Federal Character Policy and the Nigerian National Integration: Dissecting the Emerging Issues

T. Onimisi[1*], K.H. K. Samsu[2], M. M. Ismail[3], M.W.M. Nor[4]

[1]Department of Political Science, Federal University Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria
[2]Department of Government and Civilization Studies, Faculty of Human Ecology, University Putra Malaysia
[3]Department of Government and Civilization Studies, Faculty of Human Ecology, University Putra Malaysia
[4]Department of Government and Civilization Studies, Faculty of Human Ecology, University Putra Malaysia

[*]*Corresponding Author: timothyonimisi@yahoo.com*

Abstract— The quest to have an all-inclusive government devoid of marginalization, sentiment, ethnic bigotry, and to promote unity among the citizens led the enactment of Federal Character Policy as a National integrative mechanism as well as State Creation, and National Youth Service Corp in a bit to achieve this target. The paper endeavors to evaluation these approaches of the Nigerian government with the perspective on perceiving these measures, and to inspect the present issues militating its definitive objective of national integration. Thus, in order to achieve the aim of this paper, journal articles, books, and conference paper presentations were consulted and reviewed, while content analysis method was adopted. The paper, calls for the strengthening of these National Integration measures of the government and the need to adhere to the tenant of these policies and programs by the stakeholders in order to achieve its full potentials.

I. INTRODUCTION

The country Nigeria is plurality in nature, with over 250 ethnic nationalities each with its unique culture, tradition, and beliefs. The three major ethnic groups in the country are Hausa/Fulani, Igbo, and Yoruba, who amongst other ethnic groups operated as an autonomous political entity such as feudal aristocracies, chiefdoms, autocephalous units, and kingdoms before the arrival of the British colony (Alapiki, 2005). In the year 1914, these entities who hitherto operated separately became one, a situation which created seemly geographical unification for easy colonial administration. The amalgamation was a product of political convenience and economic necessity, mainly to fund the Northern protectorate from the buoyant revenues of the Southern protectorate by the colonist (Alapiki, 2005). The amalgamation and the subjection of various ethnic groups with different historical antecedent to form the country Nigeria did not ease the mutual distrust, hatred, suspicion, and fear of domination of one section of the ethnic group over the other; it rather brought choking political competition among the groups with a resultant effect on national integration (Asaju & Egberi, 2015). Thus the crisis of nation-building and national integration in the Nigerian state, consequently emanated from 'the short-cut' to integration

called amalgamation, since hitherto the people of this geographical entities lived separately with little interaction, and the joining of these people in 1914 smacks a violation of the principles of social integration, because one will expect sort of memorandum which could have prompted or discouraged the process of coming together (Frank & Ukpere, 2013).

Unpatriotic attitude, disunity, inter and intra-ethnic crisis, coupled with the different socio-political background, and the quest for predominant value of material acquisition, tribal and ethnic loyalty became the order of the day in the nation, which remains fundamental obstacles to Nigerian integration (Falade & Falade, 2013). Thus, the national integration crisis Nigeria face as a country is often manifested in the form of ethnic politics, indigene-settler dialectic, minority question, youth restiveness, religious fundamentalism and conflicts, quest for resource control, militancy and the clamor for a (sovereign) national conference to discuss continued unification (Imhonopi, & Onifade, 2013). This clamor and agitations have impacted on the government's economic programs, which invariably deepens the existing social and infrastructural challenges, threatened food and social insecurity, coupled with inter and intra-religious, inter/intra-

community, inter/ intra-ethnic with a historical ancient (Imhonopi, & Onifade, 2013).

To ensure collective orientation of the citizens of the country towards the nation in general and to promote national unity and the continuous existence of Nigeria as one indivisible entity, the call for national integration was championed to further build a strong unity amongst the diverse commonalities, with different peculiar value and cultural background (Falade & Falade, 2013; Sanda, 1999). In a multi-ethnic-cultural country like Nigeria, the need to enact policies geared towards national unity, peace, development, and integration remains the primary concern of the government and political leaders. This is to facilitate economic growth and socio-political development, as well as culminating in popular participation, empowerment, and enhanced atmosphere of stability, unity and peace (Omotola, 2007; Akinbi, 2015).

In a bit to build a strong national integration which is needed for the progress, socio-economic and political development of the country led to the enacted of the Federal Character Policy, various State Creation, and National Youth Service Corps among other measures. Hence, this paper is an attempt to examine the emerging issues arising from these measures aimed at ensuring national integration in the country. The paper is divided into six (6) sections which are the introduction, which presents an overview of the issue, followed by the conceptualization of national integration as well as the theoretical underpin which centered on functionalist theory, dissecting national integration strategies followed, while understanding the emerging issue around national integration and conclusion came thereafter.

II. CONCEPTUALIZATION OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION

A. National Integration: According to the Haas (1968), National integration is the process where elites or key stakeholders with national outlook are persuaded to shift their expectations, activities, and loyalties towards the nation's interests, unity, and development. While Asaju & Egberi (2015) sees national integration as creating awareness of common identity among the citizens in spite of their differences in religious beliefs, castes, language, and origin. National integration is an attempt put in place by the government and all concern individual and groups with the core aim of promoting a sense of unity, togetherness and peaceful co-existence among the citizens of a particular country. According to Jega (2002), national integration is the process where all the citizens of a country increasingly see themselves as one people, with shared historical experiences, bound by common values, and imbued by the spirit of unity and patriotism, which transcends primordial diverse tendencies and traditional practices. National integration is a society embodies strategy of forging peace and unity in

diversity, as well as striving measure aimed at unifying the people in a modern state who are colonially created, which thus perceived to be critical and necessary for national progress and development in an antagonistic society (Edewor, Aluko, & Folarin, 2014). According to Khurana (2014), National integration is the recognition of the need for oneness in a country with different religions, castes, regions and who speaks different languages. National integration is that process which strengthens the quality of relations among autonomous social units such as ethnic group, kinship groups, and regional groups in such a way as to make it larger and aggregate from the autonomy of each of the existing units (Osagie, 2002). In an elaborate definition Imhonopi, & Onifade (2013) sees national integration as a process which produces state omnibus initiatives through its institutions, and guided by respect for the different cultural background, traditions, ethnicities with the primary aim of harmonizing all interests through adequate representation and dialogue to addressing the diversity and promotion fairness, justice and equity in the sharing of benefits, state resources, opportunities and responsibilities in the country.

III. THEORETICAL UNDERPIN

The functionalist theory best explains the current paper on Nigerian national integration and the emerging issues in the country's quest for national unity, peace, and development through integration. The functionalist theory also refers to as functionalism or structural functionalism, is one of the major theoretical perspectives in the field of social sciences. Its origins can be traced to the works of Emile Durkheim, who was specifically interested in how social order is made possible or how to ensure the society remains relatively stable. The theory focuses on the macro-level of social structure, rather than the micro-level of the social life of the people (Ashley, 2018). Other notable functionalist theorists include Talcott Parsons, Herbert Spencer, and Robert K. Merton.

The basic assumptions of the functionalist theory is that the society exhibit a system of interconnected parts which work in harmony to maintain and ensure balance and stable social order and equilibrium through it social institutions such as the family, education, economics, and religious institution each designed to contribute its quota to the overall social cohesion, peace, unity and progress of the society (Mooney, Knox, and Schacht, 2007; Ashley, 2018). This perspective further opined that an institution only exists to play a vital role in the functioning of the society and such institution cease to exist once it no longer plays this vital role, thus the emergence of new need will automatically bring up an institution (Ashley, 2018). Basically, the functionalism or structural functionalism as it may be called centers on building a framework for the complex social system whose parts work together in order to promote stability (Gerber & Macionis, 2011).

Although the functionalism theory reached the peak of influence in the 1950s, while in the 1960s the theory decline steadily with some few criticisms from scholars such as Antonio Gramsci who see it as neglecting the negative implications of social order, and its inability to account for social change and the neglect of social inequalities (Mooney, Knox, and Schacht, 2007; Coakley & Dunning, 2000). However, the assumptions of the functional theory best explain the role of policies such national youth service corps, the Federal Character Policy, and the state creation which were enacted at a point in Nigerian recent history to strengthen and promote the country's national integration and stability, although each and every one of them has its own emerging issues, which is the focus of this paper.

IV. NIGERIAN NATIONAL INTEGRATION STRATEGIES

A. Federal Character Policy: The Nigerian government in its quest to promote national integration, unity and to give a sense of belongs to all the citizens of the country enacted the Federal Character Policy as a strategy to ensure equal distribution of employment across all spheres of government-owned institutions and agencies. According to Adesoun (2011) national loyalty, unity, and integration must reflect on the activities of the government, parastatals, and agencies to avoid the dominance of one ethnic group or state over the other to avoid national issues and concerns. The Federal Character Policy is a deliberate attempt to organize the activities to ensure cohesion, proper distribution of project, amenities, and address the issue of diversity in a bit to promote national integration, stability, peace and unity in Nigeria through equal employment distribution (Asaju & Egberi, 2015). The introduction of the Federal Character Policy in Nigeria have helped in creating an awareness of the need to accommodate all the sections of the country in the overall activities of the government institution across the country to ensure a sense of national integration. It was equally believed that by advocating the Federal Character Policy and its objectives, it would deeply promote national integration and nation building which are both seen as the panacea for unity, justice and peaceful co-existence in the country

B. State Creation: One of the strategies adopted by the Nigerian government over time in champing the national integration is state creation. State creation is the process of increasing the number of federating units in the country from its existing form. Historical all the states created in the post-independent Nigeria were carried out by various military administrations. This began in 1967 with the creation of 12 states by the regime of Yakubu Gowon, it was followed by an additional 7 states by Murtala Mohammed regime in 176, while Ibrahim Babangida's added 11 states between 1987 and 1991, this was followed by Abacha's regime with the creation of 6 additional states in 1996 making it 36 states in all at present (Adetoye, 2016; Onimisi, 2014).

According to Adetoye (2016) state creation in Nigeria like the Federal Character Policy is a strategy embedded in the country's constitution for the purpose of promoting national integration, and strengthening unity in diversity inherent in the different ethnic and communal groups, as well as ensuring even development in the polity. The creation of states in Nigeria was equally a device aimed at mitigating fear of ethnic domination, marginalization, allay the fear of intra-group conflicts and ensure greater protection to the minority segments of the country (Adetoye, 2016).

C. National Youth Service Corps (NYSC):
The need to promote national integration, unity, peace, and cohesion led to the establishment of the National Youth Service Corps, especially after Nigeria's civil service war. The military regime of Yakubu Gowon came up the NYSC scheme in 1973 to ensure reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction in the country and promote post-conflict peace, which was needed for national integration and unity through the youths (Okafor & Ani, 2014). The core objectives of the NYSC scheme is to develop a result oriented youth, full of motivation, right attitude, value, and to bring out the best in them, which is targeted toward national building, national unity and integration, which is a long run service as catalyst for national development (Okafor & Ani, 2014; Onyishi, 2011). The NYSC scheme was to further inculcate discipline in Nigerian youths, as well as to raise their morale towards national achievements, promote common ties, cultural and social improvement by developing their attitudes through training, assigning them to specific jobs in states other than their states of origin (NYSC Handbook, 1996). The scheme exposes the youth to other people modes of living in different parts of the country with the aim of removing prejudices in their perception, promoting unity, cohesion and sense of national integration in Nigeria. The NYSC scheme sees this youth as future leaders, whose contribution within the one-year service to their nation add to the sustainable socio-economic development of Nigeria through selfless service (Raimi & Alao, 2011).

The scheme is still very much desirable considering its contribution to the socio-economic and educational benefit through teaching in the less educated area in the country. The scheme desire for national integration, unity, peaceful co-existence is still much alive the program has helped in promoting friendship and endearing inter-marriage amongst people of different ethnic background in the country (Okafor & Ani, 2014). According to Onyishi (2011) through the NYSC scheme, the values of national integration, unity, peace, and agricultural development as well as improved leadership qualities among youth was rekindled through the

involvement in electoral duties, immunization program, census, which strengthens the country bond.

V.   UNDERSTANDING THE EMERGING ISSUES IN THE NIGERIAN NATIONAL INTEGRATION

A.   Challenges of Federal Character Policy:

The strategy of Federal Character Policy in ensuring Nigerian national integration is faced with issues such as personal interest, the continuous influence of scheme and most disturbing is the implementation of the Federal Character Policy itself. The pertinent to note that quest for a sense of belonging and national integration through the Federal Character Policy may not be achievable if the issue of policy implementation is not taken with an optimum seriousness which it deserves. Furthermore, the lack of national identity, sense of belonging, prioritization of ethnic loyalty, the quest for political advantage on the part of politician and selfish interest remains an issue facing the strategy Federal Character Policy in its struggle for national integration (Asaju & Egberi, 2015). Another issue to Nigeria`s national integration arising from the Federal Character Policy is it poor governance and leadership structure, which has increased the complains of marginalization by the minority ethnic groups, persistent corruption, internal conflicts affiliated with poor and ineffective the application of the policy, and lack of patriotism (Baba & Aeysinghe, 2017; Onimisi, et al, 2018; Onimisi, et al, 2017).

Another emerging issue regarding the application of the Federal Character Policy is the perceived discrimination, favoritism in the exercise of the commission duty; it is also argued that the policy rather than promoting national integration, it promotes mediocrity at the expense of merit especially abuse that characterize it application in the Nigerian civil service   appointment and promotion, admission in to school thus throwing up more issues than solving issues (Ayoade, 1998; Adesoji and Alao, 2009).

B. Issues associated with State Creation:
Although the purpose of state creations in Nigeria was to ensure national integration in the face of obvious diversity, to curb the fear of marginalization and domination in the country, however, this target has not met the much-needed integration and unity because the continuous marginalization of the smaller section within the state so created. The tendency for the strategy of state creation not meeting it's the intended aim of national integration because of the fissiparous issues and continuous ethnic manipulation of political gains remains glaring (Alapiki, 2005). The creation of state provides an emerging issue that goes beyond fear of domination to marginalization in the development of infrastructures which is perceived to occurring along with the interest of the political elite within the states in the country (Adetoye, 2016). The strategy of state creation for national integration and unity turned to be a tool in the hands of the political elite, who used it for their personal interest and to patronize political allies as well as decimate perceived political enemies thereby relegating the issue of integration of the country (Suberu, 1994).

It appears that state creation in Nigeria has only helped in the aggravating the existing loyalties to the ethnic and primordial sentiment of the political elites against the quest for national integration and promotion of unity in the country. It is also important to note that the various state creation exercise in the country came with its attendant effect on the already preexisting intergroup conflicts and inter-ethnic violence, thus heightening national disharmony and low-level national integration among the citizens of Nigeria (Alapiki, 2005). According to Eze, Elimian, & Chinwuba (2015) state, creation exercises so far have contributed to the segmentation and compartmentalization in Nigerians, especially into indigenes and non-indigenes, and which has generated to more the cries of marginalization and exclusion. It is clear that the more states are created, the more the cries of marginalization and exclusion persist.

C. National Youth Service Corps and Emerging Concerns:

One of the challenges confronting the NYSC scheme presently is insecurity. The security of these youths who are serving the country in other states outside their state of origin is hindering the effective utilization of the said target of the government which to promote Nigerian national integration. The death of a number of NYSC members in the states that they were posted to serve and to promote unity and integration in recent times especially in some sections of the country due to electoral violence, religious fanaticism, ethnic sentiments and other forms of conflict has thrown up some issues of concern (Okoro & Ani, 2011). Perceived corruption and favoritism is another issue threatening the core mandate of the scheme. Onyishi (2011), equally identify corruption as seriously hampering the over the goal of the scheme. The NYSC scheme has also thrown up the issue of ethnicity, cronyism, and favoritism in the posting of corps members, in addition to exposing these young Nigerian to security risks as clearly seen in the 2011 General Elections were some NYSC members lost their lives, coupled with corruption, misappropriation of funds, and unfortunately majority don't get jobs where they serve because of the tagged of non-indigenes which they host state seen them as, and discriminatory practice melted on them, which is a long run affects the purpose of the scheme (Imhonopi, & Onifade, 2013; Al-Shameri, 2017).

VI.   CONCLUSION

This paper found that security issues and corruption concerns especially in the national youth service corps scheme, while

political influence and the issues of non-adherence to the implementation of the Federal Character Policy remains another hindering block, as well as the continued marginalization and elitist control equally remains a source of concern for the state creation as measure of national integration in Nigeria. Thus, this paper suggests an increase in physical infrastructural equally across the geopolitical zones of the country, while access to quality and affordable education, transparency and accountability in all government dealing as this will help in building trust among the citizens, fairness, justice, and peacebuilding would be of significant importance to Nigerian national integration. Equally, a sincere adherence to all Nigerian national integration strategies would ensure national cohesion. It is imperative to note that this paper relied heavily on the secondary second of data, hence future studies could choose other forms of data collection and pick one of the strategies for in-depth analysis.

REFERENCES

[1]. A. B. Adeosun. *Federal character principle and national integration: A critical appraisal.* International journal of politics and good governance, **2**(**2.4**), **1-13, 2011**

[2]. D. Adetoye. *Nigeria's federalism and state reorganization and restructuring: Attempts at national integration through fragmentation.* International Journal of Academic Research and Reflection, **4**(**2**), **40-51, 2016**

[3]. O. Adesoji and A. Alao. *Indigene ship and Citizenship in Nigeria; Myth and Reality* Journal of Pan African Studies Vol. **2 No 9, 2009**

[4]. J. O. Akinbi. *Political Leadership and Challenges of National Integration and Development in Nigeria: The Way Forward.* Journal of Arts and Humanities, **4**(**3**), **64, 2015**

[5]. H. E. Alapiki. State *Creation in Nigeria: Failed Approaches to National Integration and Local Autonomy.* African Studies Review Vol. **48**. No. **3, 2005**

[6]. K. Asaju & T. Egberi. *Federal character and national integration in Nigeria: The need for discretion and interface.* Review of History and Political Science, **3**(**1**), **126-134. 2015**

[7]. C. Ashley. Understanding Functionalist Theory One of the Major Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology. **2018**

[8]. J. A. A. Ayoade. *The Federal Character Principle and the Search for National Integration* In Amuwo, K. et.al.(eds) ,Federalism and Political Restructuring in Nigeria, Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd **1998**

[9]. I. Baba & C. Aeysinghe. Re-Positioning Nigeria towards Sustainable National Unity *Global Journal of Human-Social Science Research* **2017**

[10]. J. Coakley & E. Dunning. *Handbook of sports studies* Sage. **2000**

[11]. P. A. Edewor; Y. A. Aluko & S. F. Folarin (2014) *Managing Ethnic and Cultural Diversity for National Integration in Nigeria* Developing Country Studies Vol.**4**, No.**6**, PP **70-76, 2014**

[12]. O.C. Eze, A. Elimian & U. G. Chinwuba. The Politics of State Creation and National Integration in Nigeria. *Journal of Politics and Law;* Vol. **8**, No. **1**, **2015**

[13]. Falade, D. A., & Falade, M. Development of core values for national integration in Nigeria. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*, **2**(7),**57-63, 2013**

[14]. E. O. Frank & W. I. Ukpere. *Administration of National Integration in Nigeria: The Challenges and Prospects.* Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences, **4**(**14**), **481, 2013**

[15]. L. Gerber & J.J. Macionis. Sociology. 7th Canadian Edition **2011**

[16]. E.B. Haas. "International integration: The European and the universal process." *International Organization,xv* **1961**

[17]. (D. Imhonopi & C. A. Onifade. T*owards national integration in Nigeria: Jumping the hurdles.* Research on Humanities and Social Sciences, **3**(**9**), **75-82. 2013**

[18]. A. M. Jega. "*Education, democracy and national integration in Nigeria in the 21st century*" The African Symposium: An Online Educational Research Journal, Vol. **2** No **4**. **2002**

[19]. S. Khurana. National Integration: Complete Information on the Meaning, Features and Promotion of National Integration in India. **2014**

[20]. K. Mooney and K. Schacht. The Three Main Sociological Perspectives *Understanding Social Problems*, 5th edition 2007

[21]. National Youth Service Corps, **1996**, *NYSC Handbook,* Abuja

[22]. C. Okafor & J.K. Ani. The National Youth Service Corps Programme and Growing Security Threat in Nigeria *Africa's Public Service Delivery and Performance Review*, **2**(2) **2014**

[23]. P. O. Okolo. *Influence of the Federal Character Principle on National Integration in Nigeria* American International Journal of Contemporary Research, 4(6), **121-138. 2014**

[24]. S.I. Okoro and K. L. Ani. *Transnational Media and the Development of a Progressive Peaceful Political Culture in Nigeria,* in Chiegboka, A. B. C., Utoh-Ezeajugh, T. C. & Ogene, M. S. (Eds.) *The Humanities and Sustainable Development,* Nimo: Rex Charles & Patrick Ltd, pp. **750-760. 2011**

[25]. J. S. Omotola. "*Democratization, good governance and development in Africa: The Nigerian experience",* in Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa, Vol. **9**, No. **4**, **247-274, 2007**

[26]. T. Onimisi. *The Politics of State Creation in Nigeria and the Economic Viability of the Existing 36 States* International Journal of Social Sciences and Management, *1*(2), **64-68, 2014**

[27]. (27) A. O. Onyishi. *Youth and National Development in Nigeria: An Analysis of National Youth Service Scheme:* 1999-2009, International Journal of Modern Political Economy, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. **87-102, 2011**

[28]. J. I. Osagie. "*Regional Cooperation and Integration in Africa*" in F.I. Omu *et al (eds)* Themes in International Studies & Diplomacy, (Benin City: Mindex Publishing, PP. **166. 2002**

[29]. L. Raimi & O. Alao. *Evaluation of the economics (cost and benefits) of National Youth Service Corps for sustainable development in Nigeria.* Humanomics, *27*(4), 270-281, 2011

[30]. A. O. Sanda. Lectures on Sociology of Development Ibadan, Fact Findings **1999**

[31]. R. T. Suberu. Recent demands for new states in Nigeria. The Nigerian Journal of Federalism Vol. **1, 1994**

[32]. T. Onimisi, K.H. K. Samsu, M. M. Ismail, M.W.M. Nor. Federal Character Principles: A Conceptual Analysis. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research* Vol. 6, Issue 2, pp: 172-177 **2018**

[33]. T. Onimisi, K.H. K. Samsu, M. M. Ismail, M.W.M. Nor (2017) Application of Federal Character Policy: Role and Constraint of

the Civil Society in Nigeria. *Journal of Policy and Development Studies* Vol. 11 (3) pp 73-80 **2017**

[34]. A. A. Nasser Al-Shameri, "Hierarchical Multilevel Information security gap analysis models based on ISO 27001: 2013*", International Journal of Scientific Research in Multidisciplinary Studies* Vol.3, Issue.11, pp.14-23 **2017**

AUTHORS PROFILE

Timothy Onimisi, currently lectures in the Department of Political Science, Federal University Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria. He has published a number of article on public policy and policy implementation in Nigeria in both local and international journals.

Dr. Ku Hasnita Ku Samsu, currently lectures in Department of Government and Civilization Studies, Faculty of Human Ecology, University Putra Malaysia. She has published many articles on political sociology in both local and international journals. She tutored and graduated quite a number of postgraduate students.

Dr. Mohd Mahadee bin Ismail, is a senior lecturer in Department of Government and Civilization Studies, Faculty of Human Ecology, University Putra Malaysia. He has published a number of article on Politics and Government and Southeast Asian.

Dr. Murni binti Wan Mohd Nor is a senior lecturer in Department of Government and Civilization Studies, Faculty of Human Ecology, University Putra Malaysia. He has published a number of article on both local and international journals. She is an expert in law.