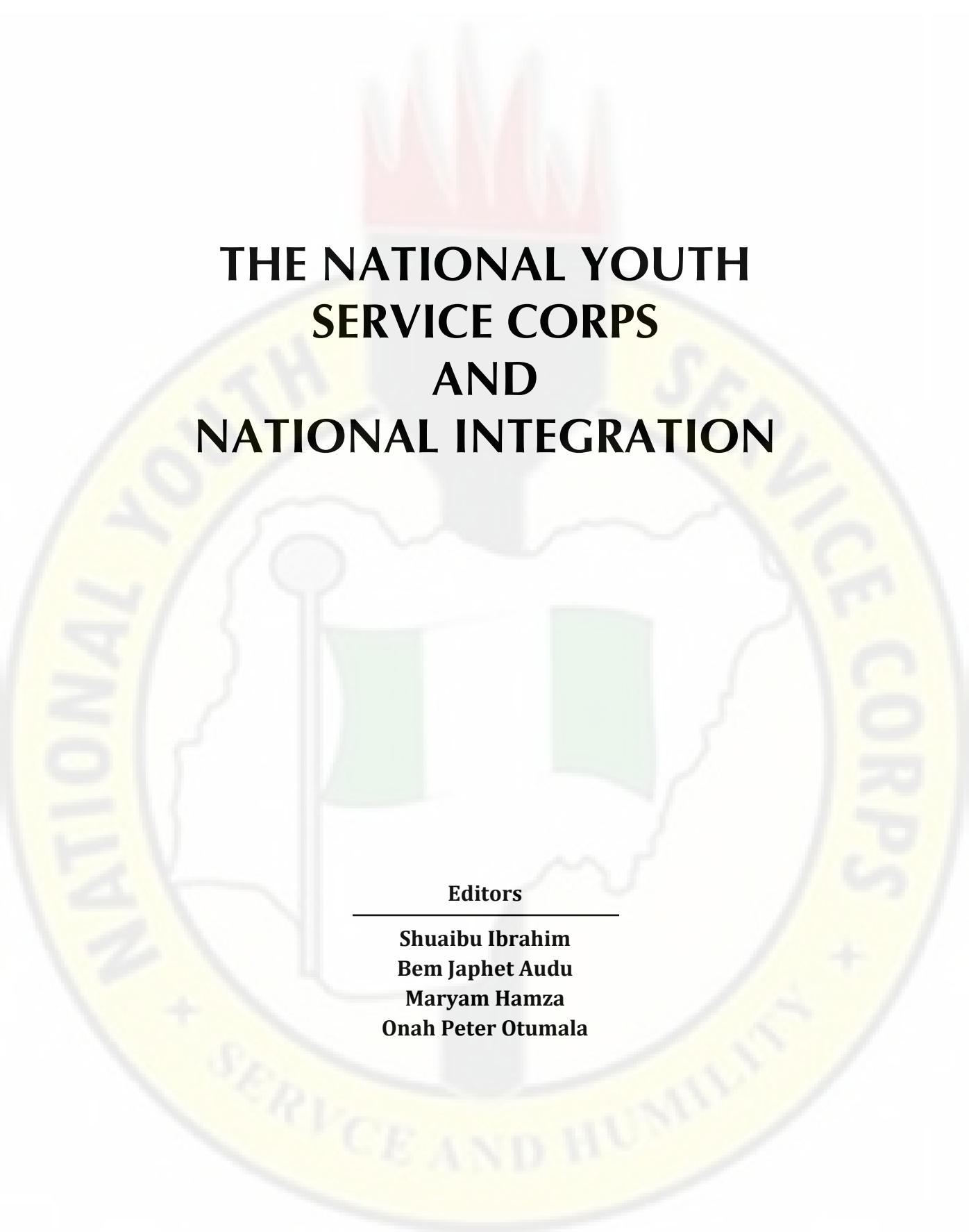


THE NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE CORPS AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

Shuaibu Ibrahim
Bem Japhet Audu
Maryam Hamza
Onah Peter Otumala



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Editors

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Maryam Hamza, Onah Peter Otumala

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ISBN: 978-978-58821-4-8

Note: Views and opinions expressed in the book are entirely those of the chapter contributors and not that of the Editors.

Printed and Bound in Kaduna-Nigeria.
Using environmental sustainable paper materials by
Pyla-Mak Press and Publishers Limited
Kaduna, Nigeria.
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CONTENTS

Contents	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	v
Preface	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	vii
Acknowledgment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	x
Introduction	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	xi
1	Background to National Integration in Nigeria							
	<i>Jamiu Yusuf Danga</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
2	Post-Independence and National Integration in Nigeria							
	<i>Isaac Itselzan</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	18
3	National Integration in the First Republic							
	<i>Bem Japhet Audu and Maryam Hamza</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	32
4	Nigeria and National Integration in the Fourth Republic							
	<i>Adeniji Olawale Abayomi</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	47
5	The Establishment of National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) and its Impact on National Integration							
	<i>Safiya Abu Wada</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	74
6	NYSC Deployment of Corps Members as a Tool for National Integration							
	<i>Anyaraku Sewuse Yvonne</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	87
7	National Youth Service Corps: Dynamics of Community Development Service for National Integration and Unity in Nigeria							
	<i>Philibus Audu Nwamagy</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	105

8	NYSC and the Challenges of National Integration		
	<i>Helen Nor</i>	- - - - -	124
9	The NYSC and its Contribution to National Integration		
	<i>Suleiman Bilal Ishaq</i>	- - - - -	133
10	The Quest for National Integration: The NYSC Approach		
	<i>Usman Abubakar Lamido</i>	- - - - -	149
11	Inter-Ethnic Marriages and National Integration: The NYSC Approach		
	<i>Mohammed Liman Murtala</i>	- - - - -	162
12	Strategic Importance of NYSC to National Integration in Nigeria		
	<i>Jamiu Yusuf Danga</i>	- - - - -	177
13	National Integration in Nigeria: The Way Forward		
	<i>Dominic James Aboi</i>	- - - - -	195
14	Prospect of National Integration: The NYSC Approach		
	<i>Anthony A. Ogidi</i>	- - - - -	212
15.	Brigadier General Shuaibu Ibrahim: An Overview of His Achievements as the 18th NYSC Director-General		
	<i>Bem Japhet Audu and Maryam Hamza</i>	- - - - -	229
Index		- - - - -	250

PREFACE

National Integration is the hallmark of unity and development in any polity. National integration is the awareness of a common identity among the citizens of different ethnic groups in a country; this means that although we belong to different ethnic groups, religious and speak different languages, yet we recognize the fact that we are all one. It is not just a feeling of national belonging, but also, the feelings which brings people of all dialects, culture and beliefs together in common endeavour, goals and aspirations. National integration has for a long time, become an increasingly investigated topical issue, due to its multi-dimensional and overarching connotations especially in relation to most African nations.

In Africa, National Integration is a much more herculean task. The countries that emerged at independence were not integrated as conventionally defined (people of different language, culture, historical experience and popular will coming together in the spirit of national identity and cohesion). They were rather ethnic groups brought together by accident of history (colonialism). They do not only lack the determination to be integrated as defined above but also, the elites and leaders were not capable of creating the enabling environment for successful integration because most of the constituent groups have been impacted with hatred and dichotomy under a long period of exploited colonial rule.

Nigeria emerged as a country within the imperialistic activities of Britain, which subjugated diverse nationalities and organized them into one state in 1914, with the amalgamation of the Northern and southern protectorates. At independence in 1960, the Nigerian state materialized with serious socio-political fundamental problems. The most critical challenge is lack of nation-building and leadership was blinded from unifying the people into a cohesive socio-political whole, the various entities that were lump together by the colonialists.

The political and traditional leaders rather engaged in rancor and rivalries that widened existing gaps as exemplified by the following events that questioned the ability of Nigeria to build a strong, united and integrated nation: the declaration of the state of emergency in western Nigeria in 1962, the National Census crisis, the treasonable felony trials of 1963, the failure of the elections of 1964 and 1965, and the general strike of 1965 among others. By January 15, 1966, Nigeria experienced its first coup d'état to be followed six months later, on July 29, 1966 by a counter coup, and subsequently, a massive civil disturbance that eventually culminated in a civil war.

A critical problem was identified easily after the Nigerian civil war, was the general lack of national unity or integration across the country. The question of National integration stands at the very core of the political problems in Nigeria. The unforgettable experience of the civil war made both the government and the citizens of the country to start seeking for ways to build a strong, stable united political entity. This informed the change aimed at achieving national integration, economic development and social advancement. The government promulgated decree No. 24 of 1973 which formerly established the National Youth Service Corps scheme. It was imperative upon the Government (FMG) to secure the victory over the secession bid, by setting in motion several instruments to ensure unity and peaceful co-existence among all ethnic groups across the regions.

The book explores the activities of the National Youth Service Corps towards engendering national integration; the NYSC and the prospects of national integration through inter-ethnic interactions like marriages, inter-group relations, and the NYSC activities as a veritable tool for national integration; the NYSC and the dynamics of community development service for national integration and unity in Nigeria.

The book which is structurally made up of fourteen well-researched chapters, addresses the background to national integration in Nigeria from the pre-colonial to colonial and the fourth republic. To set the stage, the volume tackled fundamental concepts on integration, it

causes and the need for national integration in Nigeria. It also offers an understanding of the journey towards national integration in Nigeria, the characters and dynamics involved in instituting the NYSC as the most depended tool for national integration.

In its quest to foster national integration, the NYSC has instituted some remarkable programmes which include: the orientation course, place of primary assignment, community development service and passing out ceremony. It is within the circle of these programmes that corps members tends to integrate and cultivate deeper understanding our collective existence through the interactions of corps members among themselves, the host communities, inter-marriages and work place as a result of familiarity during service year.

This book also inculcates issues, challenges and prospects of NYSC towards national integration and development in spite of such existing areas of differences. It further investigates community service activities among the corps members and how it has fostered national integration, the conditions necessitating the deployment of corps members, mostly to states order than their states of origin and how this has impacted national integration.

This volume would fill a great vacuum in knowledge, especially in contemporary Nigerian history by contributing significantly to the understanding of the NYSC as a catalyst for national integration in Nigeria.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with profound gratitude that we acknowledge God Almighty, for without Him, this project would not have become a reality. We acknowledge with gratitude the chapter contributors for agreeing to write well-researched articles within a limited period. Their patience and perseverance in the course of this project is really commendable.

We also thank our peer reviewers for their thought-provoking comments on the manuscripts. This helped tremendously in improving the quality of the chapters. Their patience through the peer review process is well acknowledged and commended.

This project also benefitted immensely from some of the research institutions and libraries in and around Kaduna. Worthy of mention here are the Library of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), Yakubu Gowon House, Maitama, Abuja, Arewa House Kaduna and National Archives Kaduna. The staff and research fellows in these offices were very accommodating and helpful during the course of our research.

Also, our profound appreciation goes to the Director-General of NYSC, Brigadier General (Assoc Prof) Shuaibu Ibrahim and his Staff who gave us unflinching support and ensured that this project is a huge success. Without the DG, the project would have suffered setbacks beyond measure.

We acknowledge the support received from some of our dependable friends and colleagues. Most of them are Research Fellows of the Centre for the Study of Leadership and Complex Military Operations, (CSLCMO) Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna. They are: Jamiu Yusuf Danga, Mohammed Liman Murtala, Suleiman Bilal Ishaq, Jack Jeremiah, Alabi Ezekiel, Helen Noor, Blaise L. Archibong, Matthew Emmanuel, Abdullahi Isah, Suleiman Bashir Mohammed and Longe Ometere Esther. Thank you all.

May God Bless us all.

Shuaibu Ibrahim, Bem Japhet Audu, Maryam Hamza and Onah Peter Otumala.
April, 2021.

INTRODUCTION

Brief History of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC)

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) was established in 1973 by the government of General Yakubu Gowon. The history of the scheme is traceable to the events that took place in Nigeria towards the last half of 1960s. The years 1967-1970 were characterized by the Nigerian civil war. At the end of the war, the General Gowon administration came up with new policies that would promote post-conflict peace, reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction. Consequently, the vital need for national unity led to the birth of the NYSC idea. The NYSC Scheme came into being through Decree No. 24 of 22nd May 1973. It states that the NYSC is being established with a view to the proper encouragement and development of common ties among the youths of Nigeria and the promotion of national unity. After 20 years of existence, the 1973 Decree was repealed and replaced with No. 51 of 16th June, 1993, now referred to as the National Youth Service Corps Act, Cap. N84, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004. The Act is preserved by Section 315 (5) (a) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended), thereby, making the NYSC Act part and parcel of the constitution.

According to Section 1(3) of the NYSC Act, the objectives of the Scheme are to:

- (a) inculcate discipline in Nigerian youths by instilling in them a tradition of industry at work and of patriotic and loyal service to Nigeria in any situation they may find themselves;
- (b) raise the moral tone of the Nigerian youths by giving them the opportunity to learn about higher ideals of nation achievements, social and cultural improvement;

- (c) develop in Nigerian youths the attitudes of mind, acquired through shared experience and suitable training, which will make them more amenable to mobilization in the national interest;
- (d) enable Nigerian youths acquire the spirit of self-reliance by encouraging them to develop skills for self-employment;
- (e) contribute to the accelerated growth of the national economy;
- (f) develop common ties among the Nigerian youths and promote national unity and integration;
- (g) remove prejudices, eliminate ignorance and confirm at first hand the many similarities among Nigerians of all ethnic groups; and
- (h) develop a sense of corporate existence and common destiny of the people of Nigeria.”

In order to achieve the objectives stated above, Section 1(4) of the NYSC Act provides that the Scheme shall ensure:

- “(a) the equitable distribution of members of the service corps and the effective utilization of their skills in area of national needs;
- (b) that are far as possible, Nigerian youths are assigned to jobs in States other than their States of origin;
- (c) that such group of Nigerian youths assigned to work together is as representative of Nigeria as far as possible;

- (d) that the Nigerian youths are exposed to the mode of living of the people in different parts of Nigeria.
- (e) the Nigerian youths are encouraged to eschew religious intolerance by accommodating religious differences;
- (f) the members of the service corps are encouraged to seek a year for their one year national service, career employment all over Nigeria, thus promoting the free movement of labour;
- (g) that employers are induced partly through their experience with members of the service corps to employ more readily and on a permanent basis, qualified Nigerians, irrespective of the States or origin."

Basically, the aims and objectives of the NYSC is to reinforce institutional efficiency and effectiveness as well as youth development in the country. It is accepted in several quarters that NYSC is a viable platform for the transitioning of youths into self-reliant adults and the improvement of general welfare and development. The NYSC programme has since inception facilitated steady and effective supply and distribution of skilled manpower, breaking of social and cultural barriers as well as the building of friendly bridges across ethno-linguistic boundaries. It has also assisted in the promotion of values, national unity and development, rekindled interest in neglected but vital areas of national development and promoted leadership qualities in the youths. The Scheme has four (4) cardinal programmes which are: Mobilisation/Orientation, Primary Assignment, Community Development Service and Winding-Up/Passing- Out Exercise.

The maximum age requirement for youths under the scheme is thirty (30) years old. They are also engaged in community development programmes and activities. According to Section 2(2) of the NYSC Act, the only groups of youth exempted are those that have served in the

Armed forces or the Nigerian Police for a period of more than nine (9) months or in the security agencies, those over thirty (30) years of age and those conferred with National Honours. In addition, the choice of youths above every other age group was based on the fact that they are considered the most active change agents needed in building a united Nigeria, and a way of achieving this is for the youths to imbibe and nurture a sense of common belonging and national consciousness which would transcend political, social, state and ethnic loyalties.

At the onset of the NYSC in 1973, only 2,346 graduates were mobilized. However, judging by the evolution of the Scheme, there has been a phenomenal increase in the number of graduates that are participating annually. NYSC is capable of bringing out the best qualities in Nigerian youth and imparting in them the right attitude and value for nation building that serves as catalyst to national development, sense of pride and fulfillment of its participating graduate youths. The criteria observed in the deployment of Corps members include:

- the equality of states,
- ability of states to absorb the service of participants,
- posting based on concessional considerations (marital and health grounds), posting on demand from various federal government establishments,
- the supportive role of a government is also increasingly becoming a factor in the placement of corps members,
- the deployment of corps members has retained its traditional process with the majority of corps members going to the classrooms.

The Scheme's presence is felt and noticed in all the LGAs in the country, creating higher emphasis in the rural and grass root development in line with its objectives since inception.

Background to National Integration in Nigeria

1

Background to National Integration in Nigeria

Jamiu Yusuf Danga

Introduction

National integration is a critical aspect of nation-building that calls on ethnic and regional groups to surrender their loyalty for the unity and development of the nation. Mazrui observed that there are five dimensions to national integration; the fusion of norms and culture; the promotion of social independence; the narrowing of the gap between the elites and the masses, the urban and the rural areas, rich or poor etc, the resolution of emergent conflicts, and the sharing of mutual

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

J. Y. Danga

experiences so that people can discover that they had undergone some important experiences together.¹

Idowu A. observed that national integration can also be seen as the process whereby several disparate groups within a given territory are united together or cooperate under conditions that do not appear to permit satisfaction of their system needs in any other way.² According to Elaigwu, national integration is determined by the degree to which members and groups in a plural society adapt to the demands of national existence while co-existing harmoniously.³ On a practical note, national integration is a process, not an end in itself and it is usually affected by contending social forces. Ronen Dov observed that African borders were artificially created and various ethnicities or nationalities lumped together.⁴ This forceful integration by the colonialists had simply served as a functional integration to the extent that it benefited the economic and political aims of the colonialists. This point is critical, colonial manipulation of the ethnic factor had created a feeling of disunity, mistrust, and tension among various African groups.

The decolonization period of Africa had ushered in a measure of integration, as several nationalists used nationalist fervor to appeal to the people to fight for independence. Ronen observed that this form of integration developed among many African countries; however, it was

¹ A. Mazrui, Cultural Engineering and Nation-building in East Africa, (North-Western University Press, Evanston, 1983)

² A.O. Idowu & U. Sayuti "Visiting the Hippopotamus: National Integration Issues in Nigeria *Romanian Journal of Regional Science* Vol 10 No 1 (2016): 67-85; Fatile, J.O. and Adejuwon, K.D. "Niger Delta and the Struggle for Resource Control: What Implication for National Integration", in Osuntokun, A and Ukaogo, V. (ed.), *Niger Delta: Politics of Despair, Deprivation and Desperation*, (Lagos: ICS Services Ltd, 2012),

³ J.I. Elaigwu "The Challenges of Unity in a Heterogeneous Society" *Development Studies Review*, Vol. 2, No. 1, (1987), pp. 1-20

⁴ D. Ronen "Alternative Pattern of African Integration" *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Dec., 1976), pp. 577-596

Background to National Integration in Nigeria

rather short-lived.⁵ No sooner had African countries gained independence than they embarked on civil wars. Such was the case of Nigeria, in less than six years of self-rule and independence, Nigeria had towed the path of self-destructing that culminated in the 30 months of civil war (1967-1970).

In the period of decolonisation, a short-lived communal integration developed in some African states due to nationalist fervor, however, political mismanagement, ethnic chauvinism, nepotism, and other negative factors that marred the political sphere of many African counties led to a challenge of integration.

This paper examines the background to national integration in Nigeria. It traces the attempt at forming a nation to the 1914 amalgamation of the country and the subsequent colonial policies entrenched to manage the diverse groups of Nigeria. National integration in postcolonial Nigeria involves attempts by the various postcolonial rulers to evolve a true nation that is devoid of ethnic rancour. Though there were policies evolved to ensure that there is integration, the lack of proper implementation has ensured the challenges that have served as stumbling blocks against national integration remain.

Conceptual Clarification

Duverger views national integration as a process of ensuring the unity of a society. Central to this process is the identification of harmonious behaviours that can foster peace and equity among the members of such societies. ⁶This implies that integration promotes unity which encourages smooth interaction among the members of the given society based on certain established principles of fairness.

⁵ Ronen "Alternative Pattern of African Integration..." p. 588.

⁶ M. Duverger, *The Study of Politics*. Hong Kong: Nelson Political Science Library, 1976)

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

J. Y. Danga

Shona (2003) sees national integration as the awareness of commonness among citizens of a state. He averred that it is:

...the awareness of a common identity among the citizens of a country. It means that though we belong to different castes, religions, and regions and speak different languages, we recognized the fact that we are all one.⁷

Shona shares a similar view with Duverger, however, he directly speaks of common identity, while Duverger does not necessarily emphasise the idea of commonality as a condition for sharing harmonious behaviours. Integration is about linking up disparate groups to pursue a common interests, by surrendering a measure of their attachment to their identities.

National integration has also been viewed from the construct of nation-building. Indeed, some scholars use the two-term interchangeably. Scholars like Deutch and Foltz see nation-building and national integration as having the same strand of ideas that emphasise surrendering ethnic, geographical and linguistic loyalties to a more powerful authority which moulds this into force of national unity.⁸

Jacob and Tenue similarly view national integration from this perspective of nation-building by arguing that national integration is both a state of mind and a disposition, that lead citizens to be cohesive, act together and work in mutual programmes that lead to development. Liddle quips that national integration sets the limits on consensus as well as the force of community needed to put a political regime in place that works for the citizens. A common denominator in these definitions is the view of national integration as a process of pursuing a nation's

⁷K. Shona, "National Integration: Complete information on the meaning, features and promotion of national integration in India" (2013),

⁸ K. W. Deutch, and W. J. Foltz *Nation Building*, (Atherton Press, New York, 1963)

Background to National Integration in Nigeria

interest that is greater than the parochial interest of a specific ethnic group.

Citizenship

Central to the idea of national integration is the role of the citizenry. According to Edosa, citizenship is closely related to indigenship within the Nigerian context. This is because, in many states or communities in the country, a Nigerian citizen may be seen as a non-citizen or non-indigene, and therefore, may not enjoy (all) the rights and privileges available to those regarded as bona fide citizens or indigenes of the state or community in question.⁹

Heywood defines citizenship as a member of a political community, which is defined by a set of rights and obligations. "Citizenship, therefore, represents a relationship between the individual and the state, in which the two are bound together by reciprocal rights and obligations"¹⁰ from these definitions, one can view citizenship as both legal status and as an identity. Citizenship is a legal status and an identity. Thus, there is an objective dimension of citizenship: specific rights and obligations which a state invests in its members, and a subjective dimension: a sense of loyalty and belonging.

Background to National Integration

Nigeria is made up of heterogeneous peoples with many cultures, ethnicity, and religious practices this implies national integration. poor management of the country's diversity has often led to rivalries that have caused violent confrontation. Nigeria has three super ethnic groups which were the initial bases of the country's division during the

⁹ E. Edosa "National Integration, Citizenship, Political Participation and Democratic Stability in Nigeria" *An International Journal of Arts and Humanities* Vol. 3 (3), S/No 11, July, (2014):61-82.

¹⁰ A. Heywood, *Political Ideas and Concepts. An Introduction*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994)

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

J. Y. Danga

colonial era; the Hausa-Fulani in the Northern region, the Yoruba of the Western region and Igbo in the Eastern region. However, there exist other minority ethnic groups within each region that have unique ethnicities different from these big three such as Ijaw, Kanuri, Igala, Tiv, and Efik among others.

The British colonial government amalgamated Nigeria in 1914 for administrative convenience, lumping the Northern protectorate and Southern protect to form Nigeria. This amalgamation has continued to haunt Nigeria's unity and pose challenge for national integration. The arbitrary creation of a union without inputs from the people continues to haunt policy decisions in the country.

As a way of managing the ethnic diversity of Nigeria, the Richard's constitution of 1946 created three regions in Nigeria, Northern Region, Eastern Region, and Western region. This was strengthened in 1954 when the Lyttleton constitution specified a federal system in which these regions were to exist. These regions became the units for the political contest that has continued to artificially exist till date. Ethnic minorities within these regions clamoured for political inclusion, this led to the setting up of the Willink's Commission in 1957 to consider the fears of minorities. However, that commission achieved very little in terms of allaying the fears of ethnic minorities.

The adoption of a federal system in 1954 created a need to fill the bureaucracy of each region up with Nigerian nationals. That 1954 constitution made provision for the establishment of public service commission (PCC) and each region was required to recruit manpower for their bureaucracy. Hence, the Federal Civil Service witnessed a process of Nigerianization.¹¹ The nigerianisation process was aimed at forging The civil service particularly was meant to provide advice to the political class while performing administrative and bureaucratic

¹¹Edosa "National Integration, Citizenship..." 78

Background to National Integration in Nigeria

duties. This meant that each region was saddled with the task of carrying out recruitment into the civil service. A major basis for recruitment into the regional civil was educational training. Hence competition for trained manpower ensued in each region.

However, during the Lancaster House conference in 1957 and 1958, the Northern region made the demand for a quota system at the constitutional conferences. They made this demand against the backdrop of the educational imbalance which was caused by the colonial government. While the Western and Eastern regions had made gains in education as a result of colonial policy, the North was behind these regions because western education was extended to the region towards the end of the colonial period.

However, that demand for a quota-based representation was rejected on the basis that creating a quota system in the public service will create a vacuum in the sense that positions will have to be kept open before personnel will be trained and then they employed into the vacant positions. Therefore the idea of a quota system in the federal and regional bureaucracy was jettisoned. Nigeria's first republic (1960-1966) was an intense era of politics; regional based leaders used ethnoreligious biases to engage in national politics, the inability to evolve a national-based leadership that can mould the contending voices for national development participated in the demise of that republic.

Before 1967, Nigeria continued to operate the regional system, four regions were the bases of development and the federal structure, namely Northern, Western, Eastern regions, and the Mid-western region created to factor ethnic minorities in the various regions. Following the military takeover of 1966, and in a bid to win the Nigerian Biafran war (1967-1970), the Head of the military government of Nigeria, General Yakubu Gowon jettisoned the regional system and created a 12 state structure in 1967. Development was to

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

J. Y. Danga

be done at the centre; states, not regions became the federating unit of Nigeria. This created the pattern for the subsequent creation of states in Nigeria.

In 1976, Gen. Murtala Muhammed created more states bringing the total to 19. With 10 in the North and 9 in the South, in 1987 General Babangida created 2 states, and in 1991, he added 9 states, making Nigeria a 30 states structure with 15 in the North and 15 in the South. This was made 36 in 1996 by General Sani Abacha, by this creation the North had 19 states and the South had 19 states with a federal capital territory. But this balance is a façade because the North and South are further divided into geopolitical zones namely, Northwest, Northeast, and Northcentral, while the South is divided into South-South, Southwest and Southeast. Each of these regions has 6 states except the Southeast which has 5 states; this has created a measure of disenchantment among the Eastern people. There has been a continued clamour for the creation of at least one more state in the Southeast to ensure balance.

It should be said that before the 36 states structure presently operational in Nigeria, it was obvious that there was an imbalance in the distribution of national resources. More so, minority voices within larger states were drowned by elites of the three big ethnic groups, Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba whose main interest was the appropriation of national resources to their ethnic groups.

Challenge to National Integration in Nigeria

Ethnic Militias

Onifade observed that one of the major challenges of integration is the calling upon ethnic militias. According to her, a new dimension to Nigeria's ethnoreligious violence is the increasing recruitment and mobilisation of ethnic and regional militias, vigilantes, and other armed groups: the Oodua People's Congress in Yorubaland, the Arewa

Background to National Integration in Nigeria

People's Congress in the north, the Bakassi Boys in the east, the Egbesu in the south, and the emergence of a supercilious army of terror merchants who represent contending interests to Nigeria's detriment. These hydra-headed conflicts imply that national integration suffers, there is increasing insecurity of citizens and property in the country, foreign investment is deterred and economic development is stymied. Ethnicity and identity politics.

Identity politics have constrained national integration in Nigeria. Politicians tend to call on ethnic identity during election campaigns as a way of securing political power. More often than not, political parties bicker about zoning formula, minority, and majority rule among others. These issues have deprived the country from evolving a truly national leadership as ethnic groups agitate for individuals from their areas.

Again ethnic factor has played out in every aspect of national life, access to national resources is through ethnic affiliation. Securing jobs, contracts or excelling in the civil and public service owes much to ethnic appeal. There is a tendency to focus on the ethnic identity of individuals during promotion than their actual capacity to excel in a position.

Absence of Rule of Law

Constitutionalism and sanctity of the rule of law principle is germane to effective governance, and security of life and property. Rule of law is one of the attractions of democracy. Democracy is more than the people's rule. It symbolizes a meaningful and broad competition for public positions through periodic, free, and fair elections, and as determined by the constitutional arrangement of the country in question. The rule of law, underpinned by an independent judicial system, implies a functional legal framework that helps to ensure settlement of conflicts between the state and individuals on the one hand and among individuals or groups on the other. Lack of judicial

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

J. Y. Danga

independence and its associated ills, a recipe for misgovernance and maladministration, particularly by the executive arm of government.

Religious Conflict

The religious challenges faced by Nigeria are occasioned by issues between Christians and Muslims. In many instances, religious violence has occurred over trivial issues, or issues in the international scene that has no direct relevance to Nigeria. For instance, after the Charlie Hebdo issue in France, religious conflicts sprang up in many parts of northern Nigeria. Similarly, in the early 2000s, the conflict over the imposition of Sharia law in many states of northern Nigeria had led to bloodletting and destruction of properties. On the other hand, religious factors have often been used to justify inter-ethnic strife. Religious conflicts have therefore been a constant threat to national integration in Nigeria.

Bad Governance

Leadership is, no doubt, a key factor in the whole gamut of public administration and the management of societal affairs. In the light of this, Nigeria's lack of capacity in terms of the attainment of effective governance that addresses the issues of corruption, human rights, and mobilization of human and material resources for sustainable development is generally traced to leadership failure. State capacity to deal with contemporary issues of governance has hampered national integration in Africa. Indeed, many states of Africa have been unable to provide basic governance that includes visionary leadership which guides creative solution to national issues such as corruption, nepotism, lack of electricity, ethnocentrism, poverty, maladministration and lack of accountability have been a major challenge of governance in Nigeria. Bad governance is a major challenge to national integration because it derives the general populace the basic necessity for existence. This put pressure on the state as various ethnic groups compete negatively for scarce national resources, thereby pressuring the factors that unite.

Background to National Integration in Nigeria

Akinola observes that governance in Nigeria as in other African and Third World countries have been driven by self interest and primordial sentiment, this ensures that only those within the corridors of powers and with connection to those holding public and powerful offices in the Federal level can influence decisions that favour individuals.¹² This implies that group interest is foregone for personal interest, indeed, to secure lucrative contracts and jobs in Nigeria, it is expected that one is affiliated to a highly placed individual, hence, the idea of meritocracy has mostly given way to mediocrity. Bad governance is even more felt at local level where governance is perceived by the people as simply those that “collect taxes” this notion of local government authority has to do with fact that basic governance is totally absent at the local level except where collection of rate and taxes are involved.

Strategies to Promote National Integration

Since independence there have been attempts at promoting national integration, though, these attempts are constrained by several factors, they are nonetheless pivotal to the maintenance of Nigerian nationality since independence, some of the attempts are analysed below:

Federal System

Nigeria operates a federal system as stipulated in the 1999 constitution in which the federating states represent the numerous multiethnic, multicultural and multi-religious groups. There are 36 states and a federal capital system. There is a federal (bicameral) legislature that draws members from all the federating units based on population and constituency delineation.¹³

¹² A. Akinola “Bad Governance in Nigeria *Journal of Sustainable Governance* 8(1) (2012): 65-78

¹³ See Asaju, K. & Egberi, T. Federal character and national integration in Nigeria: The need for discretion and interface. *Review of History and Political Science* Vol. 3, No. 1, (2015). pp. 126-134 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15640/rhps.v3n1a12.>; Gberevbie E. D. & Ibietan J. (2013). Federal character principle and administrative

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

J. Y. Danga

While there are states legislatures that make laws for each federating state. The country is divided into 6 geopolitical zones namely, Northcentral, North West, North East, South-South, South West, and South East representing the major ethno religious divides. In the North, there exists a Hausa-Fulani and mostly Muslim majority, while in the South are mostly Yoruba and Igbo majority who are mostly Christians. There exist in each of these regions minority groups that are located within the polities. While there is the middle-belt that occupies the North Central making up ethnic minorities in the region.

Federal Character

The federal character principle has been defined in many ways, while some define it in the light of affirmative action,¹⁴ (Obadahun, Otohinoyi, and Adamu: 2016) others see it as an attempt at ethnic balancing. (Osaghe: 1990) However, the definition adopted here is that of CDC's report of 1977, which states that federal character refers to

“the distinctive desire of the peoples of Nigeria to promote national unity, foster national loyalty and give every citizen of Nigeria a sense of belonging to the

effectiveness in the Nigerian public service: challenges and prospects for sustainable development 1999:2012. *Journal of sustainable development in Africa* pp. 46-61.; C.J. Igbokwe-Ibeto, F. C. Agbodike, &R.O. Anazodo, “The application of federal character principle and its implication on service delivery in Nigerian federal civil service” *International Journal of human resource studies*, Vol. 5, No. 3. (2015). <http://dx.doi.org/10.5296/ijhrs.v5i3.7763> accessed 2nd May, 2020. A. Kayode, Federalism and federal character principle in Nigeria: A dilution. *Review of Public administration and management* Vol. 3, No. 7. (2015). pp. 32-44.

¹⁴T., Wuam, Nigeria since 1960: a Comparative study in nation-building and development *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 21 (2012). pp. 99-116; Obadahun, O. Simon, Otohinoyi Samuel, and Adamu, OyorurashidaFederal character principle and the challenges of national integration in Nigeria: A comparative analysis of some federal appointments under Jonathan and Buhari's administrations. *Journal of sustainable development in Africa*. Vol. 18, No. 5, (2016) pp. 68-86

Background to National Integration in Nigeria

nation notwithstanding the diversities of ethnic origin, culture, language or religion which may exist and which it is their desire to nourish, harness to the environment of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.”¹⁵

Unity Schools

Unity schools have served as avenue for peace and national integration in Nigeria. The role of education as avenue for peace is well known. The curriculum and activities of unity schools as aspects of educational action for promoting the concept of peace, it also concerns the contents of education and training, educational resource and material, school as an ongoing training for young people and adults.” Unity schools draw students from different states, and different religion. These schools may either be boys only, girls only or mixed, the aim is to ensure that a culture of peace must take root in the classroom from an early age. It must continue to reflect in the curricula at secondary and tertiary education. More still the skills for peace and non—violence can only be learned and perfected through practice. Therefore unity schools are panacea for evolving a strong, united Nigeria.¹⁶

National Youth Service Corps

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) was established in 1973 by the military regime of the Yakubu Gowon to promote peace and unity in Nigeria. The establishment of the NYSC scheme followed the events that took place in the country between 1967 and 1970. This period was the period Nigerian experienced the Civil war. At the end of the war, the General Gowon administration came up with new policies that

¹⁵J. I., Dibua Ethnic citizenship, federal character and inter-group relations in postcolonial Nigeria.*Journal of the historical society of Nigeria*, Vol. 20 (2011). pp. 1-25.

¹⁶Gbadamosi, L & Jeyesimi, G. Studies in Educational Planning and Administration (SEPA) vol. 4, No.1 *A Journal of the National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA)*, Nigeria, (2010). 59-66.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

J. Y. Danga

would promote post-conflict peace, reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction¹⁷.

The NYSC programme was established through Decree № 24, on 22nd May 1973 with a view to engaging graduates from higher institutions of learning in community service and promotion of unity¹⁸. the fundamental aim of the scheme is to ensure that youths of Nigeria see themselves as part of a strong united nation that belongs to every part of the country. This spirit of unity has led to many youths settling in places other than their place of birth as they discovered the peaceful and harmonious nature of places they were posted to.

Democratic Governance

The government of a democracy is accountable to the people. It has the responsibility to fulfill its end of the social contract, while public officials (political office holders and civil servants) are social servants; they serve society and the population. The government has the responsibility to ensure equality and promote fundamental human rights. Heyman refers to the logic behind the historical Bill of Rights and insists that those who drafted the Bill of Rights were not insistent that government might do too little but that it might actually engage in so much responsibility.

Conclusion

Edosa E. argues that one of the ways of ensuring national integration is through citizen's loyalty. In his view, the creation of a national culture is required to direct citizen loyalty to the nation.¹⁹ That is, there is a

¹⁷ Okafor Chukwuemeka and Ani Johnmark, The National Youth Service Corps Programme and Growing Security Threat in Nigeria, Africa's Public Service Delivery & performance Review , Africa's Development watch , Vol 2 (2) , June 2012, 150-151.

¹⁸ Okafor Chukwuemeka and Ani Johnmark, The National Youth Service Corps, 151.

¹⁹ Edosa National Integration..." p. 62.

Background to National Integration in Nigeria

need to build of culture of loyalty to the nation. Citizen loyalty to the nation-state means that the citizens see themselves as one and thus able to work together for the overall good, peace, harmony and stability of the state. It is an environment like this that promotes stable democracy since everybody sees it as a collective goal to be pursued by both the big and the small in society.

National integration is a process that entails consensus building, accountability and goodwill. Therefore, for Nigeria to truly evolve a strong united nation devoid of ethnic and religious rancour, the country must build strong institutions that have sustainable features and are not control by sentiments of politicians or cronies of the leader.

Second, there should be a strong appeal to factors that unite the nation than factors that divide. More often than not, politicians are quick to harp on divisive issues that further strain the bonds of the country. Such divisive tendency must be abhorred and called out by all sections of the nation. There must be an attempt to collective take ownership of the challenges of national integration and create ways of fostering peace, unity and development.

A strong federal government that is not corrupt ridden is capable of strengthening national integration in Nigeria. Therefore, attention should be paid to strengthening Nigerian federalism and making it work for the disparate sections of the society, the current exclusive nature of the federal structure that tend to emphasise the two major ethnic groups need to be reconsidered. All parts of the society must believe they are adequately catered for in the conversation over statehood.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

J. Y. Danga

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Post Independence and National Integration in Nigeria

Isaac Itse Izan

Introduction

Nigeria at independence became a nation of multi-ethnic, multicultural, multi-religious and with different castes of people agreeing to come together as citizens of a country. Nigeria is a country made up of more than 250 ethnic groups that are distinctively isolated from each other in terms of religion, language, culture, geography among many others. The people agreed to live together with one another as a nation and be

Post Independence and National Integration in Nigeria

integrated for the purpose of co-existence, co-sharing of resources, co-administration and co-development of the nation.¹

After independence, Nigerians seem not to be united as a nation but became polarised along ethnic, religious and regional affinities. The sense of oneness, unity, integration, togetherness, indivisibility and cohesion among citizens has been distorted and replaced by sectional interests, ethnocentrism and tribalism. Issues of national interest and national cohesion have become delineated. Therefore, the issue of national integration and unity has been in the front burner and became a topic of national discourse among various castes of citizens including scholars. There is the call for national integration and unity in line with the nation's principles of unity in diversity to achieve national development.

This paper discusses post-independence and national integration in Nigeria. The paper gives a historical overview of the problem leading to disunity, disaffection, and suspicion among others that emerged within Nigeria that stalls national integration. Also, the paper discusses the mechanism and the challenges of national integration in Nigeria.

Background to National Integration in Nigeria

The pre-colonial history of Nigeria gives insight into the problem of national integration in Nigeria. Prior to Colonialism and later amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914, Nigerian history was rather the history of different tribes and ethnic groups. These tribes and ethnic groups existed but with very limited links and relationships. The area which came to be called Nigeria was inhabited in the North by the Hausa/ Fulani under the Sokoto Caliphate, the Kanuri, Shuwa and many other ethnic groups in Kanem Bornu Empire and the numerous polities in central Nigeria.

¹ E. U, Usue, Religion and National Integration in Nigeria: A Transcendental Religious Perspective. *Theologia Viatorum* 35.1.2011.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

I. I. Izan

In the west were the Yoruba kingdom of Oyo Empire and the Benin Kingdom. In the east were a number of semi-autonomous Ibo (Igbo) states. The Niger Delta area was occupied by Urhobo, Ijaw and many other small states. Each of these states and empires had their own system of administration, religions and cultures. British colonization of the area to become Nigeria formally began in 1861 with the annexation of Lagos² and at the western region which became the first colony. Other areas later fell under British rule and the north became a protectorate in 1900. The northern region was administered separately as the northern protectorate while the western and eastern regions were jointly administered as the southern protectorate. By 1914, the two regions were merged together or amalgamated to become a single geographical entity called Nigeria.

From the amalgamation till the independence period, Nigeria became a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and a heterogeneous society where the ethnic groups are woven together through trade, marriages and intergroup relations. The Colonial government in an attempt to administer the area called Nigeria introduced the indirect rule system where the traditional rulers were engaged in administration under the control of the British Colonial Office. The indirect rule succeeded partially in the west but did not succeed in the east; the colonial government then introduced a system of warrant chiefs since there were no traditional chiefs in the area. Administratively, the regions were ruled differently.

By 1920s, there were agitations for political participation from among the colonised people, the colonial government through the Clifford's Constitution provided for the creation of Legislative Council then political parties were created to give room for people's participation in

² V. F, Peretomode, Political Parties and Problems of National Integration: A Case Study of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Unpublished M.A. Thesis. Oklahoma State University. 1985.

Post Independence and National Integration in Nigeria

government. The first political party was the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) founded by Herbert Macaulay. Elections were conducted but the elected officials were only limited to debating on issues rather than governance. Agitation for self-determination began as more political parties sprang up like the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) and National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC).

Nationalists emerged against colonialism but they were regional and sectional in outlook. The political parties began to be regional as the country was divided into three regions, the northern, western and eastern regions. A central legislative council was created to represent their regions at the centre and regional representatives were created at each region to represent in the regions. The country became divided along regional basis but federal in nature.

Nigeria continued along divergent political, economic, and social developmental trends as it slides towards independence. By 1957, the western and eastern regions were granted self-government status while the north attained self-government status in 1959. Thus at independence in 1960, Nigeria consisted politically of Western, Eastern, and Northern Regions, which effectively reinforced Nigeria's major geographical, cultural, and ethnic groupings with the Hausa and Fulani concentrated in the north, Yoruba in the southwest, and Igbo in the southeast.³ Therefore, the nation's governmental structure both unified the country as a political entity while incorporating fundamental political geographic divisions.

Post- Independence and Issues of National Integration

At independence, Nigeria became a sovereign nation and ready to chart a course for its development. The new government tried to bridge the

³G. McLoughlin, & C. J. Bouchat, *Nigerian Unity: In the Balance*. U.S Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute. 2013. P5

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

I. I. Izan

gap of division between and among the regions by making coalitions to form a national government. The Northern People's Congress (NPC) in coalition with the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) formed a unity government; the coalition brought together the most conservative (NPC) and the most radical parties (NCNC) at the federal level. Sir Abubakar Tafawa Belawa became the first Prime Minister from the NPC while Nnamdi Azikiwe became the President.

The Northern People's Congress (NPC) and National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC)⁴ coalition government technically meant that the Hausa-Fulani and Igbo had reached an understanding while the Yoruba, Action Group (AG) had been pushed to the political margins as Opposition. As the western region became the major opposition, there was still rivalry in the region; the western regional conflict was between supporters of Akintola and Awolowo. It was this chaotic situation that resulted into conflicts in the western region.

The power play between and among the various ethnic nationalities had left the ethnic minorities marginalised, but the understanding between the Igbo and Hausa-Fulani soon broke down with the military coup of January 15, 1966. The second coup ushered in Lt Colonel Yakubu Gowon to become the Head of state in 1966. He tried to bring peace and harmony. He changed the unitary system back to federal system of government. During this period, there were still killings of Ibos (Igbos) in the northern part of the country. The outcry resulted in the secession of the eastern region which later culminated into a civil war.

The Nigerian civil war further reinforced the internal divisions and tensions between the various people and groups within the Nigerian State and consequently, paved the way that the various issues that arose would be handled in the coming years. The Civil War lasted from

⁴ P. A. Edewor, (et al) "Managing Ethnic and Cultural Diversity for National Integration in Nigeria" Developing Country Studies. Vol.4, No.6, 2014

Post Independence and National Integration in Nigeria

1967 to 1970. After the civil war, the union was restored again and the challenge was achieving unity in diversity and national integration.

Mechanisms for National Integration in Nigeria

Since independence in 1960, national integration has been a top priority of the various governments that emerged in Nigeria. The establishment of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme, the Unity Schools, the Federal Character Principle, and State Creation are examples of state policies intended to achieve this goal. Although these integration policies and programs have fallen far below expectation, more needs to be done because the interplay between the centrifugal forces that tear the country's unity apart and the centripetal forces that have kept Nigeria as a whole are still deep seated in national life.

The proper handling of ethnic conflicts is a mechanism for national integration in a heterogeneous society like Nigeria. Conflict cannot be completely removed from human society but they can be reduced or controlled so as to foster unity in diversity. Institutionalization of ethnic conflicts entails entrenching ethnic differences within a set of rules agreeable to competing groups.⁵

Lack of adequate representation by the ethnic groups constitutes a great threat to national integration. In realization of some inherent cleavages of inequalities, the federal character principle was introduced. The effectiveness of this policy measure in fostering national integration as well as promoting national development in Nigeria has been one controversial and problematic issue.⁶ Despite that, it has helped in uniting Nigerians.

⁵ O. Nkwachukwu, 'Theories and Practice of Ethnic Conflict Management in Nigeria', in Augustine Ikelegbe(ed) *Oil, Environment and Resource Conflict in Nigeria*. Munster: LIT Verlag. 2013. P4.

⁶ K. Asaju & T. Egberi, "Federal Character and National Integration in Nigeria: The Need for Discretion and Interface" *Review of History and Political Science* June 2015, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 126-134

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

I. I. Izan

The Federal Character system as a mechanism reduces marginalisation, therefore, is an effective tool towards national integration. The federal character accommodates the diverse ethnic groups and the large population of the country in regards to sharing of national resources and opportunities in terms of employment, allocation and distribution of projects and infrastructure among others. Federal character helps to pool together, harness, actualise and utilise potential human resources for the purpose of national integration and development.

Inter-marriage and cultural festival promotions will assist in creating cultural and religious tolerance among Nigerians. The spate of religious intolerance in Nigeria especially between the two dominant religions: Christianity and Islam have led to suspicion, conflict as well as divisions in Nigeria. The promotion of intermarriage among citizens will go a long way in national integration.

National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and National Integration in Nigeria

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) constitutes one of the major policies and program of government to achieve national integration in Nigeria. The goal of the program is to call for unity among the diverse ethnic groups and to reconcile the people after the Civil War from 1967 to 1970. The Military Government under the administration of General Yakubu Gowon at the time saw the urgent need to heal the nation of the emotional wounds inflicted on it by the war, having secured the victory over the failed attempt at secession by the Biafran nation, the administration came up with a program that will ensure a peaceful co-existence among all ethnic groups across the nation Nigeria. The immediate task of the government was to design programs and pursue policies that promote national unity, disregard points of divergence among constituent groups, and foster greater inter-ethnic and religious understanding and harmony.

Post Independence and National Integration in Nigeria

The objectives of the program include among others the development of common ties among the various youths, promote national unity by ensuring that the youths are assigned to jobs in states other than their states of origin. This is with the view to removing prejudices and eliminating ignorance among the young graduates the emerging elites.⁷ The need to engage the youth at such a time was based on the fact that they, above other groups, were considered as the viable change agents required for building a united Nigeria, and by the fact that such engagement with the youth gives a sense of belonging, reduce unemployment and the migration of young unskilled people from rural areas to urban areas as well as create in them a national consciousness that is geared towards political, social, state and ethnic loyalties. This is coupled with the fact that the youths constitute a dominant force for national mobilization and growth and therefore required an investment for their future.

The choice of using youths for the programme and not every other age group was based on the fact that they are considered as change agents needed for national integration and building a united Nigeria.⁸ To achieve this, the youths are to imbibe and nurture a sense of common belonging and national consciousness which would transcend political, social, state and ethnic loyalties.

The official stand of the NYSC on posting is that all postings should be outside the participant's state of origin, except on marital and health grounds is noteworthy because it definitely will enhance integration.

⁷NYSC, "National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Handbook," Abuja: NYSC. 1999.

⁸L. Oluwalogbon "The Future of National Youth Service Programme: Any Hope for National Integration?"*Journal of Public Administration and Governance* ISSN 2161-7104 2019, Vol. 9, No. 2

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

I. I. Izan

Challenges to National Integration in Nigeria

Nigeria is challenged by the issues of gross intolerance, distrust, ethnicity, corruption, and most dangerously, insecurity, which seems to be a formidable force undermining national cohesion and unity in high measures.⁹ The poor implementation of the rule of law and elements of inequality are also issues that continue to practically create conflicts, disorder and instability and needs to be tackled to the benefit of all citizens of the nation.

The implementation of the Rule of Law is a major challenge confronting national integration in Nigeria. Its lack of implementation is evident in governments' lack of respect for the constitution, the actions of some powerful and wealthy individuals who feel that they are above the law and the increasing cases of impunity and many other issues that are clearly undermining the proper adherence to the rule of law. As a democratic nation, Nigeria needs its citizens and governments to observe the rule of law if it hopes to strengthen its constitution, institutions and national integration. The constant flouting of the constitution; the instrument of rule of law indicates danger to building the Nigerian nation.

The issues of terrorism and insecurity caused by insurgents and criminals, the attacks, kidnappings, clashes between herdsmen and farmers, increasing spate of armed robbery and banditry as well as rising levels of religious intolerance and hate speeches portray Nigeria as a disorganised and lacking in unity. The state of the nation is a reflection of the state of mind of its citizens and their fear for the future of the nation. Insecurity stands as one obstacle confronting the building

⁹J. Onyeakazi, "National Integration in Nigeria: A Philosophical Insight" *International Journal of Novel Researches In Humanities, Social Sciences And Management* Vol. 1. No. 1 December, 2018. P51

Post Independence and National Integration in Nigeria

of strong national integration that can help the country to forge ahead with significant developmental strides.¹⁰

The problem of inequality and other levels of social inequality in Nigeria has been a huge challenge to the state of national integration in the country. The marginalization of some groups in the society continues to contribute to a more divisive and disgruntled population. The increasing inequality and uneven development only help to increase agitations, conflicts and national distrust. The nepotistic nature of giving employment, awarding of national projects and sharing of political positions among others help in breeding ethnocentric suspicion, disharmony and antagonism which contributes in undermining efforts towards national integration.

Nigerians have developed the habit of being ethnocentric and nepotistic in their journey as a nation. Nigerians are ethnocentric in their perception of issues concerning the integrity of the nation as a united democratic entity. Their behaviour exhibits the ethnic and tribal inclinations and antecedents that only aggravate the poor state of solidarity and unity among the nation's many ethnic groups, creating social tension and disorder. The attitude of nepotism contributes in enhancing disunity among citizens of the nation.

It is important to note that in spite of the many ethnic conflicts that characterised the Nigerian society, elections, allocation of resources and political patronage are enmeshed in ethnic considerations. The concepts and propositions such as geopolitical zones, zoning and rotational presidency seem to be more modest ways of perpetrating ethnic politics.

¹⁰ S. C. Udeh, et al. Insecurity and national economic development: Implications for Nigeria's Vision 20:2020. *International Journal of Development and Management Review*. 2013 8. 93-109

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

I. I. Izan

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) is facing serious challenges in its task of fostering national unity and integration. In the wake of the numerous political, ethnic and religious conflicts that have engulfed Nigeria and claimed the lives of some innocent Corps Members in part of the country, parents and guardians are increasingly expressing concerns on the security of their wards especially in crisis prone areas.¹¹

Also, the issue of posting took centre stage in the Nigerian Senate when Senator Olubunmi Adetunmbi, representing Ekiti North, sponsored a bill to amend the National Youth Service Corps Act. Among other things, the bill sought to give Corps Members the right to reject postings to states, where crises exist. However, the bill was discarded on the grounds that it is antithetical to the objective of national integration.

Conclusion

Nigeria emerged as a united country beginning from the amalgamation of the various societies that existed in the region into an independent nation in 1960. The task of national integration of the diverse polities has been a great challenge to the various governments that administered the country. So many efforts were made to keep the country united in the midst of conflict, chaos, civil war, hatred, suspicion and other threats that militate against the coexistence of the nation as a united entity. One key mechanism adopted by government to enhance national integration was the establishment of the National Youth Service scheme whereby graduate youths are mobilised and deployed to states other than their states of origin for the purpose of nation building and to foster togetherness in a nation where diversity

¹¹L. Oluwalogbon “The Future of National Youth Service Programme: Any Hope for National Integration?” *Journal of Public Administration and Governance* ISSN 2161-7104 2019, Vol. 9, No. 2

Post Independence and National Integration in Nigeria

has been deep rooted and is threatening the country. A nation that must develop has to imbibe unity so as to achieve progress but conflict, chaos and disharmony will not give a good environment for development.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

I. I. Izan

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THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

B.J Audu and M. Hamza

3

National Integration in the First Republic

Bem Japhet Audu
and
Maryam Hamza

The efforts made by various post-colonial governments in Nigeria since independence to promote the process of national integration represent a continuation of the process of social integration, that has been going on in the Nigerian area even during the pre-colonial era as Thomas Hodgkins points out that:

A variety of links existed between the various states and peoples which were the predecessors of modern Nigeria-between the Kanuri-Borno, the Hausa states,

National Integration in the First Republic

Nupe and Jukun Kingdoms, the empires of Oyo and Benin, the Delta states and the loosely associated Igbo communities, their relationships (these Nigerian communities) sometimes took the form of war and enslavement...but they expressed themselves also through diplomacy, treaties...the diffusion of political and religious ideas, the borrowing of techniques and above all, trade¹.

Like many African countries, Nigerians struggled earnestly in attaining her independence in form of nationalism exhibited by nationalists in Nigeria, factors both internal and external contributed in no small measure in rekindling the spirit of nationalism in the hearts of the people. Among the internal factors was the exploitative nature of the British government, lack of freedom, the emergence of indigenous educated elite, the creation of political parties etc. Externally, the First and Second World Wars, the idea of Pan-Africanism from the West, the role of West African Students' Union (WASU), inspired the nationalists struggle.

Though Nigerians fought to free the country from the bondage of British colonialism, the independence is seen by many Nigerian scholars and international observers as a time bomb due to the intricate relations among Nigerians, especially across the dividing lines of regionalism, nepotism and confrontational politics. This is because, the first Republic (1960-1966) was characterized by socio-political and economic contradictions deeply rooted in the colonial past. Among the remote factors that facilitated the political tension in the First Republic for example were regionalism, confrontational politics, and self-government crisis of 1956 instigated by a motion put forward by Chief

¹ Hodgins, T.L., *Nigerian Perspectives: An Historical Anthology*. London: Oxford University Press, 1967.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

B.J Audu and M. Hamza

Antony Enahoro, the population census of 1952, which was opposed by a coordinated Northern coalition, etc².

Despite the transformation of the Nigerian State in the First Republic, in education, health, transportation, security and administration, some people argued that the leaders of the First Republic were corrupt³. This development finally led to the first Nigerian coup of 1966. Military coup d'états in most African countries were coordinated with a view to 'eradicating' bribery and corruption⁴. While commenting on the reasons behind the Nigerian coup of 1966, Gbulie opined that:

For far too long the country (Nigeria) had been at the crossroads tottering dangerously on the brink of disaster. The political situation was gradually but surely getting out of hand...but if the prevailing political situation had constituted an unpleasant jar to Nigerian nerves, the stench of corruption in high places had given her racking stomach-ache. The politicians and public officers had indeed let the nation down... many a public servant had prudently enriched himself with the ten per cent takings and kick-backs from contractors. Embezzlement, too, was on the increase⁵.

² For more information see, A. Bello *My Life*, London, Cambridge University Press, (1962), pp. 110-206.

³ L.A. Adamu *Hafsatu Ahmadu Bello: The Unsung Heroine*, Kaduna, Ahmadu Bello University Press, (1995), p. 93. See also, M. Danbatta *The Pull of Fate: The Autobiography of Magaji Danbatta*, Kaduna, Ahmadu Bello University Press, (2010), pp. 163-172.

⁴ A. M. Mainasara *The Five Majors: Why they Struck*, Zaria, Richard Clay Ltd, (1982), p. 7.

⁵ A. Ademoyega *Why We Struck*, Ibadan, Evans Brothers Ltd. See also, B. Gbulie, *Nigeria's Five Majors, Nigeria*, Africane Educational Publishers Ltd, (1981), pp. 6-8.

National Integration in the First Republic

As a clandestine excuse, Gbulie and his associates such as Ademoyega defended the coup. The coup no doubt closed an important page in the Golden history of the Nigerian state. The coup was plotted by five majors viz; Emmanuel Ifeajuna, Donatus Okafor, Nzeogwu Kaduna, Adewale Ademoyega, John Obieno, C. Anuforu, and H. Chukuka⁶.

During the execution of the coup, many prominent Nigerians were assassinated by the coup plotters. Among those killed were; Sir Ahmadu Bello (The Premier of the Northern Region and the Sardauna of Sokoto), Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (The Prime Minister of Nigeria), Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola (The Premier of the Western Region), Chief Festus Okotie Eboh (The Federal Minister of Finance), and some senior northern Nigerian military officers like Zakari Maimalari, Col. Kuru Muhammad, Col. Ralph Shodeinde, Lieutenant Colonels Abogo Largema and Yakubu Pam⁷.

The fact that the January coup was plotted and executed by seven majors, six Igbos and a Yoruba (A. Ademoyega), it was seen by the northern political establishment as an effort made to eliminate and emasculate the influence of the leaders of northern Nigeria. Unfortunately, the same coup brought Ironsi to power and his failure to ensure the execution of the coup plotters led to a counter coup that ended up with his assassination alongside Adekunle Fajuyi, the Governor of the Western region in July, 1966⁸. This problem and many others finally snowballed into the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-1970⁹. In essence, the major causes of the war were; Ojukwu's refusal to acknowledge the authority and legitimacy of Gowon's regime as he considered Gowon a junior officer in the hierarchy of the Nigerian Army. The sporadic killing of Igbo in the north in an attempt to avenge

⁶ A. M. Mainasara *The Five Majors: Why they Struck*, (1982), pp. 22-23.

⁷ F. Forsyth *The Making of an African Legend: The Biafra Story*, London, Penguin Books Ltd, (1969), pp. 38-39.

⁸ M. Danbatta *The Pull of Fate*, (2010), pp. 184-185.

⁹ E. O. Ojukwu *Because I am Involved*, Ibadan, Spectrum Books Ltd, (1989), p. 175.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

B.J Audu and M. Hamza

the death of northern leaders who were assassinated during the coup of 1966, the Igbo's attempt to secede from Nigeria and the failure to maintain a common ground between the Biafrans and Nigeria, especially at the peace talks of Addis Ababa and Aburi in Ghana¹⁰. The Civil War claimed the lives of many Nigerians. Properties worth billions of Naira were also destroyed, as well as social amenities.

Though it is obvious that in every war, there must be a winner and a loser, the Nigerian government tried to carry the Biafrans along as fellow Nigerians. This was more pronounced in the government's programme of 3Rs (Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Reconciliation) in an attempt to heal the wounds of the war and to foster national integration.

After the Nigerian Civil War, Gowon's administration thought it intelligible to introduce the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) as a programme that is solely meant to promote national cohesion, unity and integration. It is against this backdrop that this chapter examines the nature, dynamics and roles of national integration, particularly through the famous NYSC scheme.

NYSC and National Integration

The NYSC Scheme was introduced by the military government of General Yakubu Gowon in line with his famous 3Rs programme that was geared towards the promotion of peaceful coexistence in Nigeria, as well as national unity and integration. The Scheme was established by Decree No. 24, of 22nd May, 1973 with the sole aim to promote nationalism, particularly amongst the Nigerian youths. This no doubt instilled in such youths, the spirit of self-less service to the nation, as well as the concept of 'oneness and brotherhood' of Nigerians despite

¹⁰ O. Ogunsanya Awo: *The Unfinished Greatness*, Lagos, Pace Books and Periodicals, (2009), pp. 125-126.

National Integration in the First Republic

socio-cultural and religious diversity¹¹. This is apparent in section 4 of the Act, which laid emphasis on national integration:

That as far as possible Nigerian youths is assigned to jobs in state other than their states of origin.

That such group of Nigerian youths assigned to work together is representative of Nigeria as far as possible. That the Nigerian youths are exposed to the modes of living of the people in different part of Nigeria. According to Onwere, the NYSC Scheme was introduced:

To ease tensions and prejudices among the ethnic groups, the Nigerian government established the NYSC whose primary aim is to help weave a spirit of oneness among the ethnic groups and inculcate national loyalty, which should supersede all other loyalties. The NYSC thus, represents a massive exercise in national integration-an attempt to change the face of Nigeria through changing the attitudes of young graduates towards fellow nationals and the nation¹².

Though national integration is an effort made to bring together people of different ethnic and socio-cultural background to live harmoniously with one another, it has never been an easy adventure due to a lot of factors. Wener argues that 'national integration refers specifically to the problem of creating sense of territorial nationality, which overshadows-or eliminates subordinate parochial loyalties'¹³. In support of this view, Abia states that national integration 'involves the

¹¹C., Onwere 'National Youth Service Corps Programme and National Integration in Nigeria', (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of International and Comparative Education, University of London, 1992), 90-96.

¹² Onwere , 'National Youth Service Corps Programme...' p.93.

¹³ Weiner, M. *Political Culture and Political Development*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. (1967).

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

B.J Audu and M. Hamza

amalgamation of disparate social, economic, religious, ethnic and geographic elements into a single nation state'¹⁴.

To Morgan, national integration 'involves the uniting of formerly separate groups into one group with the obliteration of any previous social and cultural group differences as well as the obliteration of separate group identification'¹⁵. Despite the effort made these scholars in defining the concept of national integration, they seem to imply that in the process of integration, various ethnic and socio-culturally diverse communities are brought together as one, which will never be possible in the true sense of the word. In integration, the goal is not to remove differences between various communities in a country, but to bring

¹⁴ V.B.E. Abia, *Government and Politics in Africa: A Comprehensive Approach*. Lagos: BMB. (2006).

¹⁵ Morgan, C. *Analyzing Sustainable Development Issues in Africa*. London: Marriot. For more details on development studies (2006). see, Johnson, E. Essentials of National Unity and Development. Lagos: Powerhouse, Obiabor, M.M. (2016). Corruption and National Development in Nigeria. Umuahia: Ogun Printers Ltd, Okoroafor, E.C., Nzenwa, B.N. and Ezeibe, I.P. (2016). 'Implications of Effective National Integration for Sustainable Development in Nigeria'. *Nigerian Journal for Strategic Research and Development*, 1(40), 99-120, Onyeakazi, J. and Okroafor, C. (2018). 'National Integration in Nigeria: A Philosophical Insight', International Journal of Novel Researchers in Humanities, Social Science and Management, 1(1), 51-56, Ade-Ajai, J.E. (1984). 'The Problems of National Integration: A Historian's Perspective', NISER, University of Sokoto, Awa, E.O. (1983). 'National Integration in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects', A paper delivered at Bayero University, Kano under the Distinguished Lecture Series No. 5 of NISER, Federal Republic of Nigeria (1979). *The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1979*. Lagos: Department of Information, Nnoli, O. (1980). Ethnic Politics in Nigeria. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, Mbanefo, A.C. (1983). 'A Psychological Analysis of the Nigerian Civil War: Future Implications for Unity and Union', A Paper presented at the National Conference on Nigeria since Independence at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Eke, P.P. 'Citizenship and Political Conflict: A Sociological Interpretation of the Nigerian Crisis', Occasional Paper on Nigerian Politics, Amayo, A. (1983). 'The Search for National Integration and National Identity in Nigeria since Independence: The Linguistic Aspect', A paper presented at the National Conference on Nigeria since Independence, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. (1972).

National Integration in the First Republic

them to live in harmony with one another. In this case therefore their relationships would be defined by their differences.

Bello while commenting on the nature and meaning of national integration observes that:

National integration is conceived in terms of degrees. This framework generally means that there could be vertical integration, for instance, of social classes in the society in question, as well as horizontal integration...the integration of ethnic groups. In both variants it is better to refer not just to the fitting together of diverse sectional interests vertically or horizontally represented in the state system, but also their coherence (politically, socially and culturally, etc.) in some determinate way through the blurring of differences and prevalence of mutually consistent ideas or values in order to constitute an emotionally gratifying nation-state. Thus, national integration means the coexistence of diverse social groups, under the polity, be they classes or ethnic or interest groups, under some consistent national values or objectives in order to consolidate the unity of their people into "one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign nation". Having adopted this definition, the next question is what would be the extent of the problem of national integration in Nigeria¹⁶.

The NYSC Scheme is established to promote national integration in Nigeria. It is for much the same reason that the Nigerian government mandated all graduates who are not above 30 years at the point of graduation to be mobilized into the one year programme in different

¹⁶ Bello, I.B. (1987). 'Problems of National Integration in Nigeria', *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 84(2), 266-281.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

B.J Audu and M. Hamza

Nigerian states other than their states of origin. This no doubt brings corps members closer to other cultures, traditions, norms and values. Through this system, many are educated about the nature and dynamics of other Nigerian communities and by extension, the Scheme shapes the leadership qualities of the Nigerian youths in many ways. The Scheme also promotes mutual understanding among various Nigerian ethnic groups, as well as foster religious tolerance, which has been bedevilling the nation for a very long period of time.

To achieve the goal of national integration, the youths as the most populous and productive Nigerians, are therefore targeted for the NYSC programme. This is because, such youths are the future leaders who would ensure the development of the country.¹⁷ It is established that one third of the Nigerian population comprises of the youths who normally fall between the ages of 10 to 24. That is why when the Nigerian government wanted to cement the rough and chaotic relationships among Nigerians after the Biafran War, it introduced the National Youth Service Corps in 1973, which is purely youth centred in order to promote national unity and integration and socio-cultural tolerance, which are needed for sound leadership. Apart from the fact that the NYSC Scheme has the tendency of stimulating community development service and harness skills, creativity, and innovation of Corps Members, the Scheme is equally designed to foster unity and national integration by breaking all socio-political and economic barriers. That is why the programme encourages corps members to identify the needs of their host communities and address them head-on by executing some developmental projects, beneficial to Nigerians especially the poor and the needy¹⁸.

¹⁷ Please, see records on the Nigerian population census of 2006.

¹⁸ NYSC, *Decree and Amendments*. No. 28 Vol. 60, May 23rd, Part A, 1973 and NYSC, *A Compendium of the National Youth Service Corps Scheme: Ten Years of Service to the Nation* (Lagos: NYSC Directorate, 1983).

National Integration in the First Republic

Challenges and Prospects

National integration in Nigeria has a very long history. During the colonial period for instance, the British government introduced the Richards constitution in 1946. This constitution further divided Nigeria into three regions namely; North, West and East. At that time, all politicians would be elected by the people of their regions and by implication such politicians were representing the people of their regions, but not Nigeria as one single political entity. This problem therefore became part and parcel of the Nigerian mentality, which brought disunity across regional basis, hence laid the foundation and perhaps one of the major challenges of national integration today.

Moreover, religious bigotry and manipulation by both clerics and politicians further pushed Nigeria into the abyss of religious intolerance. In an opening salvo, Usman asserts that, 'The real basis of the manipulation of religion in Nigeria today is the need to obscure from the people of Nigeria a fundamental aspect of our reality: that is the domination of our political economy by a class of intermediaries who are being increasingly exposed...this is to enable this class to cover themselves with religious and ethnic coloration in order to further entrench division among our people, slow down their awakening, at any cost; even the unity of our country, for which so much has been sacrificed' ¹⁹. Employing statistics, the author cited many examples of the manipulation of religion by the Nigerian elites, adherents to either Islam, or Christianity. For instance, the case of the owners of the Metal Box Company; Mr. Silas Daniyan and Alhaji Shehu Malami, whose accounts when published in the papers point to the fact that they compete in Metal Box to obtain scarce resources for the ethno-religious communities the names ascribe to them was a classic example. The author also argues that, 'far from competing, every evidence indicates their role of "local nationals", as Sir Alex Page, the chairman of the mother Metal Box company in Britain, calls them'.

¹⁹Usman, Y.B (2020). *The Manipulation of Religion in Nigeria, 1977-1987*. Zaria: Yusufu Bala Usman Institute, 15.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

B.J Audu and M. Hamza

The question of restructuring the Nigerian state is another big challenge to national integration. This is because many Nigerians looking at regional, local, ethnic or religious reasons feel that they have either been relegated to the back bench or marginalized. They also believe that unless the country is restructured they would not get what they 'deserve' and the issue of unity and national integration would be a mere dream. This problem is further compounded by the Niger Delta question, the Middle-belt identity and economic crises revolving around who owns or controls what.

Though the NYSC Scheme plays an important role in fostering national unity and integration, the above-mentioned problems seem to have weakened the pillars of the programme. Unless the problems are profiled with a view to providing viable solutions, the questions and challenges of national unity and integration will surely be resurgent.

Conclusion

This paper examined the concept of national integration through the NYSC scheme. Though some scholars regard national integration as a process through which people of diverse socio-political and cultural backgrounds are brought together as one, this paper instead, argued that the central focus of national integration is not to unify people as one indivisible entity, but rather, to create a conducive atmosphere in which such people of variant norms and values can relate peacefully and in harmony. In this sense, their relationships are defined by their differences.

Drawing concrete examples from the Nigerian history and its early challenges to post-colonial nationhood, starting with the coup of 1966 and later the Nigerian Civil War, this paper brought to the fore the need for a national programme that would ensure national unity and integration, which the NYSC Scheme seems to have represented and actualized in many ways. Though Nigerian national integration suffers immeasurably from regionalism, sectionalism, corruption and

National Integration in the First Republic

manipulation of religion, the paper suggests that with strong programme on ground that are geared towards the promotion of national unity and integration like the NYSC, the future of the country is bright.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

B.J Audu and M. Hamza

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Nigeria and National Integration in the Fourth Republic

4

Nigeria and National Integration in the Fourth Republic

Adeniji Olawale Abayomi

Introduction

Having sojourned in a political dreamland for more than hundred years, it is quite pathetic that Nigeria remains a "chronic bachelor" ever in search of a beautiful bride of integration. The problem of national unity has been raised at various times and in different contexts in relation to Nigeria. Sometimes this has been as an appeal,¹ interestingly,

¹Sam C. Nolutshungu, "Reflections on National Unity in South Africa: A Comparative Approach," *Third World Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (1992): 607-620, doi:10.1080/01436599208420300)

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

A. O. Abayomi

the seemingly intractable quest for national integration is neither divine nor demonic, but rather a mismanagement of a political arrangement by potentially great peoples who are yet to get their acts right.

Many countries of the world have empirically proven that multiethnicity, multiculturalism and multilingualism when properly harnessed can engender national integration and development.² India, South Africa and Switzerland are cases in point. On the other hand, Somalia and Burundi, Rwanda are sadly demonstrated that homogeneous culture, religion and language is not a conclusive panacea for national integration and stability.³ America, a largely monocultural and monolingual nation has since 1960s embraced multiculturalism because of its potential's fig national development and progress.

Nigeria is a classic case of a deeply divided society, because of its "multination" and "polyethnic" nature.⁴ This is due partly to the forced amalgamation,⁵ by the British colonialists, of the country's

²Olajide, Gbenga Julius, Odewumi A. olatunde, and Oladeji Akande Olusegun. 'Language and integration: The Imperative of Equal Right for Indigenous Languages in Nigeria" in Gbade, Ikuejube and Dolapo Zacchaeus Olupayimo. *A Century of Nigeria's Amalgamation, 1914-2014: Challenges of Integration*, (Ibadan: John Archers Publishers Limited, 2015):16-28.

³Banjo, A."A Language and Nation Building," In Asein O. and Adesanoye, *Language and Polity: Essay on Language and Society in Africa*, (Ibadan: Sam Bookman Educational Services, 1994):607-625.

⁴Iyanya, Kamoru Ahmed and Bello Sanusi Dantata, "Federalism and National Integration: The Nigerian Experience" *Historical Research Letter* 35, (2016): 8-12, www.iiste.org ISSN 2224-3178

⁵Politically, the Northern and Southern protectorate of Nigeria were brought together by British Colonial Governor, Fredrick Lugard in January 1914. The purpose for this by Braintain was for easy administration of the two protectorates, and to encourage internal trade throught the country. See Olupayimo, Dolapo Zacheus and Adeniji Olawale Abayomi, "Amalgamation Without Integration: Nigeria on the Alter of Religion Conviction" in Gbade, Ikuejube and Dolapo

Nigeria and National Integration in the Fourth Republic

“ethnocultural nations” into single economic and political units that were called “colonies,” before it eventually evolved into what are today’s independent Nigeria.

The present state of affairs in Nigeria however, in terms of integration have relation with what has happened in the past, and what is obtainable in this fourth republic are resemblance of what culminated into Nigerian Civil War,⁶ it’s even worrisome than it was in the past decades, and it seems Nigerian leaders have given up on the country, as they are less worried about the rate at which Nigeria is sliding into nothingness. Presently, there is nothing in Nigeria other than the hiatus between one general election and the coming one; the administration has been reduced to power grab and prebinal politics.⁷ Today, many of these ethno cultural groups want to secede and form their own independent polities in order to have more autonomy over policies that affect their well-being, including especially their cultural and traditional values.⁸ The struggle by these groups for either outright secession or so-called enhanced rights has created many challenges for governance, national integration and nation-building in Nigeria today. Throughout Nigeria today, inter-ethnic conflict, for example, over the allocation of scarce resources, mismanaged identity and cross-cultural communication has produced sectarian violence that has led to civil conflicts; and significantly endangered prospects for peaceful coexistence.⁹

Zacchaeus Olupayimo. *A Century of Nigeria’s Amalgamation, 1914-2014: Challenges of Integration*, (Ibadan: John Archers Publishers Limited, 2015):128.

⁶Chukwuma CC Osakwe, “What Cause Nigerian Civil War”, Interview by the author in Kaduna, August 19, 2019.

⁷Omobola...punch

⁸Abubakar Adam Ibrahim, “Amotekun, Chinese Sparrows and The Rise Of Ethnic Militia”

Daily Trust, Thu Jan 14, 2021. <https://dailytrust.com/amotekun-chinese-sparrows-and-the-rise-of-ethnic-militia>

⁹Johnson Gyan, Interview by the author in Kaduna, February 18, 2019.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

A. O. Abayomi

However, it is in recognition of its diversity, that the founding fathers of Nigeria had settled for a federal system of government.¹⁰The concern of this paper however, is not to engage in endless lamentation on elusiveness of integration in Nigeria, but rather see the quality of leadership and political mismanagement of the country as a threats to national integration in emerging democracies with specific focus on the democratic experiment of the Nigerian fourth republic. The paper contends that non-commitment to the ideals of federalism accounted for the inability of federalism (in practice) to integrate the different ethnic and religious groups in the country. The paper concludes that for federalism to perform the magic wand, political leaders must be committed to the tenets of federalism in address discrimination, intolerance, corruption and prejudice and cold-shoulder treatment of minority in the country.

The Concept of National Integration

The word national integration has plethora of definitions. There are perhaps as many definitions of the word as there are authors who have written on the subject especially as far as its usage in the Nigerian case is concerned. On its own, Integration is the satisfaction of the various components of a social polity with regard to justice, fair play, equitable distribution of resources and ability to access the accruing national opportunities.¹¹It is defined by the Chambers Dictionary is a process of unification into a whole diverse element.¹²

¹⁰Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Chief Obaferni Awolowo, Sir Ahmadu Bello and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa settled for a Federal system of government as a mechanism for coping with the deep ethnic and religious cleavages that exist in the country. Also see, Ahmed and Bello, "Federalism and National Integration", 24

¹¹ Ahmed Adam Okene. 'National Security, Good Governance and Integration in Nigeria Since 1999', *Asian Social Science* 7, No. 10 (October 2011):1-4

¹²Gbade, Ikuejube and Dolapo Zacchaeus Olupayimo. *A Century of Nigeria's Amalgamation, 1914-2014: Challenges of Integration*, (Ibadan: John Archers Publishers Limited, 2015):38.

Nigeria and National Integration in the Fourth Republic

According to Ibrahim, national integration is a political idea and an ideal which implies a national state where citizens have the full right without any form of segregation. He opines further that, it is the bringing of people of different racial or ethnic groups into an unrestricted and equal association, as in society or an organization.¹³ To J. Coleman and Bienen, integration is the progressive lessening of ethnic, cultural and regional tensions and discontinuities in the process of creating a homogenous political community.¹⁴ Leonard Binder conceptualizes integration from socio-psycho paradigm when he states that integration involves the creation of a high very level of mental and physical comprehensive.¹⁵

In the same vein, integration could be applied separately and in group to either geo-polity like territory, nationality, or socio-psychological imperatives like value system, social behaviour and group category like elite and mass. In this realm therefore, integration could manifest among social beings living in a geo-political entity and should necessarily lead to trust, communal harmony, aggregation of material development and common constructive political objective(s).

Generally speaking, therefore, integration is the feeling of the history of togetherness and high sense of community in all sectors. In a way integration is development in all ramifications of human and physical endeavours. The final objective of integration is that society is lived, guided, guarded and administered with tolerable minimum conflicts.

¹³Ibrahim Nassir, "The Crisis of National Integration and Tribes in Africa, *Mankasam*, May 7, 2017 https://www.ankasam.org/en/the-crisis-of-national-integration-and-tribes-in-africa/#_ftn1

¹⁴ Coleman J.S. and Rosberg, C.G. (Eds), *Political Parties and Integration in Tropical Africa*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1964):Chapter1 & 2. Also see, Bienen, H., "The State and Ethnicity: Integrative Formula", in *State Versus Ethnic Claims: African Policy, Dilema*. Olorunsola and D. Pothschild (Eds), (Colorado: Western Press, 1983):100-126.

¹⁵ Binder, L., "National Integration and Plural Development", *American Political Review* 18, no. 3 (1964).

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

A. O. Abayomi

With all been said, although, it has long been realised that 'developing' countries like Nigeria do not have to follow the example of 'developed' nations, the mere use of the terms 'national integration' or at times, 'nation-building' implies a straight line of 'progress' from dispersed sub-national communities towards the integrated entity of the nation-state.¹⁶ It is unquestionable that disintegration or falling apart is undesirable, and hence some kind of integration within (and maybe also across) societies is necessary.

However, the notion of national integration in Nigeria has dwell more on eagerness of political leaders to exert effective control over the population in the absence of established institutions. For this emphasis, the notion of national integration in Nigeria—whatever the exact term used: -does not implies or at least connotes a national oneness, but rather a sentiment of loyalty to a central government or political actors. This goes against the rationale for the concept of integration which means -whether the adjective is there or not — a need to create a 'territorial nationality which overshadows or eliminates subordinate parochial loyalties.¹⁷

However, it has been suggested that the solution to this political quagmire is the creation of differentiated citizenship rights for each of these groups. The paper suggests that of the three types of differentiated citizenship that have been suggested as a way to accommodate diversity—self-government rights, polyethnic rights, and special representation rights—self-government rights pose the greatest threat to social, political, and economic stability of any country. The solution to this governance challenge may lie in inclusive and robust dialogue, which can help these groups find a way to remain citizens of

¹⁶Sam C. Nolutshungu, "Reflections on National Unity in South Africa: A Comparative Approach," *Third World Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (1992): 607-620, doi:10.1080/01436599208420300)

¹⁷Ronen, Dov. "Alternative Patterns of Integration in African States." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 14, no. 4 (1976): 577-96. Accessed March 14, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/160147>.

Nigeria and National Integration in the Fourth Republic

their present polities, while at the same time, retaining their cultural identities.

Looking to the Past

Nigeria is a classic case of a deeply divided society, because of its “multination” and “polyethnic” nature.¹⁸ This is due partly to the forced amalgamation,¹⁹ by the British colonialists, of the country’s “ethnocultural nations” into single economic and political units that were called “colonies,” before it eventually evolved into what is today’s independent Nigeria. The problematic nature of this forceful marriage and its seeming unacceptability by the constituent groups began to manifest even before colonial rule came to an end,²⁰ as exemplified by the character of the political parties formed within the period as well as the ideas encapsulated in the Northernisation policy.²¹

¹⁸ Ahmed and Dantata, “Federalism and National Integration”, 8-12.

¹⁹²⁰ Politically, the Northern and Southern protectorate of Nigeria were brought together by British Colonial Governor, Fredrick Lugard in January 1914. The purpose for this by Britain was for easy administration of the two protectorates, and to encourage internal trade throughout the country. See Olupayimo and Adeniji, “Amalgamation Without Integration”, 129.

²⁰ Before the independence in 1960, the colonial power succeeded in employing ethnicity as a core administrative strategy in the governance of Nigeria. This, however, triggered regional desires for political power such that by 1946, Britain again drew boundaries of Nigeria into three separate regions: North, West, and East. It was supposedly thought to strengthen and streamline her control while appeasing Nigerian demand for representation, rather it intensified the tensions of territorial division which existed within the Country today. The colonial authority left hoping that any sectional power dominance would be avoided by the evolution of national politics, but underestimated the effects of a regionalized structure of party in a country where political power was population depended. See, The Federal Republic of Nigeria, The Final Draft of the Conference Report”, The National Conference (August, 2014):2-3. Also, James O. Ojiako, *Nigeria: Yesterday, Today, and...?* (Onitsha: Africana Educational Publishers (Nig.) Ltd, 1981):23.

²¹ Balogun M.J., *Public administration in Nigeria*, (London & Basingstoke: Macmillan Publishers, 1983).

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

A. O. Abayomi

For instance, the formation of three major political parties which vied for control of the centre were inextricably linked with regions, religion and ethnic groups, they were not considered separately but as a whole Political Parties.²² For instance, the National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) dominated the Eastern Region, under Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe; it comprises most Igbo ethnic group.²³ The Action Group (AG) under Chief Obafemi Awolow²⁴ was dominated by the Yoruba. And the Nigerian Peoples' Congress (NPC) - comprised of the ethnic group Hausa-Fulani under the leadership of Sir Ahmadu Bello.²⁵

Another factor that set-in motion fragile nation was the national census conducted between 1962-1963. It showed that the Northern region had an even larger percentage of the nation's population than had previously thought. The Ibos in the East and Yoruba in the West resent the elevated status of their neighbours to the north. In the same vein, the NCNC and the AG parties both also accused the NPC of fixing the 1964 federal election, and the 1965 regional election which incited bloody riots. These cases set in motion political turmoil,²⁶ with growing demand for self-determination by minority groups.

A statement by a former presidential aspirant, Alhaji Maitama Sule, reflects the prevailing perceptions about cultural differences which militate against national unity, integration and nation building:

Everyone has a gift from God. The Northerners are endowed by God with leadership qualities. The Yoruba man knows how to earn a living and has diplomatic qualities. The Igbo is gifted in commerce, trade and

²²Oloredesikiru, Interview by author, in Kaduna via mobile call, August 19, 2019, 04:22.

²³ Karen Russell. "The Nigerian Civil War", p.2.

²⁴ Karen Russell. p.2.

²⁵ Karen Russell.

²⁶ Ibid.

Nigeria and National Integration in the Fourth Republic

technological innovation. God so created us individually for a purpose and with different gifts.²⁷

It was, perhaps, based on the glaring incidents that have lingered from colonial time- suggestive of mutual suspicion, hatred, and disunity, one can say that Awolowo declaration in (1947) that Nigeria representing a mere geographical expression may not outrightly wrong.²⁸ In spite of the festering suppurations, Nigeria retained her “united” status at independence.²⁹ Yet, the Nigerian leaders that inherited power from the colonial masters not only failed to foster true unity among the constituent groups but also took actions that deepened the sense of disunity within the polity.

Thus, signs that things were falling apart began to manifest quite early when the country started witnessing agitations for separation within the first decade of her independence. While all being said, the overwhelming role of colonialism shaped the character of the Nigeria State and the nature of its politics, it evidently affected the actions of the political leadership and by extension the quality of democratic governance during the first republic. The politicisation of ethnicity and religion, prevalence of political corruption and kleptocracy, coupled with the alienated, unaccountable and violent tendencies of the Nigerian state can be understood within this context.³⁰

²⁷ Rosalind I.J. Hackett, “Conflict in the Classroom: Educational Institutions as Sites of Religious Tolerance Intolerance in Nigeria”, BYU L. Rev. 537 (1999). <https://digitalcommons.law.byu.edu/lawreview/vol1999/iss2/3>

²⁸ Obafemi Awolowo, *Path to Nigeria's Freedom*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1947): 47 – 48.

²⁹ James O. Ojiako, *Nigeria: Yesterday, Today, and...?* (Onitsha: Africana Educational Publishers (Nig.) Ltd, 1981):9.

³⁰ Egwu, S.G., “Ethnic and religious violence in Nigeria”, (Jos: African centre for democratic governance (AFRIGOV), 2001).

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

A. O. Abayomi

The first republic politicians preoccupied with 'ethno-regional politics' consciously mobilised ethnicity and religion as the means to acquire and consolidate political leadership and economic.³¹ It is with these internal contradictions of a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-linguistic state of Nigeria that led to the unfortunate civil war of 1967 – 1970.³²

Nevertheless, this historical episode was occasioned by mutual suspicion and distrust amongst the political leaders that were saddled with the leadership of the country after independence in 1960. Even with all efforts of National Youth Service Corps, actualising total integration is still difficult from them till now.

Continuity and Change in the Fourth Republic

As emphasised earlier, the trend has subsequently assumed frightening dimensions since then, with alarming security implications for the country and democratic governance devoid of what Egwu describes as the key elements of governance: accountability, transparency, openness, answerability, enforcement and responsiveness. Consequently, political corruption, perversion of the rule of law and due process, subversion of the institutions of accountability and transparency, reckless and rudderless political leadership, violation of human rights, authoritarianism, criminalisation of dissent, widespread impunity and personalisation of political power have become significant attributes of democratic governance, especially in the fourth

³¹ Setolu, D., "The Nigerian state, the political class and histography of elections in Nigeria", In *Elections and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria*, G. Onu and A. Momoh (eds), (Lagos: Triad Associates, 2007): 34 –S42

³² Abubakar A. Atofarati. "The Nigerian Civil War, Causes, Strategies, And Lessons Learnt", *Africa Master Web*. (1992),www.africamasterweb.com/BiafranWarCauses. Accessed 20 May, 2018.

Nigeria and National Integration in the Fourth Republic

republic.³³ These governance deficits have profoundly affected development, unity and security in the fourth republic in Nigeria.³⁴

The struggle to acquire and access power usually takes dangerous and deadly dimensions among the ruling elites in Nigeria. This is attributed to the dominant role of the state in socio-economic development which invariably is core to the existence and wealth of the ruling elites.³⁵ Therefore, the demands the elites make upon the political system as well as the subsequent processes of policy formulation and implementation is overwhelmed by intra-elites' contradictions and conflicts. The fourth republic is replete with cases of elite conflicts manifested in intra and inter-party squabbles, animosity and tensions between some governors and their deputies, and political godsons and godfathers which often snow ball into high level violence.³⁶

More often than not, identity politics are mobilized and deployed in the zero-sum contests. The storm surrounding the zoning arrangement among political parties is a notable case in this regard. Consequently, public policies are given ethno-religious and communal colourations; provoking mutual distrust among the people, heightened sense of political marginalization, violence and instability of the polity.³⁷ The monopolisation of the public policy formulation and implementation processes by the ruling elites, the fractious elite brinkmanship that precedes the making of public policy and the deployment of public

³³Egwu, S. G., "Promoting the social contract through the due process mechanism: the role of the legislature", A lecture delivered at the Kogi State House of Assembly (Lokoja, May 18, 2016)

³⁴ Monday Aliu and S.MOmodia, "Governance and Threats to National Security in Emerging Democracies: A Focus on the Nigerian Fourth Republic", *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences* 3, no.4, (2013): 36.

³⁵Jega, A.M., *Democracy, good governance and development in Nigeria*, (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, 2007)

³⁶ Njoku, F.O.C., 'Development, Conflict and Peace in Nigeria", in *Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution in Nigeria: A reader*, M. Ikejiani-Clark (ed) (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, 2009).

³⁷Jega, *Democracy*, 19.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

A. O. Abayomi

policy to promote group interests creates an elite-mass divide with dire implications for national security. It is within this context that the worsening social tensions, economic inequality, poverty and increased spate of insecurity in the country since the return of democracy in 1999 is better appreciated.

Insecurity in this present dispensation, whether internal or external, with terrorism usually has political undertones, at times, its shows other ancillary motives such as religion, economic or social. To some extent it may confuse someone in identifying what the terrorists are fighting for. Before 2009, issue of terrorism was unknown, what we are familiar with is the existence of militant groups³⁸ agitating for improvement of environment degradation, unemployment, poverty and marginalisation.³⁹The incessant killing by Boko Haram under Goodluck Jonathan became sources of contention,⁴⁰ there are agitation that it was northern agenda to crumble Jonathan regime, while himself did little or nothing to effectively curtail the activities of the sect. Farmer-herders conflict complicated the issues under Muhammadu Buhari. Likewise, River state governor (Nyesom Wike) has also threatened that Nigeria will be buried if Benue state Governor Samuel

³⁸They cut across Go-political zone of Nigeria. Niger Delta militant Group, Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP); Movement for Emancipation of the Niger Delta; Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force, Egbesu Boys and Niger Delta Vigilante; Bakkasi Boys; Bakkasi Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB); Odua People's Congress (OPC) and Arewa People's Congress (APC).

³⁹I.O Albert, "African international terrorism", in *Perspectives on Peace and Conflict in Africa* Albert, I.O Albert (ed.), (Ibadan, John Archers Publishers,2005)

⁴⁰Buhari said: "...Any attack on the Boko Haram is an attack on the North" and El-Rufai comment on insecurity in Nigeria. See, Okupe, "Buhari said any attack on the Boko Haram is an attack on the North", *Channels Television*, (December 15,2014), Video:5:22. Also, "Buhari faults clampdown on Boko Haram members", *The Nation* (2013).

Nigeria and National Integration in the Fourth Republic

Ortom is assassinated.⁴¹This and many others are affecting social construct of Nigeria today.

Stories of abductions for ransom, and incessant killing in the southern part of the country by herders have become another episode of Nigeria's socio-problems.⁴²Activities of Fulani Militia which became more even deadly, after implementation of anti-open grazing laws in some states in Nigeria⁴³has called for concerned, as communique between herdsmen, undertheir umbrella body, Miyetti Allah, and other social cultural groups have threatened anarchy within the state.

The South-West governors put politics aside and floated a revolutionary regional security network, codenamed Operation Amotekun, an arrangement that they said mirrors a "true federal structure". The genius is that the South-West governors could no longer fold their hands and wait forever on the long-awaited restructure of the country nor continue to rely on an inept federal police before securing the lives⁴⁴ and property of their people.⁴⁵

⁴¹Governor Samuel Ortom of Benue state was attacked on Saturday 20 March, 2021 by suspected herdsmen while visiting a farm in Makurdi. See 'Nigeria will be buried if Ortom is assassinated', Channel Television March 20, 2021. Accessed March, 20, 2021

⁴²Killing of Afenifere's Daughter by suspected Fulani,

⁴³ Terrorism Global Terrorism Index, "2020: The ten countries most impacted by terrorism" (2020), Accessed March 10, 2021, www.vissionofhumanity.org.

⁴⁴The former Secretary to the Government of the Federation, OluFala, was in 2015 kidnapped in Akure by seven Fulani men. Although the kidnappers were later arrested, a ransom of N5 million was paid for his release. In June 2019, the daughter of the leader of the Yoruba socio-cultural group, Afenifere, Reuben Fasoranti, was killed by suspected herdsmen along Ore road. Also, Olufunke Olakurin was shot while on her way to Lagos by masked hoodlums after a visit to her father in Akure. Of recent, a popular herbal manufacturer, FataiYusuff, popularly called 'OkoOloyun' was shot dead in Oyo State. See, Iroanusi, 'Amotekun, op. cit

⁴⁵Queen Esther Iroanusi, "Amotekun:Don't back down, Nigerians tell South-west governors", *Premium Times*, January 26, 2020, accessed February 22, 2021, www.premiumtimes.com.ng

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

A. O. Abayomi

With an updated knowledge of the current state of affairs in Nigeria, one will truly understand that the issue of religious intolerance has worsened since the past few years. Some of the actions that display the height of this religious intolerance in Nigeria often occur under the guise of political sectarianism.⁴⁶

The agitations for the implementations of Sharia law and Islamic banking system in the country by some individuals and groups like Boko Haram are seen as a clear manifestation of religious intolerance. the seed sowed by these alien religions to Nigerian political system is seriously overheated with religious conflicts. For instance, in 2000, the move for the implementation of the Shariah Law led to a bloody clash between Christians and Muslims. In 2002, the protest against the hosting of the world beauty contest in Nigeria led to another bloody clash between Muslims and Christians in Kaduna. In 2004, there was another clash between Christians and Muslims in Makarfi Local Government over an alleged case of the desecration of the Qur'an.

The bitter experiences we have to grapple with concern the extension of religious conflicts to the institutions of learning. In 2002, the election of the student union president of the Federal College of Education (F.C.E) Zaria led to a clash between Christian and Muslim students. In the same year, a similar clash was averted in Ahmadu Bello University (A.B.U) Zaria. On 17th March 2006), there was another squabble between Muslim and Christian Girls by the water tank in the female hostel in A.B.U.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Officially, Nigeria is a secular state with freedom of religion guaranteed in the Nigerian Constitution. See Nig. Const. (1979) Ch. I & 10; Nig. Const. (Promulgation Decree of 1989) No. 12. Section 11 of the latter states, "The Government of the Federation or of a State shall not adopt any religion as State Religion."

⁴⁷ Ushe Mike Ushe, "Religious Conflicts and Education in Nigeria: Implications for National Security," *Journal of Education and Practice* 6, no.2, (2015):117.

Nigeria and National Integration in the Fourth Republic

In the same vein, there are frustrations with the Northerners-dominated government that is believed to be enabling Fulani atrocities. Though, while the various governments have employed differing quota strategies to try to reflect a “federal character,” Nigerians have every reason to be doubtful of the concept of fair play, with nepotism and corruption rife at every level of Nigerian life. This becomes more intense as each of the two dominant religions in Nigeria (Islam and Christianity) tries to control government activities or to shape activities of government following the tenets of her religion.

The question now is whether he is a Muslim or Christian President, Minister, Governor or even Local Government chairman, nevertheless, the consequent abuse of human rights following these religious conflicts cannot go unnoticed. Such rights as freedom of speech, life, association, religion and movement are no longer observed.⁴⁸ In the face of political instability following these conflicts southern (Christians) no longer settle in the northern (Muslim) Nigeria for fear of loss of lives and property and vice versa.⁴⁹

With all these, Nigeria is being threatened with disintegration day by day. Policies are carried by emotional sentiments rooted in ethnicity or religion cleavages. The educated, religious and political elites (class) prey upon the masses and use them as satellite to achieve their socio-political and economic objectives. This is done through orientation, indoctrination or violence using the masses on the already conceived stereotypes against their political and religious opponents. Right from formation of political parties to campaign processes and voting patterns, all tend towards religious affiliations and tribalism. As a result, politics in Nigeria is associated with violence and lack of accommodation. Thus, ethno-religious conflicts have chartered the routine of political process in Nigeria.

⁴⁸Olupayimo and Olawale, p.145

⁴⁹Samuel Ungowm and Marcus Musa in Kaduna, “Why Dichotomy in Kaduna”, Interview by the author, March 12, 2021.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

A. O. Abayomi

Another factor that even worsened the issue is the level of conflict in the classroom. Presently, it might be expected that education would be a contentious issue in terms of its provision, control, form, and content. I am concerned in this Article with the ways in which educational institution—whether primary, secondary, or tertiary—have been connected to the growth of religious conflict in Nigeria over the last two decades. How might Nigerian schools and institutions of higher learning constitute sites for generating or countering religious intolerance?

There have been a number of incidents of religiously-linked violence involving Nigerian students since the 1980s⁵⁰. also, there are strong falsification of academic records along ethnic/religion lines in correlation with increased educational attainment and the effects appear to persist for many generations, without effectively contributing to national integration.⁵¹ There are falsifications of result by lecturers, management on religious and ethnic basis.⁵² Latest is the controversy over hijab in Christian Missionary schools, which has designated most of the South-West into epic centres of religious conflict,⁵³ though government decision to allow wearing of hijab in public schools is for

⁵⁰Rosalind I.J. Hackett, "Conflict in the Classroom: Educational Institutions as Sites of Religious Tolerance intolerance in Nigeria" *Law Review Volume* 1999, no. 2 (199):53-56

⁵¹ "Religion and Education Around the World: How Religion May Affect Educational Attainment: Scholarly Theories and Historical Background", *Religion & Public Life*, "DECEMBER 13, 2016", accessed March 17, 2021, <https://www.pewforum.org/2016/12/13/how-religion-may-affect-educational-attainment-scholarly-theories-and-historical-background/>

⁵² Interview with students Elijah Oluwatobi, interview by the author (March 13, 2021), Audio:02:13. "Yoruba teacher didn't believe that Hausa students could do something remarkable in classroom; Northern/Muslim teacher tends to alter result in favour of students of the same descent, placing their colleagues of southern descent under them.

⁵³There is Hijab crises in Osun State in 2016, Kwara State in 2021, see, GbnegaOlarinoye, "Hijab Crisis: How Osun Schools turned religious war theaters", *Vanguard* (2016), www.vanguardngr.com.

Nigeria and National Integration in the Fourth Republic

sustainable peace and communal harmony anchored on mutual respect and understanding. CAN however maintains that their schools have historical foundation, philosophy that did not Christianise any Muslims students, so far school uniform is internationally accepted for identification of student from particular schools. To Abidoye, he disagreed with the government's decision to allow Muslim students to wear Hijab in Christian schools. He asserted that wearing of Hijab is nothing but deepen and dividing the classroom and making it a religious centre.⁵⁴

Though, efforts to utilize educational resources to achieve religious harmony and national unity exist. Educational institutions have become microcosmic versions of more macrocosmic socio-political trends. Furthermore, such institutions constitute important breeding grounds for religious ideas and movements.⁵⁵ My analyses of these examples lead me to conclude that the Nigerian system which encourages a confessional approach to religious instruction in the schools has contributed to the further polarization of Nigerian society along religious lines.⁵⁶ The system also leads to probable violations of the principles of religious freedom embodied in the U.N. Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (1981).⁵⁷

In addition to this, is the Boko-Haram insurgency, an Arabic phrase which literally means that “western education is forbidden”, is among other factors, largely rooted in religious intolerance. The challenges posed by this group since 2010 have defied all logic and rationality, leaving Nigerians with deep concerns for the unity of their country in the present era. The question that quickly comes to mind is Why has religion, albeit a formidable unifying element, become an instrument of

⁵⁴ Abidoye John, “Solution to Christian/Muslim Crisis in Ilorin”, interview by the author (March 10, 2021) Audio:04:11.

⁵⁵ Hackett, “Conflict in the Classroom,” 57.

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⁵⁷ U.N. GAOR, 36th Session, pt. 1s, at 332, U. N. Doc. G A/654 6 (19 81)

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

A. O. Abayomi

various kinds of menace, destruction of lives and properties? It appears to have even caused many to wonder about the quality of education and expertise of the Nigerian polity and governance. Though, Boko Haram is not an offshoot of the immediate past administration and present one neither was these administrations that mastermind the insurgency. It existed before the Jonathan assumed power in May 2011 and Buhari in May 2015.

Persistent religious conflicts alongside the problem of insecurity – though not a new development, but it has worsened since the last ten years. Religion has been awfully misrepresented and used as an excuse for all kinds of evil.⁵⁸ The fundamental failures of the Nigerian governments have been among the most important drivers of the religious radicalism that has metastasized throughout the country since the 1980s. Countering violent extremism will require addressing the root causes, the majority of which lack readily available military solutions. Manoeuvring the levers of a deeply troubled bureaucracy to accomplish those ends promises to be the most difficult component in the fight against militancy.⁵⁹

Apart from that is mismanaged diversity in the fourth republic, the regimes allowed disappearing old ethnic and religious fault lines to reopen in greater fissures with drums of bitterness, separation and disintegration.⁶⁰ Former President Olusegun Obasanjo has expressed that he was embarrassed about how President Buhari is running the country, insisting that Africa's most populous black nation is moving towards becoming a failed State. Obasanjo is apparently not alone.

⁵⁸ Peter O. Chineke, "The Place of Religion in Education: A Contemporary Nigerian Perspective," *Cultural and Religious Studies* 4, no. 3 (March 2016):204-213, doi: 10.17265/2328-2177/2016.03.006.

⁵⁹ B., Matthew "Nigerias' Critical Juncture: Boko Haram, Buhari, and the Future of the Fourth Republic." *Small Wars Journal* 1, no. 1 (2005):6.

⁶⁰Intensification of the IPOB calls for division, and the emergency of Odia Republic for Yoruba nation. Both Biafra and Odia Republic has been included in United Nation Unrepresented Nations in October, 2020.

Nigeria and National Integration in the Fourth Republic

Wole Soyinka, poet, essayist and first African Nobel prize winner, concurred with the former President's assessment, describing the country as a crumbling edifice on the edge of collapse. According to another elder statesman, the former governor of Kaduna State, Alhaji Balarabe Musa, referring to attacks across the country by bandits and criminal herdsmen, the failure is because 'no serious and patriotic government will allow this level of killings of its citizens by terrorists and be watching aimlessly'. A prominent Islamic scholar, Sheik Murtala Sokoto, described those still praising Buhari as liars and hypocrites.

Implication for National Development

Despite all social and economic policies that have been implemented by successive administrations in the fourth republic, Nigeria has remained a laggard in social, economic and political integration, North and Southwest had boycott goods from their respective regions, drum of war and political threat are waged. Subsequently, political instability, abject poverty, acute youth unemployment, heightened crime rate, poor health prospects, widespread malnourishment has been the main features of Nigeria's political economy.⁶¹ With all these being Said, the failure of governance is core to the socio-economic and political development challenges confronting Nigeria and the spate of violence that threatens national integration.

One of the greatest experiments in national integration is still underway through activities of NYSC. Certain progress has been made, but much remains to be done. The struggle for national integration in the huge and underdeveloped Nigeria is very difficult, with ethnic, religion and geographical factors weighing heavily.

Today, some ethnocultural groups want to secede and form their own independent polities in order to have more autonomy over policies that

⁶¹ Moses M. Adagbabiri and Ugo ChuksOkolie, "Corruption and the Challenges of Insecurity in Nigeria's Fourth Republic" *Journal of Political Science and Leadership Research* 4, no. 3, (2018):41.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

A. O. Abayomi

affect their well-being, including especially their cultural and traditional values. The struggle by these groups for either outright secession or so-called enhanced rights has created many challenges for governance, national integration and nation-building in Nigeria today. Throughout Nigeria today, inter-ethnic conflict, for example, over the allocation of scarce resources, has produced sectarian violence that has led conflicts; and significantly endangered prospects for peaceful coexistence.

It has been suggested that the solution to this political quagmire is the creation of differentiated citizenship rights for each of these groups. The paper suggests that of the three types of differentiated citizenship that have been suggested as a way to accommodate diversity—self-government rights, polyethnic rights, and special representation rights—self-government rights pose the greatest threat to social, political, and economic stability in the country. The solution to this governance challenge may lie in inclusive and robust dialogue, which can help these groups find a way to remain citizens of their present polities, while at the same time, retaining their cultural identities.⁶²

War Forward

Different attempts to prevent disintegration and to ensure peace and security had been taken in the past ranging from general appeal, the use of the force, establishment of commission of inquiry to investigate remote and immediate causes of crisis, and so on. These attempts have not really been yielding positive impact. Though, it has been suggested that the solution to this political quagmire is the creation of differentiated citizenship rights for each of these groups. The paper suggests that of the three types of differentiated citizenship that have been suggested as a way to accommodate diversity—self-government rights, polyethnic rights, and special representation rights. Self-

⁶² Noah Tanko, Balogun O. Josephine and Sambo David Ringnan, for Integration in Nigeria's Multilingual Context

Nigeria and National Integration in the Fourth Republic

government rights pose the greatest threat to social, political, and economic stability of any country.

The solution to this governance challenge may lie in inclusive and robust dialogue, which can help these groups find a way to remain citizens of their present polities, while at the same time, retaining their cultural identities. Whatever political solution is arrived at; it must be based on the principle of universal citizenship. In a diverse multi-ethnic and multilingual country like Nigeria, to encourage integration, the political class and policy makers need to understand the cultural significance and sensibility of the people to their ethnic and religion inclination. A policy of linguistic pluralism promotes national integration, which is one facet of national development. Therefore, investment in the language of a people, often very close to their hearts is investment in national and human resources in any nation and it makes national mobilisation easier. It also makes it possible for citizens to be able to make maximum contribution to the building of a nation

One may wager with good assurance, on the basis of what has happened everywhere else in Africa and virtually all the world, that in the new political order, whatever specific character that may have in terms of political rights and popular participation, all the people who live within Nigeria boundaries, except temporary sojourners from other countries, will not only become citizens but will be declared 'a people', 'the people', and, before long. 'a nation'.

Also, in a bid to proffer any possible way forward for the contemporary Nigerian situation, there is a need to incorporate 'history' into the nation's educational system. Disintegration started because government did not see the role of 'History' in Nation-Building. And to correct the menace of disintegration, individual Nigerians, family and the society should promote the study of history at home, work and in all gathering for national development and integration of the country.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

A. O. Abayomi

History is essential characteristic of any society; it is fundamental to understanding ourselves and others. It promotes the understanding of societies, events, movements and developments that have shaped humanity from earliest times. The Federal Government should promote the study of history at all levels of education, its teaching is essential in Nigeria schools, for moral reorientation and critical thinking of the youth. It is time to go beyond present approach of use of jingle, rallies and propagandas for socio-reconstruction, transformation project for national integration by taking a trip to the past in order to improve the understanding of the present, with a view to gaining insights into the future, to prepare for its many challenges. The study of History in school becomes inevitable if the country intends to wield together the ethnic cracks in our society.

Finally, I will be borrowed from the word of Jhon Garang, who is the founder of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, he had shared at a conference that, 'Islam can't unite us, Christianity can't unite us, Arabism can't unite us, Africanism can't unite us', just (History) Nigerianism can unite us.

Conclusion

So far, it has been established and underscored the fact that development and utilisation of various persons (Christian or Muslim, Hausa or Igbo, Efik or Yoruba) is a critical factor in fostering integration in Nigeria. To ignore or underplay this factor is to display height of unseriousness in our quest for integration. This study also brought to the fore preferential and discriminatory character of the current government policy with its attendants' unsavoury implications for integration.

Unity in diversity of this country should be a blessing and not a curse. As an English and Yoruba proverb say respectively: "The more the merrier", and "the sky is wide enough for all the birds to fly without disturbing one another". Hence, it is what we do with these diversities

Nigeria and National Integration in the Fourth Republic

that matters. More than hundred years of amalgamation and sixty years of independence, Nigeria ought to have moved beyond concentrating developmental efforts on just few ethnic groups, religion and individual for integration sake.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

A. O. Abayomi

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A. O. Abayomi

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THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

S. A. Wada

5

The Establishment of National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) and Its Impact on National Integration

Safiya Abu Wada

Introduction

National Integration, nation building, national cohesion, national unity, national loyalty, dominated the policy agenda of many post-colonial states in Africa.¹ Nigeria like most of these post-colonial African states have been concerned with the achievement of national integration to blur the lines of diversity in an effort to unite the country in the spirit of

¹Onifade Comfort Adenike and Imhonopi David, "Towards National Integration in Nigeria: Jumping the Hurdles", *Research in Humanities and Social Science*, Vol.3, No.9, 2013, 75. ISSN 2222-1719.

The Establishment of National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) and...

nationalism and patriotism. This is because the colonial creation of states led to co-existence of ethnic groups who prior were independent nation-states.

With the independence of the country from the British who brought these nations-states together for their own administrative convenience,² a host of challenges were inherited that made them unable to coexist peacefully. Consequently, this cumulatively resulted to the civil war that was experienced in the country in 1967-1970. The military government during this period in the series of effort to ensure that these lines of divide are blurred and create a sense of national loyalty to the Nigerian state, embarked on a rehabilitation, reconstruction and re-integration program to promote national integration among the various ethnic groups. These resulted policies to create Unity Schools across the country, National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), State creation, imposing of quota system, Land tenure Act among others.³

This is because the lack of integration has hampered government efforts at achieving efficient productive sectors, limited the impact of governments economic programmes, threatened food security, complexified social insecurity, deepened the deterioration of physical and social infrastructure, distressed the living standards of a vast majority of Nigerians and their exclusion from political and economic space among others. This chapter therefore looks at the establishment of the National Youth Service Corps and to what extent it has been able to achieve or foster national integration in Nigeria since its establishment.

² Daniel RisiagbonOgbeide, "Evaluation of Public policies: The Case of National Youth service Corp in Nigeria", *Journal of political science and leadership Research*, Vol.3, No.3, 2017, 18-19.

³Onifade Comfort Adenike and Imhonopi David, "Towards National Integration in Nigeria...", 77-78

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

S. A. Wada

Conceptual Clarification

The term national integration is used synonymously with national unity, national cohesion, national loyalty, nation building and national question. It is the conscious effort at blurring the lines of divide that exist among diverse ethnic groups that exist within a polity. National integration is also seen as a process whereby members of a social system defined as its citizens, develop linkages and location so that the boundaries of the system persist over time and boundaries of subsystems becomes less consequential in affecting the behaviours of these diverse ethnic groups.⁴

Ogunjite, further added that these efforts are aimed at achieving development without jeopardizing these diversities. National Integration therefore is the process of unifying a society which tends to make harmonious city, based on an order its members regard as equitably harmonious to achieve the much-needed development in an equitable manner. This integration therefore is expected to foster and promote unity that allows the diverse group interacts. National integration is seen as relating to the building of nation state out of disparate socio-economic, religious, ethnic and geographical element. It is the translation of different and unorganized sentiments of nationalism into the spirit of citizenship through the creation of state institutions that can translate into policy and programmes that are in line with the aspirations of the citizenry.⁵

National integration therefore, is the conscious process to bring together the diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria through programmes

⁴EdosaEnaruna, "National Integration, Citizenship, Political participation and Democratisation Stability in Nigeria, *International Journal of Arts and Humanities (IJAH)*, Vol.3(3), S/No 11, IJAH: Batir Dar (Ethiopia), 63.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ijah.v3i3.6>

⁵Ogunjite Lewis O, "Federal Character as an Integration Mechanism Alternative Political future for Nigeria" in Stephen Odugbemi (ed.) *Nigeria Political Science Association (NPSA)*, Lagos, 1987.

The Establishment of National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) and...

instituted in such a way that blurs the different lines of divide that exist between the ethnics groups in an effort to achieve unity and development at all level, where every member of the community is involved irrespective of his or her ethnic identity. It should be noted that national integration and unity is different from the kind of oneness associated to kinship, clanship, racial as well as any form of cultural affiliations in a country. However, it depicts unity in diversity. National integration mechanisms that have been used by various administrations in the country include, among others; Federal unity schools, the federal character principle, relocation of the federal capital territory to Abuja considered to be the center of the country, revenue sharing formula/fiscal federalism and the NYSC programme.⁶

Events Prior to the Establishment of NYSC

The establishment of the NYSC owes a lot first, to the continuous agitation by Nigerian students and youths prior to the civil war to provide a national scheme that captures them in the developmental processes modeled on Kwameh Nkrumah's Young Pioneers of Ghana Scheme, secondly, the clamor by the Committee of Vice Chancellor of Universities in 1969 for National Youth Programme, thirdly, the media and finally, the deliberate efforts by the Gowon administration in the country to right the ills of the civil war.⁷

In the period from 1965 there were lots of agitations by Nigerians especially youths to be involved in the country's development..Also, in 1969, the committee of Vice Chancellors of Universities chaired by Professor Adeoye Lambo clamored for the provision of the undergraduate students in their various institutions especially those that had completed the first year of their three years program to be

⁶AyindefataiAremu, "National Youth Service Corps programmes and The Quest for National Integratio: Issues for Policy Consideratio", Journal of Management and Social Sciences, 2018, 281.

⁷ Gregory Enegea and Gabriel Umoden, *NYSC: Twenty Years of National...*, 8-9.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

S. A. Wada

involved in a compulsory one year scheme, to inculcate “the spirit of service and patriotism while promoting national integration in the country”.⁸

The idea was lauded by various media that existed in the country.⁹ These agitations were still not conceded to by the then administration. It was not until 1968 that the Nigerian government set up a Study committee headed by late Lt Col Nicholas Ajayi Ayanru to advise on the likelihood of establishing a youth service corps for Nigeria.

It was in the effort to promote the unity of the country at the end of the civil war, that Federal Government declared a “no Victory no Vanquish police”.¹⁰ The administration as a result, embarked on national programmes with the rehabilitation, reconstruction and reconciliation of the country in mind with intentions to solve the problems that resulted to the war from the root. This necessitated the government to quickly turn to the proposed National Youth Service Scheme.¹¹ The Federal Government declared 20th May 1972 as National Youth Day, which was followed by intentions of establishing two National Youth service scheme that would be both compulsory and voluntary.¹²

After series of deliberations and consultations at the eight convocation of the Ahmadu Bello University in July 1972, the Military Head of State General Gowon sought the opinion of the youth to come up with their own ideas to ensure the kick off the NYSC in the country. It was in this euphoria that series of deliberations and consultations were made resulting to what is known today as the National Youth Service Scheme

⁸ Gregory Enegwea and Gabriel Umoden, *NYSC: Twenty Years of National Service*, National Youth Service Corps directorate Headquarters: Yaba (Lagos), 1993, 9

⁹ Gregory Enegwea and Gabriel Umoden, *NYSC: Twenty Years of National...*, 9.

¹⁰ Gregory Enegwea and Gabriel Umoden, *NYSC: Twenty Years of National...*, 9.

¹¹ Gregory Enegwea and Gabriel Umoden, *NYSC: Twenty Years of National...*, 10.

¹² Gregory Enegwea and Gabriel Umoden, *NYSC: Twenty Years of National...*, 10.

The Establishment of National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) and...

(NYSC). It is thus safe to say that, the establishment of NYSC was a deliberate effort by the military government and the Nigerian people, especially, the youths to contribute their quota to the unity, development and continuity of the nation.

The NYSC scheme engages in four important activities to achieve its objectives which have significant impact on the country's unity and integration. Each of this stage is important in fostering national unity among these youths and the country at large. They include; the Orientation Programme, Primary Assignment, Community Development Service and the Winding Up/Passing-Out.

The three weeks of orientation which takes place in the NYSC orientation camps of each states is a preparatory camp organized to inculcate in these Corps' Members the knowledge of the states; the ethnic groups, culture, religion and languages, in an attempt to enable them understand the country's diversity. Hence, making them to see either similarities or differences and helping them to embrace them. As these states welcome them as a representative of the government into their states and by large the communities they are posted at the end of the camp for their primary assignments. This stage of the NYSC is aimed at achieving the objective 4 (b) which states that, each group, assigned to work together is a representative of the country as possible. This reason has made community where these corps member serve accept and welcome them irrespective of their ethos during their service year. These communities even go further to provide security and shelter for the Corps Members.

Impact of NYSC to National Integration

The NYSC is a deliberate social engineering or succinctly put, is a key component of what ought to be a more comprehensive package of programmes, policies, incentive structures and slogan designed to

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

S. A. Wada

wield Nigeria's disparate people into a cohesive nation,¹³ especially the youths who are going to constitute the future leaders of the country. This was re-iterated by the statement of the then head of government, Yakubu Gowon when he asserted that; "youths constitute a dominant force for national mobilization and growth and as such have a crucial role to play in the all-important task of national-building.¹⁴

This shows the importance placed on the scheme as a tool that will foster the spirit of the upcoming generation who are and will constitute the major workforce of the country. The Scheme is specifically targeted at youths broadly defined as graduates of our tertiary institutions of learning.¹⁵ The idea therefore to create the NYSC scheme was indeed a solution that will enable the country bridge the gap of distrust and disunity among different ethnic nationalities in the country. This scheme is different from other National Youth Service schemes that have been adopted by other countries in Africa, who like Nigeria are defined by their multicultural diversity. As Chioma stated, the NYSC scheme in Nigeria is unique and different from the scheme that have been practiced by other states not just in Africa but also in Asian countries. According to her, youth service schemes in these countries has objectives which reflect the particular country's main problems and priorities, ranging from the problem of high unemployment among the youth, bridging the gaps between urban/rural areas, elite/mass; skill acquisition, the development of self-reliant people; or a combination of all. But Nigeria's National Youth Service Corps scheme is unique in the sense that its objectives are not limited to the above, but go further to emphasize the country's own particular problems which was national integration, the forging of national unity and integration among the

¹³ Gregory Enegwea and Gabriel Umoden, *NYSC: Twenty Years of National...*, 3.

¹⁴ See General Yakubu Gowon message to the first batch of the corp members, July 2, 1973, "twenty year", in Gregory Enegwea and Gabriel Umoden, *NYSC: Twenty Years of National...*, 1.

¹⁵ Gregory Enegwea and Gabriel Umoden, *NYSC: Twenty Years of National...*, 3.

The Establishment of National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) and...

heterogeneous peoples.¹⁶ It is note-worthy that these youths unlike those of countries like Ethiopia, Kenya, USA,¹⁷ are graduates with very large skill base from different tertiary institutions and professions contributing to the country's development.

More so, one of the ways NYSC Scheme has been able to impact national integration and unity is through its Community Development Service (CDS). NYSC has further, through the CDS, been able to achieve the objective of instilling the idea of "sense of community" in the upcoming generation of the country. This is seen in the CDS programme introduced by the scheme. Apart from the corps members serving in their places of primary assignment they also engage in CDS within the community they serve. Corps members engage in the CDS program from the beginning of their service year after camp to the end of the service year. The concept of the community development service by the National youth service is to instill the idea of community which existed in African societies, likewise, Nigerian societies before the coming of the colonial master. This is why the community development service is one of the cardinal programme of the scheme which has a significant impact on national integration in Nigeria by providing these youth corps members the opportunity to undertake developmental activities during their service year as part of their own contribution to national development.

According to the United Nations, community development is an educational method that unites the efforts of the people themselves with those of government authorities aimed at improving the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities to integrate them into the life of the nation, making them to contribute fully to

¹⁶ChiomaOnwere, *National Youth Service Corps Programme and National Integration in Nigeria*, (a doctoral Thesis Submitted to the Department of International and Comparative Education, Institute of Education, University of London, 1992), 108

¹⁷ChiomaOnwere, *National Youth Service Corps Programme and...*, 106-108.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

S. A. Wada

national progress. This is argued, to inculcate in the member of the community a sense of citizenship and civic consciousness.¹⁸

If seen through the context of Easton's definition of community service which he considered it as "a sense of community", and also the amount of affective orientation the member of a political system has towards the other members of the community,¹⁹ the NYSC community development service shows the direct impact of the scheme as a tool for promoting national integration. This is because, the corps members who come from different state, community and posted to another within the country are not only engaged in these communities they are posted to, but also embark on individual projects for achieving and contributing their own small quota to the development of that community. This act can only be done when a sense of community and belonging to the nation is felt; a concept the government through the NYSC scheme have been achieving for over forty years since the establishment of NYSC.

Furthermore, in the scheme's efforts toward national integration, the NYSC has made it possible for the country to have a vast number of youths who are qualified as workforce for the country. These youths cannot be employed in any government or public parastatal without completing the one-year national youth service. The NYSC therefore, makes them qualified to be employed in any government or public parastatal within the country irrespective of their state of origin.

As long as they meet the requirements of these positions they are seeking. These requirements include first before any other requirement

¹⁸Oyebanniyi MA and UmofealnemesitEssiet, "influence of the Activities of the National Youth Service Corps Scheme on Knowledge of Social Issues in Host Communities in Rivers and Akwa Ibom States", *Internal Journal of Education and Evaluation*, Vol.2, No.2, 2016, 30, ISSN 2489-0073

¹⁹ See Easton in ChiomaOnwere, *National Youth Service Corps Programme and ...*, 111

The Establishment of National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) and...

after 1973 NYSC Act, the successful completion of the NYSC. Making it possible for the Federal Government to achieve its other policy of quota system in employments, within the federal Parastatal and to some extent, states parastatal with qualified and experienced personnel.

As these youth have mingled with different people from within the country and thus apply for position irrespective of the place in the country as long, they are qualified without fear of antagonism after their service. Some of these youths, after their service having understood that the knowledge, they possessed of other ethnic groups were different from what they met and saw while serving, end up even starting their life in these places. Some of these corps members, go as far as marrying from these communities or states, starting a family as they realize, life in other parts are not so different from what they were used to in their own respective states of origin.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter was able to look at the concept of national integration as the process that is aimed at deliberate efforts to unite the different ethnic, social and religious nationalities that exist within Nigeria. It also looked at the establishment of the NYSC scheme as a policy of the Federal Government under the Decree 24 of 1973, to blur the lines of divide that existed between the different ethnic groups in the country. This was done in an attempt at ensuring the peace, unity and development of the country irrespective of the ethnic group that individual, especially youth belong to and also create a sense of patriotism to the Nigerian state.

The NYSC establishment owes a lot to this intention and those of the youths, committee of Vice-Chancellors of Universities and the media in Nigeria right from the period before the civil war. After its establishment, the NYSC has impacted on the national integration of the country by ensuring that youths, irrespective of their ethnic group participate in the compulsory one-year service in states other than

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

S. A. Wada

theirs. This has made the NYSC embark on certain activities like Mobilisation, orientation, posting and CDS for the Youth Corps Members in achieving its objectives targeted at fostering national cohesion.

This makes the NYSC scheme a tool used by the Federal Government to realise the policy of achieving national integration among the disparate ethnic, religious and socio-cultural groups that exists in the country through the youths, who are perceived as the future leaders and citizens of the country. As without national integration, development at all level of the country becomes difficult.

The Establishment of National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) and...

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S. A. Wada

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NYSC Deployment of Corps Members as a tool for National Integration

6

NYSC Deployment of Corps Members as a tool for National Integration

Anyaraku Sewuse Yvonne

Introduction

Nigeria, like many other multi-ethnic countries of Africa and Asia, is faced with the crucial problem of national integration. In Nigeria's case however there is the combination and convergence of chronic, ethnic intolerance, religious polarization and political organizational power drives, within a structure of ruthless competition. Indeed, few countries have been more unstable than Nigeria; a situation which has greatly militated against any meaningful economic development. Efforts by governments to hold the different ethnic groups together, to inculcate a sense of oneness through constitutional reforms have met with little

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

A.S. Yvonne

success, with the peoples' allegiance to their particular ethnic groups continuing to surpass their loyalty to the national community.

But as long as parochial ethnic loyalties, built upon communal reinforcement of language, religion and other aspects of culture remain paramount, the achievement of an integrated society will remain a difficult task. The creation of states in Nigeria, for example has achieved little more than the substitution of tribalism with statism, while the abandonment of the Westminster model of government in favour of the American system has not so far withstood the strain of ethnic rivalry.

It was to ameliorate inter-ethnic relations, to bridge both the cultural and physical gaps that polarize the different ethnic groups, and to instil a sense of national identity that the National Youth Service Corps programme was established. The purpose of this study is to examine the topic of national integration as it applies to Nigeria through the evaluation of the effectiveness of the National Youth Service Corps programme in this regard.

National Integration: A Conceptualization

National integration is the process of unifying a multi-ethnic country, not necessarily into a single-ethnic one but into a united indivisible entity where primordial affiliations are made secondary for the greater good of the united nation. It can also be seen as the building of a national state but of disparate social, economic, religious, ethnic and geographical elements which entails the translation of diffused and unorganized sentiments on nationalism into a spirit of citizenship through the creation of state institutions that can translate into policies and programmes and aspirations of the citizenry.¹

¹ Oni, M., &Ogundinwin, A Four Republics: A Critical Discourse of the Culture of Political Parties, In Osuntokun, A, Ukaogo,A., Akachi,O (eds). Nigerian Studies- Readings in History, Politics, Society and Culture. New Jersey: Goldmine and Jacob Publishers, 2010.

NYSC Deployment of Corps Members as a tool for National Integration

In their own submission, Fatile and Adejuwon² conceptualize national integration as the process whereby several disparate groups within a given territorial entity are united together or co-operate under conditions which do not appear to permit satisfaction of the system needs in any other way. They concluded by stating that the goal of national integration is an arrangement in a plural society where component parts are reasonably contented in the polity vis-a-vis equity and justice in resource allocation and access to equal opportunities. It must also be stated that it is the progressive reduction of cultural and regional tensions and discontinuities in the process of creating a homogenous political community.

Duverger cited in Ojo,³ defines it as the process of unifying a society which tends to make it a harmonious city based upon an order its members regard as equitably harmonious. To Haas, national integration is a process whereby political actors in distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities towards a new centre, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing nation-state. Also, Ogunojemite defines national integration as a process leading to political cohesion and sentiments of loyalty toward a central political authority and institutions by individual belonging to different social groups or political unit.

National Integration

National integration is the awareness of a common identity amongst the citizens of a country. It means that though citizens belong to different castes, religions, regions and speak different languages, they

²Fatile, J., & Adejuwon, K.. Ethnicity and National Integration in Nigeria: The post Colonial Experience, In Osuntokun, A, Ukaogo,A., Akachi,O (eds). Nigerian Studies- Readings in History, Politics, Society and Culture. New Jersey: Goldmine and Jacob Publishers, 2010.

³Ojo, E. . Federalism and the Search for National Integration in Nigeria. African Journal of Political Science and International Relations , 3.9(2009): 384-395.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

A.S. Yvonne

still recognize themselves as one. This kind of integration is very important in the building of a strong and prosperous nation. National integration can also be seen as the process whereby several desperate groups within a given territorial are united together or cooperate under conditions which do not appear to permit satisfaction of their system needs in any other way.⁴ It implies unity in diversity.⁵

According to Elaigwu in Aderonke, national integration is determined by the degree to which members and groups in a plural society adapt to the demands of national existence while co-existing harmoniously.⁶ On the practical note, national integration is a process, not an end in itself and it is usually affected by contending social forces. It is a process leading to political cohesion and sentiments of loyalty toward a central political authority and institutions by individuals belonging to different social groups or political units. It is a process whereby political actors in distinct national setting are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities towards a new centre, whose institution possess or demand jurisdiction over preexisting nation-state.⁷ Shona in Okorie and Greg also notes that, National Integration is the awareness of a common identity amongst the citizens of a country. Nigeria is a country with about 250 ethnic nationalities distinctively isolated in terms of religion, languages.⁸

⁴Aderonke, M. "Federal Character Principle as a Recipe for National Integration in Nigeria: An Overview." *International Journal of Advanced Research in Management and Social Sciences*. Volume 2(6), 2013:65-84. www.garph.co.uk

⁵Asaju, K and Egberi, T. "Federal Character and National Integration in Nigeria: The Need for Discretion and Interface." *Review of History and Political Science – American Research Institute for Policy Development*. Volume 3 Number 1, 2015:126-134. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15640/rhps.v3n1a12>.

⁶Aderonke, 65-84.

⁷Aderonke, 65-84

⁸Shona, K. "National Integration: Complete Information on the Meaning, Features and Promotion of National Integration in India." <http://www.preservearticles.com/> and Okorie, C.O and Greg, E. "Federal Character Principles, Nation Building and National Integration in Nigeria: Issues

NYSC Deployment of Corps Members as a tool for National Integration

Therefore, from all of that, National integration binds people together to live in peace and unity. It gives freedoms of movement where everybody can move or reside in any part of the country without restriction from anybody. It encourages tolerance among people in respective of their tribes or religious beliefs. It gives rooms for inter-marriage among different tribes or ethnic groups in the country. It brings about the achievement of political, social, economic and cultural objectives, and lastly it enables youths to get familiar with the culture and traditions of other people in the country through National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) so that they accord respect to them.

Migration

The history of Nigerian societies has been characterized by different forms of migration and inter-group relations since the pre-colonial era. This has made the study of migration and inter-group relations inevitable overtime.⁹ Since no community or society lives in isolation or can be self-sufficient in both production and consumption of its goods and services, hence interdependence becomes imperative for survival of human societies.¹⁰ Moreover, the Nigerian societies, even before colonial period, were considered as neighbours as a result of migration which is an integral part of history of mankind as well as inter-group relations.¹¹

and Options." *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*. (MCSER) 4(16), 2013:33-40. Doi: 10.5901/miss.

⁹ Ojukwu, C.C. "Globalization, Migration and Philosophy of In-word looking: The Contemporary Igbo Nation in Perspective." In *Journal of Political Science and International Relations*. Volume 3 (3), 2009:86.

¹⁰Falola, T. et al. *History of Nigeria I: Nigeria before 1800 AD*. (Ibadan: Longman, 1889.) 122-123.

¹¹ This is because an important feature of all human societies is interdependence, for we need one another if for nothing but for survival since no city or community can ever develop through the inputs of her indigenes alone. See Falola et al, 122-123.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

A.S. Yvonne

Several scholars who have studied migration have provided different explanations on the concept. These include: Abdulwahab,¹² Amin,¹³ Crisp,¹⁴ Russell,¹⁵ Ahmad,¹⁶ Bako,¹⁷ and so many others have made reference and relate it to the movement of people of different categories and 'tribes' such as; workers, labourers, merchants, scholars, etc., from one village, town, city, area, geographical zone, state, country and continent to another.¹⁸

Various Phases of the NYSC Scheme

There are four cardinal programmes of the National Youth Service Corps, and they are as follows;

Mobilization: This entails collections and collation of data on all Prospective Corps Members from the various Corps Producing Institutions nation-wide whose graduates are qualified for enlistment into the Scheme. Nigerian graduates from foreign institutions report directly to the Directorate Headquarters Abuja, for the evaluation of their certificates preparatory to deployment. Foreign-trained graduates should note that only those who graduated before they turned 30 are eligible to serve irrespective of their age on arrival in Nigeria. It is age at graduation for the first degree that matters.

¹² Abdulwahab, T. "Ethnic Relations: A Study of Hausa Community in Ogbomosho, Nigeria, 1924 – 1967." In *Journal of Social Science Volume 17*, 2008:259.

¹³ Amin, A. (ed). *Introduction to Modern Migration and Pro-Poor Policy in West Africa*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1974). 92.

¹⁴ Crips, J. "Policy changes of the new Diasporas: Migrant Network and their Impact on Asylum Flows and Regimes." In *New Issues on Refugee Research*. <http://www.jha.sps.com.al.uk/c> p.7

¹⁵ Russel, S. "Workers' Remittances, Remittance Decay and Financial Deepening Countries." <http://www.remodeling.hw.net/industry news.asp>.

¹⁶ Ahmad, A.O. *Colonization and Labour Migration: The Ebira in Owo, Ondo State of Nigeria*. (Nigeria: Zakara Publishing Company Ltd, 2005). 38-43.

¹⁷ Bako, A. *Sabon Gari Kano: A History of Immigrants and Inter-group Relations in the 20th Century*. (Sokoto: Usman Danfodiyo University Press, 2006). 36.

¹⁸ Bako, 36.

NYSC Deployment of Corps Members as a tool for National Integration

Orientation Course: The orientation programme provides the first venue for affecting the desired change of attitude, as participants receive training in preparation for their next assignment of selfless and patriotic service to their fatherland. The Orientation Course usually holds for three weeks (21 days). The purpose of the course is also to introduce corps members to and familiarize them with the ideals of the Scheme. It is compulsory for every participant to be inducted through orientation training before service. At the end of the course, corps members are given posting letters to their various Places of Primary Assignment.

Primary Assignment: The NYSC ensures that corps members posted are properly utilized. Corps members are therefore, as much as possible; posted to areas relevant to their discipline although sometimes national need may override this consideration. Wrong posting or under-utilization of corps members, when established is corrected through reposting by the NYSC secretariat.

Community Development Service (CDS). In identifying with the current national objectives, the NYSC CDS has ventured into agriculture thus several corps members who specialize in agriculture and allied disciplines and who are also posted within the same locality are organized to work in rotational schedules on the farms. Furthermore, the generality of corps members are expected to undertake a year round CDS in addition to their Primary Assignment, at least one Community Development project in their neighborhood, in groups after consultation with the community people. Some suggested projects under the year-round community development programmes are as follows:

- i. Mass literacy.
- ii. Technologies/scientific inventions and fabrications.
- iii. Organizing local people to take more interest in indigenous art, drama, and music and dances.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

A.S. Yvonne

- iv. Public health education, immunization and health care delivery, preventive and curative horticulture, tree planting-landscaping environmental beautification.

It becomes imperative to emphatically state at this juncture that under the leadership of Gen. Ibrahim, the Management of NYSC Scheme has divested into some youth empowerment and entrepreneurship ventures such as; tailoring, printing, food production and processing, cottage industries, using local raw materials and Corps Manpower Resources.

Idea of Service or NYSC Service Scheme

In contemporary times, service has moved from its conceptualization in terms of individual actions and has come to be seen in terms of "societal systems of care and governance"¹⁹ while ways of enacting this have become increasingly formal, institutionalized and cross-cultural. However, the way in which civil service is conceptualized is conditioned by political, ideological, economic, social, as well as cultural beliefs in different societies.²⁰

National service can be presented as a means of achieving unity, to which much lip serve is paid, without any concomitant fundamental political process.²¹ It is therefore clear from these statements that the overriding *raison d'être* of service here is not essentially about the intrinsic value of service, but about what service can do, that is, what results from the process of service as military Head of State affirmed:

¹⁹ Menon, N., Moore, A., Sherraden, M. *Understanding Service: Words in the Context of History and Culture (CSD Working Paper)*. (St. Louis, Missouri: Washington University, Center for Social Development, 2002). 9.

²⁰ Patel, L. "Theoretical Perspectives on the Political Economy of Service." In Perold, H., Stroud, S and Sherraden, M. eds. *Service Enquiry Service in the 21st Century*. (St. Louis, Missouri: GSI, 2003). 15-20.

²¹Statism, E.O. "Youth and Civic Imagination: A Critical Study of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Programme in Nigeria." Centre for Social Development (CSD) Report 05-18 (Washington University in St. Louis, USA. 2005).19 & 21. <http://gwbweb.wustl.edu/csd/gsi>

NYSC Deployment of Corps Members as a tool for National Integration

If Nigeria is to make rapid progress in all fronts and make a mark on the continent of Africa, and indeed, in the comity of nations, her youths must be fully mobilized and be prepared to offer willingly and without asking for return, their best in the service of their nation at all times.²² In other words, the purpose (of the scheme)' says the founding father, Yakubu Gowon, in June 1973 is primarily to inculcate in Nigerian youths, the spirit of selfless service to the community and to emphasize the spirit of oneness and brotherhood of all Nigerians irrespective of cultural background. The history of our country since independence has clearly indicated the need for unity amongst all people.²³

Therefore, contesting the social imaginary of commonality, oneness, spatial contiguity and patriotic fervour which constitute the very foundation of the scheme, reveals the deleterious effects of political dynamics within contemporary Nigerian state on a program which was actually designed to "raise the moral tone of Nigerian youths." This was to be achieved by giving them (the youths) the opportunity to learn and know more about their country and the higher ideals of service to the community – beyond the thought of reward- in addition to consolidating the corporate existence and common destiny of the people of Nigeria.²⁴

National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) whose cardinal aims was the promotion of national unity or unity in diversity and supply of labour to areas of shortage, had played a vital role, in this regard, for example, Igbo migration to Katsina metropolis.²⁵ This shown that NYSC was established by the Gowon administration in 1973²⁶ with a view to

²²General Yakubu Gowon, Nigeria's Military Head of State (1966-1975), during the formal inauguration of the NYSC Directorate, June 4, 1973.

²³Enegwea, G and Umoden, G. *NYSC: Twenty Years of National Service*. (Abuja: NYSC Directorate 1993). 15 & 25.

²⁴Enegwea and Umoden, 12.

²⁵Enegwea and Umoden, 12.

²⁶The NYSC scheme was created in a bid to reconstruct, reconcile and rebuild the country after the Nigerian Civil war. The unfortunate antecedents in our national history gave impetus to the establishment of the National Youth Service Corps by

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

A.S. Yvonne

forging national unity in the country. The scheme affords young graduates of tertiary institutions the opportunity to render one year compulsory service in states other than their own. The programme is viewed as a veritable tool for promoting national unity, inter-tribal or ethnic marriages and other forms of social intercourse among members. This point to the usefulness of the scheme as a vehicle for national unity.²⁷ In other words, the urgent need to ameliorate inter-ethnic relations and to inculcate a sense of national identity among Nigerians. The case of Civil War in Nigeria and subsequent military coups and ethno-religious violence in the country give a note of urgency to this call. To achieve this end, that is, dissipate hostile feelings, prejudice and ethnic rivalries among different ethnic groups, and inculcate the right spirit of tolerance and national identification, the Nigerian government established the National Youth Service Corps programme for all university graduate youths.

The scheme is a cross-cultural education programme which is expected to have a favourable impact on participants' fundamental attitudes towards other ethnic groups and the nation, thereby help bring about national integration. To do this, the scheme demands that the graduate youths are posted to serve among ethnic groups which are different from their own, for one full year. By living and working among the different ethnic groups for such a prolonged period of time, and

decree No.24 of 22nd May 1973 which stated that the NYSC is being established "with a view to the proper encouragement and development of common ties among the youths of Nigeria and the promotion of national unity." In other words, the purpose of the scheme is primarily to inculcate in Nigerian Youths the spirit of selfless service to the community, and to emphasize the spirit of oneness and brotherhood of all Nigerians, irrespective of cultural or social background. The history of Nigeria since independence has clearly indicated the need for unity amongst all its people, and demonstrate the fact that no cultural or geographical entity can exist in isolation. Chikezie, O. F. "NYSC Permanent Orientation Camp, Katampe Extension. Abuja A Study of Adaptable Spaces." {M.Sc. (Arch) Dissertation, University of Nigeria, 2011}. 6-9.

²⁷Tangban, O.E. "History and the Quest for Unity in Nigeria" International Journal of Social Science and Humanity, Volume 4 Number 5, 2014:2.

NYSC Deployment of Corps Members as a tool for National Integration

thereby interacting with them, the government expects that such close contact will lead to better inter-ethnic relations and national identification.²⁸

The Role of Youths in Peace Building

Youths occupy a prominent place in any society. Apart from being the owners and leaders of tomorrow, they outnumber the middle-aged and the aged. Besides numerical superiority, youths have energy and ideas that are society's great potentials. The National Youths Development Policy asserts that.²⁹ Youths are the foundation of a society. Their energies, inventiveness, character and orientation define the pace of development and security of a nation. Through their creative talents and labour power, a nation makes giant strides in economic development and socio-political attainments. In their dreams and hopes, a nation finds her motivation; on their energies, she builds her vitality and purpose. And because of their dreams and aspirations, the future of a nation is assured.³⁰

The statement above acknowledges the role of the youths in the peace and security of a nation. As the most active segment of any society, youths are the major determiners of peace and stability of a nation. Conversely, the degree of disorderliness and instability in society is also determined in part by youths. Peace is a precursor of development. The absence of peace means that no meaningful development can take place. The National Youth Policy affirms that the extent of the youth's

²⁸Onwere, C. "National Youth Service Corps Programme and National Integration in Nigeria." (PhD Thesis, University of London, 1992). 92-97; Chidiogo, C.L. "Design and Implementation of NYSC Orientation Camp Information System (A Case Study NYSCAwgu)." (B.Ed. Project, Caritas University, Amorji Nike Enugu, September, 2012). 1-10 and Edoka, J. "Effective Leadership and Organizational Performance: A Case Study of National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Kogi State." (MSc. Thesis, University of Nigeria Nsukka January, 2012). 61-66.

²⁹Onyekpe, N. (2007), Managing youths at election. *The Constitution: A Journal of Constitutional Development* 7 (1): 76-87.

³⁰ Federal Republic of Nigeria (2001), National Youths Policy

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

A.S. Yvonne

“responsible conduct and roles in society is positively correlated with the development of their country”.³¹

According to Eberly and Gal,³² young people in national youth service organizations can play a vital role in post war community reconstruction, in maintaining peace in tense situations, and perhaps in preventing post-conflict squeal. Nigeria offers an excellent example of the utility of the youth participation in effecting post-conflict reconciliation. In the late 1960s Nigeria was plunged into civil war when one region – called Biafra – tried to break away from the rest of the country. The attempted breakaway can be traced directly to the fact that Nigeria is not a natural country, formed from within. Rather, its borders were drawn by the European powers meeting in Berlin late in the 19th century. They divided people of common language and culture, and they joined people of different cultures.

Biafra failed in its effort to secede, but Nigeria decided it must endeavour to foster national unity. University students and other youth groups called for a national youth's scheme, whose first project would be providing relief in war-torn areas. The Committee of Vice-Chancellors called for one year of service by all university students following their first year. After much debate and considerable controversy, Head of State General Yakubu Gowon issued a decree in 1973 establishing the National Youths Service Corps (NYSC) to develop “common ties among the youth of Nigerian and to promote national unity.”

³¹ Federal Republic of Nigeria (2001), National Youths Policy

³² Eberly, D.J. and Gal1, R. (2007), “A Role for Young People in Building Post-Conflict Civil Society”, International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law / vol. 9, no. 4 August 2007 / Pp. 73-78. Ed. pp 1-15.

NYSC Deployment of Corps Members as a tool for National Integration

The National Youth Service Corps Programme as an Integrative Mechanism

The National Youth Service Corps was established under Decree 24 of 1973, and was promulgated on 22 May 1973. A total of 2, 364 youths participated in its first year. The programme was arrived at to foster unity in the face of ethnic diversity following the unsuccessful attempt of the Eastern Region to secede, which resulted in the 30-month civil war (1967-70). It was urgent upon the Federal Military Government (FMG) to secure the victory over the failed Biafran nation, by setting in motion, an instrument that will ensure a peaceful co-existence not only with the Eastern Region, but also among all ethnic groups across the regions. Indeed, the immediate challenge of the post-war period was how to engage in deliberate social engineering, designing programmes and pursuing policies meant to promote national unity, de-emphasize points of discord among constituent groups, and foster greater inter-ethnic understanding and harmony".³³

The choice of the youth for the programme above every other age group was based on the fact that they are considered as change agents needed for building a united Nigeria, and a way of achieving this is for the youths to imbibe and nurture a sense of common belonging and national consciousness which would transcend political, social, state and ethnic loyalties. The choice of the youth for the programme also stemmed from two continent-wide problems namely: youth unemployment and the emigration of young unskilled people from rural areas to urban ones. It was also a way for the nation to invest in its future; since youths constitute a dominant force for national mobilization and growth.³⁴

³³Obadare, E. (2010). Statism, Youth and Civic Imagination-A critical Study of the National Youth Service Corps Programme in Nigeria. Dakar: CODESRIA.

³⁴ibid

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

A.S. Yvonne

Ojo,³⁵ arguing on the side of policy makers, who were of the opinion that an interaction among the emergent elite especially outside their ethnic base would enhance a better understanding among the various ethnic groups, justified the establishment of the National Youth Service Corps programme. To be sure, the enabling legislation that established the NYSC, Decree 24 of 1973 states explicitly the objectives as well as modus operandi of the programme.

Of great significance to the concept of national integration is the objective of developing common ties among the various youths and to promote national unity by ensuring that the youths are assigned to jobs in states other than their states of origin, with the intent of removing prejudices and eliminating ignorance among the young graduates- the emerging elite.

There are numerous instances of Corps Members who decided to settle down in their host communities after completing their service. They either establish viable businesses or had built prosperous careers where they served.

In a survey carried out on the NYSC in an attempt to foster national unity in the face of ethnic diversity, Iyizoba³⁶ attempts to evaluate the successes of the youth Corps programme in achieving the goal of reducing inter-ethnic prejudice amongst the various ethnic groups in Nigeria. Adopting a cross-sectional strategy and using a sample size of 75 current and past participants of the programme, he discovered that exposure to other ethnic groups were significantly related to prejudice of respondents; in other words, those that have had some exposure to

³⁵Ojo, E. (2009). Federalism and the Search for National Integration in Nigeria. African Journal of Political Science and International Relations , 3(9), 384-395.

³⁶Iyizoba, W. (1982). Nigerian Youth Service Corps: An Evaluation of an Attempt to Foster National Unity in the Face of Ethnic Diversity. The State University of New Jersey, Department of Sociology, Graduate School of Rutgers, New Jersey.Unpublished Ph.D Thesis.

NYSC Deployment of Corps Members as a tool for National Integration

other ethnic groups were significantly less prejudiced than those with no exposure. This result gives the programme a positive score. The policy adopted to post youth to states other than their states of origin has eventually been justified as a right step in the right direction.

Conclusion

The present study was undertaken to investigate the effectiveness of the National Youth Service Corps programme in Nigeria in relation to its major objective which is to help bring about national integration. It also aims to identify factors that have an influenced the promotion or inhibition of integration in the context of the NYSC programme in view of Nigeria's long history of inter-ethnic hostility and political instability.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

A.S. Yvonne

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A.S. Yvonne

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National Youth Service Corps:

7

National Youth Service Corps: Dynamics of Community Development Service for National Integration and Unity in Nigeria

Philibus Audu Nwamagy

Introduction

The National Youth Service Corps was established in 1973 with the mandate to raise a class of patriotic, morally and physically disciplined Nigerian youths who graduated from universities and Polytechnics to undertake the National Service. During the mandatory one year service, corps members live among and within host communities facilitating unity and integration as well as championing community development by executing projects jointly with their host communities. Without

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

P. A. Nwamagi

doubt the commitment of the Scheme's Management and proper guidance of corps members has resulted in great contributions to the social, political and economic transformation of the nation. The NYSC remained in the vanguard of the nation's drive to promote self-help initiatives in rural and urban communities through the various development programmes executed by corps members with active participation of community members.¹

This excerpt encapsulates the main issues that this paper seeks to address. There is plethora of literature on the National Youth Service Corps, some of which touches on the various issues relating to socio-economic and political development of Nigeria. However, a careful review and reconsideration of the extant works shows the need for a reexamination and reevaluation of the perspectives and insights of those scholars for new analysis of the place of the dynamics of the scheme on community development service, national integration and unity of Nigeria.

As part of Gowon's Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation (3Rs) after the civil war, the NYSC Scheme was meant to rebuild and reinsulated the spirit of unity and oneness into Nigerian youths for the wellbeing of the nation.² No nation can achieve any meaningful development without the spirit of oneness and togetherness. The struggle of Nigeria's heroes past for the freedom and independence of Nigeria togetherness for national progress and development and to create a society in which citizen will feel free to pursue their socio-economic objectives without denial or infringement. However,

¹NYSC, *ABC of Community Development Service*, A Publication of the National Youth Service Corps, NYSC Community Development Service and Special Projects, May 2015, iv.

²Bem Japheth Audu, "Brig Gen Shuaibu Ibrahim and the Reinvigoration of NYSC", in CCC Osakwe, OE Tangban, AO Ahmed and LO Udeagbala (eds), *War, Society and Leadership in Nigeria: Essays in Honour of Brigadier General Shuaibu Ibrahim*, Kaduna: NDA Publishers, 2020, 4.

National Youth Service Corps:

primordial sentiments manifesting in ethnic chauvinism, religious bigotry and regional differentiation began to rear their ugly heads as the struggle for power along regional and ethnic ideologies triggered unhealthy contestations that resulted in various frictions. The first military coup d'état of January 15, 1966 and the counter coup of July 29, 1966, created an atmosphere of distrust and suspicion leading to civil unrest. When the civil war came to an end in 1970, there was an urgent need for peace and unity for the survival of the nation, part of which necessitated the introduction of the NYSC scheme.

Establishment and Operation of National Youth Service Corps

One of the significant strategies adopted by the Gowon regime since the end of Nigerian civil war in 1970 was to consolidate on the foundations of country's unity and the introduction of the NYSC scheme.³ The NYSC was among other numerous programs initiated in order to reintegrate a people into a nation engulfed in a civil unrest for almost three years. The Scheme was set up to make Nigerian youth-graduates contribute positively to building a united nation for socio-economic development through Community Development Service for national integration and unity. Although there were no military conscriptions since 1973, Nigerian University and Polytechnics graduates were and are being required to be part of the one year compulsory National Youth Service Corps.⁴

The pioneer National Director of the scheme was Ahmadu Ali who served between 1973 and 1975, while Brigadier General Shuaibu

³Obasi N. K., "Nigeria: The Road to National Unity", in Ajaegbu H. I., Matthew-Daniel B. J. and Uya O. E. (eds.), *Nigeria: A People United, A Future Assured*, Volume 1, A Compendium of Federal Ministry of Information, Millennium Edition, Gabumo Company Publishing Company Limited, 2000, 66.

⁴MareninOtwin, "Implementing Deployment Policies in the National Youth Service Corps of Nigeria", *Comparative Political Studies*, London: SAGE Publishers, 22 (4);, 1990, 397-436.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

P. A. Nwamagi

Ibrahim is the current Director-General.⁵ Between 2016 and 2019, Major General Suleiman Kazaure served as the Director General until his redeployment to the Nigerian Army Resource Centre.⁶ The scheme was to serve as better room for renewed spirit of commitment towards reconciliation, reconstruction, and rebuilding of the nation. Based on the decree No. 24, the goal was to create a fresh mindset of promoting the common areas of national unity among the Nigerian youths.⁷ By the operation of the scheme, corps members are posted outside their states of origin to work for the collective interests of the nation. By this posting, they are expected to mix and inter-mingle with their host communities; a people of varying ethno-religious, socio-cultural as well as family upbringing and background.

This inter-ethnic and socio-cultural mingling enables them to learn the cultures of the indigenous people in their places of posting. The fundamental function of this is to bring about national integration and unity through appreciating the cultures and norms of other ethnic groups. This has had an economic and political impact by promoting peace and national development. Corps members spent three weeks in the camp for Orientation in military controlled camps far away from family and friends. There are orientation camps in each of the states of Nigeria including the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.⁸ After posting

⁵Bem Japheth Audu, "Brig Gen Shuaibu Ibrahim and the Reinvigoration of NYSC", 10.

⁶Odeh G. O., "NYSC's Engagement in the Development of Abuja, 1982-2011", in Rima International Journal of Historical Studies: A Publication of the Department of History, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Sokoto State University, Sokoto, (1)2, 2018, 8.

⁷Odeh G. O., "Demilitarizing and Democratizing the Appointment of NYSC Director General: Forging Civil-Military Relations", in CCC Osakwe, OE Tangban, AO Ahmed and LO Udeagbala (eds), *War, Society and Leadership in Nigeria: Essays in Honour of Brigadier General Shuaibu Ibrahim*, Kaduna: NDA Publishers, 2020, 19.

⁸ElemeV.E., "Effectiveness of the National Youth Service Corps Scheme among 2012-2013 Corps Members in Lagos and Oyo States, Nigeria", PhD Thesis, Institute of Education, University of Ibadan, 2015.

National Youth Service Corps:

them to their Places of Primary Assignment, the corps members work as staff and carry out various community development services for the betterment of their host communities, the states and the nation as a whole. These series of well-organized orientation programmes brought development and growth of the country.

To qualify for participation in the one-year mandatory youth service, Nigerian graduates are not expected be more than 30 years of age at the time of graduation. The graduates whose age exceeded 30 years at point of graduation are issued with Certificates of Exemption in lieu of the Discharge Certificate. The National Youth Service Corps is compulsory for every Nigerian graduate unless, of course, they have served for more than a year in the military and are above 30 years of age as at the age of graduation. Since part-time graduates are not allowed to serve, they are given Exclusion Letters.

Therefore, as a requirement for registration, those who are mobilized for service must possess an active email, phone contact, JAMB and matriculation number to be able register. Those who received their degrees in foreign universities must be sure their institutions are approved and accredited. Graduates from non-English speaking countries must translate their certificates to Nigerian lingua franca-English before they upload it.⁹ Graduates of Nigerian universities are not legible for gainful employment in governmental establishments and even in most private establishments unless they have served and completed the one-year mandatory service. During their active service year, the corps members are opportune to learn the people's total way of life in order to properly integrate themselves into their host communities for progress national unity, cohesion and socio-economic and political development and progress in Nigeria.

⁹Enegwea Gregory and Gabriel Umoden, *NYSC: Twenty Years of National Service*, Lagos: GabumoPublishig Co. Ltd., 1993.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

P. A. Nwamagi

When the Gowon military administration introduced the National Youth Service Corps in 1973, part of the objectives was to encourage the development of common grounds and build ties between Nigerians for the unity of Nigerian youths and by extension, all Nigerians. As succinctly captured in Decree No.51 of 16 June 1993, the objectives of the scheme (paraphrased) include the inculcation of discipline into the Nigerian graduates in preparation for service to the nation. National service instilled the tradition and culture of hard work and industry. They are taught patriotism and loyalty in serving Nigeria in their respective places of primary assignments. In addition national service is built strong moral tone on Nigerian graduates by learning the higher ideals of achievement in the nation in the areas of socio-cultural improvement. Another objective is to develop the right attitudes in the Nigerian youths through the shared experience they acquired in serving and suitable training to make them amenable to spirit of cooperation and mobilization for national interest. Other objectives include enabling the graduates to acquire the skills and spirit of self-reliance through self-employment; to make laudable contributions to the growth and development of the economy of Nigeria as a nation; to build areas of common ties for the unity of the country and national integration; to do away with obvious sentiments, societal prejudices and ignorance in the minds of many youths about Nigerians from other regions and find out first-hand information about the areas of similarity between Nigerian ethnic groups and cultures. NYSC also aimed at developing the sense of togetherness and corporate existence for the purpose building and sustaining a common destiny of all Nigerian peoples.¹⁰

¹⁰Obasi N. K., "Nigeria: The Road to National Unity", in Ajaegbu H. I., Matthew-Daniel B. J. and Uya O. E. (eds.), *Nigeria: A People United, A Future Assured*, Volume 1, A Compendium of Federal Ministry of Information, Millennium Edition, Gabumo Company Publishing Company Limited, 2000, 66.

National Youth Service Corps:

Corps members are equitably distributed to various states of Nigeria including Abuja for effective and efficient use of acquired skills in all areas of national interest and needs. Nigerian graduates are given jobs in other states of Nigeria outside their states of origin for national service. The fact that Nigerian youth graduates carry out the task assigned to them and worked together in unity represents Nigerian aim for establishing the scheme. Through the one year compulsory service, Nigerian youths are exposed to the modes of living of the people in different parts of Nigeria and are encouraged to imbibe the spirit of ethnic and religious tolerance through accommodating people with different religious, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. That corps members are encouraged to seek at the end of their one-year national service, career employment all over Nigeria is a direct promotion of free movement of labor that induced in employees partly through their community service experience with other corps members to employ more readily and on a permanent basis, qualified Nigerians, irrespective of their States of origin.¹¹

NYSC and Dynamics of Community Development Service

At this point, it is important to examine the dynamics of National Youth Service Corps to community development service, national integration and unity of Nigeria for socio-economic progress and development. The concept community service has been defined differently by different people based on their perception and experienced. However, the term is generally used to imply any mandatory and voluntary service, unpaid or unpaid rendered by an individual, group of people or community for the wellbeing, benefits and betterment of the individual and the community at any given time without any direct benefit of compensation. Community development service is categorized into

¹¹Obasi N. K., "Nigeria: The Road to National Unity", in Ajaegbu H. I., Matthew-Daniel B. J. and Uya O. E. (eds.), *Nigeria: A People United, A Future Assured*, Volume 1, A Compendium of Federal Ministry of Information, Millennium Edition, Gabumo Company Publishing Company Limited, 2000, 66.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

P. A. Nwamagi

group community development service, in which corps members use a day in a week for group CDS activities. On that day, the groups are not expected to attend duties in their places of Primary assignment on CD days. Such days are dedicated to the execution of projects and programmers that will improve the living conditions of their host communities.¹²

For personal or individual community development service, the projects or programmers executed by the individual corps members in their host communities based on community felt-needs. The corps members look out for areas where they could make impacts in the community. It could include construction projects like building of toilets, incinerators, bridges, classrooms, games facilities for schools or social projects such as establishment of ICT laboratory, school libraries, extramural classes, campaigns, charity work, vocational training for empowerment of unemployed youths in the community. Collaborative community development service is the type that the NYSC scheme partners with National and Non-Governmental Organizations and other establishments to implement development programmes.¹³ There has been attempt to distinguish community development service from other types of volunteer services. This is because community development service often is not done on a volunteering ground, but mandatory basis in many occasions. Community development service is not always without benefits to those carrying out the service.

The dynamics of community development service is such that it brings personal benefits and also fulfills citizenship obligation and requirements. In addition, community service is sometimes a

¹²NYSC, *ABC of Community Development Service*, A Publication of the National Youth Service Corps, NYSC Community Development Service and Special Projects, May 2015, iv.

¹³NYSC, *ABC of Community Development Service*, A Publication of the National Youth Service Corps, NYSC Community Development Service and Special Projects, May 2015, iv.

National Youth Service Corps:

substitution for criminal justice, sanctions, requirements of institutions of learning such as schools and or class as requisites for the qualification of certain benefits within the institutions or community where the service is been carried out. As a background, it is imperative to notes that community development service is a duty carried out by an individual, group of persons or the entire community of people who shares common interest. Community development service is often carried out for the benefit of the people or inhabitants of the community and its institutions. Community development service is often mandated to meet certain school requirements. This could be class service as a condition for graduation.

Borehole Renovated by 2012 Batch 'B' and 'C' and 2013 Batch 'A' Corps in Indira



Source: Borehole CDS Projects Executed by 2012 Batch 'B' and 'C' and 2013 Batch 'A', Indira Sub-Zone, Mangu Local Government, Plateau State, Nigeria.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

P. A. Nwamagi

The figure shows 2012 Batch 'B', Batch 'C' and 2013 Batch 'A' corps members constructing a borehole at Gindiri Sub-Zone, Mangu Local Government, Plateau State, Nigeria in 2013. In their community development service projects, the corps members executed various services such as sweeping and cleaning of Gindiri and Pyem Markets on weekly basis. They also organized tutorial lessons for WAEC and JAMB candidates for 2013 exams.¹⁴ These projects and community development programs contributed significantly to the development of the host community.

In Nigeria, more than the required community service, religious organizations stress volunteer service to the host community for the wellbeing of the nation as a whole. The Nigerian Christian Corps Fellowship (NCCF) carried out lots of community cum mission works for the purpose of bettering the lives of various communities in Nigeria. Part of the activities they engaged in include organizing varying programmes for children, such as hosting the Red Cross blood drives. Through these community development services, the community and religious organizations such as churches benefitted directly. Corps members in collaboration with churches organize non-profit programs to help the general public. These roles exposed the Batches 'A' and 'B' 2012 Corps Members to national service relating to conduct of election.

Just like in developed societies such as the United States of America, Canada, Europe and Australia, in Nigeria community development service is also an alternative for various criminal punishment in place of incarceration. For example, the Nigerian Prisons Bill, which was signed by President Muhammadu Buhari in December, 2018 brought with it novelties of non-custodial service such as community service probation and parole. In like manner, in the United Kingdom, community service is recognized as a form of compulsory unpaid work

¹⁴Borehole CDS Projects Executed by 2012 Batch 'B' and 'C' and 2013 Batch 'A', Gindiri Sub-Zone, Mangu Local Government, Plateau State, Nigeria, 2013.

National Youth Service Corps:

encapsulating up to 300 hours of activities. Some institutions give incentive to the students or employees carrying out such community development services. This is true in Nigeria, as corps members are paid stipend for the one year mandatory service rendered to the Nigeria. Institutions, government and non-governmental organizations provide employees with valuable job opportunities to work together and participate in community development service.¹⁵

NYSC: National Integration And Unity In Nigeria

NYSC is arguably one of the most visionary programmes in furtherance of Nigeria's unity. Its primary objective has been to inculcate in Nigerian youths attitudes of mind acquired through shared experience and suitable training that would make them more amenable to mobilisation in the national interest.¹⁶ National integration has been defined differently by different scholars. One of such definitions sees it as a process by which states within a nation willingly agreed to mingle, merge and mix with their neighbors for socio-economic, political, military, security and diplomatic reasons. National integration is a phenomenon through which territorial state systems intensify their interactions based on their common interests and collective good in order to create new forms of organization, co-existing with traditional forms of state-led organization at the national level.

It is a process by which states within a particular country intensify their level of interaction for economic, security, political, or social and cultural issues. In other word, national integration is the joining of individual states within a nation into a larger whole. The level of

¹⁵NYSC, *ABC of Community Development Service*, A Publication of the National Youth Service Corps, NYSC Community Development Service and Special Projects, May 2015, iv.

¹⁶Obasi N. K., "Nigeria: The Road to National Unity", in Ajaegbu H. I., Matthew-Daniel B. J. and Uya O. E. (eds.), *Nigeria: A People United, A Future Assured*, Volume 1, A Compendium of Federal Ministry of Information, Millennium Edition, Gabumo Company Publishing Company Limited, 2000, 66.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

P. A. Nwamagi

integration depends on the willingness and commitment of independent states within the nation to promote their common interest.¹⁷ Since 1960 when Nigeria gained political independence from their erstwhile colonialists, there have been several efforts by the various past governments to foster ethnic cohesion and unity for the development of the nation in the socio-economic and political facets of the nation. The relationships helped the graduates developed interactions that broke societal stereotypes militating against progressive unity and development in Nigeria. The interactions facilitated better opinions and viewpoints around different topics and issues that make Nigeria a diverse people.

The wrong beliefs that all people with a certain features are the same were corrected. This is because stereotypes always reveal themselves in swift and quick judgments mainly off the visible and practicable characteristics. In breaking all stereotypes, community service helps participants and the beneficiaries to realize that not everyone falls into these pre-conceived ideas. Along with breaking down stereotypes, community service work can assist people in realizing that those they are helping and working with are no different from themselves. This realization leads to empathizing with other people and also learn to understand the needs and motivations of others, especially those who live different lives from our own, is an important part of living a productive life. This leads to a view of humanity that can help a person stay free of biased opinions of others and can lead to a more diverse and ultimately more productive and thought provoking life.

¹⁷ Haas Ernst B., 'The Study of Regional Integration: Reflections on the Joy and Anguish of Pre-theorizing', 1971, 3-44; Leon N. Lindberg and Stuart A. Scheingold (eds.), *Regional Integration: Theory and Research*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; Carr, E.H. *The Twenty Years Crisis, 1919-1939*. Macmillan, 1978, 230-231.

National Youth Service Corps:

National unity is a spirit of oneness, togetherness and cooperation in the interest of the nation. National is first and above personal, grouping, party, regional and or sectional, ethnic and religious interest. Unity must be expressed in words and actions; it is wishful thinking and lips service. National unity means sacrificing personal interest for the interest of all. The NYSC has been very useful in Nigeria's quest for national unity. This is because through the Scheme, Nigerians that participated in the national service developed a greater sense of belonging and cohesion.¹⁸ Over the years, the NYSC was used as a strategy to deploy graduates to work in other states of the federation different from their states of origin and away from their geographical, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Through the scheme, Nigerian youths were organized to work in groups as representatives in various parts of the country and by so doing they were exposed to the modes of living of the people in different states and regions of the country. This removes all the prejudices and eliminates various forms of ignorance about the country by confirming directly the numerous similarities among Nigerians of all ethnic groups. In the past 48 years of its operations, about 4.7 million Nigerian graduates have participated in the Scheme through its numerous programmes.¹⁹

National Youth Service Corps and National Development

Community Development Service requires choosing the right strategy in order to achieve fruitful result and outcome. Those seeking to engage in community development service must be able to form formidable associations. The civilian population should develop a relentless desire and aptitude for community development service without the direct involvement of the government in order to address the socio-economic

¹⁸Obasi N. K., "Nigeria: The Road to National Unity", 66.

¹⁹Ibrahim Shuaibu, Director General, National Youth Service Corps, Agency Report, August 15, 2019.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

P. A. Nwamagi

needs of the people in the communities. They should be able to understand the root causes of challenges confronting the community and initiate projects aimed at addressing such problems. The independence and autonomy of the intermediate bodies in society such as schools, press, business, and the arts is important for effective development of the community and the nation. Communities should have the right and autonomy to organize, and manage community development service groups and organizations for the betterment of their societies. Community service is therefore a tool for preparing and empowering the people to help build a better society where peace and unity is feasible. This will further create new employment opportunities and bring about better lifestyle to avoid destructive decisions.

Many young university and polytechnic graduates who get involved in community service through the National Youth Service Corps come out with better perceptions of their worldview. Through their participation in community development service they are prepared for national service and development of their respective communities, states and the nation as a whole. For example, the 2012 Batch 'B' Corps Members that served in Plateau State, Mangu Local Government Area and Gindiri sub-zone participated in community development service. They were able to rehabilitate a borehole for the benefit of their host-community, the entire Gindiri District.

They also engaged in the weekly sweeping and cleaning of the Gindiri market, which helped to promote marketing, trade and commerce for the development of the economy. Their service gave them better understanding of the diversity of Nigeria. Community development services enable these corps members to appreciate the culture and norms of the people of Gindiri thereby breaking the societal stereotypes. This makes them responsible citizens and positioned them for better national service and development. Therefore, participating in the community development service projects by the 2012 Batch 'Corps

National Youth Service Corps:

members made them to interact with one another and build personal relationships across cultural divides.

Each community development service project gives insightful knowledge and experience to the participants in various areas. In some instances, participants internalize the information they found insightful and use in the future. Community service is valuable to the recipients and also beneficial to those serving. Their service brings positive changes to the society for a better Nigeria. Institutions of learning such as schools always take students on community service projects to help them learn how their individual actions affect the well-being of the public. Community development service helps participants to discover the effects of their serve in fostering the public view of a purpose service. After serving in various community projects those involved in the service may learn that for a long period of time, they have an advantage in real-world experience.

In other words, the practical experience gained in community development service positions the participants well ahead of others in the society. Eventually, the skills and knowledge acquired and obtained while working with the community becomes useful and applicable in future areas of work. Community development service also increases a participant's social capital and connectivity because most community service opportunities allow others to interact and work with other individuals. This service therefore, helps volunteers network and connect with others towards a common goal in national development. The people of any society gain mostly from their community service projects particularly whenever they volunteer their time, energy and resources to help those they have never met or interacted with. This express and direct contact gives people the opportunity to view the reality of life from a different point of view and reconsider the opinions they formed about people from other regions, cultures and ethnic background.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

P. A. Nwamagi

Religious bodies and other organizations promote community development service because they are called to serve people. Christians for instance, see the importance of community service to show God's love and to further spread the gospel. Some non-governmental (NGOs) community service organizations were founded by Christians seeking to put their beliefs into practice. Aside the benefits of community service to society as a whole, community service have personal benefits of serving to the individual and or group doing the service. Community service gives the participants the avenue to ponder on the impactful difference they are making in societal development. Community service gives the participants greater understanding of the project in the community and the impact of their contributions towards the needy. It exposes those who serve to different people, personalities, environments and circumstances.

Criticisms of the NYSC Scheme

In recent years, some people have expressed mixed feelings as to whether or not the reasons for community development service have been justified. To some, community development service is a waste of time, resources and energy. Some of those who held this position believe that one should rather commit his or her time to national service for the purpose of bringing benefits to the individual carrying out the service.

The recent challenges of insecurity in the country have raised questions concerning the relevance of sustaining the National Youth Service program. To some, this as a matter of urgency calls for dialogue in the best interest of socio-economic development of Nigeria. Preemptive measures must be taken in order to avoid future incidents of violence.

The integrity and nobility of the program must be upheld by addressing the aforementioned issues. It also appears that in spite of the laudable objectives of establishing the scheme, religious bigotry, ethnic jingoism and regional sentiments still beclouds the nation's political landscape

National Youth Service Corps:

thereby hindering the emergence of credible leaders that will steer the affairs of Nigeria putting national interest above sectional, regional, religious and ethnic interest.

In developed climes such as the United States of America, educational jurisdictions demand that students perform community service for certain number of hours to qualify for graduation from high school and other educational institutions. For instance, in some high schools in Washington DC, students must complete at least 200 hours of community service to qualify for a diploma certificate. In other instances, community service is differentiated from school service-learning in some districts in Washington, including Seattle Public Schools, which requires that students demonstrate that their service-learning work contributed to their education.²⁰

Conclusion

The significance of National Youth Service Corps Scheme to community development service, national integration and unity of Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized. The scheme provided solid ground for national interaction between the Nigerian youths. This provided a platform for cross-cultural relations necessary for national development. After the civil war in 1970, there was high level of suspicion and distrust among Nigerians. For Nigeria to remain an indivisible and indissoluble nation, one and the same nation, there is need to do away with such unhealthy feeling of hatred and distrust. Community development service is a programme undertaken by all corps members throughout the service year. As one of the four cardinal programmes of the scheme, CDS enables corps members to register their physical presence in their host communities. Furthermore, opportunities are given for harnessing the creativity of Corps members for the rapid development of the host community with the active participation of the community members.

²⁰Kirk-Green Anthony and Douglass Rimmer, Nigeria since 1970: A Political and Economic Outline, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1981.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

P. A. Nwamagi

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THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

Helen Noor

8

NYSC and the Challenges of National Integration

Helen Noor

Introduction

The effort of achieving national integration among the various ethnic, religious, political and socio-economic groups in Nigeria have remained a difficult national challenge since the amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorate in 1914. This is particularly baffling considering the efforts of all government regimes since independence towards national integration, the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) is one of such programs, yet the gap between the various groupings seems wider as the nation is still plagued with ethnic rivalry, religious intolerance, political exclusion, quest for self-determination, power sharing and violent agitations, to mention a few.

NYSC and the Challenges of National Integration

This paper examines the challenges militating against national integration in Nigeria using the NYSC as a tool for the study. The findings revealed that the NYSC scheme has come a long way in promoting national integration in Nigeria. However, national integration remains a difficult task due to some factors such as insecurity: the continuous attacks carried out by Boko Haram, banditry, kidnapping, continuous farmers/herders clash and other militia agitating for self-rule and autonomy are bane to national integration in Nigeria.

The Concept of National Integration

Flip Lindo refers to integration as the process of settlement, interaction with the host society, and social change that follows as a result of migration. From the moment these migrated populace arrive in a host society, they must “secure a place” for themselves. Seeking a place for them is a very literal task: Migrants must find a home, a job and income, schools for their children, and access to health facilities. They must find a place in a social and cultural sense as well, as they have to establish cooperation and interaction with other individuals and groups get to know and use institutions of the host society, and become recognized and accepted in their cultural specificity. Yet, this is a two-way process. The host society does not remain unaffected. The size and composition of the population change, and new institutional arrangements come into existence to accommodate immigrants’ political, social, and cultural needs¹.

Clare Ferguson in his work titled “promoting social integration” defines social integration as the process of promoting the values, relations and institutions that enable all people to participate in social, economic and political life on the basis of equality of rights and opportunity, equity and dignity. Social integration describes the

¹F. Lindo, The Concept of Integration as an Analytical Tool and as a Policy Concept in Rinus Penninx *Integration Processes and Policies in Europe*(University of Amsterdam. 2016). 120

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

Helen Noor

process of building institutions that promote a society for all on the principles of social justice.²

Fatile and Adejuwon define national integration as the process whereby several desperate groups within a given territorial entity are united together or co-operate under conditions which do not appear to permit satisfaction of the system needs in any other way. They concluded by stating that the goal of national integration is an arrangement in a plural society where component parts are reasonably contented in the polity vis-a-vis equity and justice in resource allocation and access to equal opportunities. It could also be stated that it is the reduction of cultural and regional tensions and discontinuities in the process of creating a prosperous homogenous political community.³

Morrison and Stevenson also defines national integration as the degree of cohesion that binds members of social systems together, and is generally thought of in terms of the values, institutions and communications which facilitate escalating sequences of social contact, cooperation and consensus.⁴

M. Oni, and A. Ogundinwin, refers to National integration as the process of unifying a multi-ethnic country, not necessarily into a single-ethnic one but into a united indivisible entity where primordial affiliations are exempted or made secondary for the greater good of the united

² C. Ferguson, Report commissioned by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) for the Expert Group Meeting on Promoting Social Integration, Helsinki, Finland, 8-10 July 2008

³ J. Fatile, and K. Adejuwon, Ethnicity and National Integration in Nigeria: The post Colonial Experience, In A. Osuntokun, A. Ukaogo, and A. Akachi, (eds). *Nigerian Studies- Readings in History, Politics, Society and Culture.* (New Jersey: Goldmine and Jacob Publishers, 2010). 35-40.

NYSC and the Challenges of National Integration

country.⁵ It can also be seen as the building of a national state of different social, economic, religious, ethnic and geographical elements which entails the conversion of diffused and unorganized sentiments on nationalism into a spirit of citizenship through the creation of state institutions that can translate into policies and programs and aspirations of the citizenry⁶.

In this light, national integration can be defined as a deliberate effort by a government to create Policies that will promote unity and cooperation among citizens to foster national integration and development. This is to reduce ethnic tension, suspicious among ethnic minority, and acceptance of a central system that works for all.

The Need for National Integration

The Nigerian civil war was a catalyst that rocked the emergent Nigerian state from 1967 to 1970. The 30 months civil war was preceded by a configuration of pre-independence and post-independence crises. The Origins of the civil war could be located in a complexity of factors ranging from the remote which includes remote factors such as the regional election crisis in Western Nigeria in 1965; the Tiv riots of 1964; the Federal Elections of 1964; the killing of the Igbos living in Northern Nigeria from May to September 1966, the structural imbalance of the Nigerian federation; and, most importantly, the asymmetrical distribution of power among the various ethnic and geopolitical groups; as well as the military coups d'état of January 15, and July 29, 1966.

⁵ M. Oni, and A. Ogundinwin, Four Republics: A Critical Discourse of the Culture of Political Parties, In Osuntokun A. A. Ukaogo, O. Akachi, (eds). *Nigerian Studies-Readings in History, Politics, Society and Culture.*(New Jersey: Goldmine and Jacob Publishers, 2010). 28-30.

⁶"A Cup of Tea From Yakubu Gowon". *All Africa*. 22 October 2012. Retrieved 28 December 2015

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

Helen Noor

The Challenges of NYSC in National Integration

The NYSC program has been met with criticism from sections of the country. A few youth carrying out the NYSC program have been killed in the regions where they were sent due to religious, ethnic or political violence. Corps members also face difficulties in areas of attack by hoodlums, lack of accommodation, portable water, and cultural intolerance. Besides the issue of security, many have questioned the continued importance of the NYSC program, below are some of the challenges the scheme faces in its pursuit of national integration.

Political Threats and Insecurity

Elections in Nigeria have triggered series of political violence, which at times lead to the killing and displacement of corps members. These unfortunate events send a bad signal to the populace rather than national integration philosophy of the scheme. Politicians are desperate to score cheap political points even more so are their supporters. The presidential election of 2011 was greeted with violence and while reacting on the killings of these patriots in national service, Wole Soyinka condemned it as a premeditated act. He stated that I was really shocked by the note of satisfaction, almost sadistic reaction at the killings... There was always a kind of glory in what was always going on, which made me wonder why we all call ourselves Nigerians. It makes me wonder whether we all have the same project in mind when we go to polls, or whether we all have the same destination in mind, when we embark on events. A female corps member who said she escaped miraculously told tales of how she and other corps members on electoral duty were forced to thumbprint for a particular party in Giade Local Government Area of Bauchi State, tortured and even fondled by the irate protesters, and how eleven of them were butchered like animals. The Boko Haram sect, backed by their bomb-blast terrorism in Northern Nigeria has practically

NYSC and the Challenges of National Integration

planted the psychology of fear among parents and Nigerian graduates that are waiting for NYSC deployment.⁷

The problem of disunity among Nigerian peoples and groupings do not seem to emanate from lack of constitutional, political, cultural, educational and religious commitment to national integration and unity. Indeed, there have been commitments by successive government administrations to maintain and uphold the unity of the country. However, the problem seems to lie with the manner in which these policies and programmes have been implemented by the ruling elites⁸. The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Scheme was introduced in 1973 to aid national integration in Nigeria as stated in Decree No. 24 of 22nd May, 1973 (supplanted by Act CAP N84 LFN in 2004). According to the Act, the scheme is to among other things, develop common ties among Nigerian youths and promote national unity and integration" (NYSC, 2004). It was hoped that the scheme would assist in addressing problems of ethnic loyalties, mutual group suspicion and distrust, which have eaten deep into the fabrics of Nigerian society. The Scheme is implemented such that fresh tertiary institution graduates are deployed to serve the nation in states or communities other than their states of origin with the intention of broadening their socio-cultural orientation and to instill the virtue of tolerance.

Lack of Equal Opportunity to Employment and Empowerment Scheme Employments are not given to youths based on merit; a lot of sentiment is involved when carrying out recruitments like status, tribe, religion and other factors which have caused resentment. The major problem is the un-relenting lobbying by Nigerians (particularly the well-placed in the society) for their children and wards to serve in selected states, urban areas and places where the corps members have contacts to

⁷ C. Okafor J. K. ANI "The National Youth Service Corps Programme and Growing Security Threat in Nigeria" *Africa's public service delivery & performance review*, Vol. 2 , No2,(2014), 150.

⁸ P. Udende and A.A. Salau, National Youth Service Corps Scheme and the Quest for National Unity and Development: *A Public Relations Perspective*, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria. 2012.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

Helen Noor

secure lucrative jobs after service. Secondly some states still operate discriminatory employment polices to the disadvantage of non-indigenes. The exposure of the corps members to open practice of nepotism by their employers dampens the zeal of service and leads the corps members to openly question the issues of national integration⁹.

Geographical threats

Parents of prospective corps members as well as serving corps members might be afraid of letting their wards go to some northern parts of Nigeria with a history of recurrent violent attacks from Islamist terrorists.

Conclusion

All the efforts by the various successive governments to overcome the challenges of national integration have not achieved the desired outcome between and within the different entities that make up Nigeria for more than sixty years of independence. This is a call for a national change in the approach, towards national integration; we also need our leaders to be sincere in their quest for national integration. It is evident that structural, constitutional and policy initiatives cannot promote national integration without appreciable change in the value orientation (mindset) and material conditions of the Nigerian citizens. National integration will remain a fantasy without appreciable change in the mindset that blames colonialism for the challenges of national integration.

The role of the National Orientation Agency (NOA) in the process of national integration is very important, the Agency should be well funded to enable it realize its mandate through a value reorientation programme that focuses on fostering national integration. For the change in the mindset of Nigerians to be attained and sustained; the problem of social inequality must be addressed; there has to be an appreciable and corresponding change in the area of wealth

⁹ G. Enegwea and G. Umoden, *NYSC: Twenty years of natuial service Gabumo* publisher, Yaba Lagos, 1993.

NYSC and the Challenges of National Integration

distribution among citizens. The security of lives and properties should be a high priority. The above challenges are not exhaustive but if addressed will definitely enhance the prospects for national integration in Nigeria.

The eradication of Illiteracy and poverty should receive adequate attention. This will free majority of the Nigerians from the manipulations of self-serving political elite that have continuously exploited them against their political opponents each time they lose elections or do not achieve their political aspirations thereby creating the rhetoric of disintegration. The study, therefore, recommends careful implementation and regular evaluation of the scheme to make it possible for it to achieve most of its set goals, national integration being the topmost. Corrupt NYSC officials should be flushed out of the system by replacing them with people of high integrity. Above all the NYSC alone is not able to foster the kind of integration that is expected to cause significant change in Nigeria without the help of other agencies with the aims and objectives.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

Helen Noor

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The NYSC and Its Contribution to National Integration

9

The NYSC and Its Contribution to National Integration

Suleiman Bilal Ishaq

Introduction

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi religious nation and sadly all these diversities have impacted adversely on her socio-political existence. Even before independence, the deep seated division that have manifested among the different ethnic nationalities is worth mentioning. More so, the events of 1966-1970 called to question the unity and continued existence of Nigeria as an ethnically segmented nation. The Federal Military Government led by General Yakubu Gowon (rtd.) established the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) programme

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

S. B. Ishaq

as a means of achieving national integration in the face of mutual suspicion and hostility.¹

National development is central to government planning and activities. However it cannot thrive especially in heterogeneous nations if there is no peace or national integration. In Nigeria, the need for unity and curbing of all centrifugal forces immediately after the civil war led to the introduction of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) through Decree No. 24 of 22nd May, 1973. Therefore, the NYSC scheme was established as an instrument for national reconstruction, reconciliation and rehabilitation, after the 30- month Nigerian civil war. The unfortunate antecedents in the nation's history necessitated the establishment of the NYSC. The Federal Government made it crystal clear that the Scheme was established "with a view to the proper encouragement and development of common ties among the youths of Nigeria and the promotion of national unity"²

The heterogeneous nature of Nigeria and the events preceding the introduction of NYSC have elicited an avalanche of arguments for and against the continued existence of the Scheme. With a plethora of ethnic, religious and political crises that currently pervade the nation, reservations have been expressed on the effectiveness of the NYSC in facilitating the much needed integration as envisaged in the establishing Act. The NYSC has remained on the headlines of national dailies in Nigeria given that some parts of Nigeria have gradually slipped into structural anarchy on account of insurgency and banditry; while in the South, militancy and kidnapping hold sway.³

¹F.A. Aremu , "National Youth Service Corps Programme and the Quest for National Integration: Issues for Policy Consideration", *Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, Vol.7 No.1 (2018). 279-296.

²F.A. Aremu , "National Youth Service Corps Programme..."

³F.A. Aremu , "National Youth Service Corps Programme..."

The NYSC and Its Contribution to National Integration

Over 40 years after its establishment, security challenges are threatening the existence of the NYSC scheme. The fear of corps members being posted to volatile states became worrisome. Insecurity and insurgency have created fears that the NYSC Scheme might have outlived its relevance. Indeed, the relevance of this all important programme was called to question with the pronouncement by the House of Representatives on Tuesday, July 3, 2012, barring the NYSC from posting corps members to volatile states in the northern parts of the country.⁴

The Concept of National Integration

Nigeria is bedevilled by a myriad of problems which, despite its oil wealth, inhibit its development and even threaten its continued existence as a sovereign state. The country is a conglomeration of diverse nationalities, ethnic and linguistic entities “under a single territorial and institutional framework”⁵. According to Shona⁶ national integration is the consciousness of a common identity amongst the citizens of a country. This means that though people belong to different religions and regions and speak different languages they take cognizance of the fact that they are one. The significance of this consciousness in building a strong and prosperous nation cannot be overemphasized⁷.

National integration and unity in a country is different from the kind of oneness that comes from racial and cultural similarity. However, it

⁴O. Adedayo, Nigeria: NYSC - Trudging On, 37 Years After. Daily Independent, 18 July.

⁵C. Agbodike, Federal Character Principle and National Integration, In K. Amuwo et al (eds), Federalism and Political Restructuring in Nigeria. (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, 1982).177 – 190.

⁶C. Agbodike, Federal Character Principle and National Integration...

⁷A. Egunyomi,. The National Youth Service Corps: A Bridge to Nationalism in Nigeria. Retrieved from <https://www.cfr.org/blog/national-youth-service-corps-bridge-nationalism-nigeria>.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

S. B. Ishaq

depicts unity in diversity. National integration mechanisms in Nigeria include, among others, Federal unity schools, the federal character principle, relocation of the federal capital territory to Abuja considered to be the center of the country, revenue sharing formula/fiscal federalism and the NYSC programme. The Federal Character Principle was initiated by the Federal Government of Nigeria as a policy framework to achieve fair and effective representation of the different federating units of the country in positions of power, status and influence⁸.

The principle was given the legal back up as it was enshrined in 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria with the goal to accommodate the diverse ethno-religious and geographical shades in the decision-making, socio-political and economic apparatuses of the state⁹. The rationale behind the policy was to foster peace, unity, equity in the distribution of the common wealth of the nation and ensure even development by adequately integrating less advantaged states in the affairs of the country. However, the application of this policy has been called to question by the activities of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and other public institutions on issues of recruitment, promotion etc.¹⁰

Some Nigerians are of the view that this policy engenders mutual mistrust and tend to breed instability as people continuously cry of marginalization. It also brings about ‘square pegs in round holes’ as it does not encourage merit.¹¹ An important historical programme through which this unity has been pursued is the National Youth

⁸J.A. Ayoade, Nigeria:Positive Pessimism and Negative Optimism. A Paper delivered at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ibadan.

⁹A.B. Adeosun, “Federal Character Principle and National Integration: A Critical Appraisal”. *International Journal of Politics and Good Governance*, Vol2, No.2: 1-13.

¹⁰A.B. Adeosun, “Federal Character Principle and National Integration...

¹¹A.B. Adeosun, “Federal Character Principle and National Integration...

The NYSC and Its Contribution to National Integration

Service Programme (NYSC). Nigeria is a very vast country both in population and landmass, and indeed the most populous black nation in the world, with an exceptionally large land mass.

The religious, social and cultural diversities that define the Nigerian nation have constituted a huge challenge to the country's search for unity. General Yakubu Gowon during the formal inauguration of NYSC on June 4, 1973 stated that; If Nigeria is to make rapid progress on all fronts internally, and if she is to make her marks on the continent of Africa, and indeed, in the comity of nations, her youths must be fully mobilized and be prepared to offer willingly and without asking for rewards in return, their best in the service of their nation at all times.¹² The argument that no meaningful development can be achieved in a state of rancour and acrimony is the rationale behind the National Youth Service programme. By 2013, an estimated total of 2,000 Nigerian young graduates drawn from across the states of the federation were deployed to the FCT. This suggests that virtually all the tribes in the country are properly represented in the FCT. These young men and women lived with the FCT indigenes learning their way of life, eating their local food, adopting their dress code, inter-marrying with them etc. Marriage between corps members and indigenes fashions out great bond/cord of relationship that spans ages, thereby limiting chances of hostility among Nigerians.

The elimination of every form of racial, ethnic or religious impediments or barriers to the free and unbridled interaction among Nigerians has remained a huge task. Often people have very strong feelings for their own religion and language and oppose those of others. Such primordial feelings culminate in strife/clashes between different sects, religions, tribes etc. This state of affairs affects adversely national unity and hinders even development. The colonial rulers had fanned the ambers of division because a gap between Christians and Muslims (North and

¹²A.B. Adeosun, "Federal Character Principle and National Integration..."

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

S. B. Ishaq

South) made it easier for them to control the diverse groups in Nigeria. Regrettably however, in spite of the passage of time these feelings have persisted.

More than five decades after independence, mistrust still exists and riots easily break out today in many parts of the country. This is a consequence of narrow-mindedness, prejudices and lack of knowledge of other religions. Attaching much importance to religious considerations rather than unity and continued existence of Nigeria portends grave danger for its national unity and development. Therefore, tolerance, mutual love and understanding for other religions and tribes are important in order to destroy all the centrifugal forces. Interestingly, this is one of the cardinal objectives of the National Youth Service Corps. Integration entails a process of structural connection between two or more parts of a system or systems.¹³ The significance of integration in a society is better understood from the functionalist perspective where the society is seen as comprising sub-systems that are interdependent.

From the above it can be said that in a heterogeneous society like Nigeria, every section or part needs the other parts for survival. Therefore, the different ethnic nationalities are interrelated and interdependent sub-units that must function in unity for the good of all. Integration can be social, cultural, economic or political in nature. At the national level, integration is always political in nature. In other words, it is the political integration that keeps a country united first before other forms of integration. Integration starts from the individual consciousness of mutual respect for national unity. It is achieved when political actors of the various ethnic nationalities in a country jettison

¹³B. Odumade, National Youth Service Corps: In search of Relevance. Retrieved from <https://guardian.ng/opinion/national-youth-service-corps-in-search-of-relevance/>. Accssed 23/02.2021.

The NYSC and Its Contribution to National Integration

or abandon primordial ethnic loyalties, and embrace national identity.¹⁴

Therefore, national integration is a process that seeks to erode the manifestation of micro-nationalities in place of a spirit of nationhood.¹⁵ It is clear that individuals are the units of integration, and members of a nation are integrated as they share a common identity. Thus, the term national integration is not applicable to a single nation, but involves two or more nations. A state is a political entity that is in many cases made of more than one nationality group. Thus, for example Nigeria constitutes of over 250 ethnic groups.¹⁶

Contributions of the NYSC towards National Integration

The National Youth Service Corps established by Decree 24 of 1973, and promulgated on 22nd May, 1973 with a total of 2, 364 youths who participated in its first year was aimed at fostering unity in the face of ethnic diversity following the unsuccessful attempt of the Eastern Region to secede, which resulted in the 30-month civil war (1967-70). It became urgent upon the Federal Military Government of Nigeria to reshape the country after the unsuccessful attempt by the Biafran state to secede, by setting a mechanism that will engender peaceful co-existence and cooperation among the people of the country. The immediate challenge of the post-war period was how to engage in deliberate social engagements, designing specific programmes and pursuing meaningful national policies aimed at promoting national unity, eliminating discord among constituent groups, and fostering greater inter-ethnic understanding and harmony.¹⁷

¹⁴Ojo, "Federalism and the Search for National Integration in Nigeria". *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 3(9), 2009. 384-395.

¹⁵Ojo, "Federalism and the Search for National Integration

¹⁶Ojo, "Federalism and the Search for National Integration

¹⁷ E. Obadare, Statism, Youth and Civic Imagination-A critical Study of the National Youth Service Corps Programme in Nigeria. (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2010). 22.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

S. B. Ishaq

The choice of selecting the youths for the programme was borne out of the consideration that generally, the youths are agents of change and they are the ones who can bring about meaningful integration in the country, therefore the only way of achieving this is for the youths to cultivate a sense of common belonging and the desired national consciousness which would be far reaching and include political, social, state and ethnic loyalties. The choice of the youth for the programme also stemmed from two of the continent wide challenges namely: youth unemployment and the emigration of young unskilled people from rural areas to urban ones.

It was also a way for the nation to invest in the youth's future; since youths constitute a dominant force for national mobilization and growth.¹⁸ Ojo¹⁹ in his work argued that the NYSC scheme is of great significance to the concept of national integration, it is the easiest means to employ in developing common ties among the various youths and to promote national unity by ensuring that the youths are assigned to jobs in states other than their states of origin, with the intent of removing prejudices and eliminating ignorance among the young graduates.

Though a difficult goal to achieve, its attainment has been mostly subtle and the successes recorded includes but limited to the making of the friends, the displacement of old prejudices and very significantly, inter-cultural marriages during the service year. In a survey carried out on the NYSC as an attempt to foster national unity in the face of ethnic diversity, Iyizoba²⁰ attempts to evaluate the success of the youth corps

¹⁸ E. Obadare, *Statism, Youth and Civic Imagination-A critical Study of the National Youth Service Corps Programme in Nigeria*. (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2010). 44.

¹⁹ E. Ojo, *Federalism and the Search for National Integration in Nigeria*. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 3(9), 384-395.

²⁰ W. Iyizoba, "Nigerian Youth Service Corps: An Evaluation of an Attempt to Foster National Unity in the Face of Ethnic Diversity". (Unpublished P.h.d Thesis,

The NYSC and Its Contribution to National Integration

Scheme in achieving the goal of reducing inter-ethnic prejudice amongst the various ethnic groups in Nigeria, he discovered that those that have had some exposure to other ethnic groups were significantly less prejudiced than those with no exposure. This result gives the programme a positive score. The policy adopted to post youths to states other than their states of origin has eventually been justified as a right step in the right direction.

Forty-eight years after the establishment of the National Youth Service Corps, the deployment policy of the Scheme has remained as stipulated and constant: that all corps members must be posted to states other than their own. The implication of this, is that a much larger number of corps members serves in various parts of the country and their parents or guardians are also compelled to take interest in events and to think of developments in other parts of the country throughout the service year, whereas such parents and well-wishers may not have ordinarily given any thought to events in other parts of the country, but the fact that their sons and daughters or relations are on national service somewhere far away from home, compels them to think national.

By the NYSC deployment policy, a large number of the nation's youth have over the years, been given the opportunity of living and interacting with fellow Nigerians of other ethno-cultural groups for one year, thereby gaining direct, basic knowledge about these other Nigerians. Such interaction enables them to appreciate the basic similarities that exist between their culture at home and those of the host community. This appreciation of different cultural attributes which Nigerians shared help reduce ethnic bigotry and enable most corps members develop an attitude of hospitality and accommodation towards other Nigerians. In 1983, it was reported that 66 percent of those who participated in the scheme admitted that it has helped them

The State University of New Jersey, Department of Sociology, Graduate School of Rutgers, New Jersey). 1989.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

S. B. Ishaq

to develop a more positive attitude towards the people whom they stayed and served with.²¹

As a direct consequence of the above, there was elimination of former prejudices. The scheme was able to some extent; break down the conservative attitude of youths in choosing marriage partners only from their own ethnic groups or lineage. They were transformed by their service year experiences and have come to the realization that tribe ought not to constitute any barrier to marriage. As a consequence, inter- tribal marriages which once seemed alien to the people began to be accepted as a norm if not even commonly adopted among the youths. These inter-tribal marriages subsequently helped to strengthen inter-ethnic ties and solidified bonds of unity among the Nigerian people.²²

It has also been a standing policy of the scheme to post a large number of the corps members to serve in rural communities. By this arrangement, the young corps members are brought to face the rural life and the challenges of development in those areas beside their own places. Due to the realization that these young men and women are the one who will serve as the nation's policy-makers in the future, it was deduced that that they should have the basic experience of life in the rural area as it will help them forecast in the nearest future and formulate policies that will benefit millions of rural dwellers if given the opportunity. Therefore, it is clear from the above, that over the past four decades, the scheme has been building bridges between various factions of the Nigerian society; between state and state; one ethnic group and another; and urban and rural areas. It is also pertinent to note that it has been harmonizing the diverse ethnic groups of Nigeria by reducing prejudices and misconceptions among the people,

²¹ G. Enegwea and G. Umoden, *NYSC: Twenty years of National Service*, (Abuja: Gabumo Pub, 1993). 160.

²² G. Enegwea and G. Umoden, *NYSC: Twenty years of National Service* ...161.

The NYSC and Its Contribution to National Integration

encouraging appreciation and tolerance. Recently, the NYSC has come to be acknowledged as perhaps the most realistic of all programmes initiated since independence.²³ These have impacted to a large extent on national integration.

Furthermore, as the scheme gained acceptance, acknowledgement and accolades, it has continued to serve as a point of reference in matters that demand patriotism, morals and values we cherish in our society. This is demonstrated in the activities of the members of the scheme as they have always partner with other government agencies. Important services and programmes organised by such agencies or organs of the agencies such as the National Population Commission (NPC), National Electoral Commission, among others are carried out in collaboration with the NYSC.

In further examining the contributions of the NYSC scheme to national integration, one could take account of the statements of the heads of the Nigerian states over the years, in terms of their charge to the corps members and assessment of what the scheme is capable of doing and has done, one could come to the conclusion that the scheme has recorded unquantified success. ‘The purpose (of the scheme)’ says the founding head of state, Yakubu Gowon, in June 1973

“is primarily to inculcate in Nigerian youths, the spirit of selfless service to the community and to emphasize the spirit of oneness and brotherhood of all Nigerians irrespective of cultural background. The history of our country since independence has clearly indicated the need for unity amongst all out people....”²⁴

About a decade later, President Shehu Shagari confirmed that “the hope expressed by Gowon had been achieved, stating that, participants of the NYSC have continuously

²³ G. Enegwea and G. Umoden, *NYSC: Twenty years of National Service ...*

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THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

S. B. Ishaq

made us proud and have justified the optimism of the founding fathers of the corps scheme. The discipline, the dedication to duty and loyalty they displayed each succeeding year, and their general comportment has been very admirable....”²⁵

The general who upstaged the Shagari-led democratic government did not share this optimism. For Muhammadu Buhari, speaking to the corps members in July 1984,

“the scheme’s value lay in its potentials and not what it had achieved. Thus, Members of the NYSC constitute a reservoir of highly skilled, talented and vigorous manpower whose energies and vision, if tapped and properly harnessed would lead us to the desired socioeconomic upliftment and threshold of greatness....”²⁶

Buhari’s military successor, General Ibrahim Babangida, was more enamored by the achievements of individual corps members as he stated that “the numerous achievements of corps members, past and present, point to the fact that a technological breakthrough is feasible” The NYSC Directorate itself lists wide-ranging achievements. In its first decade the directorate sponsored some surveys that pointed to high success of the scheme in terms of the impact on the participants and general assessment. First is what the Directorate regards as the ‘less tangible’, but ostensibly more crucial contribution of the scheme, which is ‘fostering national consciousness and integration’.

One such indication of that is taken to be the interest that parents and relations of corps members develop about the areas where their wards

²⁵‘Spotlight on NYSC at 25’, Daily Sketch, June 3, 1998, p. 5.

²⁶‘Spotlight on NYSC at 25’, Daily Sketch, June 3, 1998, p. 5.

The NYSC and Its Contribution to National Integration

are serving thus forcing them to ‘think national’.²⁷ Also, interaction among the corps members with fellow Nigerians of different ethno-cultural groups for one year is regarded as enabling them to ‘appreciate the basic similarities that exist between their culture at home and that of the host community’.²⁸ This is expected to lead to ‘reduction in ethnic chauvinism and enable most corps members to develop a healthier and more accommodating attitude towards other groups of Nigerians’.²⁹

Inter-ethnic marriages resulting from the service year among others, have helped to build bridges and in ‘harmonizing the diverse peoples of Nigeria’ with the scheme acknowledged as ‘perhaps the most realistic of all programs initiated since independence, towards the systematic Nigerianization of the nation’s citizens. The scheme in the last 30 years has made major contributions in the areas of manpower supply, education (the sector where about 70 percent of the corps members perform their primary assignment), health care delivery and rural infrastructure, technology, sports and self-development of the participants.³⁰

These major contributions to the Nigerian state and society are acknowledged by media reports which praised the scheme in its second decade as, among others, playing ‘a unifying role among the nation’s various ethnic groups thereby promoting the objectives of ‘One Nigeria’ with ‘the cultural interaction while it has also helped in crucial ways in tackling skilled manpower problems and preparing the graduates for self-reliance, employment and self-employment.³¹

²⁷ The Guardian, ‘Revisiting the NYSC Scheme’, (editorial), September 6, 2002, p.

12. 10

²⁸ The Guardian, ‘Revisiting the NYSC Scheme’, (editorial), September 6, 2002, p.

12. 10

²⁹G. Enegwea and G. Umoden, NYSC: Twenty years of National Service, (Abuja: Gabumo Pub, 1993). 104

³⁰G. Enegwea and G. Umoden, NYSC: Twenty years of National Service...105

³¹G. Enegwea and G. Umoden, NYSC: Twenty years of National Service...

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

S. B. Ishaq

Conclusion

The NYSC scheme, even though it has grappled with enormous challenges has been able to stand the test of time, and it is still very much relevant to the nation. Through the scheme, various achievements have been attained. Prejudices built over time have been reduced to some extent. Mutual trust has been developed among Nigerians of diverse languages and cultures. Today, the NYSC has enhanced and promoted inter-ethnic marriages among the youths of the nation. Nigerians now reside permanently in states where hitherto, they do not visit and this has led to greater integration. The scheme has served immensely as a source of awareness to Nigerian youths as they are better informed about the cultures and way of life of others.

This paper discussed the contributions of the National Youth Service Corps to national integration; the paper also highlighted the challenges of the National Youth Service Corps towards national integration. The paper found out that despite these challenges, the NYSC has remained a leading unifying factor that has brought about greater integration in the country.

The NYSC and Its Contribution to National Integration

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S. B. Ishaq

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The Quest for National Integration: The NYSC Approach

10

**The Quest for National Integration:
The NYSC Approach**

Usman Abubakar Lamido

Introduction

The most important challenge facing Nigeria in her journey of development since 1914 is no doubt that of nation-building or national integration. The country became a single entity when British colonial amalgamated all its constituent groups/parts. This colonial rule till 1960 was unable to promote the corporate unity of the Nigerian people but left the country worse off with underling traits of rivalries, rancor and acrimony amongst the emerging political elites of the diverse groups. With the breaking up of Nigeria into regions and introduction

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

U. A. Lamido

of elective representations, it was not surprising that most of the political parties formed were regionally or ethnically based.

Most of the early political parties were formed to prevent domination or control of their regions by any other regional parties in the politicking of the period. For instance, it was only the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) led by Nnamdi Azikiwe, that had a national acceptance in its formative stage, but later was bedevilled by some ethnic manipulations. These tensions and conflicts propped up at events that questioned the ability of Nigeria to emerge as a strong, united and integrated nation: the declaration of the state of emergency in western Nigeria in 1962, the National Census crisis, the treasonable felony trial of 1963, the poor conduct of elections of 1964 and 1965, and the general strike of 1965 among others. The ugly event were climaxed with the two military coups of January 15th, July 28th 1966 and the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-1970.

However, there were conscious and concerted attempts to integrate the Nigerian entities severally but it was not yielding desired and expended result. For instance, military interregnum of Major General Aguiyi Ironsi's regime promulgated Decree 34 on assumption of office. The decree was the adoption of a unitary system of government by abolishing the federal system. The main objective of the new system was to promote stability and unity through the eradication of tribalism and regionalism as they acted as agents of disunity during the aborted First Republic. However, the intention of the regime was misconstrued by some Nigerians especially Hausa-Fulani, who saw the decree as a grand design by the Igbo to dominate the political scene. General Yakubu Gowon's regime restored the federal structure and also structured the country into twelve states from the former four regions. According to General Gowon, the creation of states was to protect the

The Quest for National Integration: The NYSC Approach

rights of minorities in the event of a civil war.¹ It could also be argued that the creation of states by Gowon's regime was to weaken the political base of Lt. Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu to frustrate his secession bid of the Eastern Region, thus, keeping the unity of the country as a corporate entity intact. The above events have culminated into animosities leading to the Biafran war which lasted for 30 months (1967 – 1970).

After the civil war, General Yakubu Gowon's government introduced many changes into the socio-political system of national life to promote peaceful co-existence, healthy growth and national cohesion. These include the establishment of the Federal Unity Colleges in all states which drew students from parts of the country. Second, the introduction of the Annual inter-state Games and Sport Competition now called The National Sport Festival where hosting is rotated amongst states and participating athletes are drawn from all states. The government started the National Festival of Cultural and Arts/Crafts for states/zonal participations. It was climaxed in the hosting of the first Black Cultural and Arts/Crafts Festival called FESTAC, 1977 in Lagos. National Students' Exchange Programme co-ordinated by the Federal Ministry of Education and the States' Ministry of Education was also introduced where their transportation, feeding, health, other sundry needs of the student were handled by the host state(s). These innovations including the establishment of National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme were aimed at addressing the ill feelings caused by the civil war, and ensuring to strengthen unity and peaceful coexistence of the people.² It is against this backdrop that this work seeks to

¹ L.U. Edigin, "Federal Character and National Stability in Nigeria" *Journal of Research and National development*, Vol. 8 No. 2, (2010)

² A. Egunyomi, The National Youth Service Corps: A Bridge to Nationalism in Nigeria. Retrieved from <https://www.cfr.org/blog/national-youth-service-corps-bridge-nationalism-nigeria>. Accessed 23/02/2021.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

U. A. Lamido

conceptualise national integration, Nationalism and examine the NYSC as a panacea to national integration in Nigeria.

National Integration: A Conceptualization

National integration is the process of unifying a multi-ethnic country/state, not necessarily into a single-ethnic one but a united and indivisible entity where primordial affiliations are made secondary for the greater good of the united nation-state. It can also be seen as the building of a national state, made up of disparate social, economic, religious, ethnic and geographical elements which entails the transformation of diffused and unorganized sentiments on nationalism into a spirit of citizenship through the creation of state institutions that can translate into policies and programmes and aspirations of the entire citizenry.³

In their submission, Fatile and Adejuwon⁴ conceptualize national integration as the process whereby several disparate groups within a given territorial entity are united or co-operate under conditions which do not appear to permit satisfaction of the system needs in any other way. They concluded by stating that the goal of national integration is to ensure that plural society component parts are reasonably contented in the polity vis-a-vis equity and justice in resource allocation and access to equal opportunities. It must also be stated that it is the progressive reduction of cultural and regional tensions and discontinuities in the process of creating a homogenous political community.

³B. Odumade, National Youth Service Corps: In search of Relevance. Retrieved from <https://guardian.ng/opinion/national-youth-service-corps-in-search-of-relevance/>. Accssed 23/02.2021.

⁴J. Fatile, and K. Adejuwon, Ethnicity and National Integration in Nigeria: The post Colonial Experience, In A. Osuntokun, A. Ukaogo, and A. Akachi, (eds). Nigerian Studies- Readings in History, Politics, Society and Culture. (New Jersey: Goldmine and Jacob Publishers, 2010). 35-40.

The Quest for National Integration: The NYSC Approach

Duverger⁵ defines it as the process of unifying a society which tends to make it a harmonious city based upon an order its members regard as equitably harmonious. National integration is a process whereby political actors in distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities towards a new centre, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing nation-state. Ogunojemite⁶ also defines national integration as a process leading to political cohesion and sentiments of loyalty toward a central political authority and institutions by individual belonging to different social groups or political unit.

Morrison and Stevenson⁷ define it as the degree of cohesion that binds members of social systems together, and is generally thought of in terms of the values, institutions and communications which facilitate escalating sequences of social contact, cooperation and consensus.

Nationalism

In his exposition, Nwabughoughu rightly posits that Nationalism is:

The Strong devotion to one's country, patriotic feelings, efforts, principles ... a consciousness on the part of individuals or groups of membership in a nation, or a desire to forward the strength, liberty or prosperity of a nation.⁸

⁵D.G. Morrison, and H.M. Stevenson, "Political instability in independent black Africa: more dimensions of conflict behavior within nations". *Journal of Conflict resolution*, 15, 347- 368. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002200277101500306>

⁶A. I. Nwabughugu, *Problems of Nation Biulding in Africa*, (Owerri: FERP Publication, 2009) 49.

⁷O. Adedayo, Nigeria: NYSC - Trudging On, 37 Years After. *Daily Independent*, 18 July, 2010.

⁸ A.I Nwabughugu, *Problems of Nation Biulding in Africa*, (Owerri: Fasmen Publication, 2009), 4.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

U. A. Lamido

The above position is not engraved in Nigerians and seen in other countries. Ever before and after independence, rather, many ethnic societies were in conflicts with one another and each with its loyalties to the small ethnic group. Although the colonial authorities tried to bring many of these minorities into a larger group called nation-states and for them to subsequently be integrated. Yet, there was no political commitment that could encourage or enforce the transformation of any of these ethnic societies that colonialism brought together in to a single integrated entity. In other words, that political force or will otherwise called nationalism which alone promotes the idea of a nation and which mobilizes mass support to make the idea a reality, was completely absent in most Nigerian succeed leadership, particularly in post-independent period.⁹

The National approach to National Integration.

By every conceivable standard, Nigeria is a country that is richly blessed with human and material resources. Like many other African states, Nigeria's human endowment is a conglomeration of different ethnic group,¹⁰ Okonta identifies the larger groups as "Hausa, Fulani, Tiv, Kanuri, and Nupe in the Northern parts; the Yoruba, Edo, Urhobo, Itsekiri and Ijaw in the Western parts; the Ibo, Ibibio and Efik in the Eastern parts". The country has an estimated population of about 200 million people.¹¹ Apart from its immense mineral wealth, of which oil and gas resources are currently the most prominent, the country is also endowed with rich agricultural lands capable of sustaining a wide variety of crops across the savannah and forest zones.¹²

⁹ A.I Nwabughuogu, *Problems of Nation Biulding...*

¹⁰ A. Amalachi, How to restore NYSC's lost glory.
thenationonlineng.net/web2/articles/.

Downloaded on February 8, 2011.

¹¹ I. Okonta, . Nigeria and the world: Re-thinking Nigeria (3), Thisday, May, 21.

¹² E. Amana, We can take our people up there: An examination of leadership and democracy in Nigeria. Lagos: Union Communications and Publishers Limited. 2000.

The Quest for National Integration: The NYSC Approach

The need for temporary peaceful environment (administrative convenience) and perhaps, easy access to the Atlantic for British sustainable exploitation of the Nigerian resources for her home economy prompted the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern Protectorates in 1914. While Obayori¹³ out rightly debunked the position that it was meant to "serve the exploitative aim of the British", Edwand Ajayi¹⁴ however, view the amalgamation as an act by the colonial rulers to bail the North out of its perpetual deficit, translated to mean that "customs revenue could be shared between Southern Nigeria with a coastline and the landlocked Northern Nigeria". In contention of this, Okonta¹⁵ insists that such utterances are promoted by Southerner stop or tray their northern counterpart in a negative light as he remarks that before 1914 "all Hausa cities were well sufficient in food and other necessities. Kano was one of the greatest market centers in Africa and had trade links with Egypt and the Mediterranean World." This work is in support of the views expressed by Okonta because the interests of the colonial officials were paramount, to develop their economy back home and not to redeem any part of Nigeria.

Tools Employed for National Integration

Ojo¹⁶ arguing on the side of policy makers, is of the view that an interaction among the emergent elite especially outside their ethnic base would enhance a better understanding among the various ethnic groups, justified the establishment of the National Youth Service Corps programme. To be sure, the enabling legislation that established the NYSC, states explicitly the objectives as well as modus operandi of the

¹³K. Oyetimi, NYSC redeploys corps in Borno. Downloaded from <http://tribune.com.ng> on May 15 2012.

¹⁴A.H. Center, Public relations practices. 6th edition. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall. 2003

¹⁵G. Broom, Effective public relations. New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall. 2006

¹⁶E. Ojo, Federalism and the Search for National Integration in Nigeria. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 3(9), 384-395.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

U. A. Lamido

programme. Of great significance to the concept of national integration is the objective of developing common ties among the various youths and to promote national unity by ensuring that the youths are assigned to jobs in states other than their states of origin, with the intent of removing prejudices and eliminating ignorance among the young graduates- the emerging elite.

In a survey carried out on the NYSC as an attempt to foster national unity in the face of ethnic diversity, Iyizoba¹⁷ attempts to evaluate the success of the youth corps programme in achieving the goal of reducing inter-ethnic prejudice amongst the various ethnic groups in Nigeria, he discovered that exposure to other ethnic groups were significantly related to prejudice of respondents; in other words, those that have had some exposure to other ethnic groups were significantly less prejudiced than those with no exposure. This result gives the programme a positive score. The policy adapted to deploying youths to states other than their states of origin has eventually been justified as a right step in the right direction.

There are varying factors that has contributed to making the NYSC scheme an attractive tool for national integration.

Corps Members Deployment to Various States

The rationale behind the deployment of corps members to states mostly, states other than their state of origin is a factor that translates into the earnest desire the Scheme to enhance national integration and cohesion among the youths. This has served as a source of awareness to the youths, as most of them are posted to areas alien to them. The youths who hitherto see some states as their least expected destination began to acknowledge their stay there as it becomes their host

¹⁷W. Iyizoba, "Nigerian Youth Service Corps: An Evaluation of an Attempt to Foster National Unity in the Face of Ethnic Diversity". (Unpublished P.h.d Thesis, The State University of New Jersey, Department of Sociology, Graduate School of Rutgers, New Jersey). 1989.

The Quest for National Integration: The NYSC Approach

communities. It has been recorded that: as a consequence of the above, most of the corps members stay in their host communities to carry out other activities such as trading activities, regular businesses, and even, others are retained in the places of their primary assignment, after their service year and subsequently became integrated in their host communities.¹⁸

Community Development Service

The community Development Service Programme , it has served as a veritable tool for national integration. This has made the corps members to engage in developmental activities, mostly in rural communities which has helped integrate these corps members and promote patriotic behaviors among them, These various projects they embarked on have helped strengthen the development status-quo of their host communities and has virtually remained a legacy to be remembered among the host communities.¹⁹

Intermarriage

Inter-ethnic marriages, which is a consequence of the one-year service mostly occurs and this is a result of the long-time familiarity of corps members from the period of camping and even during service year. These have helped to build bridges of unity and cohesion among the youths and bringing together divers ethnic groups in Nigeria. It is also record that the Scheme set up incentives to promote intermarriage. There are monetary, and non-monetary incentives put in place to ensure that Corps members are encouraged to getting married to themselves during their service year. Though even beyond their service year, ex-corps members still go ahead to get married, this is as a result

¹⁸R. Alba "The Social significance of Intermarriage" *Contemporary Jewry*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (December 1991), pp. 9-19

¹⁹https://nysc.gov.ng/downloads/CDS_ABC.pdf

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

U. A. Lamido

of the familiarity that was established during their camping and post-camp exercise.²⁰

Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development

The SAED programme has been largely acknowledged as an assessment of national integration which was brought to limelight in the year 2012. The programme has served so many economic purposes especially in the area of employment creation yet it still portrays some aspect of national integration. Through the SAED, corps members have learnt skills and have established themselves mostly in places other than their state of origin. So also, they have relied on trainers from across the country not minding the distance or the location of these trainers. By so doing, they tend to settle in places other than their place of birth. Some of these corps members, having thrived in their ventures tend to integrate with their host communities and most time, getting married there and being acculturated through marriage or learning of language of their host communities.²¹

Conclusion

The NYSC Scheme has come to stay, of agenda how household which served as a veritable tool for national integration. One could not have thought of a better way to unite Nigerians after the thirty (30) months of the dreaded civil war than the NYSC. Even though it is not without its shortcomings which are not farfetched, yet its relevance outweighs the limitations. This is evident in scores of social, economic and political activities it involves in. For example, corps members as well as staff of the Scheme are invited regularly involved in the conduct of sensitive national and international assignments as it is currently done by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) where they are

²⁰https://nysc.gov.ng/downloads/CDS_ABC.pdf

²¹https://nysc.gov.ng/downloads/CDS_ABC.pdf

The Quest for National Integration: The NYSC Approach

being used as adhoc staff for elections. Similarly, the Scheme's partnership with other sister agencies such as NEMA, FRSC, EFCC, among others have largely contributed to national development has enhanced National Integration.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

U. A. Lamido

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THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

M. L. Murtala

11

Inter-Ethnic Marriages and National Integration: The NYSC Approach

Mohammed Liman Murtala

Introduction

The quest for national integration, unity, and cohesion among Nigeria's diverse ethnic groups has for long littered the pages of the country's history,¹ but it became more determined especially after the end of the Civil War 1967-1970. The war left in its trail catalogue of unhealed wounds that desperately needs urgent attention. The Gowon's

¹T J. Davis and A. Kalu-Nwiwu, "Education, Ethnicity and National Integration in the History of Nigeria: Continuing Problem's of Africa's Colonial Legacy," *The Journal of Negro History* Vol 86, No. 1 (2001): 1, accessed March 16, 2021, URL <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1350175>.

Inter-Ethnic Marriages and National Integration:

administration, in its effort to reconstruct, reconcile, and rehabilitate the Nigerian nation and foster unity and national integration, in all fronts, birthed the idea of the establishment of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) in 1973, targeting the teeming Nigerian youths as a driving force in the achievement of the set objectives.

As enshrined in the establishment Act of the scheme, amongst other objectives is the promotion of national unity and integration. This remains, therefore, the primary and uncompromising engine that moves the wheels of the motive behind its establishment. The scheme involves the posting of Corps Members for national service to states other than theirs to meet, interact, impact, and of course inter-marry with other Nigerians from different backgrounds, cultures and traditions they met. This paper studies inter-marriage among ethnic groups since the earliest times as an avenue of cultural contact between societies, demonstrating the use of marriage to advance their relationships and forge alliances with one another.

Inter-marriage has been a veritable tool for integration among groups. However, the paper further interrogates the role of inter-ethnic marriages as a social tool of national integration through the NYSC. In the same vein, the paper seeks to examine the union among corps members during the service year, and how it has been encouraged by the Scheme through various means, for the example given monetary and moral support to corps members who meet themselves during the service year and end up in marriage. Such moral and monetary supports have fostered national integration by stimulating more inter-ethnic marriages among serving corps members in a different states.

Conceptual Clarification

Inter-marriage

According to the new world Encyclopedia, intermarriage is the marriage between people of different backgrounds. This background can be either religious or racial. It can also be understood as marrying outside one's social group which can be defined by religion, race, or

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

M. L. Murtala

other differences.² Inter-marriage is practically adopted and used universally by almost, if not all races for mostly, developing more close ties and inter-ethnic tolerance.³ Simon Mackson postulated further in his famous theory of inter-marriage and assimilation that, "Miscegenation or the inter-breeding of ethnic and racial groups is a universal phenomenon.

There are no peoples that do not interbreed. The resulting process of amalgamation represents the fusion of ethnic and racial groups by interbreeding and intermarriage. Amalgamation or the crossing of racial and ethnic traits through intermarriage promotes assimilation". With such analysis, it means that with inter-ethnic marriages among different nationalities, it is only a question of time for the process to complete which is amalgamation.⁴ Besides the cultural assimilation, in line with social cohesion theory, intermarriage significantly reduces the probability of violent conflict among social groups, serving as an early warning system for inter-ethnic conflicts.⁵ While in the context of our study, we are looking at inter-marriage between different ethnicities as a tool of national integration, with special emphasis on the role of National Youth Service Corps Scheme in bringing together, the polarized ethnic groups through inter-marriages.

² New World Encyclopedia,<https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Intermarriage>.

³ Safiya Abu Wada, 29 years, PhD Student, Interviewed at Kaduna, March 16, 2021.

⁴ Simon Mackson, "*Theory of Inter-Marriage and Assimilation*"(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951), 75 in Oxford University Journal, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2572762>.

⁵ Jeroen Smits, "Ethnic Intermarriage and Social Cohesion: What can we learn from Yugoslavia"? Nijmegen Center of Economics, Institute for Management Research, Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands, (2009), doi:10.1007/s11205-009-9485-y

Inter-Ethnic Marriages and National Integration:

National/Cultural Integration

Weiner offered an understanding of the concept of integration by categorizing it into five different sections; the change from cultural diversity to national identifications, the establishment of a central political authority, the linkage of elite and masses, minimum value consensus, and a capacity for action towards a common goal.⁶ Meanwhile, Weiner also believes that the ability to bring together the masses perceived to be indifferent to one another regardless, to the realization of national identity other than culture is national integration.

It may not necessarily be to assimilate one's culture into another as often stresses by Mackson. In other word, national integration can be regarded as a sub-process of the wider concept of nation-building, Amucheazi, defines it as the bringing together of the various relationships, with the loyalty to the nation above any other.⁷ This may be described simply as an effort on the part of the individuals, as well as the government of a geopolitical entity, to consolidate diverse people, communities, and socio-cultural groups under the umbrella of a broad concept of nationality. This has never been an easy task on the side of any government or polity to drive a polarize society to national integration, this is better described by Davis as thus;

Since ancient times, history has demonstrated the difficult, complex, and varied developments needed to unite a people under a government and to create among them a stable cultural, economic, political, and social community. The process has been especially strenuous where the people to be united have included

⁶ Otwin Marenin, "National Service and National Consciousness in Nigeria", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 17, No 4 (1979), p642.

⁷ S A. Ajayi, "Nigeria and the Search for National Integration: Tapping from the Pre-Colonial Inter-group Relations", *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 16 (2005), p89.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

M. L. Murtala

diverse, large groups distinguished by their customs, language, or separate identity.⁸

The idea here is to change the existing traditional inward-looking attitudes of ethnic and tribal groupings and inculcate in the citizenry a sense of loyalty, belonging, and patriotism to the new and larger geopolitical entity, as in the case of Nigeria to the federal government, especially as noted earlier above during the post-civil war experience.⁹

The NYSC and Inter-Marriage

As earlier stated in the paper, one of the objectives of the NYSC Scheme is to expose the corps members to different cultures and traditions in the country through posting to states other than their own.¹⁰ The central aim is forging unity, integration, and inter-ethnic understanding. The long-lost social harmony among the various ethnic groups in the country is faced with an all-out strategy during this period; the Gowon's administration was ever committed to this course until the cleavage is defeated. In restoring peace, social cohesion, and

⁸ T J. Davis and A. Kalu-Nwiwu, "Education, Ethnicity and National Integration in the History of Nigeria.p1

⁹ Furtherance on this, cultural integration as regards our understanding of the topic under discussion, can be said to have been more rigorously pursued especially during the aftermath of the Nigerian Civil War. Although, this has been the case since the period of the colonial amalgamation of the southern and the northern regions, up to the period of the attainment of political independence in October 1960. This is as a result of the bitter experience of the war that connotes more of an inter-ethnic clash rather than a cessation move. This played out well even before the outbreak of the war. As at the time, there is intense ethnic rivalry following the political crisis in the western state, couple with the first coup of January 1966 than aggravated the situation further all along ethnic and cultural alienations.

¹⁰ It is believed that exposing one to other cultures and traditions that hitherto might have been to him that he only herd or see on paper will help in disorienting minds to the actual truth of the beautiful nature of other tribes and traditions. In most cases, corp members that happen to visit the other side always attest to the saying that this is not what they expected to see, it could have been an exaggeration or underreporting.

Inter-Ethnic Marriages and National Integration:

inter-ethnic integration, the NYSC encourages any act either through the NYSC or otherwise that, in the end, will be in the interest of fostering unity among people in the country including inter-ethnic and inter-religious marriages.

To encourage inter-ethnic marriage among corps members, the NYSC provides incentives for the couples which arguably encourage others to also partake. Inter-ethnic marriages in African culture and Nigerian in particular for example, Otumalah succinctly categorize the stages of unity through inter-ethnic marriages as follows; Firstly, when the inter-ethnic marriage has taken place, the two in-laws (ethnic groups) have become united and positively attached forever. This is because, during childbirth, they will do the social gathering together, and in the case of offerings, they will consider themselves as the first beneficiary, their families will always celebrate in uniform because of the union.

Secondly, inter-ethnic marriage prevents strife and conflicts among people to an extent. It is undeniable fact that people that are called in-laws, (Suruki, Ogom) can never throw a stone or any hard object at each other. That is to say, the marital union involving their family members helped them in resolving conflict than separating them. Even in an event of war, the man who marries from that ethnic group from the other side is not allowed to go participate in that war, including the children of that family. It will look like they are fighting their mother or father as the case may be. Therefore, in an African traditional system, if one marries from a particular ethnic group, that family becomes his also.¹¹

In the quest to promote this quality and healthier relations among people in the society, since the inception of the NYSC scheme, it was recorded on several instances; successive NYSC directors were reported to have been encouraging the corps members to intermarry among themselves, which in turn will aid in the achievement of the

¹¹ Onah Otumalah, 34 years, Lecturer, Nigerian Defence Academy, 18, March 2121.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

M. L. Murtala

objective of the scheme. Intermarriage is an important indicator of the quality of the relationships among groups in a society.¹² As earlier stated, marriage among corps members is encouraged and can be said to have significantly improved from the records of inter-marriages among corps members, as noted by Enegewea that;

The scheme is continually breaking down the conservative attitude of youths choosing marriage partners only from their ethnic groups. Transformed by their service year experiences, many youths have since realized that the tribe ought not to constitute any barrier to marriage. The result is that inter-tribal marriages are helping to strengthen inter-ethnic ties and to solidify the bonds of unity among all Nigerian people.¹³

During his tour of camps recently, Brig. Gen. Shuaibu Ibrahim encouraged corps members Wamakko permanent Orientation camp to foster the country's quest for integration. He assured the corps members of the scheme's readiness to encourage inter-ethnic marriages with any assistance that will lead to the success of the marriage. He further stated that "you should see your selves as one family irrespective of where you come from, establish the spirit of oneness right from the orientation camp and if possible marry yourselves".¹⁴ Even before this call, one can be said that Nigerian youths had heeded to the call of the National Youth Service Corp to some extent; this is because it was recorded on various occasions when corps members inter-marry, while in the case of some, it is the NYSC that paved the way, as they were able to meet their spouses because

¹²Safiya Abu Wada, 29 years, PhD Student, Interviewed at Kaduna, March 16, 2021.

¹³Enegewea G, and Umoden G, NYSC: Twenty Years of National Service.p162.

¹⁴News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), " NYSC DG Encourages Corps Members to Inter-Marry", Economic Confidential, 21 June, 2019, in Media Assessment: Shuaibu Ibrahim's Silent Revolution in NYSC, Vol 1, 2020.p26.

Inter-Ethnic Marriages and National Integration:

either the wife or the husband was deployed to the domain of the opposite sex.

Mrs. Iyabo Omokri (nee Ogunseitan) who was one time State Director NYSC, Ondo State, gave an account of her experience of meeting her husband during the service year from 1974-1975 and the eventualities that led them to marriage in the north-western part of the country. She stated that her posting to the northern part of the country garnered a lot of criticism from her family, although she did her undergraduate from the north Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, still, her parent wanted her to serve in the south. She further stated that her father has even made an attempt of working for her relocation to Lagos, but she insisted on actualizing her dream of having the opportunity to visit Sokoto, as she had for long been hearing about it.

The couple met at the Orientation camp in the Argungu Fishing Village from where the relationship started to gather momentum. After the Orientation exercise, she was posted to the Civil Service Commission in Sokoto, as Assistant Secretary, but for the fact that she and her husband to be had decided to get married, she had to relocate to Minna where her fiancée is as a lawyer-corper serving as a state counsel. Iyabo lamented that;

I was reposted as a teacher to Fatima College in Minna, and then during the service year, we got married in Minna. It was a real Corps' affair, the place was packed full of all the corps serving around there plus some of our relations in the North-Western State. To crown it all, we had a child before the end of the service year, whom everybody was calling Ali (after the then National Director) Colonel Ahmadu Ali. My only disappointment is that we did not receive the cash award meant for those who got married during the service year.¹⁵

¹⁵ Enegwea G, and Umoden G, NYSC: Twenty Years of National Service.p97.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

M. L. Murtala

A good example of this also can be seen in the case of His Royal Highness Ovie Omeleh, a paramount ruler of Yenaka Community in Yenagoa Local Government of Bayelsa State who met his wife as a result of the NYSC. He narrated his experience to the NYSC News crew while being interviewed on the assessment of the NYSC Scheme. The traditional ruler commended the tremendous contribution of the NYSC scheme in the promotion of national development, unity, and integration. He opined that;

I am aware of the impactful values of the programme from other people's experiences, especially my wife who came to serve in Bayelsa State. The NYSC provided me the opportunity to meet her. Of course, it has impacted positively on the lives of members of the society especially the youths, by exposing them to the diversity of the country and the opportunity to gain and share their individual experiences.¹⁶

Another instance of inter-ethnic marriage among corps members happened in Taraba State between Ayodele Blessing and Jude Amile of the 2013 Batch C exercise. The corps members hail from different states and belong to different ethnic groups. Jude is Tiv by tribe from Benue State, while Blessing is Yoruba from Kogi State. The relationship started from the camp in Sibre Jalingo, fortunately for these love birds, Jude and Blessing belong to the same family house, Nigerian Christian Corps' Fellowship (NCCF) where Jude was the Papa and Blessing happens to be the Mama. This relationship continued even after the orientation exercise which culminated in marriage two years after. Jude stresses the important role played by the NYSC in making their journey a reality that today, the marriage is blessed with two children a boy and a girl.

¹⁶ NYSC News, A Journal of NYSC Directorate Headquarters, "I Me My Wife Through the NYSC, HRH Ovie Omeleh, 2019, p51.

Inter-Ethnic Marriages and National Integration:

Although the couples did not notify the NYSC as the marriage ceremony took place when their batch had already passed out from service, this has not changed the fact that it was the NYSC that became the genesis of the union. Right from that period of the marriage, a strong bond of social cohesion between the two families was created that today according to Jude, “my wife unlike from the beginning, I could remember she was offered the Tiv native cloth to wear as part of the wedding proceedings when she refused, but today, she had learned a lot of the Tiv culture and to a greater extent, I can say she is now Tiv because she knows a lot now, and can as well speak the language although not fluently, I too can now understand the Yoruba language, culture, and traditions, thanks to NYSC.¹⁷

It has become a norm in the activities of the NYSC Director Generals to always encourage the corps members on the importance of inter-marriage among corps members. The DGs usually said this while reminding the corps member of the cardinal objective of the scheme, which is the promotion of national unity and cohesion. In the same vein, NYSC recorded another achievement of marital vow between 2019 Batch “A” corps members Muhammad Alhaji Musa and Hauwa Yahaya Bagudu. The relationship according to the couples started when they met at Kusallah Dam NYSC Orientation camp Karaye in Kano State. What aided the progress of the relationship to continue is the fact that they genuinely identified their potentials in improving their lives regardless of their ethnic backgrounds provided that they are all Nigerians with the common national interest.

This bond between Corper Muhammed and Corper Hauwa culminated and finally blossom into marriage.¹⁸ The wedding reception took place at Nigerian Air Force Base in Kano, the NYSC State Coordinator Malam Baba Ladan and other NYSC staff had graciously witnessed the occasion and also call on other corps members to emulate the couples in the

¹⁷ Jude Amile, 33 years, Business, Kaduna, March 19, 2021.

¹⁸ NYSC News, A Journal of NYSC Directorate Headquarters, “

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

M. L. Murtala

actualization of the ideals of the NYSC Scheme which is to promote national unity and integration.

Felicia Haruna and Mark Makafan Odi also take the advantage of the NYSC that brought them together to serve in Plateau State. Felicia is from Kaduna State while Mark hails from Kogi State. Their tribal difference had never stand in between the natural love and respect they developed for each other. Just as Muhammed and Hauwa who are of different ethnic background and from different states, Felicia and Mark had the same history of being from different ethnic backgrounds, they narrated the development of their relationship since from the beginning that they met in the Mangu Orientation camp in Plateau state as 2019 Batch "B" Corps members.

Felicia stated that she met Mark at the Orientation camp, it happened that they are of the same platoon 7, they went through the activities of the platoon together which became the reason they familiarize themselves. Then eventually after the three weeks of Orientation in camp, they were posted to their place of Primary Assignment in the same Local Government, Jos South, coincidentally again, they belonged to the same Community Development Service (CDS) group, and this was how it all started. The NYSC News crew had time to ask the couples about the contribution of the NYSC Scheme in improving their lives, and their opinion was sought to encourage other corps members to also utilize the opportunity provided by the scheme to develop themselves and if possible inter-marry. Felicia observes that;

The NYSC is a ground that has opened opportunities for self-discovery. It nurtures youths to be better citizens. In just a year, I have learned so many things not just for myself but how to be of help to others....my advice to other Corps Members is that they should stop having a negative thought about the service year because if I were the type that believes in playing with male corps members just for marital gain, I wouldn't be here today, happily married. I was focused on creating something big out of NYSC and even when my husband asked me

Inter-Ethnic Marriages and National Integration:

out, I didn't accept or took him seriously but I was still a friend to him who also helped until I found all the characteristics I have always wanted in a man in him.¹⁹

Mark had also put the advice to the fellow Corps Members on the importance of taking advantage of the NYSC Scheme to advance oneself, he stressed that "The NYSC Scheme has been given great opportunities for youth and graduates. It is an eye-opener because it has helped to teach one to be independent, peaceful, and respectful. Therefore, my advice to other Corps Members is that they should seize the opportunity given to them by NYSC Scheme to uplift the nation and develop themselves for the future. They should be ready to break boundaries and always take a bold step with strong determination. The Scheme should not be taken for granted as everything it offers the youth affects our day-to-day living as a prerequisite for greatness".²⁰

Similarly, corps members from Jigawa State also tied the nuptial knot in the marriage registry of the Ijumu Local Government Area of Kogi State. The two couples met and started their relationship during the 2019 Batch "C" Orientation Course at NYSC Orientation Camp Fanisau-Dutse, Jigawa State. Corps Members Oluwasegun Fabiyi Ayobami and his bride Oluwaferanmi Daramola Joy, expressed satisfaction and gratitude to the Lord Almighty for making it possible especially the unquantifiable role of the NYSC Scheme in the provision of the atmosphere for them to meet.

The wedding took place in the presence of both families and some officials of the NYSC. This has gone down in the history book of the Scheme as one of the achievements so far recorded aimed at bringing unity and cohesion among various ethnic groups in the country. The groom hails from Idofin Aye-Kole, Oke-Ero Local Government of Kwara

¹⁹ NYSC News, A Journal of NYSC Directorate Headquarters, "When my Husband ask me out, I didn't take him Serious", 2020, p120.

²⁰ NYSC News, A Journal of NYSC Directorate..p121

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

M. L. Murtala

State, while the bride is from Ekinirin-Adde in Ijumu Local Government Area of Kogi State.

In the area of inter-marriages among corps members generally, the NYSC can be said to have significantly achieved to a greater extent, deducing from the above. The number of the recorded inter-ethnic and inter-religious marriages is sizeable that cannot be exhausted in one paper, however, one important aspect about this discourse worthy of note is that, aside from the usual verbal encouragement by the NYSC for corps members to exploit the opportunity of getting spouses from ethnic backgrounds other than theirs, the Scheme as noted above provide incentives for those corps members involve in support of their marriage. This in earnest contributed to the actualization of the national integration agenda for the creation of the NYSC.

Conclusion

From the above narrative, therefore, the paper had extensively brought to the limelight the tremendous contribution of the NYSC Scheme in the promotion of national unity and cohesion through inter-ethnic marriages. The paper gave the background to the exigencies that informed the effort of the then-Federal Military Government's search for national unity and integration among the various ethnic groups in the country. It was traced further, right from the period of 1914 amalgamation by the colonial powers up to the days of the Civil War of 1967-1970 that shattered the already fragile nature of the country's unity. This, therefore, necessitated the intensification of the call for unity, inter-ethnic tolerance, promotion of social cohesion, of which the creation of the NYSC scheme was part. The paper interrogates some of the recorded incidences of inter-ethnic marriages among corps members, a sizeable number of people responded with their experiences that up till today they are still praising the role of the NYSC in making it a reality in their lives. We can therefore deduce from the above analysis that the role of the NYSC significantly speaking, towards national integration is achieved.

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Strategic Importance of NYSC to National Integration in Nigeria

12

Strategic Importance of NYSC to National Integration in Nigeria

Jamiu Yusuf Danga

Introduction

National integration is a continuously evolving project that multicultural and multi-religious groups pursue. Nigeria is an example of a diverse society with multiethnic divisions, attempts to manage Nigeria's diversity has lingered since amalgamation of the various polities in 1914. Yet, threats to its corporate existence remain as a result of hyper ethnic enthusiast, economic inequality and political rhetoric. It has been argued that Nigeria struggles with national integration because of its multiethnic and multi-religious compositions.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

J. Y. Danga

Attempts at managing Nigerian nationhood have been evolved by various governments since its independence in 1960. However, failure to properly manage the diversity led to the Nigerian civil war which lasted for thirty months (1967-1970). The loss of lives and properties and the horrors of the civil war were not lost on Nigerians and their leaders.

The National Youth Service Corps is an enduring institution that highlights the resolve of the Nigerian state to forge national integration. Founded in 1973 on the aftermath of the civil war, the Scheme has continued to serve as a strong force for national integration. Through a combination of sources, this paper describes the strategic importance of NYSC to national integration. The paper argues that the scheme through its various programmes such as community development service, posting of Corps members and staff to different geographical locations other than theirs, intermarriage and awareness programme of the NYSC, the scheme has strengthened national integration in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification

Smock and Bentsi-Enchill describe national integration as the development of identification with the national community that supersedes in certain situations more parochial loyalties.¹ Coleman and Rosberg view integration as the progressive lessening of ethnic, cultural and regional tensions and discontinuities in the process of creating a homogenous political community.² Gurpreet Kaur defined “national integration is the creation of a feeling of oneness where the diversities are recognized and respected by imbibing a sense of

¹ D.R. Smock and K. Bentsi-Enchill, _eds.) *The Search for National Integration in Africa*. (New York: The Free Press, 1976)

² J. Coleman and C Rosberg (eds.) *Integration in Tropical Africa*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1964)

Strategic Importance of NYSC to National Integration in Nigeria

nationhood"³ Integration ultimate aim is to create a multicultural, pluralist society.⁴

Mazrui observes that the five major aspects of national integration includes; the fusion of norms and culture; the promotion of social independence; the narrowing of the gap between the elites and the masses, the urban and the rural areas, rich or poor etc, the resolution of emergent conflicts, and the sharing of mutual experiences so that people can discover that they had undergone some important experiences together.⁵

For there to be national integration, there must be a central authority to serve as a rallying point. In the quest for national integration, citizens are expected to respect the overriding supremacy of the national government.⁶ This entails subordination of institutions and cultural values to the demands of the central authority. Often, intra and interethnic crisis result in tasking the state's security apparatus. The ability of the state to resolve or regulate the recurring crises and to create an enabling environment where the people's respect and love for their nation is enhanced would definitely affect the tempo of the nation's integration positively. National integration, thus, covers a vast range of human relationships and attitudes, the integration of diverse and discrete cultural loyalties and the development of a sense of

³G. Kaur. "Understanding National Integration and Challenges in Its Way."Educationia Confab, Vol 2 (No.9) (2013)

⁴L. Fekete *Integration, Islamophobia and civil rights in Europe.*(Institute of Race Relations. Upstream Ltd. London. . 2008.)

⁵A. Mazrui, *Cultural Engineering and Nation-building in East Africa,*(North-Western University Press, Evanston, 1983)

⁶R. O'Dode, "Incidents of Hostage Taking and the Niger Delta Crisis in Nigeria. *South-South Journal of Culture and Development*, 9 (1) . (2007).

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

J. Y. Danga

nationality; the integration of the rulers and the ruled and the integration of the citizens into a common political process.⁷

In this paper, national integration is in essence the act of bringing people from diverse background and culture to be united, yet at the same time keeping their original identity without changing it. It is a highly normative concept consisting of complex and multi layered economic, social and cultural practices especially when applied in the context of nation-building.

Various Phases Of The NYSC Programme

There are four cardinal programmes of the National Youth Service Corps, and they are as follows:

Orientation Programme: The Orientation Course provides the first venue for affecting the desired change of attitude, as participants receive training in preparation for their next assignment of selfless and patriotic service to their fatherland. The Orientation Course usually holds for three weeks or 21 days. The purpose of the course is also to introduce corps members to and familiarize them with the ideals of the youth corps scheme. It is compulsory for every participant to be inducted through orientation training before service; nobody joins the service prior to orientation. At the end of the course, corps members are given posting letters to their various places of primary assignment.

Primary Assignment: The NYSC takes care to avoid posting that result in wastage of human resources. Corps members are therefore, as much as possible; posted to areas relevant to their discipline although sometimes national need may override this consideration. Wrong

⁷O. Aluko U. Idowu, Usman Sayuti- "Visiting the Hippopotamus: National Integration Issues in Nigeria" *Romanian Journal of Regional Science Association* 16(1) (2016): 67-85

Strategic Importance of NYSC to National Integration in Nigeria

posting or under-utilization of corps members, when established is corrected through reposting by the state NYSC secretariat.

Community Development Service (CDS): In identifying with the current national objectives, the NYSC CDS has ventured into agriculture thus several corps members who specialize in agriculture and allied disciplines and posted within the same locality are organized to work in rotational schedules on the farms. Furthermore, the generality of corps members are expected to undertake a year round basis in addition to their primary assignment, at least one community development project in their neighborhood, in groups. After the consultation with the community people.

NYSC as an Ideology Based Tool for National Integration

The ideology-based frame of NYSC is as a result of the existing structure and mode of operation as stressed in the establishing decree of the scheme. Indeed, NYSC appears to prioritize the ideas, opinions, and beliefs of the Nigerian society. It legitimizes the need for national integration, by constructing within it images, words, narratives and symbols that stress national unity. It is not a coincidence that the logo of the NYSC has the map, and flag of Nigeria and a torch that shows the huge task the scheme carried. Furthermore, the NYSC theme song is constructed to serve as a beckon to national service:

Youths obey the clarion call
Let us lift our nation high
Under the sun or in the rain
With dedication and selflessness
Nigeria is ours, Nigeria we serve

The NYSC anthem urges youths to come as people duty bound to respond to the call of the country, this is regardless of their background, identity and affiliations, It seeks to appeal to the patriotic zeal of the youths, to serve the country with honor, dedication and

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

J. Y. Danga

selflessness. This is in line with the strategy for forging national integration and nation building which according to Musa Hitam goes beyond constructing physical infrastructures.⁸ According to Hitam, nation building includes weaving together national values for the citizenry to live by and devising greater missions to galvanize the spirit of unity.⁹ Such high values are aimed at creating a true sense of unity among the populace.

Theoretical underpinnings of national integration are critical to the understanding of the strategic role NYSC plays. Mazrui identified five interrelated aspects of national integration, of which the one he stressed the most is fusion of norms and culture. This can be achieved by stressing the linkages which facilitate connections such as understanding of languages, norms and morals. The NYSC scheme facilitates connections between disparate communities and consequently encourages interaction between groups, and facilitates national identification and integrative tendencies.

Heidmets' proposition for national integration is central to understanding the role of NYSC. He stressed four models of integration namely; assimilation, integration, separation and confrontation.¹⁰ Nations that adopt the integration, like Nigeria means a significant number of citizens must develop identification with the nation that supersedes identification with ethnic, cultural or religious group, acquire political awareness, share common norms and values and develop attitudes favorable to the display of integrative behavior among people of different groups. NYSC serves these multiple purposes; indeed a subsection of the establishing Act addresses these issues of identity *inter alia*:

⁸ Musa Hitam "Introduction" Z. Ibrahim *In Good Faith* Petaling: ZI Publication 2007.

⁹ Hitam Introduction p.7

¹⁰ M. Heidmets *Integration of Minorities into Estonian Society* In Collection of Materials Disantrek

Strategic Importance of NYSC to National Integration in Nigeria

As far as possible, youths are assigned to jobs in states other than their states of origin and away from their geographical, ethnic and cultural background.; each group assigned to work are as representative of the country as possible; the youths are exposed to the modes of living of the people in different parts of the country with a view to removing prejudices, eliminating ignorance and confirming at first hand the many similarities among Nigerians of all ethnic groups.¹¹

Consequently, NYSC may be viewed as taking part in the multiple identity approach to integration. This approach stresses that the people of a nation sought to cultivate the sense of political unity among diverse ethnic groups, while at the same time upholding and maintaining the social structures and cultural norms that make the groups disparate. Proponents assume that the acceptance of common political institutions is sufficient to make cohesive the disparate groups.

Multiculturalism which is understood as a system of beliefs and behaviors that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges and values their socio-cultural differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context which empowers all within the organization or society.

The achievement of NYSC in encouraging national integration lies in the ability of the scheme to post Corps members across the federation to places they previously have no idea about in terms of their culture, social and political structure, without having fear of being unwelcomed or treated like strangers. The character of the NYSC scheme can therefore be described as favouring multicultural integration.

¹¹Umoden 158

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

J. Y. Danga

Strategic Importance of NYSC to National Integration

There are several factors that contribute to the NYSC scheme as a strategic tool for national integration. These multiple factors are analyzed below:

Deployment of Corps Members

National integration from the perspective of the Inter-group contact theory believes that continuous interactions among members of the various groups would lead to improvement in relationships among them. It is a deliberate policy of the NYSC to deploy Corps Members to states other than theirs. According to Enegewea and Umoden, Corps member have no choice as to what state they would be deployed to.¹² In fact they are to be posted to states other than their own state of origin. They add that the integrative purpose of the Scheme makes it necessary, therefore, Corps member are exposed to other parts of the country that they previously would have been ignorant about.¹³ Indeed, many Nigerians that passed through the youth service scheme are very appreciative of the chance they had to explore and learn about other cultures of the Nigeria. In fact, some persons went ahead to settle, marry and or relocate to their state of deployment after the Youth service.

Officials drawn from different places

Critical to the integrative force of the NYSC is the posting of staff and officials of the scheme to different parts of the Nigerian federation. This has fostered understanding of the various cultures of people of Nigeria it enhances the capacity of officials to promote the integrative objective of the NYSC scheme. This is valuable to the critical role they perform during and after orientation exercises.

¹²Emegwea and UmodenNYSC: 20 Years p.23

¹³ There are exemptions to deployment on health, marital and compassionate grounds, so long as there are sufficient proof and documentations that satisfy the officials of the scheme.

Strategic Importance of NYSC to National Integration in Nigeria

Media Awareness programmes

Media has a constructive role to play in national integration. The NYSC have multiple collaborations with various media outfits, where it airs programmes that promote issues bordering on national unity, health, environment and education. The role of media in the NYSC scheme is very critical, as the barrier of space and time is being broken by new media which uses the internet to reach out to a vast number of people through channels like Google, Facebook, Instagram and Whatsapp among others.

The NYSC has tremendously used media as an avenue for promoting national integration. Some of the media programmes include the follow:

- National builders (Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria-FRCN)
- NYSC Half Hour (multiple radios across the federation)
- U-Report

In 2019, the Director General of NYSC, Shuaibu Ibrahim announced that the NYSC is pursuing a license to establish a radio station in Abuja. According the Director General, the idea of establishing the station would help to develop potentials of Corps Members and educate the general public about the workings of the Scheme.

This is not surprising that the NYSC have used the media to increase awareness of the public on various activities for inter-ethnic interaction. However, the low sensational appeal of the programmes of NYSC media programmes has sometimes led to some of the programmes not resonating among youths, during their youth services, individual presenters in radio and television stations have used their platforms to promote national integration.

Community Development Service (CDS)

The NYSC has used its various CDS groups to contribute to national integration. CDS groups such as drama troupe and anti-corruption have used the avenue to promote national integration by stressing the

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

J. Y. Danga

desired patriotic behaviour that can move Nigeria forward. Through the CDS, members of the Service Corps work with the local communities to promote self-reliance by systematically prospecting and executing development projects and programme which impact positively on the socio-economic development of the host communities.¹⁴ Some of the NYSC CDS groups include;

- Corps Legal Aid Group (CLAG)
- Cultural and Tourism Group (Band, Dance, Drama & Tourism)
- Education Development Group (Mass Literacy, Adult Education, Extra Murals ICT)
- Anti-Corruption Group (EFCC & ICPC)

Physical training

One of the ways the NYSC has promoted national integration is through fitness and healthiness. Corps members have participated in multiple awareness campaigns that use mass trekking, walking, hiking or marathon to highlight various areas of national integrations. Therefore, while keeping the citizens mentally aware and alert, the scheme has equally served as a tool for integration when it participates in many fitness activities.

Intermarriage

Intermarriage is a strategic contribution of NYSC to national integration. In fact, the NYSC has a definite objective to promote intermarriage among service Corps members, hence, the scheme set up incentives to promote intermarriage. There are monetary, and non-monetary incentives put in place to ensure that Corps members are predisposed to getting married to other corps members during the service year. This strategic factor of national integration has gone a long way to promote inter ethnic harmony, unity and national development.

¹⁴https://nysc.gov.ng/downloads/CDS_ABC.pdf

Strategic Importance of NYSC to National Integration in Nigeria

The unifying factor of ethnic marriage is well noted by scholars. Alba observes that inter ethnic marriage is a force for integration in Europe, therefore blurring lines of century old divisions.¹⁵ Similarly, Okonji observes that interethnic marriage in Nigeria can serve as a panacea for development. Okonji averred that Inter-ethnic marriage would simply breed a population with plural ethnicity which would naturally nurture federative patriotism for both participating groups. Thus, affinal relationship can aid national restructuring that can reduce ethnocentrism in both Nigeria body politics and its economic adventure. The Nigerian government may want to encourage interethnic marriage through deliberate policy in favor of the participating partners or couples and their children.¹⁶

Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED)

An aspect of national integration that is usually ignored is the SAED programme of the NYSC Scheme. The programme may serve economic purpose, yet it has integrative features. Through SAED many Corps members have started ventures in places other than theirs because of the economic prospect of those places. Corps member rely on their trainers in various corners of the country to help them acquire entrepreneurship skills that is beneficial to their life. In doing this, they do not have to go to their areas of birth or residence but where they are deployed. SAED has fostered economic dependencies and therefore promoted integration in Nigeria. As more entrepreneurs increased in Nigeria, they depend on various people for patronage; in doing this, the national unity and progress is strengthened.

¹⁵ R. Alba "The Social significance of Intermarriage" *Contemporary Jewry*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (December 1991), pp. 9-19

¹⁶ P Okonji "National Unity and Inter-Ethnic Marriage between the Hausa and Yoruba in Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria" *International Journal of Scientific Research and Innovative Technology* Vol. 5 No. 10; (December 2018) 76-90

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

J. Y. Danga

Political participation

According to an observer, NYSC saved Nigeria's democracy from failing. The importance of democratic governance to national integration is well discussed given the nature of democracy as a system of rule by laws that protect the rights of citizens and limit the power of the government. Creating a strong nation-state in a heterogeneous society is an important focus of democracy. However, political ideology of desperation, rigging, and electoral violence previously threatened national integration in Nigeria. However, in the 2011 general election, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) linked up with NYSC to deploy Corps members to serve as poll officials, that experiment proved very effective.

The 2015 General Elections, in which the NYSC members served as ad-hoc electoral officials, were adjudged one of the fairest in Nigerian history. The conduct of elections with Corps Members has greatly improved the prestige of the country. More so, the results of elections conducted with Corps members have tended to be accepted even in the highest courts of the land, proving the credibility of the NYSC.

National integration is promoted in the face of fairness and equity, the plural nature of the Nigerian polity therefore provides opportunity for democratic governance through multiparty elections. The use of Corps members therefore was aimed at tapping in to the core philosophy of the scheme which stresses fairness, patriotism and unity. Since Corps members are serving in areas other than theirs, the tendency to be neutral in party politics is high, and this neutrality is a major factor that has greatly served as a positive tool in the conduct of Corps members in the various elections they have superintended. Indeed, they have given a credible account of themselves and they have been commended both locally and internationally. According to Osumah:

Although INEC was statutorily charged with the responsibility of administering the elections, the commission had inadequate manpower to cover the

Strategic Importance of NYSC to National Integration in Nigeria

election unaided. NYSC members were recruited as ad-hoc staff to assist in the administration of polling stations, on the basis of the strategic collaboration between the NYSC and INEC (This Day 2015). INEC estimated that about 750 000 ad-hoc staff were needed to conduct the election (The Punch Editorial 2015). The NYSC corps members constituted a significant proportion of the personnel in all 36 states. The NYSC members demonstrated great courage and resilience during voter registration and polling-unit operations. Their resilience was particularly tested by mammoth crowds that were sometimes unruly, impatient, discontented and violent, following widespread challenges with card readers on election days. In the spirit of selflessness and patriotism, corps member operating polling units had to work late into the night. Indeed, international observers such as the African Union Election Observation Mission (AUEOM) and National Democratic Institute reported that corps members who served as ad-hoc polling personnel were highly professional and effective (AUEOM 2015, NDI 2015).¹⁷

Critical to this point is the need to stress that by conducting elections, the NYSC strengthen national integration. If parties to an election do not feel cheated, the tendency to seek violent alternative is usually absent. Although, there are still cases of post electoral violence, the tendency is that it is unrelated to the actual conduct of elections; it is rather an expression of frustration by disgruntled politicians who will rather use the vicious cycle of violence as an expression of frustration.

¹⁷ O. Osumah "Paradigm Shift: Youth Engagement in the Conduct of the 2015 Elections in Nigeria" *Journal of African Elections* Volume 15 No 1 (2016): 1-24

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

J. Y. Danga

In essence, the NYSC participation in the conduct of elections has fostered national integration, increased the credibility of elections in Nigeria and greatly enhanced the national and international image of Nigeria. The implication for national integration is that an aspect of division that threatens the country's national unity is greatly reduced. As INEC and NYSC collaborate to strengthen elections, it helps the country's nation building efforts.

Threats to NYSC as a Force for National Integration

Insecurity

The rising spate of insecurity in Nigeria has threatened the sustainable role NYSC plays in national integration. Several Corps members have regrettably been killed in the line of service to their fatherland. During election cycles, increased violence has sometimes threatened the lives of Corps members. Although, the NYSC have put up strategies to reduce the threat against Corps members by redeploying Corps members to areas with less risk, as the insurgency raged on since 2009 in the North East, there has been a relocation of camping from states like Borno, Adamawa and Yobe to other camps across Nigeria.

Political Rhetoric

Despite the noble efforts of the NYSC scheme, the main challenge to national integration lies in the negative rhetoric of politicians across the nation. There is a tendency to call on ethnic divisionism to score cheap political points in Nigeria. Furthermore, ethnic militias have sprung up to challenge Nigeria's nationhood, including groups like Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) and Boko Haram among others.

Strategic Importance of NYSC to National Integration in Nigeria

Conclusion

National integration is a process that seeks to unite people of different ethnic, cultural, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds for reciprocally beneficial goals. Correspondingly, it occurs when people from the same nation think, feel and care for one another and are willing to sacrifice the individual interest for the nation. National integration and nation building are essential to national development in Nigeria. Since 1973, the NYSC has continued to serve as the most potent tool for national integration. The posting of thousands of Corps members annually to various states that are not theirs have greatly contributed to building national consciousness, national integration and nation building. This strategy of sending large number of youths to different parts of the country has been viewed as relevant to national integration. The movement of mass populations into different regions of a country is a significant way of achieving integration between a people and its territory, and also among different groups within the population.¹⁸

Similarly, Deutsch explains that when a community experiences many transactions the people who have experienced these transactions will like them. If these transactions were rewarded, the image of the community may be strongly positive. He says the perception of a sense of community allowed diverse groups to exchange norms, values and expressive symbols unconsciously. Thirdly, the spatial perspective sees integration as a function of the geographic distribution of people. This can be said of NYSC as many youths who recount their post service experience tend to stress the positive values they derive from the communities they have served and how this has improved their sense of nationality and unity.

¹⁸A. Mabogunje *The Development Process: A Spatial Perspective* (New York: Holmes and Meyer, 1981)

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

J. Y. Danga

In conclusion, NYSC is a very strategic tool for national integration, from the conception, the establishing Act to the various programmes set up for the implementation of the objectives, the NYSC has served the dual purpose of a tool for national integration and an example of the outcome of a deliberate effort at forging national unity. In essence, it is important to reexamine NYSC, strengthen the institution and project the achievements of the scheme to highlight its critical importance to national integration.

Strategic Importance of NYSC to National Integration in Nigeria

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THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

J. Y. Danga

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Brig. Gen. S Ibrahim presenting an award to the winners of the
Dance competition



NYSC DG, Brig. Gen. S. Ibrahim and his entourage in a sporting event

SHOWCASE OF THE RICH CULTURAL HERITAGE



Corp members performing Igbo Cultural dance at
NYSC Orientation Camp, Iyana Ipaja, Lagos State.



Corp members performing Hausa Cultural dance at
NYSC Orientation Camp, Kano State.



Corp members performing Yourba Cultural dance at
NYSC Orientation Camp, Iseyin, Oyo State.



Former NYSC DG, Brig Gen NT Okore-affiah on camp inspection in Abia.



Former Minister of Youth and Sports Development, Barr Solomon Dalung
welcomes representative of Mr President, Mrs Pauline Tallen to
NYSC SAED programme.



Corps members participating in a football match



Male Corps members participating in athletic events



Female Corps members participating in athletic events



President Buhari welcomes Former DG NYSC, Brig Gen Olawumi



Gen Gowon signs the visitor's notebook at the Commissioning of NYSC Directorate Headquarters Complex while the Minister of Youth and Sports Chief Akinlabi Olasukunmi, DG NYSC and others watch



NYSC DG, Brig Gen MI Tsiga commissioning a project built by a Corps Member



NYSC DG, Brig Gen Yusuf Bomoi welcoming another former DG NYSC,
Gen Hafis Momoh to the Commissioning



NYSC DG, Gen Kazaure received the representative of Plateau State Governor.



Gen Yakubu Gowon (Rtd.) at the 35th Anniversary of the NYSC Scheme



DG NYSC, Brig Gen Olawumi visits Gen Yakubu Gowon with Management and some Corps Members.

National Integration in Nigeria: The Way Forward

13

**National Integration in Nigeria:
The Way Forward**

Dominic James Aboi

Introduction

Every nation is not perfect, the seemingly perfect ones have a long history of struggles that either have assisted them to develop or set them on the path towards sustainable development and progress. Nigeria is not an exception in this regard. By virtue of its ethnic and religious pluralism and multiple parties, the notion of compatibility and most importantly, integration plays a key role in the governance of a state like Nigeria. Therefore, this paper examines the nature, challenges and prospects of national integration in Nigeria.

195

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

D. J. Aboi

Background to the Struggle for Integration

Most of sub-Saharan Africa at a point was not only physically conquered, or militarily subdued, its people were psychologically broken and made to feel less than them by the colonial masters through cultural differentiation and political imperialism. The colonialists in taking over the minds of the Africans in their colonies, structurally broke the people into zones for easy dissemination of their Indirect Rule System like we see in Nigeria (which is diametrically opposed to the French's concept of Assimilation), and further emphasized this divide by way of ethnic grouping and physical features differencing where necessary.

It was based on this divide and conquers mentality that the partitioning of Africa took place during the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, and African nations were parceled out to European countries like gifts. Nigeria, though surrounded by Francophone speaking countries was taken over by the British. The notion of nation-building and patriotism was created around the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria: Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo, representing the North, South and Eastern regions. The leaders representing these regions include Tafawa Balewa as the Northern Prime Minister (Sir Ahmadu Bello was seen as a spiritual father of the North); Akintola led the South and Nnamdi Azikiwe represented the East.

This seeming perfect representation, though has overruled the autonomy of minority ethnic groups; captures the entirety of Nigerian leadership and the British capitalized on it to administer their relationship; be it socioeconomic, religious and political as colonial masters. But the leadership, as Will Durant once asserted, no civilization can be conquered from the outside, till it has been destroyed from within, started having glitches within the matrix of its relationship as vices like nepotism, maladministration, unnecessary squandering of public funds on luxurious goods; and the leadership

National Integration in Nigeria: The Way Forward

headlong started wearing the dictatorial shoes of their former masters as the newly independent state.

They became overwhelmed by the prospect of regional politics instead of holistically looking at leadership from a federalist position. The new persons in the corridors of power tasked themselves with the creation of followership cults and cabals rather than focusing on the progressive development of the country, and sustaining credible relationship abroad. Achebe in *The Trouble with Nigeria* weighs on the problems surrounding the abuse of power and succinctly argues that the Nigerian problem is squarely that of bad leadership¹. It is on the stroke of this failure that the leadership gave the military powers the impetus to strike and claim they were trying to restore the country to its initial glory.

A coup was staged and the military took over power but the coup was allegedly lopsided because the North felt to be targeted and another counter-coup was staged and this time around the casualty was enormous on the Eastern side that it decided to secede to form the Republic of Biafra. This call of secession did not sit well with both the Nigerian and British government. That was the beginning of the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970). Lives were lost on both sides of the divide and hence the seeds of disunity, distrust and suspicions were sown; one region against the other, still in the same country. The length and bloody outcome of the war was underestimated.

Though Wole Soyinka, the first African writer to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1986, had earlier on hinted on the this break up in his Independence play entitled *A Dance of the Forest*, attention was not brought to his prognostications, instead he was chided as a pessimist with a bleak vision for a young promising country. Soyinka himself was imprisoned for nearly two years during the war by the Nigerian state

¹Achebe, C. 1984. *The Trouble with Nigeria*. London: Heinemann Books, 1.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

D. J. Aboi

for allegedly trying to procure firearms for the Biafran side². With this soiling of truth and the harmony that once blossomed – in fact the war was seen as a struggle between the major religions in Nigeria: the predominant Islamic North and the Christian South/East. The loss of credible trust and food shortage brought about the loss of more lives and properties even when a ceasefire was declared after Biafra's unprecedented and unconditional surrender.

Many Biafrans – Easterners in this case, after the announcement of ceasefire were heading to the borders to cross into neighboring African countries where they believe they will be safe rather than be integrated or reunited into Nigeria. But the then government under the leadership of Yakubu Gowon who was perceived to be a balance between the warring side being that he is a Christian and at the same time a northerner, initiated the proverbial three Rs: reconciliation, reconstruction and rehabilitation. This is proverbial in the sense that the prospects of these three (3) Rs continue to elude the grasp of Nigeria since it was introduced. But it is its initiation that signaled the genesis of national integration and the call for One Nigeria. Partisan politics and politicians later capitalized on this maxim in order to solder or suture the fractured relationship among the regions. It is within the backdrop of these happenings and national crisis that structures of the NYSC were erected to foster unity, trust and progress among Nigerians and the future it hopes to build and achieve.

In the event of a crisis, desperate solutions are not only created, but uncovered to salvage the disturbing situation. A good example of blurring the lines of discord and divide is the unification of Rwanda after the 1994 hundred days Massacre. Though critics argue that it has long been a bottled up frustration that spilled into the open in the form

² Soyinka, W. 1972. *The Man Died*. London: Rex Collins.

National Integration in Nigeria: The Way Forward

of the massacre, now called the Rwandan Genocide, Nigeria in the present has so much to learn from its challenges and triumphs.

The unification of Rwanda or integration of its warring regions called for the abolition of classifying Rwandans based on their origins or ethnic groups: Hutu, Tutsi or Twa who were the major actors in the crisis. Nigeria's crisis was contained through the earlier adopted all-embracing or inclusive scheme in the form of the NYSC to create peaceful platforms where almost every religion and ethnic group, be it popular or within minority ethnic groups, will be adequately represented.

Nigeria is a growing and undergoing development but still nursing the setbacks and challenges of the so-called Third World country. In this wise, it is still faced with an unemployed population amidst poverty, mass illiteracy which could be relied upon to cause violence, unavailability of skilled labourers in certain fields, and these problems are compounded by the lack of socioeconomic infrastructural facilities, housing, water and sewage facilities, road, healthcare services, and effective communication system. Most of these problems are ongoing and need to be constantly addressed else they become detrimental to national growth and progress.

In places, where they are more pronounced, the claims of government negligence will be echoed. It is the NYSC program that had in many instances act as a shock absorber, or an intervention project that interface with this forgone conclusion on the part of the masses who might think the government have neglected them. And most times, if it is ill-conceived, the footprints of ethno-religious divide will begin to appear and in the way, trust will be lost and the integration policies that are supposed to push the country forward will be hampered with.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

D. J. Aboi

The CDS Groups as Small Units of Integration

Community Development Service (CDS) groups are small units under the NYSC scheme that meet regularly to discuss projects they must embark on in order to assist their communities where they are serving, in other words, how they could develop their Place of Primary Assignment (PPA) and host communities. These small units are reflective of larger governmental bodies like the Federal Road Safety Commission, Economic and Financial Crime Commission, the Red Cross, among other segments that perform similar functions within their capacities, but most times are in the service of providing enlightenment with regards to the sectors they represent.

These CDS programs oblige youths or Corps Members to undertake at least one Community Development (CD) project that will be beneficial to their host community. This makes Corps Members to be adequately involved in the affairs of their community, and will encourage integration, because bright minds share different points of views that can lead to mutual progress and understanding. Through these bonds, structures like market stalls, clinics, roads, gutters, drainages, public boreholes among other development plans are hatched and brought to fruition. Akume et al in Arubayi (2015: 90) asserts that:

The CDS requires Corps Members to use their acquired skills to provide services like education, health care delivery, rural infrastructural and community development, agriculture, science and technology, and enlightenment campaign for the benefit of their host community...As such, ensuring the success of the CDS imposes the Corps Members to wear a spirit coded with dedication and enthusiasm irrespective of the

National Integration in Nigeria: The Way Forward

challenges they may face in so far as they are not life-threatening³.

This call to duty and shouldering of responsibilities brings about academic tailor-ship and the embroidery of ideas that end up producing a beautiful garment of understanding among groups, and that in itself is a stepping stone toward integration. The NYSC's idea of integration is contingent on collaborations offered by Corps Members. It is in the light of this apprenticeship where individuals are taught skills that could be transferred to other regions where they might be deficient and by so doing create new markets.

This kind of initiative is illustrated in the NYSC's collaboration with the Office of the Senior Special Assistant on Millennium Development Goals (OSSAPMDGs now SDGs) of the Presidency among other international partners like the British Council and World Bank in training Corps Volunteers as Development Knowledge Facilitators (DKFs)⁴. This gives Corps Members in determining their future as they are involved in grassroots projects and corporations that are instrumental to not only their well-being but that of their communities. The involvement of Corps Members as primary bridges between new policies and the people aids development across facets of the society.

³Arubayi, D. O. 2015. Youth in Development: Understanding the Contributions of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) to Nigeria's National Development, an unpublished PhD thesis submitted to School of Environment, Education and Development (SEED), Institute of Development Policy and Management (IDPM), 90. See also, Akume, A.T., Solomon, M. Mohammed, O.A. 2012. Conflict, the NYSC Programme and the Question of Policy Relevance in Present Day Nigeria: An Assessment. In, Abdulrahman, D.A., Ogundiya, I.S. Garba, T., Dankani, I.M. (eds.) (2012): 50years of Nigeria's Nationhood: Issues and Challenges for Sustainable Development. Ibadan: Crown F. Publishers.

⁴Eboh, E. 2010. MDGs-Based Planning in Africa: Lessons, Experiences and Challenges: A case Study of Nigeria. Addis Ababa: UNECA, Holmes, R., Akinrimisi, B., Morgan, J., Buck, R. 2012. Social Protection in Nigeria: Mapping Programmes and their effectiveness. London: Overseas Development Institute.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

D. J. Aboi

Such collaborations bring initiatives like War Against Poverty (WAP), Family and Community Life Reorientation Programme (FACOR) and the MDGs, SDG's, Advocacy Creation Programme (MACR), together and the diverse group involve further integrate the country and spark new approaches towards lasting peace and development in the country⁵.

The development of any independent country lies in the hands of its youth. The universities and other tertiary institutions could be the cathedrals of knowledge but the NYSC creates platforms where the true potentials of future leaders can be examined and tested. NYSC Corps Members who have been able to secure leadership positions within the intricacies of multiple ethnic groups, diverse faiths and political persuasion have shown their ability to rule the nation because the federal character within the NYSC is enough to build credible leaders of tomorrow.

In order words, the integration policies of Nigeria have been tested using this platform and could be used to test new ideas as any response negative or positive will be a litmus paper test reaction that will be expected from Nigerians. This is because the totality of what Nigeria, its youth, ideology and visions today, is being adequately mediated and represented by the NYSC. In other words, the youths or graduates working together in the spirit of oneness have found ways of accommodating each other's excesses, and therefore built tolerance across other facets of life and living together.

⁵NYSC,2008. National Youth Service Corps: Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): NYSC Family and Community Life Reorientation Modules for Upper Primary and Lower Secondary School Pupils. Abuja: National Youth Service Corps Service, Nigeria.

National Integration in Nigeria: The Way Forward

The Engagements of the NYSC as a Body

It should be noted that the purpose of the scheme is primarily to inculcate in Nigerian Youths the spirit of selfless service to the community (nation) and to emphasize the spirit of togetherness and brotherhood among Nigerians, regardless of their sociocultural backgrounds. This is because cultural and geographical entity cannot exist in a vacuum. The NYSC's mandatory one year requires graduates to participate in community development services as a way of contributing to the fatherland. This is a veritable tool that could be harnessed towards national integration and development and sustainable progress within the Nigerian state. Adam Smith's law governing dynamics for instance, claims that the best result is achieved when everyone in the group does what is best for him and the group.

Nigeria in taking the NYSC approach by bringing individuals from different backgrounds, religions, political persuasions and ethnic affiliations, can benefit so much from this initiative if these individuals can give the best of themselves through their various professions to the Nigerian state. A cross-pollination of ideas will surely give birth to the most remarkable results and meaningful progress can be achieved and could be built upon for future development and national growth. It is worthy of note to reiterate that when the NYSC was established on the strength of decree No.24 of 22nd May of 1973 with a view to properly encourage and develop common ties among the youths of Nigeria and the promotion of national unity, its mission statement reads:

"To mobilize and groom graduate youths for the promotion of national unity, sustainable development, self-reliance and prepare them for the challenges of leadership"

The practicalities of performance are the key ingredients in the integration project as a promising initiative built to be an all-inclusive leadership structure and platform. The notion of credible positive leadership committed to unity is at the fore of its goals. This is to

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

D. J. Aboi

develop individual minds that value nationalism, patriotism and accountable leadership indiscriminate of ethnic, religious and political affiliations or differences. This rings true in the words of Booker T. Washington during "The Atlanta Exposition Address" as found in his memoir *Up from Slavery* where he encourages African Americans to work with their fellow white Americans despite the bitter past of slavery and hundreds of years of servitude⁶.

Washington encourages African Americans that in terms of all things essential to mutual progress, they should all be equal as the hand. It is not coincidental that individual contributions could lead to national and collective progress that John F. Kennedy, America's youngest and 35th democratically elected President insisted that Americans should think not on what their country could do for them, but what they could do for their country.

This selfless spirit geared towards contributing to the development of communities where NYSC Corps Members are domicile does not only promote regional growth it fosters national integration because it brings out the best in individuals at regions that have no claims to their origin or genealogy. This helps members of certain communities to wipe clean the stereotypical postulations they once held, even grudges in some quarters, about the behavior of certain ethnic groups or region. It offers the opportunity for individuals to get to know and understand themselves properly. And it is only right to state that once individuals have full knowledge of themselves, an understanding is established among them, and it is this understanding that brings about tolerance or one another alongside their excesses. Once this trust and compatibility is enshrined, the fruits that come with integration and national development can be yielded.

⁶Washington, B. T. (2013). *Up from Slavery: An Autobiography*. New York: Seahorse Publishing, 292.

National Integration in Nigeria: The Way Forward

Community development projects have been executed by so many members of the NYSC and these projects brought smiles on the faces of Nigerians. For instance, corps doctors have organized Health Campaigns (Outreaches) workshops where difficult kinds of ailments and diseases have been tackled and more serious cases have been referred to General or Teaching Hospitals for further treatment. These are individual efforts that have become public due to the nature of its outreach and the lives that have been positively touched and changed. If Nigeria could borrow a page from the book of such kind of progress without paradoxically waiting for the government of the day to come and contribute to their communities, the rural and remotest parts of the country will immensely grow.

The exodus to urban dwelling where supposedly successful people live will be cut short when medical or health reasons have been at the fore of most immigrants. On another note, there is a double-edged progression to individual commitment towards rural development when we consider one of the causes of migration from villages: medical or health concerns. If such projects are established, rural dwellers whose occupations are mostly farmers will remain at home to produce food for the state and by so doing, they cease to become liabilities to themselves and also relief the government from burden and the debt of dependence. In this wise, an uplifting or development in terms of rural standards of living cuts the influx of migrants to urban areas without the survival skills adequate to thrive in such environment.

The yearlong service initiated with the creation of the NYSC has bridged the unemployment gap and curtailed antisocial vices among individuals and youth. It means instead of being somewhere engaging in non-development activities, their energy is given direction and purposes through various engagements provided by the NYSC. There are schools and other establishments both private and government owned that enjoy the services of the NYSC Corps Members.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

D. J. Aboi

Some of these schools can either not employ or afford the salaries of teachers, or are located in remote areas that people do not want to work in, but with the integrational policy surrounding the NYSC where regardless of where an individual graduate is from, not minding social status or background, once the clarion call to duty and service of the fatherland is made, individuals are bound to respond, these schools and establishments get to function and students gets to have the services of qualified teachers to tutor and give them insight into their future dreams. It aids to harness economic integration as even the rural and public schools get to experience teaching from top graduates they would not have been able to afford, or that could only be accessed in rich or private schools and settings.

This random selection of individuals to different places enables them to cope with what is available at their regions and enhances the conception of adaptation and the idea that when the desirable is not available; the available becomes the desirable. And thus, the shedding off of unnecessary expectations by all parties involved which helps prepare them for integration into the larger society as the less expectations they have coming off such programs, the readily available they are to seize on opportunities open to them. In fact, some graduates who have affected lives in remote villages help to share their experiences with others to estimate how fortunate they have been. This opens up the possibility and taking advantage to what life has offered to graduates, help individuals to survive in any given circumstances and also buttress the need to come together towards achieving a common purpose. This in itself emphasizes the need for patriotism which is very important in integration and nation-building.

In looking at the prospect for national integration, one of the outstanding features of the NYSC is the distribution or mobilization (deployment) of individuals across regions to ensure federal character, in other words, it is a panoramic representation of all states which by extension is an even distribution of sociocultural groups across the

National Integration in Nigeria: The Way Forward

nation. This potpourri of ethnic grouping and individuals from diverse backgrounds and regions consolidate one of the ideals of federalism and fiscal distribution of national wealth.

Graduates under the auspices of the NYSC are entitled to the same stipends or monetary allowances though certain professions due to the commitment needed in their fields are offered a little rise in pay, unifies the notion of equality and sense of belonging among individuals having seen justice being played out through the same justification for similar work done.

That the NYSC conglomerates individuals from different fields of studies, religions and ethnicity unifies the country even in its diversity. If Nigeria as a country can borrow a page from the handbook of the NYSC, national issues like sectarian violence, inter-religious crisis and ethnic clashes will be reduced to a minimum or relegated to the background of national concerns. This is because diverse cultures, and traditions with regards to ethnic groups would rather celebrate their pluralism instead of their differences. Hence the popular maxim: unity in diversity. It will call for an interaction of similarities and the building of bonds instead of capitalizing on little areas that are detrimental to national integration, peaceful coexistence and sustainable development.

National integration can be achieved through the NYSC's concept of indefinite deployment of graduates which most often happens in the opposite direction of their states of origin. It is a popular adage that one should not throw stones in the market as one is likely to hit his mother or a relative. This is to say when individuals are mobilized across the country, the likelihood of some graduates with influential parents to be sent to remote or rural areas is high. The implication here is, it exposes the area or community, or bring attention to the failure of its government to develop it.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

D. J. Aboi

For instance, a village without a clinic, flowing pipe borne water, electricity or good roads could be brought to the limelight when individuals connected to, or whose kin are responsible for its development are sent there. It also raises the question of fiscal responsibilities and how balanced are the allocations sent to certain regions alongside their needs and everyday challenges. On the other hand, indefinite posting will serve as a voice of caution for contractors and officials responsible for carrying out community development projects to play their parts as whatever they end up building as these legacies could end up being enjoyed by either their family members or relatives.

The unpredictability of these postings to a large extent stimulates the notion of truth and fairness which is a major ingredient in national integration. Satyagraha to use the Sanskrit word used in Hinduism to mean being fair and steadfast in one's dealings, or having a conscious and habitual disposition to be kind and doing the right thing is a veritable tool in both integration and national development. In this sense, justice is said to be the promotion of peace, not the absence of war. The NYSC approach in mobilizing individuals from different fields, states of origin – by extension diverse ethnic groups and social status, to different regions demonstrates a rigorous approach towards national integration, unity and progress while rising above differences and regional divides or ideologies.

In spite of the various challenges arising with regards to security and how secure is the NYSC scheme, critics are asking if the NYSC has been achieving its aim of developing and creating common ties among Nigerian youths or its graduate, and of course the answer is a positive yes⁷. Ethnic divisions which have been fractures in the past has been

⁷ Chukwuemeka, O. and Ani, J.K. 2014. The National Youth Service Corps programme and Growing Insecurity Threat in Nigeria. Africa; Public Service Delivery and Performance Review. Vol. 2(2). pp. 6-7. See also, National Youth

National Integration in Nigeria: The Way Forward

sutured with technology also playing a vital role, ideas within NYSC platforms are shared and projects peculiar to certain regions are now shared, practiced and experienced across the federation.

The success of the NYSC towards integrating the country, and a scheme which the country should hold strongly to should not be underestimated as it has brought about friendship among individuals and groups that would not ordinarily have contact, let alone become friends. It is worthy of note to mention the inter-tribal marriages that the scheme has soldered – including the monetary support it has extended to such unions, which to a large extent will help curb and prevent inter-ethnic or inter-religious crisis and tensions. In line with looking at the prospect for integration.

Conclusion

The NYSC therefore stands at the threshold with the renewed agitation or the secession of Biafra, the need for the NYSC remains high and illuminates the fact that the scheme is far from achieving its mission of fostering national integration. Based on the design of the NYSC, it is a good scheme and a great avenue to promote nationalism in Nigeria. The program has a lofty objective and has achieved some positive goals. Even with all its mistakes, there is still hope for the Nigerian National Youth Service Corps, but it is crucial that it be reviewed, updated, and better managed in order to preserve and strengthen the cause of national unity of integrating Nigerians of all religious and socioeconomic backgrounds and political persuasions toward national unity and sustainable development⁸.

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⁸Egunyomi, A. 2017. "The National Youth Service Corps: A Bridge to Nationalism in Nigeria." *Africa in Transition*. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/national-youth-service-corps-bridge-nationalism-nigeria>

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D. J. Aboi

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THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

A. A. Ogidi

14

**Prospect of National Integration:
The NYSC Approach**

Anthony A. Ogidi

Introduction

Nigeria is a country which has emerged from a historical consequence of foreign interference. Hence, her multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-religious status makes her a heterogeneous nation with such diversities which have impeded socio-political development over the years. The activities which characterized the pre, during and post-civil war era showed discord was sown in the minds of many Nigerians which warranted the need to probe the unity of Nigeria and the necessity of its continued existence as a heterogeneous state. Consequently, the

212

Prospect of National Integration: The NYSC Approach

then military administration led by General Yakubu Gowon established the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) programme via Decree 24, issued on 22nd May, 1973, with a view to further realize the national goals and objectives aimed at not only re-establishing Nigeria as: a united, strong and self-reliant nation; with a great and dynamic economy; a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens; a free and democratic society, but also at fostering national integration amidst high level of mutual suspicions and hostility, through reconstruction, rebuilding, reconciliation mechanisms. The NYSC scheme, since then, has been driven in pursuance of the goal of "proper encouragement and development of common ties among the youths of Nigeria and the promotion of national unity"¹. This is in addition to other national integrative mechanisms adopted by successive governments. For example, the increment in the number of the federal unity schools, the Nigerianization Policy, National Language Policy, Federalism, Party Politics, New Federal Capital Territory, States and Local Governments Creation, revenue sharing formula/fiscal federalism, and establishment of the Federal Character Commission to among others promote, monitor and enforce compliance with the principles of the proportional sharing of all bureaucratic, economic, media and political posts at all levels of government. The idea behind the Federal Character policy was to foster peace, unity, equity in the distribution of the common wealth of the nation and ensure equal development by adequately integrating less advantaged parts of the country in the central affairs. However, the application of this policy has been frowned at given the activities of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and other public institutions on issues of recruitment, promotion etc². Besides, some analysts have argued that the policy

¹ NYSC, "NYSC Magazine", *The Journal of NYSC Directorate Headquarters*. Abuja: National Youth Service Corps Service (2014).

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

A. A. Ogidi

engenders mutual mistrust and tend to breed instability as people continuously cry of marginalization.²

About forty years after, Nigeria is still grappling with the issue of disunity; exemplified by hostility, mutual suspicion, religious intolerance, ethnic bigotry, communal clashes and the likes. The North, for instance, has been literally thrown into a state of anarchy due the activities of the Boko Haram and the recent wake of armed banditry with increased rate of kidnapping. In some cases, NYSC members become victims by either being abducted or die in violent crises and thus unable to complete their service year. Consequently, Corps members tend to reject deployments to places of primary assignment believed to be very prone to violent crises or insurgency.

Given the current ethno-religious and political crises that Nigeria is faced with, however, concerns have been raised about the capability and prospect of the NYSC to integrate Nigerians in line with the goal of the Decree and the Act establishing it, especially, with the pronouncement made by the House of Representatives on Tuesday, July 3, 2012, pressuring on the NYSC Headquarters to stop deployment of Corps Members to northern parts of the country believed to be volatile due to violent crises¹. Hence, there is need to carry out a study on the prospect of the NYSC to achieving national integration in Nigeria. Thus, this paper seeks to examine the prospect of NYSC Scheme in achieving national integration in Nigeria. This will be done by proffering answers to the following questions; (i) Is there any hope for effective national integration in Nigeria? Will the NYSC programme remain relevant in the scheme strategies for national integration in Nigeria in the nearby future? (ii) What can be done to make the NYSC

²Ayoade, Jacob, "The Federal Character Principle and the Search for National Integration," In Amuwo, K et al ed., *Federalism and Political Restructuring in Nigeria*, Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited(1998): 101.

Prospect of National Integration: The NYSC Approach

programme realizes its desired goal(s)? The paper is divided into 7 sections, viz: introductory, the concept of National Integration, the National Youth Service Corps as a tool for national integration, its objectives, prospect, conclusion and policy recommendations.

Conceptual Clarification of National Integration

The concept of nation is the process of constructing or structuring a national identity using the power of the state. The key idea behind any nation is the drive to building a national identity through the powers of the state. This process is intended for the unification of a people bonded by state so that they can remain politically stable and relevant on the global stage. This is why it becomes pertinent to reorient her consciousness by integrating confidence in her citizenry to pursue a united and integrated nation that is built on a sure foundation of her collective knowledge of socio-political, socio-cultural and socio-economic facets of a nation with a view to engendering unity in diversity.

The term National Integration has been used variously to mean national cohesion, national unity, and nation building. Is the process of unifying a multi-ethnic country, which does not necessarily mean unification into a single-ethnic country but into a united indivisible entity where primordial affiliations are made secondary for the greater good of the united nation.³ It can mean building of state institutions that can translate into policies and programmes and aspirations of the citizenry regardless of divergent social, economic, religious, ethnic and geographical elements which ³entails the translation of diffused and unorganized sentiments on nationalism into a spirit of citizenship. It is

³Leke Abraham Oluwalogbon, "The Future of Nigeria's National Youth Service Corps Programme: Any Hope for National Integration?" *Journal of Public Administration and Governance* 9, No. 2 (2019): 1.
<https://doi:10.5296/jpag.v9i2.14312>

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

A. A. Ogidi

also about building institutions that possess the attributes of political entity. Such institutions may include; bureaucracy, economy, the judiciary, universities, civil service and civil society organizations. Defining national integration, Fatile and Adejuwon (2010) posit that it is the process whereby several disparate groups within a given territorial entity are united together or co-operate under conditions which do not appear to permit satisfaction of the system needs in any other way. Coleman and Rosberg, 1964 and Amienyi, 2005 all agreed that national integration is the progressive reduction of cultural and regional tensions and discontinuities in the process of creating a homogenous political community. This implies the shifting of sentiments of loyalty and political cohesion in the direction of central political authority and institutions whereby individuals can belong to different social groups or political unit. Morrison et al. were quite succinct in their argument that it is “a process by which members of a social system (citizens for our purpose) develop linkages and location so that the boundaries of the system persist over time and the boundaries of sub-systems become less consequential in affecting behavior. In this process members of the social system develop an escalating sequence of contact, cooperation, consensus and community” (Ojo, 2009). Morrison and Stevenson in Oluwalogbon (2019) define national integration as the degree of cohesion that binds members of social systems together, and is generally thought of in terms of the values, institutions and communications which facilitate escalating sequences of social contact, cooperation and consensus. Aremu (2018) described national integration as a process geared towards building a common sense of purpose, a sense of shared destiny, a collective imagination of belonging.

The National Youth Service Corps Scheme in Perspective

All aims and objectives of the NYSC are carved out to be mutually reinforcing to ensure systemic and institutional efficiency of the scheme and youth development in Nigeria. The expected outcomes of

Prospect of National Integration: The NYSC Approach

youth participation in the NYSC programme includes but is not limited to psychosocial and character development (Bodley-Bond and Cronin, 2013); interethnic tolerance through enhanced cognitive and perceptual shifts that seeks to eliminate discriminatory practices and manage conflicts (Olaiya, 2014). The National Directorate, headed by a Director-General, is responsible for drawing up detailed capability development programmes of training schedules and coordinating implementation with the governing boards of the State Committees (NYSC, 2004).

The mobilization of eligible youth participants in the NYSC scheme is carried out by the National Directorate while the State Committees under the authority of State Coordinators are responsible for deploying mobilized corps members to places of critical national and community development needs. At the grassroots level, the operation of the scheme is supervised by the State Secretariat, Zonal Officers and the Local Government Inspectors. By and large, an average of 250,000 graduates is mobilized by the NYSC for national service and community development (FMYD, 2013a). Mobilization of corps members is guided by two policies. They are deployment and posting policy.

The NYSC deployment is the strategy used to expose corps members to the many similarities and diversities of cultures and traditions in other parts of the country, with a view to eliminating any inherent ethno-religious prejudices and stereotypes (NYSC, 1999: 13). This is why the policy ensures that no corps member is posted to his'/her institution of graduation or local government of origin (NYSC, 2012). Corps members do not have a choice with regards to their state of deployment. However, there is a notable exception known as 'concessional deployment' in which corps members are redeployed on the grounds of health, marital and extreme compassionate reasons (NYSC, 1999, 2012). Furthermore, the recent security challenge in some North

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

A. A. Ogidi

Eastern states of the country is shaping deployment to this region and has currently made deployment to such states, an optional exercise.

On the other hand, the NYSC posting is a strategy for deploying youth capabilities to areas of national development needs (NYSC, 2014). The posting strategy is usually applied at the state level to direct corps members' capabilities and ensures maximum utilization of the youth capital. Of late, posting is particularly streamlined into four (4) priority sectors, namely: Agriculture, Health, Education and Infrastructure (FMYD, 2012).

The continued existence of NYSC has been challenged by insecurity and the volatile nature of certain parts of the country. What characterized the April 16 presidential election result declaration in favour of the sitting President Jonathan in the year 2011, were violent crisis which erupted in Northern Nigeria, leading to the killing of some corps members serving at the time. About 11 corps members were killed and several other non-corps members too. Properties worth millions of naira were wantonly destroyed as a result of violence that engulfed some northern states. About 11 persons officially confirmed dead in Bauchi alone. However it was believed that the actual figure could not have been less than 25 with the same number of casualty or more in other states such as Kaduna, Kano, Adamawa, Nasarawa, Benue, Gombe, Sokoto, Plateau, Niger, Katsina among others (This Day Editorial, July 9, 2012). This is coupled with Boko Haram insurgency in the North East and the notorious armed banditry ravaging different parts of the country

The Youth Capability Development Programmes (YCDPs) of the NYSC Scheme

The NYSC scheme has four cardinal programmes, which include Orientation, Primary assignment, Community Development Service and Passing Out. Essentially, after mobilization and deployment to their states of national service, the corps members undergo a 3-week

Prospect of National Integration: The NYSC Approach

orientation in a paramilitary camp setting where virtues of discipline and resilience are inculcated under a command structure. The orientation exercise affords youth corps members the opportunity to receive lectures from facilitators of different organizations including International Governmental Organizations (e.g. UNICEF, World Bank), Global Humanitarian Organizations (e.g. the Red Cross) and Nigerian Governmental Organizations (e.g. Economic and Financial Crimes Commission – EFCC) and multinationals.

This is in addition to skills acquisition and entrepreneurship development programmes, language seminars, socio-cultural and traditional lectures, development workshops, career mentoring programmes and religious activities which are offered together with Man-O-War paramilitary training (NYSC, 2011). The expected outcomes of participating in these activities are to increase self-discipline and opportunity for ethnic interaction; reduce fear of the unknown, enhance knowledge of the country's development agenda, and imbibe the culture of professionalism (NYSC, 2008).

Another cardinal programme of the NYSC is the Primary Assignment. At the end of the Orientation exercise, Corps Members are posted to their Places of Primary Assignment. Places of Primary Assignment (PPAs) are spaces that youths and their capabilities can be deployed or posted in Nigeria's political economy. Although attempts are made to post corps members and utilize their capabilities in sectors relevant to their certified areas of specialization, national development needs very often override this consideration (NYSC, 2012). Service in PPA typically last for approximately eleven (11) months.

The third cardinal area of the NYSC programme is the Community Development Service (CDS). The CDS programme of the NYSC scheme is basically aimed at harnessing the skills, creativity and innovativeness of Corps members (NYSC, 2014). The CDS programme gives the corps

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

A. A. Ogidi

members the opportunity of identifying the needs of their host communities, and undertake at least one community development (CD) project that will be of great benefits to their host community (NYSC, 2014). There are three types of CDS programme, and they include: (1) Year Round CDS (2) Individual CDS and; (3) Collaborative/partnership CDS (NYSC, 2012). Corps members are expected to directly get involved in community development in any form, be it construction of small bridges, primary health care centres, classroom blocks, market stalls, culverts etc. (NYSC, 2014).

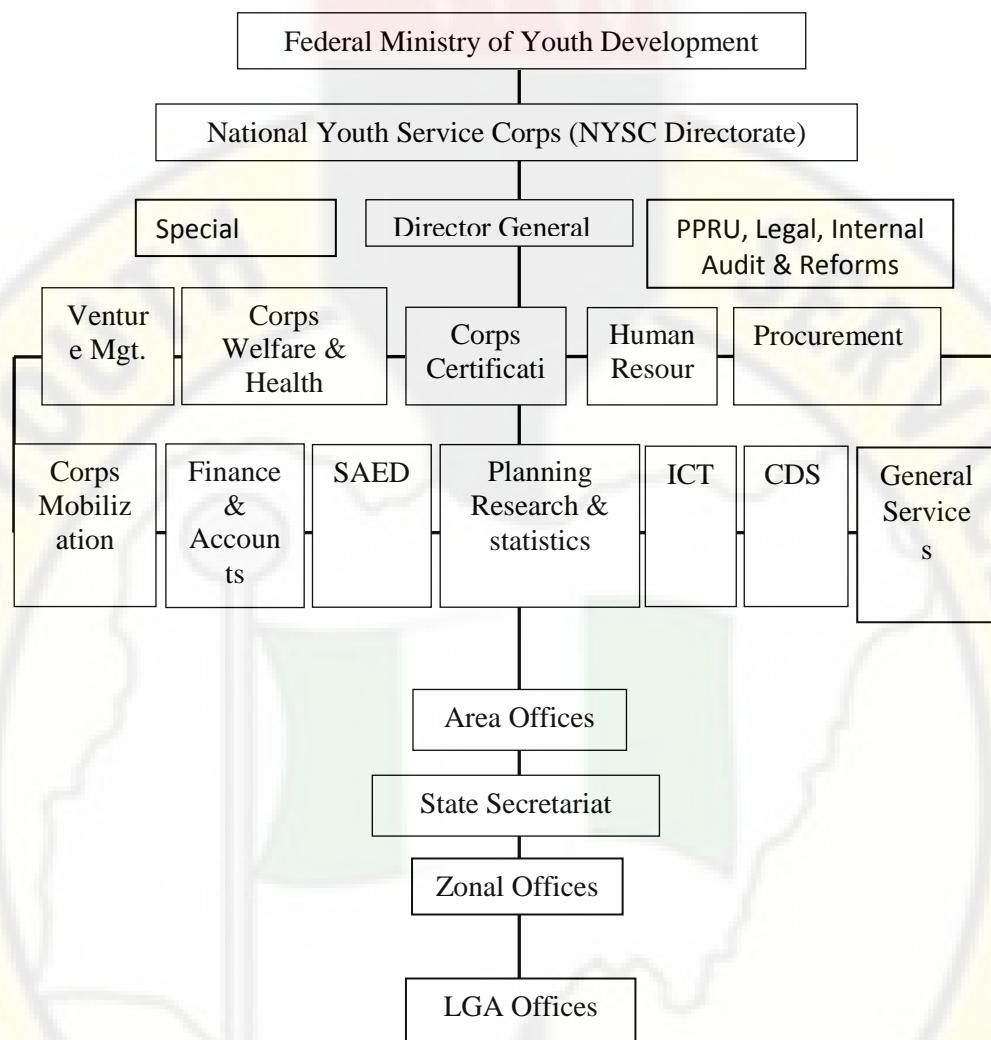
The forth and the last cardinal area of the NYSC is the Winding-up/Passing Out activities. This programme of the NYSC is usually very brief and to certify that the corps member has been appraised and found to have adhered to the tenets of the other cardinal programmes of the NYSC and thus, rewarded with certificate for active participation in NYSC scheme (NYSC, 2011). This certification is a pre-requisite for employment in the political economy of Nigeria. No wonder, Sections 11 and 12(1) of the NYSC decree of 1993 states that:

- (1) The Directorate shall, on completion of a member of service corps unless such person is exempted under section 17 of this Decree, issue him with a Certificate of National Service which will contain such particulars as may be prescribed.
- (2) For the purposes of employment anywhere in the Federation and before employment, it shall be the duty of every prospective employer to demand and obtain from any graduate of higher one of these instruments issued by the NYSC.

Figure 1 illustrates the workforce that is directly involved in the implementation of the Youth Capability Development Programmes (YCDPs) of the NYSC Scheme.

Prospect of National Integration: The NYSC Approach

Figure 14.1: The Organizational Chart of the NYSC



Source: NYSC (2012: 15; 2014)

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

A. A. Ogidi

The National Youth Service Corps as a Tool for National Integration

The National Youth Service Corps, popularly known as NYSC was established under Decree 24 of 1973, issued on 22nd May 1973. This Decree was later revised to Decree No. 51 of 1993 and enacted as an act of parliament in the NYSC ACT, Cap. 84 of 2004 (NYSC, 1993, 2004) and is under the oversight of the Federal Ministry of Youth Development (FMYD, 2013a, 2013b). The goal of programme was to foster unity in the face of ethnic diversity and the height of hostility which resulted in the 30-month old civil war (1967-70). The Federal Military Government under the administration of General Yakubu Gowon at the time saw the urgent need to heal the nation of the emotional wounds inflicted on it by the war, having secured the victory over the failed attempt at secession by the Biafran nation, and subsequently came up with an instrument that will ensure a peaceful co-existence among all ethnic groups across the regions.

The immediate task of the government of the day was to 'engage in deliberate social engineering, designing programmes and pursuing policies meant to promote national unity, de-emphasize points of discord among constituent groups, and foster greater inter-ethnic understanding and harmony' (Enegwea & Umoden cited in Obadare 2010). The very first exercise upon inauguration of the programme witnessed a total of 2,634 youths participating from across the country.

The need to engage the youth at such a time was based on the fact that they, above other groups, were considered as the viable change agents required for building a united Nigeria, and by the fact that such engagement will give the youth a sense of belonging, reduce youth unemployment and the emigration of young unskilled people from rural areas to urban areas as well as create in them a national consciousness that geared towards political, social, state and ethnic loyalties. This is coupled with the fact that the youths constitute a

Prospect of National Integration: The NYSC Approach

dominant force for national mobilization and growth and therefore required an investment for their future.

Table 14.1: The NYSC Core Mandates and Strategies for National Integration

NYSC Objectives	Strategy	Proposed Outcomes
Ensure the equitable distribution of members of the service corps and effective utilization of their skills in areas of national needs	1. Mobilization and Deployment 2. Orientation 3. Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship 4. Community Development Service (CDS)	1. National integration 2. Equality 3. Capability usage 4. Address national development needs
That as far as possible, youths are assigned jobs in states other than their states of origin	1. Intra-state deployment and career development 2. Inter-state deployment	1. Capability usage 2. Economic development 3. National consciousness, cultural integration, and nation-building
That such group of youths assigned to work together is as representative of Nigeria as far as possible	1. Deployment equality 2. Intra-state deployment	1. Equality 2. Identity formation, recognition and representation
That Nigerian youths are exposed to the modes of living in different parts of	1. Value re-orientation and leadership	1. National integration and citizenship

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

A. A. Ogidi

Nigeria	development 2. Inter-state deployment	development 2. Enhanced interethnic awareness and cultural tolerance
That the Nigerian youth is encouraged to eschew religious tolerance by accommodating religious differences	1. Youth re-orientation 2. Inter-state and intra-state deployment 3. Leadership Development	1. Enhanced interethnic and religious tolerance 2. Citizenship and leadership development 3. Conflict management
That members of the service corps are encouraged to seek at the end of their one-year national service, career employment all over Nigeria, thus prompting free movement of labour	1. Intra-state placement and career development 2. Youth transition 3. NYSC certification	1. Youth transition 2. Enhanced employability 3. Spatial labour mobility
That employers are induced partly through their experience with members of the service corps to employ more readily and on a permanent basis, qualified Nigerians, irrespective of their state of origin	1. Intra-state deployment 2. National reorientation 3. NYSC certification	1. Youth transition 2. Enhanced employability and retention in employment 3. Induce work ethic .

Source: NYSC (1993, 1999, 2004)

Prospect of National Integration: The NYSC Approach

Prospects for National Integration

Given the lofty objectives of the NYSC, its achievements and collaborative efforts with several agencies such as the Federal Road Safety Corps, NDLEA, INEC, etc., it is reasonable to believe that national integration in Nigeria is truly achievable, and of course, through the NYSC especially with the view to entrenching global best practices in line with:

- i. Sincere enforcement of the fight against corruption can build great confidence in the minds of the people. For instance, the NYSC can take advantage of its collaboration with the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in the conduct of periodic elections in Nigeria by ensuring that all participating Corps members during general elections be as transparent as possible and never willing to be compromised by individuals or groups who tend to subvert election process in their personal interest.
- ii. There is often this very strong feeling that people have for their religion or language, not minding those of others. Consequently, strife or clash between different sects, religions, tribes, etc. becomes imminent. The ripple effect of such attitude is quite adverse on national unity and impedes on equal development. The NYSC may as well extend their collaborations to the National Orientation Agency to harp on advocacy for tolerance for one another's religion. This can be done by deploying Corps members in such advocacy vanguard to schools where they can have maximum reach with limited effort.
- iii. A genuine commitment to implementation of policy thrust and not lips service has a way of building confidence towards integration.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

A. A. Ogidi

Conclusion

Nigeria's yearning for national integration has been given several impetuses by successive administration. The NYSC as one of the major tools for this purpose has weathered several storms and has been able to stand the test of time. Through the NYSC scheme, several unprecedented achievements have been made. Walls of discords built over time have been demystified by the scheme. What is currently on ground as a measure of mutual trust and confidence among Nigerians and the diverse ethnic group and religious beliefs is quite appreciable. Today, the NYSC has enhanced and promoted inter-ethnic marriages among the youths of this nation. Corps members now reside relatively free in their states of deployment and own means of livelihood. Where certain manpower were hitherto lacking in the country, NYSC scheme now provides such manpower through its strategic posting. Nigerian youths that have passed through the scheme now have a better orientation of the people they hitherto knew nothing or have wrong impression about them. This paper has discussed the challenges faced in achieving the prospects of achieving national integration through the NYSC Scheme.

Recommendations

It is one thing to deploy young Nigerians to different parts of the country so as to engender national integration. However, it is another thing to ensure their safety in the course of discharging their duties to the fatherland. Therefore, it is recommended that adequate security be provided for the Corps members to enable them perform their duties without fear or favour. Agencies and policy makers charged with the responsibility of ensuring adequate security for Nigerians must not leave a stone unturned when it comes to protecting the lives of the Corps Members in particular and all Nigerians in general.

Prospect of National Integration: The NYSC Approach

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A. A. Ogidi

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Brigadier General Shuaibu Ibrahim:

15

**Brigadier General Shuaibu Ibrahim:
An Overview of His Achievements as 18th
NYSC Director-General**

Bem Japhet Audu
and
Maryam Hamza

Introduction

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) has attained tremendous height since the assumption of office by Brig Gen Shuaibu Ibrahim as the Director General (DG) of the Scheme. This is not surprising, given the fact that Gen Ibrahim is a thoroughbred military administrator, who combines scholarship, emotional intelligence and finesse in his administrative duties. His experiences cut across administration in the

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

B. J. Audu and M. Hamza

military and civil establishments, which combination have accelerated the pace of the modest service rendered to the NYSC.

Key issues that confronted the Scheme upon his assumption of office include the need to sustain the relevance of the NYSC in a fast-changing world; second, inadequate motivation and welfare for Corps Members and staff of the Scheme. The third was the challenge of unemployment among the youths after the mandatory one year national service.

Gen Ibrahim's track record as a visionary leader readily came to play in tackling these challenges. He initiated a five-point policy thrust to address them. These five-point policy thrust include the following:

- ❖ Sustain effective utilisation of the potentials of Corps Members for optimal benefit;
- ❖ Strengthen existing collaborations with critical stakeholders;
- ❖ Improve on the welfare and security of Corps Members and staff;
- ❖ Pursue a technologically driven organisation to deepen effective service delivery;
- ❖ Reinvigorate the NYSC Ventures and SAED in line with the NYSC Act for greater impact.

It is against this backdrop that this essay examines the achievements of Gen Ibrahim as Director General of the NYSC, using a descriptive approach and evidence -- based study. The paper argues that Gen Ibrahim has not only transformed the NYSC, but has also repositioned it to benefit the Corps Members, members of staff and indeed, the nation at large.

The assumption here is that leadership is a process of galvanising resources to attain group goals. Gen Ibrahim's leadership style has led to the transformation of the NYSC by strengthening the institution, in terms of welfare, security, innovations and technological advancement. Despite these laudable achievements, there have equally been

Brigadier General Shuaibu Ibrahim:

challenges. The Corona Virus (COVID-19) pandemic threatened to derail the activities of the Scheme. As an astute administrator, he rose to the occasion through a robust coordinated response to manage the pandemic that has become a reference point and template for other establishments in the country.

Towards a Biography of General Ibrahim: Trends in his Academic, Military and Administrative Career

Brig Gen Shuaibu Ibrahim (Associate Professor), was born on the 13th July, 1967 and hails from Nasarawa Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. He attended the famous University of Jos where he obtained Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in History (1989 and 1992 respectively), before proceeding to bag a Post-Graduate Diploma in Education from Tai Solar in University of Education, Ijebu Ode, Ogun State. Driven by his tenacity to acquire knowledge, he went on to obtain a Ph.D in History from the University of Abuja in 2007.

Since his commissioning into the Nigerian Army, he has served in various capacities in military formations across the country. His appointments and postings include: The Institute of Army Education (Research Officer). Researched and produced Nigerian Army Journals and Briefs for the Nigerian Army in particular, and the Military in general; NYSC (Military Assistant to the Director General) 1997-1999; Nigerian Defence Academy (Taught 100 and 200 Levels 2000-2004; National Defence College (Staff Officer I Military History 2004-2009; Headquarters Nigerian Army School of Education (Senior Instructor) 2009-2011; Commandant Command Secondary School, Suleja 2012-2014; Nigerian Defence Academy (Head of Department, History and War Studies), 2015-2018; and Registrar, Nigerian Army University, Biu, Borno State(2018-2019).

Brigadier General S Ibrahim is a scholar of high repute, who authored, co-authored, edited, co-edited and contributed articles/chapters to numerous books and academic Journals.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

B. J. Audu and M. Hamza

Despite his tight schedule, Brig Gen S Ibrahim still devotes time to academic work, including the supervision of students' thesis and dissertations, serving as Internal and External Examiner of Master's Students at the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria and the Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna.

Brig Gen Shuaibu Ibrahim was appointed 18th Director General of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), and assumed the leadership of the Corps on 10th May, 2019. This ushered in a transformation era for the Scheme which has not only been a source of immense benefit to the Service Corps, but the entire country in general.

The General also had a cluster of completed courses in the military, and excelled in these courses. Brig Gen Ibrahim is an Associate Professor in the Department of History and War Studies, Nigeria Defence Academy, Kaduna. These feats in both military and academic trainings, as well as experience in service are what marked him out as a visionary, seasoned and ingenious administrator.

Since assumption of duty as the Director General of the NYSC, the media has been awash with burgeoning records of his strides. His vision for the Scheme informed his decision to roll out a five-point policy thrust, geared towards utilising the potentials of the Corps Members maximally. Since assumption of duty at the NYSC, his pragmatic leadership skill has set the Scheme on the path of rejuvenation and continuous relevance. Like his predecessors, he came up with robust and ambitious programmes, aimed at repositioning the Scheme as a self-sufficient and revenue -- generating government organisation.

This chapter will attempt an appraisal of the delivery of these specific goals by the administration of Gen S Ibrahim within a short period of two years, in spite of the huge challenges facing the Scheme.

Sustain effective utilisation of the potentials of Corps Members for optimal benefit.

Brigadier General Shuaibu Ibrahim:

The successful conduct of the 2019 NYSC Sports and Cultural Festivals is a remarkable achievement of the Director General in harnessing the huge potentials of the Corps Members for national development. The NYSC Sports and Cultural Festivals serve as one of the veritable avenues through which the Scheme promotes national unity, cultural integration, as well as showcasing the abundant talents of Corps Members in the areas of sports and culture for gainful employment in the sports and film industries. The Festivals were revived by the present management. The grand finale was held in Abuja. Not only that, measures were put in place to ensure that the event holds annually.

Another success of the NYSC Director General is the production of an NYSC movie titled "A Call to Service" currently undergoing post production work. Apart from its entertainment value, the movie is being packaged to create public awareness on the roles of stakeholders to the Scheme. These stakeholders include the three tiers of government, Corps employers, as well as serving and prospective Corps Members. Ultimately, the film will promote better understanding of the Scheme to the public, in addition to sensitising them on their expected roles to the Scheme.

Another noteworthy achievement of the Director General is the establishment of NYSC National Cultural Troupe. This initiative is to provide a veritable platform for Corps Members to develop their talents in drama and cultural dance, while also eliciting public support towards harnessing such talents through private and corporate patronage. Remarkably, the NYSC Cultural Troupe will also shore up the revenue base of the Scheme through its activities which will be commercialised.

In the same vein, the NYSC Director General has successfully organised a National Anti-Corruption Walk. This is in furtherance of the NYSC's contributions to the fight against corruption through the activities of the Corps Anti-Corruption and Integrity CDS Group. The programme involved the participation of thousands of Corps Members in the first ever nationwide rally/road walk organised by the Economic and

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

B. J. Audu and M. Hamza

Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), in conjunction with the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development on 14th February, 2020. The Director-General personally joined the Corps Members and officials in Kano State for the rally, which was tagged “Nigerian Youths March Against Corruption.”

This action further boosted the commitment of the NYSC in eradicating corruption and promotion of good moral and ethical values in the country.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic nearly crippled the global socio-economic activities and did not spare the Scheme. The 2020 Batch “A” Orientation Course was suspended barely eight days into the programme. However, the ever resourceful and proactive Director General challenged the creative ingenuity of Corps Members who responded appropriately to the challenge by producing non-pharmaceutical intervention materials such as face-mask, liquid soap, alcohol - based hand sanitiser and donated same to the indigent populace across the length and breadth of the country.

Under the leadership of Gen Ibrahim, the NYSC has also carried out public awareness campaigns on containment measures for the dreaded virus. The initiative of the Director General was later adopted by some public institutions.

Another innovative contribution of the NYSC in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic is the fabrication of foot-operated water, liquid soap and hand sanitizer dispenser by individual Corps Members in several States.

For instance, Babatunde Dolapo Dayo and Sebe Godspower - Abia State; Abdullahi Sani - Kano; Abdulsalam Abubakar and Obiefuna Ebuka - Kwara; Adeyanju Adeyemi, Afolabi Victor, Ogunmoye Victor - Oyo and Onyekwere Chiwotaoke – Zamfara and Ilori Deborah - FCT were among the Corps Members that fabricated and donated the devices.

Brigadier General Shuaibu Ibrahim:

In addition, Corps Members, acting on the platform of Charity CDS/SDGs Group, have been contributing towards mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 at the grassroots, through the donation of food and other relief items to State and Local Governments, as well as indigent members of the society. These strategies by the Director General paved the way for the Scheme to obtain approval from the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) to resume full operations, especially the Orientation Course.

Relatedly, several Corps Members on teaching assignment also contributed towards sustaining the educational progress of their students by adopting virtual teaching approach while schools remained closed as a result of the pandemic.

As per the pursuit of a technologically-driven organisation to deepen effective service delivery, the Director-General recently conducted the first ever video conference with the 2021 Batch 'A' Stream 1 Corps Members in all the 37 Orientation Camps. It was an avenue to interface with thousands of Corps Members simultaneously, in line with COVID-19 safety protocols. He has sustained this initiative by periodically holding virtual meetings with serving Corps Members, as well as NYSC State Coordinators across the country.

It is gratifying to disclose that the Director General's interface with National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) has ensured the equipping of the NYSC Rivers Secretariat with computers by the agency. That singular gesture has in no small measure deepened the proficiency of Corps Members and staff members in the area of Information technology.

The Chief Executive introduced the inscription of date of birth on the Certificate of National Service and Exclusion Letter, beginning with the 2019 Batch "A" Corps Members and 2019 Batch "C" respectively. This is in a bid to check the manipulation of date of birth by ineligible persons seeking mobilisation for National Service, and it has had a positive

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

B. J. Audu and M. Hamza

effect in checkmating the falsification of records for employment, visa, political appointments, among others.

Brig Gen Shuaibu Ibrahim conceptualised and designed a state-of-the-art ICT Office for the Scheme. The design had already been forwarded to the Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA) and Federal Ministry of Works and Housing for approval. The cost of construction was appropriated in the 2021 Budget, and the Scheme is awaiting the release of funds for its commencement.

Other laudable efforts by Gen Ibrahim to deepen effective service delivery include, the development of a Five-Year Strategic Development Plan for the Scheme, review of the NYSC Composite Policy Document and documentation of the activities of the Scheme, all aimed at positioning the Scheme as a research hub for academics and the general public.

Under his watch, the Federal Government drafted the NYSC into the Presidential Steering Committee on Alternate School Programme. The inclusion of the Corps in the Committee is in recognition of the invaluable contributions of the Scheme to national development, particularly in the sphere of Education.

NYSC is a repository of talents, parading the most enlightened class of Nigerian youths, who in forty - eight years of the Scheme's existence have continued to make varying degrees of multi-sectoral contributions to the growth and well-being of the nation.

Therefore, the inclusion of the Scheme, whose visibility has been top-notch in the last two years as member of the Mambila Hydro Power Project speaks on the high premium the Federal Government places on the Corps.

Undoubtedly, membership of these august bodies have clearly underscored the high pedestal the Director General has taken the Scheme in his two years of his eventful and remarkable administration.

Brigadier General Shuaibu Ibrahim:

In respect of improving the welfare and security of Corps Members and staff, in a rare demonstration of empathy and commitment to the welfare of Corps Members, the Director General personally visited and encouraged Corps Member Saidu Mohammed Adamu, who was admitted at the Federal Teaching Hospital, Ado-Ekiti, as a result of gunshot injuries that he sustained while on election duties during the recent bye-election held in Ekiti East Local Government Area of Ekiti State in March 2021.

Similar visits were also paid to several members of the Service Corps on admission in hospitals in Sokoto, Katsina, Edo, Plateau, Taraba and Kwara States, among others, following their involvement in road traffic accidents.

The Director General has also paid condolence and reassuring visits to the families of deceased and missing Corps Members in Plateau, Kaduna and Edo States. Such gestures have increased the confidence of Corps Members and their families in the Scheme, and have also engendered more zeal for patriotic service by the members of the Corps.

The Director General further demonstrated his commitment to Corps welfare by procuring prosthetic limbs for a Corps Member in furtherance of his welfare policy. The sum of Thirty-two Million Naira (N32,000,000.00) was expended to procure the limbs for Corps Member, Nuraddeen Tahir from Kano State, who, along with other Corps Members, was involved in a road traffic accident, while on his way to report for Primary Assignment after the 2019 Batch 'B' Stream 1 Orientation Course in Taraba State. The Corps Member, who had earlier lost an arm at a younger age, had the other one amputated as a result of the accident. The artificial limbs have already been supplied, while Nuraddeen was trained on the effective use of the limbs before he was re-united with his family. With this development, he can now effectively perform normal tasks such as writing with the limbs.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

B. J. Audu and M. Hamza

The Director General relentlessly pursued the issue of increment of Corps Members' allowance in the wake of approval of the new National Minimum Wage. His effort paid-off and the allowance of Corps Members was increased from Nineteen thousand, Eight hundred Naira (N19,800.00) to Thirty-three Thousand Naira (N33,000.00). Following the commencement of the payment of the new rate with effect from January 2020, the Director General along with the Honourable Minister of Youth and Sports Development and some representatives of Corps Members paid a "Thank-you" visit to His Excellency, the President and Commander-in-Chief, Armed Forces, Federal Republic of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari GCFR on 6th February, 2020 at the Presidential Villa, Abuja.

Following improvement in the security situation in the country, the Director General sought for, and got approval from the Federal Government for a return to the earlier suspended ceremonial passing-out of Corps Members. Accordingly, the Passing-Out Ceremony of the 2019 Batch 'A' Corps Members was marked with colourful parades nationwide, thereby increasing the visibility of the NYSC.

The successful conduct of Orientation courses is also another achievement of the Director General as he oversaw the successful conduct of the 2019 Batch 'B' Streams I and II, as well as 2019 Batch 'C' Streams I and II Orientation Courses.

As a proactive measure, NYSC Management suspended the 2020 Batch 'A' Stream 1 Orientation Course just a week into the exercise as a deliberate effort to avert the spread of COVID-19 in the Orientation Camps. The commendable action equally brought to the fore his concern for the health and general well-being of Corps Members and staff.

In recognition of his efforts at curtailing the spread of COVID-19, Victims Support Funds (VSF), an organisation chaired by Lt Gen TY Danjuma donated 60,000 RDT test kits to the Scheme. The kits are used

Brigadier General Shuaibu Ibrahim:

for the screening of prospective Corps Members and camp officials for COVID-19 in NYSC Orientation camps nationwide.

In his quest to expand the administrative structure of the Scheme, the Director General ensured the smooth take - off of the NYSC Area Offices, whose approval had earlier been secured by the immediate past administration of Gen Kazaure, one in each of the six geo-political zones of the country, headed by a Director on salary grade level 17. This feat has opened up more vacancies, allowing for posting of other cadre of staff alongside the Directors to man the Offices. The Area Offices are located in Kaduna (North West), Niger (North Central), Bauchi (North East), Enugu (South East), Osun (South West) and Delta (South South) have since taken off and have in no mean way boosted staff morale and operations of the Scheme.

In line with one of the cardinal points of his policy thrust, the Director General has been pursuing policies that are geared not only towards motivating staff, but also promoting industrial harmony in the Scheme. This has been aptly demonstrated through prompt payment of entitlements, capacity building programmes, as well as timely and transparent conduct of promotion examinations. During the 2020 Promotion Exercise for instance, One Thousand Seven Hundred and Eighteen (1,718) out of the Two Thousand One Hundred Fifty-One (2,151) officers that participated in the event were elevated to the next grade level after meeting the requirements stipulated in the Public Service Rules and NYSC Conditions of Service. Additionally, the 2021 Senior Staff Promotion Examination recorded a huge success. The impact of these promotion exercises has reinforced the commitment of staff to work for an enhanced performance.

Meanwhile, as Management strives to enhance the motivation of staff, much premium is laid on the need to have a highly disciplined workforce. In this regard, officers who commit infractions are reprimanded in line with the provisions of the Public Service Rules (PSR).

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

B. J. Audu and M. Hamza

On strengthening the existing collaboration with critical stakeholders, on assumption of office, the Director General saw the dire need to sustain and strengthen the existing collaboration with critical stakeholders to garner more support and involve them in the management of the Scheme. He therefore embarked on advocacy visits to the stakeholders such as the former Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon, whose administration founded the Scheme. The Director-General has had interface with the 36 State Governors, the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, heads of Security and Anti-Corruption Agencies, Federal Road Safety Corps, among other stakeholders. The impact of this initiative is the improvement already being achieved in stakeholders' support to the Scheme which is of great essence.

The Director General also addressed a meeting of the Nigeria Governors' Forum – the first of such engagement by any Chief Executive of the Scheme. He used the occasion of the meeting to appreciate the State Governors for their support to the Scheme, through various intervention projects in their respective States. He drew their attention to other areas that needed to be addressed, being part of the obligations of the State Governments to the Corps, as spelt out in the NYSC Act.

Consequently the hosting of the meeting of NYSC top Management with the representatives of State Governments and the Federal Capital Territory Administration, a fallout of the meeting with the Governor's Forum is aimed at strengthening the collaboration with the Scheme, with a particular focus on the discharge of the statutory obligations of the States and FCT to the NYSC, as spelt out in its enabling Act.

The impact of the meeting is profound, as several State Governments have made remarkable gestures in support of the Scheme. Prominent among them is the donation of two NYSC permanent Orientation camps by Edo and Anambra States, plans by the Lagos State Government to build a 14,000 -- capacity Orientation camp and the ongoing upgrading and rehabilitation of camp facilities in twenty five States, while the

Brigadier General Shuaibu Ibrahim:

expansion of camp facilities has commenced in nine States to meet the 5,000 -- Corps Member and 500 -- course official -- capacity camp.

Other notable gains derived from the meeting include, constitution of functional NYSC State Governing Boards in seventeen States, with eighteen States enhancing the regular payment of state allowance to Corps Members, provision and upgrading of transit camps for Corps Members in thirty -- one states, provision of watertight security for Corps Members in all the States and the FCT, issuance of circulars by State Governments against the rejection of Corps Members, increased partnership with the Association of Local Governments of Nigeria (ALGON), provision of decent accommodation or payment of allowance in lieu of that to Corps Members and provision of office and residential accommodation by the States hosting the Headquarters of the Area Offices.

In Promoting NYSC/Media relations, the Director General has since assumption of duty, strived to strengthen the cordial relations the Scheme enjoys with the Media. This, he kick-started with his maiden chat with Editors, Bureau Chiefs and Youth Correspondents of various Media Organisations in the country on 15th August, 2019. Brig Gen S Ibrahim also paid courtesy visits to Media offices in Abuja, including the Headquarters of the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), Media Trust Limited and Leadership Group Limited. Similar visits with Director-General's directive were also made to Lagos Head Offices of The Punch, Daily Sun, The Nation newspapers, among others. He has consistently maintained his Media-friendly posture, thereby attracting wider publicity for the Scheme's activities.

To deepen and sustain the wide publicity that the Scheme has enjoyed, he has resuscitated the production and airing of the NYSC Half Hour programme on NTA International Channel 251 and Armed Forces Radio FM. So far, plans have reached an advanced stage to establish the first ever NYSC FM Radio that will be useful to adequately drive the

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

B. J. Audu and M. Hamza

publicity efforts of the Scheme and showcase its activities to Nigerians and the entire world.

The Director-General in furtherance of his transparent, inspirational and all-inclusive style of administration paid visits to some former Chief Executives of the Scheme. The gesture was aimed at appreciating their respective contributions to the development of Scheme when they were in the saddle of leadership, and also tap into their vast wealth of experience. The former Chief Executives appreciated the initiative as it was the first ever visit paid simultaneously to them.

The maiden meeting with the Registrars of some Foreign Corps Producing Institutions was also held, having, uncovered the fraudulent activities of some tertiary institutions in Africa, especially in the West Africa sub region which have the penchant to issue questionable academic certificates to unqualified persons, who in turn present same to get mobilised for national service. The Director-General has commenced an aggressive fight against this menace which has earned him the commendation of the President, His Excellency Muhammadu Buhari GCFR, during his address at the 2018/2019 President's NYSC Honours Award Ceremony. Similar commendations were given to him by a broad spectrum of vice chancellors of some indigenous and foreign institutions, including the Honourable Minister of Education.

In addition to hosting the meeting with the Registrars, internal mechanisms have been put in place for easier detection of unqualified persons attempting to present themselves for mobilisation for service. As a result of the stance of Management, some of the foreign institutions are now volunteering to alert NYSC of suspected fraudulent practices by their students. Interestingly, out of over twenty thousand (20,000) persons who registered online as foreign-trained prospective Corps Members of the 2019 Batch 'C' Service Year, only three thousand, four hundred and twenty (3,420) turned up for the pre-mobilisation physical screening of their credentials.

Brigadier General Shuaibu Ibrahim:

To serve as a deterrent to others, sixty-five (65) unqualified persons arrested during the 2019 Batch ‘B’ Stream II Orientation Course in camps across the country are being prosecuted with some convictions already secured. These steps taken by Management have helped to create national awareness, especially on the need for parents and guardians to check the accreditation status of the institutions attended by their wards, and also monitor their academic progress.

The bold move by the Director General in sanitising the mobilisation process will also ensure that only well trained and competent persons occupy critical positions that will fast-track the development of the country.

The Director-General has equally hosted a national sensitisation programme on the NYSC Act on 24th July, 2019 in Abuja. Prior to this, it was clear that many Nigerians were not aware of the provisions of the Act – a situation that has led to avoidable infractions. With the sensitisation, which is still on-going, organisations and individuals are now having better understanding of their obligations to the Scheme. In particular, cases of evasion and abscondment from Service, especially by the foreign-trained Nigerian graduates, are expected to reduce drastically.

Broadly looking at the reinvigoration of the NYSC ventures and skill acquisition and entrepreneurship development programme in line with NYSC Act for greater impact, the Director General has been speaking passionately about his desire to make the Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) Programme and NYSC Ventures Management Departments more functional.

To match words with actions, he has taken several steps towards reinvigorating the SAED programme, including, but not limited to the following:

- Renewal of commitment by the NYSC and Bank of Industry towards the resuscitation of empowerment of Corps entrepreneurs with business loans under the BOI-NYSC Graduate Empowerment Fund.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

B. J. Audu and M. Hamza

- Intensive monitoring of GEF beneficiaries.
- New collaboration with NIRSAL Microfinance Bank on empowerment of Corps entrepreneurs.
- New partnership with Unity Bank Plc on a programme named 'Allawee' aimed at empowering Corps members.
- Collaboration with British-American Tobacco Foundation on empowerment of Corps Members with agricultural skills and business trainings, farm internship, mentoring and farm input supplies.
- Hosting of the 2020 NYSC SAED Stakeholders meeting aimed at reviewing the programme implementation strategies, as well as strengthening of existing partnerships and exploring new ones for further technical and material support.
- Pursuing the completion of the North West Skill Acquisition Centre in Kazaure, Jigawa State, this is now at advanced stage.
- Commencement of work on the North Central Skill Acquisition Centre in Keffi, Nasarawa State.
- Research-based collaboration with OAU-NACETEM sponsored by a Canadian Agency, International Development Research Centre on evaluation of the impact of SAED and reinvigorating it for greater impact.
- Resuscitation of NYSC Water Factory and Bakery at NYSC Orientation Camp Kubwa. The NYSC Water Factory and Bakery were revived and revitalised by the Director-General immediately he assumed office, and these two ventures are now producing at full capacity. The water and bread produced in these ventures are being supplied to the FCT, Nasarawa, Kogi, Kaduna and Niger State Orientation camps and the general public. These ventures now generate revenue to the Scheme and help Corps Members acquire skills too.
- Purchase of modern farm equipment for the four NYSC functional farms namely, NYSC Farm Kwali in FCT, Saminaka, Kebbi State, Dungulbi, Bauchi State and Iseyin Oyo State. Each of these farms now has tractors and other basic farm equipment.

Brigadier General Shuaibu Ibrahim:

- The consistent support in terms of funding and staffing has increased the hectares under cultivation from 60 hectares to 160 hectares during the 2020 farming season.
- Reclaiming of NYSC farmland at Ezillo which hitherto was collected by the Ebonyi State Government. Immediately after the reclaiming, tractor was purchased for farming operations at the Ezillo Farm.
- The structure of Ventures Management Department was expanded which gave room for the promotion of staff, and has in no mean way motivated the staff members.
- Registration of the two NYSC Garment Factories, Water Factory and Bakery with the Corporate Affairs Commission. Arising from the last Meeting of the NYSC Top Management with Representatives of State Governments, the Governors of Edo and Ekiti States announced the donation of land for the sitting of two garment factories which will boost the production of Corps Members' kit items.
- Developing partnership with relevant institutions such as International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA), National Agricultural Land Development Agency (NALDA), NCRI, NCAM, ARMTI, NCAC etc. to enhance the productivity of NYSC Farms/Ventures among others.
- Resuscitation of moribund NYSC Feedmill, Lagos. The mill is now ready to start production of animal feeds.
- Construction of new poultry pen at NYSC farm Kwali, FCT.
- The Director General has met with the State Governors and other stakeholders with a view to securing land in all the States for agricultural production.

In addition to the above, twelve States have opened up their skills centres for the post camp training of Corps Members to further strengthen the skills and entrepreneurship training acquired in camp.

- The tremendous support given by the Director General has repositioned all the NYSC Ventures for greater revenue generation for the Scheme.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

B. J. Audu and M. Hamza

Interestingly, the Scheme paid into the national coffers over Two Hundred and Eighty Million Naira (N280,000,000.00) as internally generated revenue which is unprecedented in the annals of the Scheme.

The Director General who has introduced the use of name tags by every member of staff for easy identification, equally in an unprecedented move sought the help of the Federal Government in tackling the ecological challenges confronting some of the NYSC Orientation camps. Government granted the request through the deployment of Ecological Fund to tackle the menace. Eight camps have been approved as beneficiaries in the first phase of the intervention. Already, work is ongoing in Cross River, Taraba, FCT and Nasarawa Orientation camps.

In recognition of his service to the nation, Brig Gen Shuaibu Ibrahim who has institutionalised Farewell Parade for outgoing NYSC Chief Executives - a novelty, has received numerous commendations and awards which include:

- Chief of Army Staff Award as the Overall Best Participant for 2013 NAEC Executive Management Course.
- Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) Special Recognition Award 2014.
- Award for Distinguished Professional Contributions to Public Service/Fellowship (FCAI) by Institute of Corporate Administration.
- Professional National Award (Historical Society of Nigeria HSN) and
- Chief of Army Staff Commendation Letter 2018.

Conclusion

The above discourse has given an insight on the achievements of General Shuaibu Ibrahim since becoming the Director General of the National Youth Service Corps. Within the last two years, the Scheme has made some giant strides owing to the pursuit of strict implementation of the Director General's five-point policy thrust. Therefore, the contributions of Brig Gen Ibrahim to the NYSC since his ascension into office cannot be overemphasised. These contributions are indeed

Brigadier General Shuaibu Ibrahim:

remarkable, and will undoubtedly stand the test of time, having set the Scheme on growth trajectory and continuous relevance.

THE NYSC AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

B. J. Audu and M. Hamza

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INDEX

INDEX

A. Mabogunje, 191
A. Akinola, 11
A. Egunyomi, 135, 151
A. Heywood, 5
A. M. Mainasara, 34, 35
A. Mazrui, 2
A.B. Adeosun, 136, 137
Abdulbaqi, S. S., 160
Abdulsalam Abubakar, 234
Abdulwahab, T., 92, 102
Abia, V.B.E., 44
Abubakar A. Atsofarati, 56, 70
Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, 35, 50
Abuja, x, 25, 30, 77, 92, 95, 96, 102, 103, 108, 111, 123, 136, 142, 145, 147, 185, 202, 211, 213, 228, 231, 233, 238, 241, 243, 248, 249

Achebe, C., 197, 210
Ade-Ajayi, J.E., 38, 44
Ademowo, Y., 160
Ademoyega, A., 30
Adeniji Olawale Abayomi, iii, v, 47, 48
Aderonke, M., 90, 102
Adewale Ademoyega, 35
Africanism, 68
Agbodike, F, C, 17
Agunloye S., 175
Ahmadu Bello University, iii, 34, 38, 44, 45, 60, 78, 169, 232
Ahmed Adam Okene, 50
Ahmed, Iyanda Kamoru, 70
Ajaegbu H. I., 107, 110, 111, 115, 123
Akpan P. A., 85

INDEX

- Akume, A.T., 201, 210
Aliu, Monday, 70
Amalachi, A., 160
amalgamation, vii, 3, 6, 19, 20,
28, 38, 48, 53, 69, 124, 155,
164, 166, 174, 177
Amayo, A., 38, 44
Amin, A., 92, 102
Amotekun, 49, 59, 71, 72
Anthony Ogidi, iii
Antony Enahoro, 34
Anyaraku Sewuse Yvonne, iii, v,
87
Appadorai A., 248
Arabism, 68
Arewa People's Congress, x, 8,
58
Arubayi, D. O., 201, 210
Asaju, K., 11, 16, 90, 102
assimilation, 164, 182
Australia, 114, 161
Awa, E.O., 38, 44
B., Matthew, 64
Bakassi Boys, 9
Bako, A., 92, 102
Balogun M.J., 53, 70
Balogun O., 66
Banjo, A., 48
Bello, I.B., 39, 44
Bem Japhet Audu, i, ii, iii, v, vi, x,
32, 229
Bienen, H., 51, 70
Binder, L., 70
Boko Haram, 58, 60, 64, 70, 72,
125, 128, 190, 214, 218
bribery, 34
Britain, vii, 41, 53
Burundi, 48
Bwala, J., 160
C. Agbodike, 12, 135
C. Anuforu, 35
C., Onwere, 37
Canada, 114
capacity building, 239
Chikezie, O. F., 96, 102
Chukwuemeka, O., 208, 210
Chukwuma CC Osakwe, 49
civil war, viii, xi, 3, 22, 28, 56,
75, 77, 78, 83, 98, 99, 106,
107, 121, 127, 134, 139, 151,
158, 166, 178, 197, 212, 222
Coleman J.S., 51, 71
colonial rule, vii
colonialism, vii, 21, 33, 55, 130,
154
Conceptualization, 88, 152
confrontational politics, 33
Corona Virus, 231
corruption, 10, 26, 34, 42, 50,
55, 56, 61, 185, 225, 233, 234
COVID-19, 231, 234, 235, 238,
239
critical thinking, 68
D.R. Smock, 178
Daniel B. J., 107, 110, 111, 115,
123
decolonization, 2
democracy, 9, 14, 15, 58, 154,
160, 188
deployment, ix, xiv, 57, 92, 129,
141, 156, 184, 206, 207, 214,
217, 218, 223, 224, 226, 246
Dominic James Aboi, iii, vi, 195
Donatus Okafor, 35
E. Edosa, 5
E. O. Ojukwu, 35

INDEX

- E. U, Usue, 19
Eberly, D.J., 98, 102
Eboh, E., 201, 210
Edo, 154, 237, 240, 245
Edoka, J., 97, 103
EFCC, 159, 186, 219, 234
Egberi, T., 11, 16, 90, 102
Egbesu, 9, 58
Egwu, S.G., 55
Eke, P.P., 38, 44
Elemure V.E., 108, 122
Emmanuel Ifeajuna, 35
Enebong M. T., 85
Ethiopia, 76, 81, 85
ethnocentrism, 10, 19, 187
ethno-religious violence, 96
F. Forsyth, 35
F. Lindo, 125
F.A. Aremu, 134
Falola, T., 91, 103
Fatile, J., 89, 103
Fatile, J.O., 2, 16
Federalism, 12, 17, 48, 50, 53,
70, 89, 100, 103, 135, 139,
140, 147, 148, 155, 213, 214,
227
Festus Okotie Eboh, 35
FMG, viii, 99
FRSC, 159
G. McLoughlin, 21
Gbadamosi, L., 13, 16
Globalization, 91, 103
Gregory Enegwea, 77, 78, 80
H. Chukuka, 35
Haas Ernst B., 116, 122
Helen Nor Iguniwei, iii
Hodgins, T.L., 33
I. Okonta, 154
I., Dibua, 13
I.O Albert, 58, 71
Ibrahim Babangida, 144
Idowu A., 2
Idowu A.O., 17
Igbokwe-Ibeto, C.J., 17
imperialistic activities, vii
indoctrination, 61
INEC, 158, 188, 190, 225
IPOB, 64, 190
Isaac Itse Izan, iii, 18
isolation, 91, 96
Iyabo Omokri, 169
J. K. ANI, 129
J. Onyeakazi, 26
J.I. Elaigwu, 2
James O. Ojiako, 53, 55
Jamiu Yusuf Danga, iii, v, vi, x, 1,
177
Jega, A.M., 57
Jeroen Smits, 164
Jeyesimi, G., 13, 16
John Obienu, 35
Jukun Kingdoms, 33
K. Shona, 4
K. Asaju, 23
K. W. Deutch, 4
Katsina, 95, 218, 237
Kenya, 81
Kirk-Green Anthony, 121, 122
L. Oluwalogbon, 25, 28
L.A. Adamu, 34
Lamido Abubakar Usman, iii
leadership, vii, xiii, 7, 9, 10, 40,
50, 54, 55, 56, 75, 85, 94, 154,
160, 196, 197, 198, 202, 203,
223, 224, 230, 232, 234, 242

INDEX

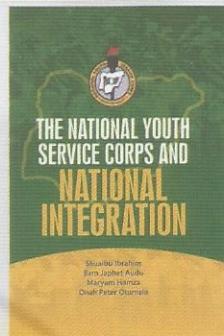
- LO Udeagbala, 106, 108, 122, 123
Lobban, Richard, 71
M. Danbatta, 34, 35
M. Duverger, 3
maladministration, 10, 196
Maryam Hamza, i, ii, iii, v, vi, x, 32, 229
Mazrui, 1, 2, 17, 179, 182, 193
MEND, 190
Menon, N., 94, 103
mobilization, xii, 10, 25, 80, 99, 110, 140, 206, 217, 218, 223
Mohammed Liman Murtala, iii, vi, x, 162
moral reorientation, 68
Morgan, C., 38, 45
Moses M. Adagbabiri, 65
Muhammadu Buhari, 58, 114, 144, 238, 242
Murtala Muhammed, 8
Musa Hitam, 182, 193
Nation Building, 4, 16, 48, 70, 90
national interest, xii
NDLEA, 225
NEMA, 159
nepotism, 3, 10, 27, 33, 61, 130, 196
Niger Delta, 2, 16, 20, 42, 58, 160, 179, 190, 193
Nigerianism, 68
Nigerianization, 6, 145, 213
NIRSAL, 244
NITDA, 235
Njoku, F.O.C., 57
Nnamdi Azikiwe, 22, 50, 150, 196
NNDP, 21
Nnoli, O., 38, 45
Noah Tanko, 66
Northern Protectorates, 155
Nwosu, I. E., 161
Nyesom Wike, 58, 72
Nzeogwu Kaduna, 35
O. Nkwachukwu, 23
O. Ogunsanyo, 36, 45
Obadahun, O., 12, 17
Obadare Ebenezer, 176
Obafemi Awolowo, 50
Obasi N. K., 107, 110, 111, 115, 117, 123
Obiabor, M.M., 38, 45
Odeh G. O., 108, 123
Ogunjite Lewis O., 76, 85
Okafor Chukwuemeka, 14, 17
Onah Otumalah, 167
Onah Peter Otumala, i, ii, x
Oni, M., 88, 104
Onifade Comfort Adenike, 74, 75
Onyeakazi, J., 38, 45
P. A. Edewor, 22
P. Udende, 129
Pan-Africanism, 33
Patel, L., 94, 104
patriotism, 74, 78, 83, 110, 143, 166, 187, 188, 189, 196, 204, 206
Peace Building, 97
Peter O. Chineke, 64
Philibus Audu Nwamagy, iii, v, 105
Places of Primary Assignment, 93, 109, 219
pluralism, 67, 195, 207

INDEX

- primary assignments, 79, 110
Pyla-Mak Press and Publishers Limited, ii
R. Alba, 157, 187
R.O. Anazodo, 12
reconciliation, xi, 14, 78, 98, 108, 134, 198, 213
reconstruction, xi, 14, 68, 75, 78, 98, 108, 134, 198, 213
regionalism, 33, 42, 150
rehabilitation, xi, 14, 75, 78, 134, 198, 240
Religious Conflict, 10
Reorientation, 202, 211
Rosalind I.J., 55, 62
Russell, S., 92, 104
Rwanda, 48, 198, 199
S. C. Udeh, 27
Safiya Abu Wada, iv, v, 74, 164, 168
Samuel Ladoke Akintola, 35
Sani Abacha, 8
Second World War, 33
segregation, 51
self-determination, 54, 124
Sharia law, 10, 60
Sharma, M.K., 249
Shehu Shagari, 143
Shuaibu Ibrahim, i, ii, vi, x, 106, 108, 122, 123, 168, 176, 185, 229, 231, 232, 236, 246, 248
Sokoto, 19, 35, 38, 44, 65, 92, 102, 108, 123, 169, 218, 237
Sokoto Caliphate, 19
Somalia, 48
South Africa, 47, 48, 52, 73
Suleiman Bilal Ishaq, iv, vi, x, 133
Switzerland, 48
T J. Davis, 162, 166
T., Dankani, 201, 210
Tangban, O.E., 96, 104
Terrorism, 59, 73, 86
tribalism, 19, 61, 88, 150
TY Danjuma, 238
United Nations, 81, 126, 132
USA, 81, 94, 104
Usman, Y.B., 41, 46
V. F. Peretomode, 20
violent confrontation, 5
VSF, 238
W. Iyizoba, 140, 156
Washington, B. T., 204, 211
Wole Soyinka, 65, 128, 197
Wuam, T., 17
Yakubu Gowon, x, xi, 7, 13, 22, 24, 36, 80, 95, 98, 127, 132, 133, 137, 143, 150, 151, 175, 198, 213, 222, 240
Yakubu Pam, 35
Zakari Maimalari, 35
Zamfara, 234

ABOUT THE BOOK

More than six decades after decolonisation in many parts of Africa, the challenge of unifying different entities that were fused together as countries during colonialism have remained a challenge. In Nigeria, the quest for nation-building and national integration has thrown up issues, challenges, and prospects. How can policy and institutional measures foster national integration? The book *The National Youth Service Corps and National Integration* contributes to knowledge by collecting well-researched articles highlighting the trajectories, challenges, and successes of national integration in Nigeria. It turns attention to NYSC as an institution that fosters national integration by examining various components of NYSC built into the one-year mandatory programme that strengthens national unity, self-awareness, and development. The chapters shed light on how NYSC serves as a veritable tool for national integration by highlighting community development service, inter-ethnic marriages, and harmonious relations among the participants during the NYSC programme. The book is exclusive, rich in content and in-depth research on the contributions of NYSC to national integration.



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