

THE CITIZENSHIP QUESTION AND INSECURITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Extant literature have shown that the nature and character of the Nigerian state is undermining the relevance of citizenship and we must not fail to point out that the nation's democratic project and development have been greatly inhibited to some extent by the problem of citizenship which in a way is affecting the survival of Nigeria as a geo-political entity. Despite the constitutional provisions guaranteeing the citizenship status of Nigerians, yet within the country, the discriminatory tendency premised on non-indigeneship is making Nigerians to becoming second class citizens in states other than their own. Therefore, the current popular struggle towards ensuring equality among the citizenry has constituted an impediment to internal security across Nigerian states. This paper therefore examines the nature of formation of Nigeria as a state, the kind of people, tribes, culture and belief. The paper also unveiled the emergence of unprecedented violence and insecurity situation in Nigeria which could be linked up with failure of Nigerian government to ensure equality through the principle of citizenship. Secondary sources of data were used in this paper with the means of collecting information from textbooks, journal articles and internets while Social Division Theory was used as theoretical framework. It was concluded that for security to be sustained, issues of ethnicity, indigeneity, among others, must be discouraged while promoting citizenship.

Keywords: *Nigerian State, Citizenship, Ethnicity, Insecurity and Indigeneity.*

Introduction

Citizenship is the hallmark of the modern nation-state. But in most of the so-called new states of Africa, Asia and Latin America, citizenship is quite a problematic issue, partly because most of these states are 'artificial' and partly because they are bedeviled by enormous conflicts arising from the mosaics of centrifugal forces which separate them (Osaghae, 1987). Pursuant to the declaration that the motto of the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be unity and faith, peace and progress, the 1999 constitution pledged that national integration shall be actively encouraged while discrimination on the grounds of place of origin, sex, religion, status, ethnic or linguistic association or ties shall be prohibited. This is the central political objectives of the document that constitute the *grundnorm* of the nation's existence. Citizenship as a legal phenomenon which defines a citizen as one who, by birth, or naturalization, belongs to a state is not problematic. Rather, it is in assigning an equal status both in theory and in practice to all citizens, an issue which goes beyond sheer legalism that is problematic. The problem with Nigeria as observed by Akinkotu (2014) is the failure by those who are at the helm of affairs to put Nigerian people first by upholding the sanctity of the constitution. This clearly shows the extent to which innocent Nigerians have been dehumanized by their so-called leaders.

Nigeria returned to civil rule in 1999 after a long period of military dictatorship and tortuous democratic transition programmes. One of the distinguishing characteristics of this return to civil rule is frequent civil strives and conflicts. Mostly putting ethnic and religious groups against one another, identity politics and attendant violence have also assumed unprecedented dimensions (Alubo, 2006). The increase in prevalence, incidence as well as in intensity in the crisis of citizenship in Nigeria in recent years, has deep-rooted historical and cultural origins. Research and informed commentary in extant literature indicate that no region in the country is spared of the scourge of the violence associated with overt and covert discriminations against citizens who have been classified or labeled as “non- indigenes” or “settlers” in places of origin. Whereas, citizenship is meant to foster excellent relationships among individuals/groups and bring people from diverse cultures, religious persuasions and economic and political interests together in an ambience of peace and joy thereby leading to sustainable development.

The political use and misuse of citizenship and indigeneship has promoted dual conceptual explanations and application of the notion of indigeneity. In this regard, a Nigeria citizen may be excluded or denied opportunities in Nigeria owing to his/her parental genealogy. Nigerians, who have their ethnic geology elsewhere, even if they were born in a particular state or lived all their lives therein, they are still regarded as 'settlers' (Ibrahim, 2006 as cited in Bamidele, 2017). This discriminatory tendency on the basis of indigeneship or citizenship is quite problematic because it is directly tied to individual or group access to societal resources including political opportunities. Candidly, citizenship is a bundle of rights within and the citizen is expected to enjoy those rights within and even outside the territory of his/her country. In Nigeria, the term is rarely used as the basis for defining the citizen's entitlements in the contestation for power and other material benefits. Rather, the recourse is origin, religion, ethnicity, state and other group identities. Of the entire group identities, the most used and abused is ethnicity which is the basis for determining indigeneity.

In spite of the seeming irrelevance of citizenship in all forms of relationship in Nigeria, the constitution which is the body of fundamental principles according to which a nation or body polity is constituted and governed recognized only the citizen as those who constitute the nation. Despite the constitutional provisions that emphasize the importance and relevance of citizenship, particularly as regards the rights and obligations associated with it, indigeneity has consistently thwarted citizenship. Citizens are facing insecurity of different kinds, such as inter-communal and intra-ethnic clashes, religious violence, e.t.c. In recent years, the nation has moved from militancy to terrorism, it has found itself in the belly of ethnic and religious whales and the constitution has not been able to deliver the citizens from unprecedented level of insecurity.

As it were, while the state provides that all citizens are equal and should be treated equally, the centrifugal forces of ethnicity, religions, statism and regionalism, among others, produce discriminatory practices in the sub-units of the state which negate the constitutional provisions by treating citizens unequally. This sociological component of citizenship which is defined by

differentiation is one of the greatest problems Nigeria faces in its search for national unity and integration. Identity in its ethnic and religious forms is central to the citizenship question in Nigeria because it is a basis for inclusion and exclusion. The issue becomes more crucial because as in most of African states, citizenship is tied to group rights and thus, inextricably linked with identity and indigeneship. This perhaps explain the rise in the citizenship politics, especially in relation to material issues, in a sense therefore, any federation which continue to operate according to the dual federal model in such a way that citizens are not treated equally, is said to be underdeveloped. To the extent of this underdevelopment, the federal system can hardly be expected to promote national integration (Osaghae, 1987). Controversies and contestations over citizenship rights in Nigeria have become major sources of insecurity and political conflicts that often threaten the corporate existence of Nigeria. Honestly, the political sphere remains fundamental and needs to be attended to. This is because when the problem of citizenship is allowed to damage other facets of national life, a country is bound to face enormous problems and for this reason, a study of this nature is important to be investigated for the purpose of creating a friendly atmosphere where individuals and/or groups can contribute his or her own quotas to the growth and development of our great nation.

Against the backdrop of the foregoing, this study shall discuss the following; the concepts of citizenship and security in Nigeria, problem of citizenship in Nigeria, especially as they relate to insecurity. These problems are derivable from the contradictions between national citizenship and state citizenship. Lastly, the study reveals the origins and nature of the problems, and possible ways in which they can be resolved.

The Origin and Concept of Citizenship

The Westphalian concept upon which universal conception of citizenship is based is different from African societies (Nigerian notion of citizenship as indigeneship). Hence, in Nigeria, the state defined the citizen within the parameter of the Westphalian concept. The treaty of Westphalian in 1648 gave birth to the concept of 'nation' in the European sense with claim to specific territories. What constitute a nation and its rights was further entrenched in the League of Nations' Charter of 1918, and re-enforced in the UN Charter of 1945. The Westphalian notion of nationhood, and its usurpation of sovereignty from the individual landowners in Europe to the state, settled the landowners and claims of resources found therein, in favour of the European states. However, when applied to African societies, it became a conflict variable, precisely because Africans lay claim to a communal ownership of the geographical space. Thus, Africans consider the physical land as one of the resources given by their ancestors which also constitutes the basis of their identity citizenship in its entirety and therefore has become the evil plaguing the Nigeria (Bakut, 2008). The concept of ethnicity therefore, has overridden the spirit of society in term of its usage and the basis of classification.

It is important at the onset to grasp the import of the citizenship as a concept which is germane to the study. Historically in ancient Greece, there was a distinction between the citizens, and the

slaves. A Citizen, according to Greek philosopher – Aristotle as cited in Akinlade and Ibitoye (2004) is one who is capable of ruling as well as being ruled. The sixth edition of Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2001) defines citizen as a person who has the legal right to belong to a particular country. In this context, a person who has acquired the citizenship of a particular country is called a citizen and differs from an alien who merely resides in a country without necessarily belonging to it. Section 25, 26, and 27 of the Nigeria 1999 constitution make provision for all categories of citizenship, that is, by birth, by registration and by naturalization (FRN, 1999). Citizenship connotes the status of an individual as a full and responsible member of a political community. Thus, a citizen is a person who owes allegiance to a state and in turn receives protection from state (Dunmoye, 2011). He must fulfill his duties and obligations towards the state, as the state in turn, grants him civil, political and social rights. This two-way relationship between individual and the state in the concept citizenship emanates from, although is not limited to the social contract theory.

For the purpose of understanding the concept of citizenship in an intellectual discourse, a distinction must be made between a 'subject' and a 'citizen'. A subject is usually subservient to the state while the opportunity to rule is reserved for a privileged class, called citizens. More so, citizens themselves constitute a class, citizenship implies full membership of a community, those who possess this status are equal with respect to the rights and duties associated with it (Garuba, 2004:269). Different states usually attach different rights and duties to the status of citizen. There is no universal principle which determining necessary rights and duties of citizenship in general (Dunmoye, 2011).

The significance of citizenship depicts that there are two inhabitants of any particular country, the permanent or temporary residents who are members of another country and who hold allegiance to their country of membership. They are referred to as alien in their country of residence (Akinlade and Ibitoye, 2004:3) The American Supreme Court in 1913 declared citizenship as membership of a political society with a duality of duties; allegiance on the part of the member and protection on the part of society. Citizenship is the status that bestows membership of a sovereign political community or state on an individual (Tournon, 1996 as cited in Bamidele, 2017). Its parameters are usually set out in the law books. Sections 27 and 32 of the 1999 constitution clearly spelt out in elaborate terms who is and who could be a Nigerian citizen. The formal assumption is that anybody with citizenship shares in the social contract relations between the sovereign and people on the basis of equality.

Nigerian is anyone who is a Nigerian citizen as defined by the constitution. Consideration for citizenship in Nigeria began with the 1963 constitution because being a colonial state before 1960, there was no conception of Nigerian citizenship until independence came (Osaghae, 1987). According to the 1963 constitution, “Every person who, having been born in the former colony or protectorate of Nigeria was, on the 30th day of September 1960 a subject of the United Kingdom and colonies or a British protected person...” was a Nigerian citizen (section 7). Furthermore, the constitution provided that, “Every person born in Nigeria after the 30th day of

September 1960 shall become a citizen at the date of his birth” (section II). This did not include those neither of whose parents was a Nigerian citizen but it included Nigerians born outside the country.

The 1979 constitution defined the Nigerian citizen in more or less the same way, but with an operative requirement of indigeneity for those born before independence. Obviously, in 23(1)(a), those born before independence are Nigerian citizens only if either parents or grandparents “belongs to or belonged to a community indigenous to Nigeria” (Bamidele and Oluwasanmi, 2007:46). The Nigerian 1999 Constitution makes provisions for the rights and obligations of the citizen. The notion of citizenship connotes reciprocity between rights and duties. This is so because citizenship confers certain duties (Price, 1975) alongside rights and privileges.

Sections 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38 to 43 are constitutional provisions that guarantee the fundamental rights of Nigeria citizens. The right of freedom from discrimination, in section 42(1), (2) and (3), is of utmost importance to this study. According to these sections and subsections:

(1) A citizenship of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of birth, sex, religion or political opinion shall not by reason only denied that he/she is such a person:

a) be subjected either expressly by, or in the practical application of any law in force in Nigeria or any executive or restrictions to which citizens of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religion or political opinions are not made subject, or

b) be accorded either expressly by, or in the practical application of any law in force in Nigeria or any such executive or administrative action any privilege or advantage that is not accorded to citizens of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religion or political opinions.

(2) No citizen of Nigerian shall be subjected to any disability or deprivation merely by reason of the circumstance of his birth.

(3) Nothing in sub-section (1) of this section shall invalidate any law by reason only that the law imposes restrictions with respect to the appointment of person to any office under the state or as a member of the armed forces of the Federation or a member of the Nigerian Police Force or to an office in the service of a body corporate established directly by any law in force in Nigeria (FRN, 1999).

Omotoso (2008) asserts that there is no doubt that these constitutional provisions are safeguards against discrimination in any form in the country. Explicitly enough here, Nigerians are considered as citizens with equal rights, irrespective of race, sex, religion and status. Unfortunately, Nigerians are still faced with series of discriminations, most especially in areas other than their places of origin. The constitutional provision also spells out rights and privileges in a fairly comprehensive manner as to ensure rights of all the citizens. The problem is not, however, the constitution but the translation of its provisions of Nigerian citizens in daily experiences into indigenes and settlers (Alubo, 2009).

The Concept of Security

Security like any other concepts does not lend itself to easy definition. However, from the conventional usage of the word, security means safety or freedom from danger and protection from militarist point of view, but even at that, security involves but does not just means defence (Nwolise, 2006). However, it is because security like Barry Buzan regards the concept as underdeveloped, and needs to be rehabilitated, insisting that the word 'security', has never been in proper working order (Buzan, 1983). Buzan's approach is an interesting one as he looks at security from all angles going from micro to macro, also addressing the social aspects of security and how people or society construct or 'securitize' threats. He elsewhere, lamented the fact that military factor has dominated the concept of security; while Garvet (1972) asserts that security is a very ambiguous concept. Garuba opines that the cold war era gave the highest currency to the conventional security doctrine to the effect that security:

...rests on the assumption that only a (strong) military system can effectively deter force (attacks) and threats of forces... the cold war elevated security and its independence or ours to the level of another ideology, indeed a religion (Garuba,1997).

For decades, issues relating to security tend to occupy the centre stage in the development discourse. With the end of the war, there have been attempts to shift conceptualization of security from a state - centre perspective to a broader view that places premium on individuals in which security that embodies elements of national security, human rights and national development remain major barometer for explaining the concept. At the heart of this debate, there have been attempts to deepen and wider the concept of security from the level of the states to societies and individuals, and from military to non-military issues.

Majorly, two contending perspectives tend to provide the basis for the conceptualization of human security. One is a neo-realist theoretical framework, which is predicated on the primacy and centrality of state in conceptualizing security. It tends to explain security from the standpoint of state primary responsibility. Within this context, Buzan (1991) argued that the 'straitjacket' militaristic approach to security that characterized the discourse during the cold war was simple minded and subsequently led to the underdevelopment of the concept. To him, human security includes political, economic, social and environmental threats including those that are militaristic. Thus, Buzan (1991) illustrated a tripartite concept analysis of security based on international system, state level, and individual level but submitted that sovereign states should remain the most effective security provider.

The second approach is a post-modernist or pluralist view that seeks to displace the state as a major provider of security but rather places greater emphasis on non-state actors. Advocates of this approach tend to argue that the concept of security goes beyond a military determination of threats. According to Booth (1998) governments must no longer be the primary referents of

security because governments which are supposed to be the *grondron* of their people's security have instead become the primary source of insecurity for the people who live under their sovereignty. As a result, Booth (1998) further argued that human security is ultimately more important than state security. While concurring with Booth, Nwabueze (1989) posited that economic security of the individual is or should be of greater concern to the government and society than the security of the state.

The contemporary thinking about security is all-encompassing. As aptly captured by Ogunbanwo as cited in Akindijo (2014:623) writing on the developing world stated that:

“Security is more than military security or security from external attacks. For many of the four billion inhabitants in the developing countries, security is conceived as the basic level of the struggle for survival. Therefore, in order to provide an integrated African security assessment, the non-military dimensions of security should be added. Henceforth, African security as concept should be applied in its broadest sense to include economic security, social security, environmental security, food security, the equality of life security and technological security”.

Derived from the above submission, there is a deviation from general knowledge about the concept of security. Here, attention is more concentrated on the Africa perspective of security which is less of military but more centre on means of livelihood. Concurring with the contemporary school of thought, McNamara (1983:135) has long warned that:

“Any society that seeks to achieve adequate military security against the background of acute food shortage, population explosion, low technological development, inadequate and efficient public utilities, and chronic problem of unemployment, has a false sense of security”.

He further warns against the penetration of poverty in a country as it is the harbinger of unrest, internal upheavals, violence, and escalation of extremism. For developing societies, he urges political leaders to note that without development there can't be national security. Thus, some scholars seem to place emphasis on absence of threat to acquire values or tendencies that would undermine national cohesion and peace as criteria for determining what security connotes (David 2006 & Wolfers, 1962). In his view, David (2006) posited that security is the condition or feeling of safety from harm or danger, the defence, protection and absence of threat to acquire values (cited in Nwanegbo & Odigbo, 2013). Security in an objective sense, measures absence of fear that such values will be attacked (Wolfers, 1962). The similarity between the assertions of scholars above established relevance of absence of threats to achieve security of society.

Theoretical Framework: Social Division Theory

As much as we do not intend to go into a deep analysis of Social Division as a theory, it is important to highlight some of its basic tenets in facilitating our understanding of the subject-

matter. Social Division Theory as a perspective and a scientific methodology has the potential to analyze societal development holistically. It is against this background that this paper adopts this theory. This study used Social Division Theory with the motion of “articulated categories” built on the influential theory of intersectionality coined by Kimberly Crenshaw (1991). This theory analyzed how different social divisions such as tribe indigeneship and gender intersect with one another at different points in time in varying degrees. Therefore, citizenship is a social and cultural construction, in and of itself and it is used as justification for oppression based on internalized belief about what tribal difference (ethnic) means socially.

While Nigeria is not a homogeneous state by nature, the white men came and for their own selfish interest amalgamated people with different culture, belief, norms, languages (dialects) together under the same ‘umbrella’ called Nigeria without consideration that in Nigerian states, more emphasis would be placed on ethnicity than citizenship. However, there are many differences within ethnic groups and just as not all Nigerians are oppressed neither are all minority individuals, but they face a higher probability of being oppressed, therefore, in tribalistically and ethnically society (Nigeria), this also form a key determination of life chance.

Ethnicity is the most academically considered social inequality coupled with labour and power relationships with varying class implications. Moreover, they come into being and are reinforced through class relations. This is evident in tribal clashes, insecurity, unequal pay and differing hierarchical structures, which are largely considered illegitimate but unavoidable. The concept of citizenship in Nigeria intends to overwhelm the problems of ethnicity, sectionalism and primordial interests. The synergy between social divisions and citizenship in Nigeria showcases how an antidote called citizenship in a society of heterogeneous structures cannot suppress incidents of identity, tribal/ethnic loyalty which eventually render citizenship irrelevant.

National Citizenship Versus State Citizenship

Obviously, there are two levels of citizenship, meaning that one is an indigene of a particular state, and the other, national citizenship in Nigeria, meaning that, at a larger level, one belongs to Nigeria. While the first is mutually exclusive, precluding non-indigenes of a state from citizenship, the other is all-inclusive, and all citizens are equal. State citizenship (indigeneship) is simply a discriminatory concept employed in Nigeria to distinguish between the ‘indigenes’ or ‘natives’ of a state or locality and those who are referred to as ‘non-indigenes’ or ‘settlers’ (Omotoso 2008: 135). Osoba and Usman (1976:15) put it:

“This dubious notion of state citizenship ... is even more stringent and biologically determined than national citizenship in the sense that it does not make state citizenship comparable provisions to those of national citizenship by rhetorical and platitudinous pronouncements . . . on the duty of the state to encourage free mobility of people throughout the country and to secure full residence rights for every citizen in all parts of the country . . . ”a culpable implication of its definition of state citizenship is that no matter for how long a Nigerian has resided in a state of Nigeria of which none of his parents is an indigene, such a Nigerian cannot enjoy the rights to participate fully in the public life of that state.

Noticeably, no matter how long one resides or domiciles in a state other than one's own and notwithstanding that one pays his taxes and performs other duties to the state, one is not entitled to education for his children or employment in the state institutions, because one is not an indigene. It is germane to note that the introduction of regionalism by the Richards constitution in 1946 and the subsequent state creations in 1963, 1967, 1976, 1981, 1991 and 1996 in the country have not only encouraged sectional consciousness, loyalties and sentiments, but have also made these states centre of attraction to Nigerian citizens. This is the crux of the problem of citizenship in Nigeria which has far-reaching implications for the individual's loyalty to the state. In a way, state citizenship has become a powerful political weapon in the hands of the political elites in the struggle for state power and resources. Nwosu (2000:136) argues that:

“The political elites have fanned religious and ethnic factors in the pursuit of their selfish and acquisitive interests. The attitude of the 'cake' sharing syndrome of Nigerian politics, underpins the perennial divisive crises of our nation concerning revenue, federal character, the struggle for new states... all of these are distributive centrifugal forces in Nigeria's federalism”.

Generally, citizenship related contestations in Nigeria are often seen as conflict based entirely on the rights that Nigerians are entitled to within their residential communities. But the contestations and claims of ownership of a particular geographical space by certain groups and the exclusion of other groups resident within the geographical space is emotive and goes beyond the general claims of the rights of citizens in an egalitarian society. It therefore goes beyond the claim of rights as enshrined in the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Bakat, 2008). One of the things that make the issue of state citizenship deep rooted in Nigeria is the factor of land. Land ownership is a matter of life and death in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general. This is evident in the submission of Awa (1985) that one major factor which explain the indigeneity syndrome is “our acceptance of land as a primary form of property in our traditional society and its source as a form of wealth. As it were, only those who claim direct descent from the ancestors who “owned” the communal lands - families, clans, villages, ethnic group, e.t.c, have rights to such lands and are indigenes of the corresponding political unit solely because of this. Today, in spite of the use of land decree as amended in various constitutional provisions in

Nigeria, indeed Nigerians, see land as an inheritance from God and as such, nobody wants outsiders to encroach on his inheritance. Land is handed over from one generation to the other. On this note, Omotoso (2008:132) opines that:

“In Nigeria, the state and citizenship has little or no appeal in the consciousness of the people. As such, they are not bothered about what happened to the Nigerian state and their citizenship status. In other words, people see the state as highly incapable of guaranteeing and protecting their rights and offering them privileges. And where the state fails, the indigenous excel”.

To fully understand this however, it is germane to delve into an historical caveat. Perhaps the most conspicuous feature of British colonial rule from the very beginning was the differential administration of Northern and Southern parts of the country. The establishment of local jurisdiction principle of indirect rule under colonial rule led to establishment of Native Authorities to serve the ‘natives’ of the area. As far as the British were concerned, each indigenous group was to be autonomous (Coleman, 1985). More so, the push for regional autonomy was enhanced by the creation of regional legislative houses, public services, judiciary and marketing boards, to mention the most important ones. The end was regionalism, a principle which seeks to attribute to a unit within a federation a distinct individuality with a claim upon the loyalty to the federal state (Nwabueze, 1973). In practice, the North existed only for Northerners, the East for Easterners, the West for Westerners, and later (1963), the Mid-West for Mid-Westerners. Regionalism, then interpreted as a region existed only for its indigenes as all non-indigenes were discriminated against in the schools, employment, land allocation, e.t.c. For example, in the Northern states, non indigenes were given employment on contract basis.

Nowadays, statism has emerged with as much force as regionalism had and in some cases, with greater force. In general terms, however, statism is very similar to regionalism, in that states are over-protective of their interest, serving only their indigenes. As before, non-indigenes are discriminated against and denied citizenship rights even though they perform duties required of them. Though, the emergence of military rule in Nigeria brought a new dimension to problem of citizenship, this is premised on the fact that military rule is highly encompassing in which states were, to all intents and purposes peripheries of the federal centers in consonance with the military organization principles of unity of command and hierarchical authority. But the situation changed once the country returned to civil rule, such that political parties were nearly founded to satisfy tribal, or ethnic interest and fundamentally, the establishment of federal character further escalated the problem of citizenship in Nigeria.

There is a strong belief that regionalism and statism promote group paranoia, parochialism and feeling of distance from government and the nation-state. These frustrate national integration, social mobility, personal confidence and commitment to national identity. Among many other forms, regionalism and statism are manifested in the following ways: denial of employment

opportunities to Nigerians on the basis of ‘non-indigeneity’ or ‘outsider’ ; discriminatory charges of fees for educational and other social services based on indigeneity, discriminatory admission policy or denial of admission opportunities in institutions and places of learning to non-indigenes; denial of political rights such as the right of political representation to non-indigenes; undue ethnic and political patronage in relation to recruitment of personnel and allocation of public resources, positions of power, e.t.c, dominance of ethnically based political parties; ethno-religious and communal crises and a host of others. Some of these forms of discrimination have been formalized through certificates of indigene (Alubo, 2006, Ibrahim, 2006 & Human Rights Watch, 2006). These certificates have become prerequisite for admission to tertiary schools and employment, including into the federal civil service. The experiences point to a two - tier citizenship structure, the first for indigenes and the second for settlers.

Problem of Citizenship in Nigeria

The problem of citizenship in Nigeria is not exactly in the context of who is a citizen as the constitution in section 25, 26 and 27 clearly outlines the requirements for the different categories of citizenship (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). In most cases, the status and rights of a citizen is not usually contested at the federal level once the citizenship is established except if the federal appointment requires prior clarification as an indigene status. Nwosu (2008) has identified three dimensions of citizenship problems in Nigeria as political, economic and socio - cultural which broadly speaking is linked directly with the deep rooted cultural practice and the failure of successive political leaders and elites to transcend central and primordial allegiances.

The challenges with Nigerian citizenship is viewed from the economic dimension where there is competition for scarce and limited opportunities and resources. This competition creates and encourages a situation whereby members of a community who consider themselves natives and hosting migrant's settlers in their community will begin to organize themselves along ethnic and communal lines (Ojiji & Kirn, 2008). The situation may and has actually resulted in building hostilities among the people. Nwosu (2008) submits further that it is the need to prevail mostly in economic competition that makes people banish citizenship and fallback on primordial sentiments. Examples of conflicts and insecurity situations which can be associated with competition over economic space are those that have occurred in Niger-Delta region, Kaduna, Plateau, Taraba, e.t.c. Nnoli (1989) reveals that Nigerian example of conflict arose first between Hausa and Yoruba in western Nigeria in the 1930's when some Yoruba entered into kolanut trade in competition with the Hausa who virtually had monopoly over the trade. Also, when the Yoruba made an unsuccessful attempt to displace the Hausa as cattle landlords around the same period. Since then, ethnic chauvinism started in the cattle market.

From the political dimension, a source of problem is traced to the emphasis on command and ethnic identity by the political elites especially during elections to gain advantage over their opponents. Adetula (1997) asserts that the space of power is a veritable arena of dichotomies connected with identity. In such situation , it is not how much one contributes to the growth and

development of the community that matters but being considered an 'indigene' or 'the son of the soil' which becomes the ticket to benefiting from any political office.

The evolution of ethnic politics in Nigeria conspicuously began in 1953 after Nnamdi Azikwe had won an election to the Western Nigeria House of Assembly as a representative of Lagos. His ambition was to represent his constituency in the House of Representatives. Lagos was administratively part of Western Region and in accordance with the principle of regional nomination to the House of Representatives, Azikwe was to obtain the endorsement of the Western House of Assembly. However, he was outmaneuvered by the carpet crossing of some members of his party, NCNC to another party (AG). Thus, his ambition was thwarted with the ethnic card. Emerging a man who had lived in Lagos for sixteen years in the vanguard of African emancipation, the experience of 1953 must have brought him to the nadir of idealism (Omu, 1996 cited in Nwosu, 2008).

Furthermore, there was a wild protest from Borno State, when a woman indigene of the state, though married to an indigene of Yobe State was appointed a Federal Minister to represent Borno State in 2003. In 1994, the appointment of a Hausa man as the chairman of Jos North Local Government was opposed by the indigenous ethnic communities. This disagreement over this led to the communal violence of April 12, 1994. Also in September 2001, the ethnic and religious violence that took place in Jos was as a result of resistance of indigenous ethnic groups to the appointment of a Hausa man as the coordinator of federal government-initiated Poverty Alleviation Programme in the Jos North Government Area (Egwu, 2005). These and other similar records in Nigeria's political history show the significance of communal identity in Nigerian politics, even as it clearly contradicts the principle of rational choice and tenets of constitution in view of citizenship. In recent times, conflicts rooted in the discrimination between "indigene" and "non-indigene" has been expanded in nearly all regions of Nigeria with devastating consequences on the overall well-being of the century. In view of this, Nwosu (2008:132) submits that:

“The Nigerian state tends to support this divide occasional by citizen crises by actually providing laws to deepen it. Section 14(3) of the 1999 constitution makes specific provision requiring appointment of ministers from states of the federation to be based on indigeneship”.

The crises of citizenship at the political space of struggle are not peculiar to Nigeria. It was citizenship politics that led to the exclusion of Kenneth Kaunda from contesting presidential election by the Fredrick Chiluba regime despite the fact that Kaunda was the founder of the modern state of Zambia. In Cote d'Ivoire, political elites from the country's South have played up the sentiments of genuine Ivoirians as a strategy of excluding large immigrant population of the North, e.t.c. It is obvious that the controversy surrounding citizenship gets most heated up at the political context of competition for spaces.

The problem with Nigerian citizenship is equally manifested in socio-cultural identity and the inherent differences in multi-cultural society contribute to deepening the divide between communally defined citizen and the formally defined one. It is in social relations that various derogatory unpleasant labels are invented and transferred to economic and political relations. Danfulani (Cited in Nwosu, 2008:139) describes the labels given to non-indigenous as follows:

“Settler, native, non-native, host community, foreigner, native foreigner, stranger element, squatter, non-squatter immigrant, migrant, indigene, non-indigene, Mnak, Gambari, Hausa/ Fulani, Nyamiri, Nasara, Ngwa, Arna, Kirdi and Baro, among many others, are used to stigmatize or stereotype the 'other' as a category who do not belong”.

The question of discrimination among citizens is a recurrent and thorny issue in socio-political and legal discourse in Nigeria. The characterization of someone or a group as "non-indigene(s)" or "settler(s)" often inscribes a stamp of disability or deprivation on such persons or groups in terms of access to opportunities, resources and power. This, in turn often culminated in crises of monumental proportions in Nigeria, such as Ife/Modakeke, Tiv/Jukun, Kuteb/Chamba Berom/Anaguta, Afizere/Jasawa, e.t.c.

It is obvious from the above that the constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria refuses to say how full residence rights from every citizen in all states of the Federation shall be secured and this usually brings the contestation between indigenes and settlers on residence rights which often result in violence. Some of the cases of insecurity in the North-Central Zone, a region where these issues flare up regularly, include: Jos and most of Plateau State (1994, 2001 & 2004) in which Beroms, Afizere, Anaguta, Jasawa and others who claimed to be indigenes are pitted against the Hausa/Fulani regarded as settlers. Since September 7, 2001 violent explosions continued including the Yelwa eruption in April, 2004 (Human Rights Watch, 2004). The Bassa-Igbira-Gbagyi conflict in Nasarawa State is not left out. These three ethnic groups have been at daggers drawn since 1986 and in several subsequent waves of violence, based on land dispute and superiority claim over land (Nnoli, 2003). Explosion of violence over-land dispute between Tarraba and Benue States (The Nation, August 24, 2012). Incessant clash between landowners (farmers) and cattle rearers in Benue State (The Nation, March 16, 2014). Explosion of violence in Zango Kataf in 1986, 1990 and 1992 between the Kafat (indigenes) and the Hausa/Fulani settlers.

Aside, the use of religious fundamentalism and the politicization of religion and ethnicity and sometimes, meddling of state and other forms of government interventions have often called to question the constitutionally guaranteed security of the country. The manipulation of religion shows how the progress of Nigeria has been marred largely by individuals and interest groups who take recourse in the systematic deployment of religious sentiments meant to stir up and play out group antagonisms along religious lines. Those who engage in this manipulation do so to

cover up their shallow or lack of political base or shallow religious understanding (Kukah, 1999). The controversy surrounding the 1979 Constitution Drafting Committee on the inclusion or otherwise of the Sharia law did threaten to derail the entire transition process itself. Similarly, the adoption and spread of Sharia law in a number of Northern states without due consideration for the secularity nature of Nigeria increase tension between Moslems and Christians.

In 2004, there were two waves of violence in Yelwa/Shendam over 200km from the state capital. In the first place, on February 24, 2004, Christians alleged that without any provocation, Muslims attacked and began to kill their members. According to the Christians, a group of Muslims swooped on the former during morning prayers in Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN). The Muslims gave a different account by alleging that the attack was between the Christians and soldiers (Egwu, 2010). These and other factors graduates to the problem of Islamic extremism called Boko Haram that is threatening the security situation of Nigeria up till today in the North-eastern states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa.

Citizenship Problem and Insecurity: Implications for Development.

The negative effects of citizenship question and insecurity in Nigeria are too numerous to mention. However, we shall attempt to mention few of them and later suggest various ways through which the upsurge of citizenship problem and insecurity can be minimized and/or eliminated. The effects are as follows:

- * Citizenship problem and insecurity have the potential of destroying the foundation of national unity which is a necessary condition for nation-building;
- * It has tremendous effects on the country's political system as the contest for political offices has been tribalized;
- * Primordial loyalty is much more stronger in the country than national loyalty. For example, an average Nigerian of Yoruba extraction sees himself or herself first and foremost as Yoruba before seeing himself or herself as a Nigerian;
- * It weakens the political base of a nation and could lead to political anarchy, violence and wanton destruction of lives and property that cannot be quantified;
- * Nigerian government spends a large proportion of their natural resources on damaged property during ethnic conflicts which would have been used for the welfare of the people;
- * It also depletes government financial resources as energy is dissipated on maintaining elusive peace and security across the nation;
- * It promotes the proliferation of ethnic-based groups with their militant wings comprising the youths who have unalloyed mission to protect the interest(s) of their tribes at the expense of the national government; and

* It creates restriction on mobility of labour as many Nigerians cannot work in states of their choice or get employment in their chosen professions (Adeogun, 2006).

Summary and Concluding Remarks

It is established in this study that Nigerian citizens are facing insecurity challenges because of the problem of citizenship. It is also revealed that citizens in Nigeria do not fully recognize the content of the constitution that gives every individual (citizens) to enjoy equality as enshrined in the constitution. However, the primordial influence of indigeneship still has its way and this has degenerated to discrimination of various kinds. It is expedient in the study that something urgent must be done to check the menace associated with citizenship in order to achieve socio-political stability and security sustenance in Nigeria. This can be done through a constitutional reforms and structures that can withstand the stresses of the competitive demands of our national life. Besides, Nigerians who are divided along ethnic, social, economic and political lines should be mobilized in the task of national growth and development as this will constitute part of the social action for resolution of national challenges. Residency rights should be placed over and above state of origin in determining national politics. It is by this that full citizenship rights as enshrined in the constitution could be achieved and the nation's security could be guaranteed without prejudice.

Suggested Remedies

In the light of the foregoing, there seems to be a systematic relationship among these three concepts: citizenship, security and development. Therefore, any search for solution to the problem of citizenship must of necessity, begin with a recognition that in new states bedeviled by centrifugal forces, citizenship in its national dimension is a vehicle of national integration. Though, it might be argued that the encouragement of integration through residency rights does not force anyone to take advantage of such rights. However, the issue is this, when an adequate enabling environment is created, and people internalize the norms of citizenship through voluntary interactions, they can collectively develop relationships that supersede their various private and group enclaves. The Natives are history in America, human movement is what gives the United States an edge. For example, Mitt Romney's father was a Governor of Michigan. Mitt Romney moved to Massachusetts and became Governor there. Barack Obama moved from his birthplace of Hawaii and became a Senator representing Chicago (The Nation, 2012).

It is a duty of Nigerian state to provide adequate facilities for and encourage residence rights for every citizen in all parts of the federation, encourage inter- free mobility of people, goods and services throughout the federation, secure full marriage among persons from different places of origin, or of different religious ethnic or linguistic association or ties and promote or encourage the formation of associations that cut across ethnic, or linguistic, religious or other sectional barriers.

Everyone who has given a thought to the matter of citizenship related problems in Nigeria knows that at the root of all the citizenship related problems is the poverty of majority of Nigerians and

opportunistic propaganda value it has for the unscrupulous politicians. Germane at this juncture, is the need for government to centre all their programmes and policies to alleviate poverty among the citizens through empowerment programmes (that is, the achievement of political, social, and economic power by an individual or group) and by creating a conducive environment.

Good governance and a strict adherence to the rule of law appears to be other way citizenship problem can be tackled successfully in Nigeria. However, the role of good governance in resolving citizenship problem cannot be over emphasized. The day citizens realize that they will have access to the basic amenities of life not on the basis of where they come from or who they know, only then can the problems relating to citizenship be resolved in Nigeria.

There is an urgent demand for Nigerians to begin to engage violators of citizenship rights in litigation; such public impact litigation could be before National Courts or Regional/International Mechanisms like, the African Commission and the UN system. Besides, Federal Government should sponsor a broad public education campaign focused on the rights that go with citizenship and the need for an end to discrimination against non-indigenes throughout Nigeria. The National Orientation Agency (NOA) in partnership with organized civil society is in best position to play active role and should be assisted to discharge this responsibility.

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