the ultimate solution to the numerous inter-ethnic conflicts that have contributed in no small measure to the undermining the growth and development of a democratic ideals, which will eventually pave way for the achievement of the goals of nationhood. Some schools of thought were of the opinion that, ethnic diversity if well managed can be a source of strength and unity. Ajayi (1992) once observed that ethnicity can in fact be used to promote nationalism such that we have “a gradation of loyalties from family to community, to linguistic group or state and to the nation”. Ethnic differentiations are part of human creation; they therefore should not necessarily be a source of conflicts. When ethnic conflicts and disagreements are perceived to be necessary results of inter-group interactions, their solution can be easily sorts, but when such conflicts are targeted at achieving personal desires and are manipulated to serve just that, the tendency to arrive at an amicable resolution become impossible. This study is of the opinion, that the existence of the ethnic militias in Nigeria and indeed in most

African societies is attributed to a multiplicity of causative factors. These include: the desire to manipulate ethnicity as a political platform by the ruling elite; the poor or lack proper management of ethnic grievances and complains by the Nigeria state and its agents; the diffusion of dictatorial tendencies of the military rule which translates into individual intolerance and hostility that today metamorphosed into conflict into in Nigeria; the general discontentment of the amalgamation of 1914, where sovereign nations were brought together without their consents; lopsidedness of the federation where the northern part is more than twice the size of the south and couple with the allocation of power and resources to the majority population in the north; the existence of graduate without employment and increasing level of poverty among the illiterates due neglect of agriculture; and the total collapse of state welfare schemes due to corruption and the tribalisation of the state security apparatus. These problems according to Ihonvbere (2000), state failure in Nigeria, have led to 'the emergence of guerrillas and warlords, swelling the number of informal entrepreneurs of violence'. However, the Nigeria is presently infected with a cancerous virus of conflict that seems to beckon loudly in pain for attention. With coming democracy the feeling was that, now we can say the illness that pathologically infected the country has been clinically dissected, but instead the Nigeria's nascent democracy seems to serve as another setting for brewing more ethnic unrestiveness than prescribing the right drug to diagnosed ailment. All efforts geared towards solving the ethnic and communal conflicts seem a failure due to the multiplicity of the causative agents. The crisis range from the desire to have control over the petro dollar resources by southern states to the detriment of the other part of the country, to the resistance by northern Christian minority to allow Muslims to have Islamic shariah in their various states as dictated by constitution of the country; from the fuelling and training of ethnic militias with a separatist agenda; to the insistence of the Muslims to institute Islamic Sharia by enforcing it to the Muslims and the resistance by the Christian minorities, supported by the human right from the western world; from insecurity as a results of the state

failure to monopolised the instrument of conflicts, to the insubordinate actions of the military faction who never celebrates their loss of political power after ruling for decades. All the ugly faces of the dictatorial rules of the military that were hitherto buried started reincarnating with the coming up of democratic governance. It is hope that Nigeria will gallop, limp and walk straight after a while, with the existence of democratic governance in the country, this is a possibility and it could on the other way round, if the ethnic unrestiveness is not addressed timely lead to the capsizing of the democratic ship. One of the important sources of the conflicts has to do with either failure to appreciate the benefits of mutual coexistence or the inability appreciates the contributions of each other and therefore come to agreement with the truth that the consolidation of democracy is the instituted key to sustainable socio-political and economic development of any country. The facts remained that, in the present circumstances a nation is rated as advanced and as well developed if it was able to stabilise its political institutions under a democratic ideology and not military dictatorship. Its ability to also consolidate the gains of democracy to its citizens push the international comity of nations to accord it much and enviable respect.

This paper is an inquiry into ethnic nationalism the Nigerian experience and how the experiences will serve as a lesson to Malaysia; Suffice here is to discuss briefly on the concept ethnic nationalism. Ethnic nationalism seems to be one of the eclectically defined concept and as well a complex social phenomenon. It may be seen and defined as a conglomeration of beliefs about the superiority and differences of one's ethnic group to another (ethnocentrism), and a desire to ensure the defence of its group interest against another and as well to dominate others. It also implies the individual's attachment, association, or identification with an ethnic group, the culture of that ethnic group, as well as its interest and goals. To sum it all it is ethnocentrism that cuts across all other loyalties to stress loyalty to a particular ethnic group. This is in line with Hofstede (1994) view that, there is always a strong tendency for ethnic or linguistic

groups to fight for recognition of their own identity, if not for national independence. This tendency has persistently been on the increase rather than on the decrease in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Following the Hofstedian analysis, this paper can simply states that, the Nigerian experience of a pronounced ethnic nationalism is not particularly a strange phenomenon. The concept of ethnicity refers to a social identity formation that rests upon culturally specific practices and a unique set of symbols and cosmology. A belief in common origins and a broadly agreed common history provide an inheritance of symbols, heroes, events, values and hierarchies, and confirm social identities of both indigene and settlers, which is the 20<sup>th</sup> century causative agent of ethnic conflicts. In real life, an ethnic nationalist identifies with and sees himself or herself first as a member of a particular ethnic nationality before identifying himself or herself with a nation (Steve 2005). Thus, this helps to explain the emergence and proliferation of ethnic associations and militias in Nigeria such as Movement for the survival of *Ogoni* People (MOSOP) by the South-south Peoples, Yoruba Council of Elders (YCE) “*Odua* People’s Congress” (OPC) “*Arewa* Consultative Forum” (ACF) “*Arewa* People’s Congress” (APC) “*Obaneze Ndigbo*”, “*Egbesu* Boys”, “*Bakassi* Boys”, “Middle Belt Forum” (MBF), Union of Niger Delta (UND) among others. Having defined the concept of ethnic nationalism, we shall now proceed to present our methodology and examine the literature and identify the following as contained in the literature:

## **METHODOLOGY**

In analysing the negative consequences of ethnicity on nations growth and development, this paper provides a Nigeria case study, so that it will serve as a platform for the Malaysian citizens to act fast to avert similar occurrence in their country. The paper relied heavenly on secondary data or literature of the different ethnic clashes in Nigeria from 1999 to 2002. And therefore, based its conclusion and analysis on it, evidence supporting this paper is based on the authors 17 years as a lecturer in both sociology, environmental resources conflicts and citizenship education in Nigeria

higher institution and as well a member of several NGO's in Kaduna state Nigeria. The second author also was an environmental health officer for years, sociologists/anthropologists, a lecturer and academic director of college of administration and business studies Azare Bauchi state Nigeria. Both authors were eye witnesses to most of the ethnic conflicts as they unfold in the country.

## **QUESTIONS**

1. What are the factors responsible for the re-emergence of ethnic divide in Nigeria?
2. How the ethnic diversity did affect the democratic governance and its sustenance in Nigeria?
3. To what extent can an effort be made to reduce the consequence of ethnic diversity in Nigeria?

## **LITERATURE**

The literature is full of factors that accounted for the rise of ethnic nationalism in Nigeria right from the independence. The first factor is the legacy of colonialism. According to Dare (1986), Aluko (1998), Ake (2000), among others, the problem of ethnic nationalism in Nigeria came with the advent of colonialism. This happened when disparate, autonomous, heterogeneous and sub-national groups were merged together to form a nation in 1914. Again, the colonialists created structural imbalances, even though the colonial masters made the natural population lopsided with north more than twice the size of the south-east and south-west, the colonial masters only used the population of the north for political and economic gain. There is also an imbalance in terms of socio-economic projects, and educational development, with the west having it all, while the north only retained its population for political gain. The relative peace and the existence of fortified traditional political structure and bounty of cash crop and mineral resources in the north, gave the colonial masters the security needed to establish its administrative centres. This imbalance negatively affected the relationship of the

various nations and tribes in the country. This is so because the north provided much of the resources needed for the take up of the country after independent, but with nothing to show in terms of development, this therefore, deepened the antipathies between the various ethnic nationalities in the country (Nnoli, 1980; Young, 1993 and Aluko, 1998). Worst still, the activities of the countries political actors from the period of the struggle of independent to the events that have followed since the first republic, where the patriotic leaders from the north were slaughtered by the military juntas under the leadership of a Christian south-eastern Nigeria soldiers, headed by Major Chukuma Kaduna Nzegwu and Major Emmanuel Ifeajuna, killing all the northern Muslim leaders and left behind all the south-east and south-western political leaders intact with the exception of Chief Akintola that was also killed because of his support for a united Nigeria, come the serious crisis of ethno-religious coloration. The actions of our political leaders gave more emphasis to these diversities and also continue with campaigns that keep reminding us of those wounds that never healed up till the present's moments. The literatures in most of political history textbooks emphasises most of these events, this alone also continue to train the younger generation to continue to harbour hatreds generation after generation. These things for as long as they are being kept in our brain achieves, will continue to separate us rather than uniting us, *Stavenhagen (1994) argued that ethnic nationalism is common in all plural societies and came up with two schools of thoughts on the meaning and nature of ethnic nationalism. These two schools of thought are –the primordialists and instrumentalists. Primordialists may be defined as those who hold that “members of the same ethnic group have a common primordial bond that determines their personal identity and turns the group into a natural community of a type that is older than the modern nation or modern class systems’ Instrumentalists, on the other hand, are those who see ethnic identity as a means for people, especially leaders, to pursue their own purpose such as ‘forming’ mobilizing and manipulating groups for political ends”*, therefore it is unfortunate to concludes today that, specifically, the Nigerian political actors and indeed sectors are dominated largely

by people who belong to both schools of thought; most especially the primordial group.

One of the most striking characteristics of Nigeria is its popularly known ethnic diversity, a demographic landmass with more than 200 different ethnic groups, in which most have geographical homogeneity and often coincide with linguistic, cultural and religious groupings and similarities (Nweke, 1994:3, in Adeyemi 2006).

In Lijiphart's (1984) opinion, all or most multi-ethnic nations are, 'profoundly divided along religious, ideological, linguistic, cultural, ethnic or racial platforms or formations. He also reclassify that, they are, 'virtually made up of separate sub-societies, with sub-cultural rules of allegiance each, which also metamorphosed into formation or affiliation with a/or own political party, its own goal, it owns interest group and its own means of communication. A society characterised with these type features lack all the necessary flexibility for the evolution of a popular democratic ideals that will usher in peace, progress and prosperity. In his conclusion Lijipharts, concludes that, under these conditions majority rule would not only be undemocratic, but also dangerous, because the minorities who are constantly denied access to power would feel excluded; and would stop showing allegiance to the government (Lijiphart, 1984: 22-23). In disagreement to the position of Lijipharts, this paper argue that, this type of presentations are the main lubricants that ensures lack of stability of democratic ideals in most multiethnic societies than ethnicity itself. This is so; because democracy is the game of number where the majority carry the day and the minority follow the dictate of democracy ensuring allegiance. The Americans witnessed democracy that usher in majority northern American citizens as presidents and it was not a problem in any way in America until today. This observation rendered Lijipharts assertion satiable democratic wise, therefore, does not holds the truth about democracy.



*Again, Ekeh (1975) in his famous theory of two publics, sufficiently explained why a typical*

*“African nation usually have problems of attracting the loyalty, commitment and patriotism of its citizens. According to Ekeh, the historical root of the crisis in Africa lies in the fact that the present (nation) state in Africa evolved not from within the society as was the case in most parts of Western Europe, but from outside, as an imposition of the colonial authorities. The process of establishing this alien structure on largely artificial political formations which brought together formerly separate sub-nationalities led to the development of the public realm as two publics rather than one in addition to the private realm which was coterminous with the society.”*

First was the civic public which was basically the government and consisted of modern institutions such as the – military, bureaucracy, courts, political parties and the likes – all of which were imported wholesomely from the West.

Second, there was the primordial public which, as an emergent social formation because it evolved out of the dynamics of the colonial process grew up to satisfy some of the personal and group demands that could not be met by both the colonial and postcolonial government. Ekeh’s assertion of two publics contradicts the reality in some African societies, a case in point is that, the colonial masters for example met the northern Nigerian Hausa/Fulani traditional society with an established political structure for over hundreds of years. This traditional political structure has a leadership known as ‘SARKI’ whom was renamed ‘AMIR’ with the advent of Islam, and as well renamed ‘EMIR’ with coming of colonial masters. The structure also provided army and the police known as ‘DOGARAI’ headed by ‘MADAWAKI’, the two renamed by colonial master to mean ‘HAUSA CONSTABULARIES’ and the ‘HEAD OF ARMY CALBARY’, this renders Ekeh’s theory imperfect and lack universalistic applicability or to a more greater extent sentimental. This public is what Joseph (1987) think is best described in communal terms as

ethnic nationalism and the origin of prebendal politics in Nigeria. Simply put, prebendalism has been described as the process of using government positions to pursue personal and parochial or group interests. In the civil public in Nigeria, it is perfectly in order and the norm to exploit one's position in the public realm to pursue private, parochial or sub national interests. The real problem is that the same sets of individuals operate in the two publics being altruistic in one and very instrumental in the other. This duality, which has subsisted since colonial times, helps to explain the problems of ethnic nationalism, corruption and of course political instability in Nigeria. The theory of prebendalism, in a way explained some of the reality in the evolution of present day predicament, but it also failed succinctly explained the genealogy of present predicament. The divide and rule introduced by the colonial masters, created suspicion and distrusts among Nigerians, which was brewed to maturity and manifests its ugly face today in the form of ethnicity and later loyalty to the ethnic group and not to the nation. These, act culminated into cover up of the corrupt act perpetuated by my ethnic son who is representing my ethnic group in government, a case of Ibori of recent memory.

The worst problem is associating the economic resources to an ethnic ownership which make the resolution to the ethnic clervergies more difficult if not impossible in Nigeria. These acts also prove insurmountable in having a universally acceptable revenue allocation formula, when sharing the revenue for nation building. According to Nnoli (1980) there are 'ethnic watchers' who monitor what each ethnic group gets from the federation account. When they think that what their ethnic group is getting is not favourable they are expected to raise 'ethnic alarm which if not treated with caution tends trigger gorilla and/or militia reaction especially from the south-west and south-east and south-south of Nigeria.

### **Ethnic Divide**

A fundamental question in an ethnic divided society's is to what degree the groups within this culture share common attitudes, values and beliefs, that may not be detrimental to the political culture of Nigeria its dynamic and heterogeneous composition. Therefore, any political arrangement and analysis must take into account the ethno-cultural background of Nigeria, the impacts of complex relationship between pre-colonial conditions and religious forces, especially from the Christian and Muslim groups in Nigeria (Aborisade and Mundt, 1999).

Nigeria has more than 300 ethnic groups speaking 250 languages and 1,000 dialects. Among these groups the Hausa/Fulani majority from the North, Yoruba second largest single spoken ethnic group from the southwest, and the Igbo from the southeast are the three major ethnic groups. These groups have historically dominated the political and economic spheres of the country since independence, (Ezechukwu, 2000) Table 1 shows the distribution of ethnic identities in Nigeria.

Table 1: Distribution of Ethnic Identities in Nigeria

GROUP	PERCENT OF POPULATION
Hausa-Fulani	29.5
Kanuri	4.1
Tiv	2.5
Nupe	1.2
Yoruba	20.3
Edo	1.7
Igbo	16.6
Ibibio-Efik	3.6
Ijaw	2.0
Other	18.5

Source: Oladimeji Aborisade and Robert J. Mundt (1999)

Given the distribution of ethnic identities in Nigeria, it is important to note that these ethnic groups are not homogenous and have had a pre-

colonial history of rivalries and it is frequently resurrected by political and economic competitions (Aborisade and Mundt, 1999). Such was the case in 1997, in the economic capital of the Delta region, Warri. An inter-ethnic conflict erupted between the itsekiris and the Ijaws over the relocation of local government headquarters from Igbe-Ijoh and Ijaw enclave, to Ogidigben, an Itsekiri town in Warri North. In the ensuing conflict hundreds of lives were lost on both sides, waterways were blocked, and more than 120 Shell Petroleum workers were held hostage (Obasa, 1998). Concomitantly, in Edo State on October 6, 1998 an inter-ethnic crisis at Ikpako-Ekewan, in Ovia North-East local government led to the death of several people. This particular conflict was between the Ijaws, on one hand, and the Urhobos and the Itsekiris on the other (Obasa, 1998). Then on July 22, 1999, approximately more than 300 lives were lost as a result of inter-ethnic conflict between the Yorubas and Hausas in Kano and Sagamu. This particular conflict began in Sagamu, Ogun State, a Yoruba dominated state, Ummulere-ogunlere in the southeast, kafanchan religious conflicts in 1987 in Kaduna state, the Zangon-Kataf massacre of 1991, shariah crisis in Kaduna, the jos mayhem occurring five consecutive time, Jukun and Tiv conflicts in Taraba state and hosts of others suffice is to mentioned just a few.

#### **A DIARY OF COMMUNAL CLASHES IN NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC**

May 30-June 9, 1999 renewed Warri communal clash in Delta State.

July 18, 1999 Oodua People's Congress and Hausa traders clashed at Sagamu, Ogun State.

November 25, 1999 Communal clash in Lagos between Oodua People's Congress and Hausa traders.

January 25, 2000 Communal clash in Brass Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

January 29, 2000 Communal clash in Etsako Local Government area of Edo State.

January 30, 2000 Communal clash at Etsako Local Government area of Edo State

February 2, 2000 Boundary dispute between communities in Akwa Ibom and Cross Rivers State.

February 21, 2000 Sharia riots in Kaduna.

February 28, 2000 Religious riots in Aba, Abia State, reprisal killing from the Kaduna mayhem.

March 5, 2000 Epoch of Ife – Modakeke war of attrition.

March 16, 2000 Renewed hostilities between the people of Eleme and Okirika in Rivers State.

March 28, 2000 Religious riots in Damboa, Borno State.

April 8, 2000 Communal clash in Ovia South Local Government area of Edo State.

May 18, 2000 Local farmers and Fulani cattle rearer's clash in Saki, Oyo State.

May 23, 2000 Renewed religious riot in Kaduna.

June 5, 2000 Epoch of the Owo mayhem in Ondo State.

June 12, 2000 Communal clash in Isoko North Local Government area of Edo State.

June 23, 2000 Communal clash between the people of Ikot Offiong and Oku-Iboku of Cross River State.

July 1, 2000 The commencement of communal clash at Ikare Akoko, Ondo State.

July 21, 2000 Renewed hostilities between the Ijaws and Urhobos in Delta State.

August 12, 2000 Communal clash in Bendel Local Government area of Abia State.

August 22, 2000 Violent clash at Agboma community in Epe Local Government area of Lagos State.

October 16, 2000 Igbos and Hausa traders clashed at Alaba Rago market area of Lagos State.

December 11, 2000 Renewed clashes between Ife and Modakeke.

March 13,2001 Renewed communal clashes at Owo, Ondo State.

April 13,2001 Religious riot in Kano State

May 12,2001 Communal clash between the Ijaws and Itsekiri of Delta State.

July 2,2001 Communal clash between Odimodu and Ogulagba communities of Delta State.

July 12,2000 Ethnic violence in Nassarawa State.

September 7,2001 Religious clash in Jos, Plateau State.

September 16,2001 Religious riot in Kano.

September 18,2001 Religious riot in Benue State.

January 12,2002 Oodua People's Congress clash at Owo, Ondo State

February 2,2002 Oodua People's Congress and Hausa people clashed at Idi-Araba, Lagos State.

February 26,2002 Communal clash between Apprapum and Osatura communities of Cross Rivers State March 10,2002 Egbira youth's revolt on Local Government creation

March 30-April 2,2002 All Peoples Party Intra party clash at Ilorin, Kwara State

August 31,2002 Communal clash at Ado-Ekiti

September 3,2002 Renewed communal clashes at Owo, Ondo State.

November 21,2002 Religious riots in Kaduna State and Abuja

Source: 2000 Annual report on the Human Rights Situation in Nigeria, Tell Magazine, September 24, 2001 and The Nigerian Tribune September 19, 2001, The Punch, November 22, 2000, adopted from the work of **'Lanre Olu-Adeyemi (2006).**

The above diary reveals about forty ethno-religious clashes between May 1999 and September 2000, thus, signalling an average of one bloody clash per month since the return to democracy. The estimated lost of lives through out the period 1999-2002 is over 5042 people and with lost

of properties at the range of billions of Nigerian currency. This portends a dangerous signal to the quest for national integration.

A good number of these instances are not products of the present era; they date back to the pre-colonial period. That they still rear their ugly head at this age attest to the fact that they were never thoroughly resolved to the satisfaction of all parties concerned.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Life on the edge: The invention of the Nigerian tradition**

As indicated earlier, the reoccurrence of these ethnic conflicts in recent times is obviously not necessary, because it marks the beginning of an obstacle to the achievement of meaningful national development and respect in the comity of nation. Essentially, the rise and concretization of the tradition of political restlessness, involving threats and counter-threats of breakdown of law and order induced and supported in contexts by the tendency of the political elite to prefer confusion to fusion, separation rather than unification, at moments of great national crises, provided the background to the emergence of contemporary forms of ethnic militias in Nigeria from the 1990s. Such leadership has been the bane of Nigeria, pursuing dangerous policies, postures and statements to the utmost limits of national safety, survival and stability.

## **CONCEPTUALIZING MALAYSIAN ETHNIC CONFLICTS**

In conceptualizing the Malaysian ethnic conflict, what easily comes to mind is who control what and why? Of course the ready made answer to this is the Malayu majority control more than seventy percent of both the economic, political, social, cultural and religious activity in the country. Why? For the simple reason that democracy is the game of number, or we may simply say because they owned the peninsular island, that is to say they have historical advantage over the other two competing ethnic groups, that is the Chinese second peddle and the Tamils third peddle citizens. Is that all? If that is the case, why won't the Chinese and the Tamils accept

their natural position? No, there is more reason to it, than just the above, some of the other more serious reasons includes the serious 'segregation' and 'deprivation' and lack of 'recognition' the Tamil particularly claimed they are suffering in the hands of the Malay majority. Even though some of the reason may partly be with Tamils some are wholly associated with the Malay ethnic majority, this grievances are said to be the source of the Tamils worries which led to their staging demonstration in 2007, to show case their complains to the British embassy in Kuala Lumpur. This demonstration rather than solving the enigmatic condition of the Tamils reveal the following;

1. The laziness associated with the Tamil ethnic groups.
2. The poor initiatives and lack of strong structure for political leadership that will serve as the avenue to officially ventilate their grievances cooperatively.
3. In ability of the Tamil to adopt or adapt the popular culture and way of life of the majority ethnic group made them to be alien in a country where they are part of.
4. Their inability to evolve a micro economic activity that is ingenious to them, made them to be economically, politically, religiously and even socially porous, vulnerable and/ or passive, since their population is too small to negotiate for better condition of living.
5. Their personal effort to educate their children despite the deprivation did not correspond with their effort to remove themselves from the chain of the enslavement, this is because, through out the history there was only very scanty literature to show a concerted effort by the Tamil as a group to unite and make great sacrifice for the future generation apart from the effort made to join the coalition of political parties, which yield them a ministerial position since 1979, the second is the 2007 demonstration.
6. And finally unlike the Chinese the Tamils were unable to link up with their ancestral country to seek for assistance in terms of training, employment and development of enterprises to compete perfectly in the society and as well as the economy.



On the part of the Malay majority the Tamils heavenly complain of deprivation and segregation in the areas of;

1. Recognition as equal citizens in a country where their grand parent contributed to build and stayed here for over 150 years, their treatment always as immigrant is unacceptable by them therefore aggrieved.
2. The 5 percent employment vacancies given to the Tamil up till 2007, was too small considering the impoverished condition they and their children are living, even then, this percentage seem to be decreasing every day (Sunanda, 2007).
3. The conditionality on starting a business is too harsh and is making the Tamil and Chinese to feel alienated, especially when a partner must be sort from the Malay majority with 30 percent equity assured (Sunanda, 2007).
4. The islamization of the country by ensuring shariah legal system pervaded everything and every where in the country, force other religious groups to feel threaten and therefore, ensued tension of ethnic coloration in the country.
5. The demolition of the Tamil 36 year's old temple in Shah Alam under the pretence that, the place is a shariah zone generated further ethnic tension and was defined as Malay lack of religious tolerance from the point of view of other ethnic groups affected by the demolition (Sunanda, 2007).
6. And finally the Tamil particularly complain bitterly to their almost total absence in the political arrangement and economic programmes of the Malaysian government, this singular act further aggravated the impoverished condition under which they live and which by extension necessitated the looming ethnic tension in country.

## **ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION**

The lesson to learn here is that, the Malaysian government and indeed the Malay majority should thread gently on this minor grievances that may starts to manifests itself in the form of complains and minor

protests. This is so because enemies of the country could easily cash on this to start permeating unrestiveness under the pretence of provision of aids to alleviate the suffering of the aggrieved ethnic group. The journey Nigeria crisis started with the issue of provision of assistance to the under privileged, followed by religious conversion to Christianity and then raising claim to certain issues, beyond the government power to provide, the next is ethnic conflicts that use to gulf lives and valuables. Therefore, the citizens and government of Malaysia should refuse the institution of any form of aid from government of other countries or religious organizations that has question marks.

The shariah law as long as is the decision of the majority citizens should stand, any reverse could elicits other tension that may not be surmountable. Once a decision is taken and is not ultimately affecting the flow of the system, it should be maintained. The shariah crisis manifested itself in Nigeria due to the indecision of the government of the day, by supporting the Christian minority in the north to demonstrate against the wish of the majority. The crisis was also not devoid of the contribution of the western world, through the provision of financial assistance to Non Governmental Organizations and civil liberty organizations to organised anti-shariah seminars in and outside Nigeria, with the desire to destabilise the shariah or the country, therefore this should be a lesson to the Malaysian people.

There is the need for the Malaysian government to look inward and contemplates the improvement of the percentage of employment given to the other ethnic nationalities in the country. This if done will go a long way in dowsing down the present tension in the country, deprivation in the form of lack of employment, education and social freedom could degenerates into social evil, such as corruption and receipt of kickback, armed robbery, ethnic conflicts, religious conflicts and unrests. There is no gain saying that, if this is happening, no matter the resource availability, the country will never forge ahead in terms of growth and development.

The Nigeria nation was besets by this evils, which beheaded our desire to forge ahead. Corruption, kickback, ethnic conflicts, ethno-religious conflicts, tribal rift, religious conflicts, settler indigene conflicts are the main obstacles to Nigerians growth and development. The Malaysian government and people should learn to avoid this in order to retain their present prestige in the comity of nations.

The minority ethnic groups, that is the Chinese and Tamils should recognised the fact that, they have no any other nation than Malaysia, any insertion by the outside world to protests, to destabilized will only end up aggravating their present predicament or at the end of it all destroying the good name and good days of a country they called their own and in which they are fighting for recognition and equal treatment. They should remember that unless the country is peaceful nothing good is going to come out of it. Therefore, the basic option is persistence in amicable dialogue, negotiation, education and business initiation through entrepreneurial development using local talents and connections outside the assumed hostile environment; it is only through vertical as well as horizontal business initiative integration that a community will grow. The recent Nigeria community bank and micro-finance business initiative is one way of getting disadvantage group out of the chain of poverty and psycho economic tension.

The 'SATU' Malaysian concept is an attempt towards evolving a national sign and symbol that may serve as a platform for reintegration, but effort should be geared towards not only singing songs, but towards instituting an instrument where both parents, children, and communities will cooperatively pursue the goal of achieving the 'one' Malaysia concept. But where the government is spending huge amount of money on the campaign and the community are not willing to diffuse the campaign to the grassroots, make the whole effort to futility. This is so in the case of Nigeria National Youth Service Corp (NYSC), where the graduate must serve a one year post university free and compulsory service to

a community outside their own community and intermarriages were encouraged in the process and government pay the dowry or bride price in the event that, the youth accepted to marry during the service year.

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