

MULTICULTURALISM IN NIGERIA AND THE PROSPECTS OF TRUE DEMOCRACY MODELS

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Abstract

The plethora of problems confronting Nigeria as a multicultural nation often compels a reconsideration of homogenization over multiculturalism. Thus the aim of this paper is to address the problems that bedevil governance in a multicultural nation like Nigeria, hence recommending democratic solutions. This research applies analytic tool of investigation to examine Nigeria's multicultural problems in their atomic form. This research studies the rich benefits that multiculturalism offers a nation from survival of culture and growth through friction to the color and the richness it adds. This research studies some fundamental challenges of multiculturalism to which all other problems are merely outgrowths such as; conflicts due to fundamentalism and chauvinism; cultural fixity discouraging interaction with other cultures and its peoples; extermination of minority and individual rights in a context that emphasizes group rights. This research recognizes Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo as the major tribes among many other minor tribes, the use of English as the *lingua franca* and the NYSC initiative towards unity amidst multiculturalism. However, the work calls for a proper enforcement of these initiatives. Minding the weight of problems rocking the nation as a result of her multiculturalism, this research proposes democratic solution anchoring on true federalism; power-sharing among the regions; a return to regional autonomy against the presidential system currently in practice; a consensus democracy which grants citizens not only voting rights but right to referendum; and enforcement of the rule of law. The work also highlights the need to initiate attitudinal changes through education. When these situations are well addressed then Nigeria's multiculturalism can best be described as unity in diversity.

Keyword: Nigeria, multicultural, democracy, solutions, unity, and diversity.

Introduction

Evolutionary theory has taught us that the world is in a process of unfolding, in a continuum of development and mankind is gradually opening up to the stunning realities of these evolutionary processes though with trepidation and uneasiness on the ground of breaking away from some comfortable base of assured hopes. The movement or trend seems however, unstoppable, and man is propelled to seek ways to appropriate the gains of these various levels of the unveiling truth and reality. No wonder pluralism as a socio-political theory continues to thrill a wide range of human population. It is a theory that opens up to the world the immense riches of our planet, a theory whereby human diversity is acknowledged and celebrated; an openness to plurality of cultures and values. It is in such recognition that President Bill Clinton was prompted to say "let many flowers bloom", wishing that his administration-look like a nation reflecting the nation's ethnic and sexual mix.

Another term which one may use to express this form of reality is 'multiculturalism', which literally refers to plurality of cultures, i.e. an acceptance of diversity which has made a positive contribution in broadening narrow horizons and exposing people to the wide range of cultural heritages. And Nigeria is one of the many nations which exist as a multicultural nation. "Yes", says R. Oyeyemi, "Nigeria is a multicultural society. It is a conglomerate of nations with different peoples and cultures. It is a basket of different religions and worldviews. It is a country which expectations of its peoples, other than remaining as one are different"¹

This multicultural reality of Nigeria nation, however, has not been lived without deadly conflicts and frequent threat of possible break away, to the point that some opponents of multiculturalism have capitalised on these difficulties to condemn or express their hostilities thereon. As a system, multiculturalism thinks that unity can exist with divergence. But this is one of the most puissant contradictions of our time —to prove that convergence could coexist with divergence based on identity

and difference; divergence which sometimes include religious fundamentalism, virulent nationalism and aggressive ethnicity.

It is the aim of this article to show how important and beneficial it is for multicultural nations but especially Nigeria to maintain their ideals of plural existence. The paper will also indicate the ways to manage the exigencies of the cultural diversity in a peaceful concord. The article is not aimed at proving that there is no problem with regard to multiculturalism. Indeed, part of its duties is to point out these difficulties, but then to show how these problems can be governed or solved democratically in multicultural states of which Nigeria is one.

Conceptual Clarifications

Multiculturalism literally denotes ‘multiplicity of cultures’. This means it can be fully grasped only through an understanding of culture. Culture itself refers to the collective material and non-material accomplishments of particular groups, their ways of looking at the world or doing things, and the manner in which these patterns of behaviour are transmitted from one generation to the next. As the lens through which a people perceive and interpret reality, it is “the locus of value priorities, indicating the behaviours of a given social group and, hence the choices among the many possible futures.”² This is why when physical survival is threatened or the cultural identity of a people is challenged by values different from their own, they strive to find an identity which they can claim steadfastly in an attempt to recover their security. This is where cultural conflicts often spring up, but paradoxically multiculturalism maintains or believes that several cultures can coexist equitably and peacefully in a country, instead of a single national culture. In short, multiculturalism champions cultural diversity.

In what seemed like a definition, Malcom Fraser explains clearly the content of multicultural diversity. He says: ‘Multiculturalism is concerned with far more than the passive toleration of diversity. It sees diversity as a quality to be actively embraced, a source of social worth and dynamism. It encourages groups to be open and to interact, so that all ... may learn and benefit from each other’s heritages, Multiculturalism is about diversity not division — it is about interaction not isolation. It is about cultural and ethnic differences set with a framework of shared fundamental values which enables them to co-exist on a complementary rather than a competitive basis. It involves respect for the law and for our democratic institutions and processes’.³ On the other hand, he maintains too that “insisting upon a core area of common values is no threat to multiculturalism but its guarantee, for it provides the minimal conditions on which the well-being of all is secured.”

As a philosophical concept, multiculturalism has a relatively recent history. Originally, it set out as part of pragmatism, which was a movement at the end of the 19th century but later developed into a political and cultural pluralism at the beginning of the 20th century. This was consequent upon the new wave of European penetration and control of the sub-Saharan Africa and secondly, their massive immigration to the United States. In the face of this reality, a number of philosophers like William James, George Santayana and John Dewey developed a concept of cultural pluralism, from which emerged what is known today as multiculturalism.⁴

Benefits of Multiculturalism

Venting his anger on the proponents of multiculturalism and especially the political leaders who promoted the principles in America, Gerald F. Kreyche saw nothing good in it having people of varied or divergent cultures existing together except as an alternative experiment after the failure of integration policy of the past administrations. Speaking from American background, he maintained that Americans had never been told why multiculturalism and diversity as such are necessarily good. For him, they are simply declared so by fiat, strongly suggesting that their good is only a political one for an administration that was teetering on the edge.⁵

Indeed, Kreyche has the right of information on the values and the benefits of multiculturalism and this is part of the duty of this article; that culture and society exert tremendous influence on each of our lives, structuring our values, engineering our view of the world, and patterning our responses to experience. In other words, human beings have a basic, almost biological need for cultural attachment.

This need can only be satisfied by publicly validating and protecting different cultures. The case for 'value pluralism' and need for its protection has probably been best expressed by late philosopher Isaiah Berlin. 'Life may be seen through many windows', he said, 'none of them necessarily clear or opaque, less or more distorting than any of the others'.⁶ For Berlin, "there was no such thing as a universal truth, only a variety of conflicting truths. Different peoples and cultures had different values, beliefs and truths, each of which may be regarded as valid. There is no impartial or universal viewpoint from which claims of all particular cultures can be rationally assessed. Any standpoint we adopt is that of a particular form of life and the historic practices that constitute it."⁷ The best we can therefore do is to allow and respect every culture, from which we also stand to benefit.

Some critiques, however, object to granting individual cultures such rights of being separate partners, and claim that to see humans as bearing specific cultures means to deny them a capacity for transformation. It suggests that every human being is so shaped by a particular culture that to change or undermine that culture means to undermine the very dignity of that individual. This aims, for instance, to signify that the biological fact of, say, Igbo, Yoruba or Hausa ancestry somehow makes a human being incapable of living well in a society other than his/hers except as a participant.

Indeed, much as we accept that every individual bears some specific culture, we know that every culture is also dynamic, and a multicultural person ought to be a product of a meddling of cultures. In fact, the conditions of contemporary history are such that we are now already on the threshold of a new kind of person, a person who is socially and psychologically a product of the interweaving of cultures in the twentieth century, It is a reality which has now been facilitated by mass media. Harold Lasswell speaks on this regard that the technological revolution as it affects mass media has reached a limit that is subject only to innovations that would substantially modify our basic perspectives of one another and of man's place in the cosmos. He points at the emergence of the multicultural person as just such an innovation.

8

Human beings cannot detach themselves from some form of cultural influence and these influences add up to their identity. It is therefore improper to suppress or liquidate these cultural horizons in an effort to integrate every one into a single nation state. In fact, this is one of the problems that formed the regrets of R. Oyeyemi who writing on the Nigerian efforts at forging a nation out of the various ethnic cultures of its multicultural regions attempted to homogenize these divergent cultures, all in a bid to build one Nigeria. He lamented that Nigeria had tried to throw overboard our "source of being", the cultural context that gives meaning to the variety of our individual existences. According to him, it is from its cultural milieu that each ethnic group in Nigeria derives its relevance and identity, hence meaning and purpose for existence. The culture "not only underscores the values that individuals or groups from such ethnic group would continue to cherish or detest as they traverse the length and breadth of universe, it also gives them uniqueness, hence their pride and self-esteem. Man cannot operate in cultural abstract." Even cultural transformation or changes depend upon some form of a substratum, some cultural constant.

Individually, we discover that our development depends upon the people whom we meet in the course of our lives. The benefit of these meetings is due as much to the differences as to the resemblances; to the conflict as well as the sympathy between persons. It should be counted as fortunate to meet the right friends at right moment, and right enemies at right moment. If we actually desire the survival of culture, it must be seen as bad any policy that aims at exterminating enemies, which unfortunately is the most tragic development of modern war and peace. Within some reasonable limit, we need the enemy, since the friction between individuals or groups is very necessary for civilisation. According to T. S. Eliot, "the universality of irritation is the best assurance of peace. A country within which the divisions have gone too far is a danger to itself; but a country which is too well united —whether by nature or device, by honest purpose or by fraud and oppression - is a menace to others".¹⁰ He pointed at Italy and Germany as countries which violently imposed a cultural unity with politico-economic aims, but which had unfortunate consequences on both nations. By thinking themselves first, rather than as native of particular small principalities, the traditional culture was disturbed to the point that no future culture could grow.

The same point was made by Alfred Whitehead in the last chapter of his book *Science and the Modern World*. For him, “a diversification among human communities is essential for the provision of the incentives and material for the Odyssey of the human spirit”.¹¹ He regards it as dangerous what he calls ‘the Gospel of Uniformity’. He maintained that “the differences between the nations and races of mankind are required to preserve the conditions under which higher development is possible”.¹² He believed that other tribes or nations of different habits should not be seen as enemies but as godsends since we require of them “something sufficiently akin to be understood, something sufficiently different to provoke attention, and something great enough to command admiration”. One should not expect from them all the virtues. On the contrary “we should even be satisfied if there is something odd enough to be interesting”.¹³

If a country does not appreciate multiculturalism, it is likely that its citizens would be identical with regard to everything including beliefs and actions. It will lack color and creativity and the society would probably be boring. But, having a diverse mixture of cultures and people inspires citizens to think differently and thus enhance their creativity. With the fusion of several cultures in Nigeria, for instance, the nation is truly in a better position to grow. Bright technocrats and academicians scattered all over the nation are there as pool from which the nation could make its selections of the human resources needed to move the country forward. There are also several kinds of food available from the North, the Middle Belt, East and West, thanks to the multicultural Nigeria. Today, we hear such jingles as: ‘Benue the food basket of the nation’; ‘Rivers the heart beat of the nation’; ‘Anambra the light of the nation’ etc. These are the values and impacts the various states and tribes bring mm or make on the nation respectively.

The culture in Nigeria is basically a huge mosaic of all the cultures of the regions. As a multicultural nation with more than 250 languages and several ethnic groups, Nigeria is an excellent ground where the various powers and riches of mankind can be orchestrated. The social, cultural and ecological diversity of its constituent regions (nationalities) are sources of great advantage. It is therefore required that it remains a nation where the constituent regions and other immigrants would retain their ancestry and cultural values while, concurrently feeling at home under same umbrella Nigeria.

Problems of Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism has become a global reality, if by no other reason, at least by the force of immigration. It has immense values but also defects and one of them that is almost inevitable is conflict between different groups sharing divergent values and ideals. Think of Nigeria for instance, where the ethnic groups do not share a uniform dream. R. Oyeyemi writes here: “Our world-views are different. Our expectations from our leaders are different. Our notions of government are different. Our moral standards, which though do not make one ethnic group more morally upright than the others, are different. Our perceptions and understanding of religion are different, Our usage of it as dictated by our different cultures is different, Our ideas of how to live and regulate our lives are different. Our goals and missions as individual ethnic groups are different”.¹⁴ Under such divergence, the possibility of strife and conflicts is almost inescapable. Some writers have actually blamed multiculturalism for the conflicts in places like Rwanda and Burundi, where the death toll in the struggle between Tutsis and the Hutus has exceeded 100,000¹⁵

In other parts of Africa, the multicultural conflicts between various tribes or ethnic groups have also been rife: Angola has seen Ovimbundu versus Mbundu; Senegal and the Comoros have been beleaguered by strong separatist movements in Casamance and Anjouan, Islamic militants in Northern Nigeria have been very virulent against the Christians, hundreds of people have died in Jos, Maidugiri and Kano which are Northern cites of Nigeria; Christian fundamentalism in the form of the Lord’s Resistance Army continues to ravage northern Uganda. In Europe the language of conflict is not different either. The diversity between, various ethnic groups, for instance, has caused the agonizing disintegration of former Yugoslavia as the state tried to overcome its challenges through some form of ethnic cleansing in the formerly multicultural and multiethnic country. The Czechs and the Slovaks have split into two countries because of cultural differences. The Flemish and the Wallons of Belgium

have continued to live a very cold peace, Spain suffers till date the terrorist attacks from separatist-minded Basques.

Apart from the massacre of the Igbos in 1966 by the Hausas of the Northern Nigeria, an event that led to a full-fledged civil war which left hundreds of thousands dead, bloody confrontations between members of different ethnic groups have continued till date. It can be argued that Nigeria's greatest social problem today is the internal violence plaguing it. Inter-ethnic fights throughout the country; religious rioting between Muslims and non-Muslims over the creation of Shari'a law (strict Islamic law) in the northern states; political confrontations between Niger Delta minorities and supporters of oil companies spark off frequent bloody altercations. In the face of this frequent violence, the police who are often called up to put a control do it less effectively because these agents are sometimes divided along regional lines and interests. It is unfortunate because such incessant deadly conflicts habitually threaten the corporate existence of our multicultural nation.

Given this currency of deadly conflicts, there is no doubt that multiculturalism is in ill repute. It seems therefore that the greatest challenge about multiculturalism is how to encourage cultural difference and at the same time check possible conflicts arising from virulent fundamentalism, disrespect, cultural chauvinism, segregation and persecution. In doing so, it is necessary to point out that cultural differences have sometimes been manipulated and misapplied in criticising multiculturalism. There is need to demarcate between the cultural differences which are socially or politically constructed with the aim at domination-subjugation from those which are innate; — differences which are true marks of identities from differences socially constructed, framed into hierarchy and petrified as facts, all with an aim of some social, political or economic privileges. Such differences when they become more entrenched lead to deeper conflicts. The Rwanda's case illustrates clearly this fluidity of ethnic categories, in which post-colonial ethnic classifications greatly changed due to new socio-political contexts after the independence and so hardened the categorizations imposed by colonial lords. Indeed, many have argued that Hutu-Tutsi ethnic differentiation in recent decades has more to do with social construction and Political manipulation than any innate differences.

No one is kept in doubt that one of the most worrying challenges of multiculturalism is how to discourage cultural fixity and homogeneity within the majority and minority ethnic communities. Such demon of segregation makes it almost impossible, for instance, that an Hausa man will win an elective post in the minority ethnic regions of Plateau state of Nigeria, even when immigration density and demography show the reasons for the contrary. How could cultural isolation in multicultural state be overcome? This is where the heart of the disturbances lies, as the case in Plateau state and several other places in the country have demonstrated. How does multiculturalism contend with a systemic, intended or unintended denial of power or recognition and privileges to certain people based on the groups which they belong? It extends also to monopoly of power at the federal level. These are real problems in multicultural states.

Another important challenge is how to encourage diversity and at the same time avoid aggressive ethnicity which often leads to exterminating minority ethnicities. John Rex defends aggressive ethnicity in the sense that it grows out of some perceived injustice and effort to validate and give meaning to the group's existence which may have been played down by the dominant culture. He tells us that minor ethnic groups do not actually go out of their way to attack other groups but are primarily concerned with gaining equal recognition and love. The main tendency towards ethnic genocide, he said, comes rather from the ideology of nation state itself. This is because a society based upon citizenship and the ideology of nationalism has no place for subordinate ethnicity. It is even worse where there is lateral ethnicity involved in the government of the state, for in such cases other ethnicities are often eliminated.¹⁶ The defence J. Rex makes is rather the ideology of nation state being the cause of ethnic genocide than aggressive ethnicity itself. But he did not show how aggressive ethnicity is not one of the products of multiculturalism which often ends up in shading of blood.

Finally, multiculturalism has also the problem of how to deal with the issue of individual human rights in the context of pervasive emphasis on group rights, a thing which raises the fundamental questions of

identity and of choice. If cultural difference is so rigorously imposed, then it leaves little room for individual choice. Thus, one of the major issues around the concept of multiculturalism says B. Brain in his egalitarian critique of multiculturalism is how it meshes with individual rights since it so clearly emphasizes the recognition and rights of a collectivity. If identity is socially derived from particularistic cultural experiences, then it amounts to an ascribed status that allows for growth and development within the limited purview of the community.¹⁷

Governing/Dealing with Multicultural Diversities

Cultural diversities generate conflicts and possible break-up of a nation if not well managed. Thus, for multicultural states, especially like Nigeria, the challenge is how to accommodate cultural differences and at the same time build an overarching construct of citizenship. The international organisations have shown the way forward by adopting some policies on how to deal with ethnic diversity, but as Will Kymlicka said, these policies had been driven by conflicting impulses. Their pessimism about the destabilizing consequences of ethnic politics alternates with optimism about the prospects for a peaceful and democratic form of multicultural politics. Thus, the result is often an unstable mix of paralyzing fear and naive hope, rooted in conflicting imperatives of security and justice.¹⁸ The recent consideration by the Federal Government to offer Amnesty to Boko-Haram is a case in point of seeking solutions precipitated by destabilising fear of possible break-up of the nation and prospect for peace.

But, the practices of some states like Canada, Switzerland and Australia have offered us some paths of assured hopes. In his book, “Swiss Democracy: Possible Solutions to Conflict in Multicultural Societies” Wolf Linder provides how the example of Swiss democracy could offer a relevant help to other multicultural societies struggling to manage cultural diversities. According to her, Switzerland is a country characterised by cultural, linguistic, religious and regional diversity. As a country, it has existed for more than 700 years and the reason for her success had been that over the years, she had developed unique institutions aimed at minimising any conflict emanating from their cultural differences. Some of these measures were that “Switzerland renounced the idea of creating a one-culture, one language nation-state. Secondly, the Swiss were able to develop a type of democracy that favours and enforces political power-sharing between Protestants and Catholics, between the German-speaking majority and French-, Italian and Romanisch-speaking minorities, and between organised employers and trade unions. This, has led to social integration, peaceful conflict resolution by negotiation and national consensus amongst a once fragmented and heterogeneous population”.¹⁹

The first requirement seems to have been met in Nigerian society though imperfectly, by not legitimizing one single ethnic language for the nation, but making the languages of the major ethnic groups Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo as national languages, and formulating an educational policy of at least one compulsory national language in West African School Certificate examination outside one’s own native language. The aim had been to encourage love and understanding through ethnic mix. Obviously this has not yielded its fruits because it has not been conscientiously implemented and followed up. Moreover, there are many other minor ethnic groups that feel neglected in that socio-political drawing. But Nigeria has been saved in this respect through another policy of adopting English language as a ‘lingua franca’. Other policy aimed at encouraging understanding, mutual respect and love through ethnic mix is the NYSC program where Youth Corp members are sent to Regions outside of their own to serve the nation for a year. This again is being bastardised by Moslem extremist groups who exterminate or make these young men/women serving their nation, the objects of their targets. This notwithstanding, it is a good effort in the right direction.

On the issue of power sharing, Nigeria has still much to learn for ethnocultural justice to be met. For the past 60 years of independence Nigeria had been ruled the most part by the Hausa North which arrogates to herself the natural right to rule (born-to-rule). Because the pendulum tilted recently to Niger Delta minority after the South has had a shot, the nation has experienced series of deadly attacks through religious militancy in disguise. The Niger Delta group too had threatened on their own side to tear the country apart if they were not given their own right to leadership and proper share of the economy. Indeed, it must be said without contradiction that if justice is to be ensured to Nigeria’s national minorities, part of the democratic solutions to her multicultural diversity must include equality of

opportunity and power sharing. It is in this regard that Will Kymlicka did suggest in multicultural states the system of “federalism” as a solution.²⁰ It is a system which ensures strong regional governments and a weak centre.

Indeed, it is important that Nigeria remains a nation. The advantages are obvious, but in the face of deadly conflicts and tensions between the country’s sub regions: the Yoruba, the Igbo, the western minorities, the Eastern minorities, the Hausa-Fulani, the North Western minorities, and the North-Eastern minorities. It may be more productive to play down the presidential system being presently practiced and then seek ways of granting autonomy to the regions under a federal state. This appears in the consideration of many scholars to hold a safest key to eliminating Nigeria’s multicultural conflicts. It was even the system immediately after the amalgamation of the three regions: northern, eastern, and western into what is now known as Nigeria in 1914. Before then, Nigeria had not existed but as many scattered autonomous nationalities. When the union took place, the country was then administered as still three autonomous regions held together by the existence of a colonial governor-general appointed by the colonial office in London. At that time, each region had constitutional powers to regulate its education, trade, agriculture, health care, and judiciary. Each was allowed to develop and modernize its culture and society at its own pace.

Will Kymlicka argues that the difficulties involved in accommodating ethnocultural diversity are not insurmountable, and that Canadians have given us along same line as Nigeria’s earlier attempt an impressive range of experience and resources on which to draw in addressing them. A crucial part of it is its ‘multicultural’ model of amalgamation adopted by the federal government in 1971 which has worked much better than is commonly thought, and can be adapted to new circumstances. He sees the challenges of accommodating the self-government demands of national minorities as greater ²¹, and it provides a more lasting solution when these challenges have been broadly dealt with, because it is often not the actual differences of identities which cause conflict, but rather the differences of interests. Therefore, there is need for greater conceptual strategies for managing ethnic interests and conflicts.

In the case where the option of federalism is not commonly accepted due to some geo-economic reason and its logical implications, the nation must seek a consensus democracy. This requires that the citizens not only vote but also participate in some legislative decisions of major importance through referendum. By this way, all will feel the ownership of the political institutions, process and outcome. It equally resonates well with our traditional African form of governance. In fact, the Nigerian policy-makers must eagerly face the challenge of constructing more inclusive institutions which reflect the needs and concerns of all citizens and regions. The nation must pay heed to those national policies that promote equality and sense of belonging; such policy as contained in Section 14, subsection 3 of the 1979 Constitution which provides as follows:

The composition of the Government of the Federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also to command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or combination of a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that Government or any of its agencies.

The policy makers must also find ways to change the attitudes of the citizens so that they respect differences, most effectively through education that takes place within a diverse setting and where students encounter and learn from others who have backgrounds and characteristics very different from their own. In this regard, the federal universities in various states must be able to admit each year a reasonable number of successful candidates from different segments of the nation. The Revised National Policy on Education which came into effect in 1981 had already specified this but with regard to growth and development of the university System in the country. It maintained that “admission of students and recruitment of staff into universities and other institutions of higher learning should be on a broad national basis.”²² This simply draws attention again to the need of reflecting “federal Character” but it requires a re-enforcement.

Finally, the citizens should show responsibilities in a democracy and act accordingly. It requires that they respect the rule of law enacted by the government which is a non-negotiable and central tenet of the policy of multiculturalism. Once our policy framework is right, our effort should be to focus attention on ensuring all schools - public, faith-based and independent — effectively support the principles and practice of our democracy. On the part of the federal government, it must never turn a blind eye to cruelty and crime out of some misguided sense of cultural sensitivity. There must be boundaries of acceptable behaviour —cultural, social and political.

Conclusion

Our effort so far had been to show how priceless it is for nations to maintain their multicultural identities. To those who vent angers upon the champions of multicultural existence, we pointed out how cultural exchange has been the pre-eminent condition of the twenty-first century given the shrinking globe and how mankind's horizon had been broadened by such contacts and new reality to her advantage. For example, the close association of Igbo with Hausa and Yoruba is to the advantage of everybody; an association of Igbo which rupture her connection with Hausa and Yoruba would be an unqualified misfortune. Our national culture, if it is to flourish, should be a constellation of cultures, a constellation which benefiting each other, benefits the whole. And, against those who encourage assimilation or complete absorption of minor cultures into a stronger culture, we showed how it is impossible because it is the instinct of every living thing to persist in its own being. Moreover, it is of no gain, for instance, for a Yoruba person to be indistinguishable from an Igbo or Hausa man. If it were so, we would all become indistinguishable featureless Nigerians at a lower level of culture than that of any of the separate regions. It is of great advantage for Nigerian culture therefore, to be constantly influenced from Hausa North, Yoruba West and Igbo East.

However, the above mentioned benefits of multiculturalism are not without a price. Parts of this price is the challenge of maintaining diversity of cultures, beliefs, opinions, world-views, moral judgements and at the same time uphold common identity? How can the conflicts which these cultural differences cause be managed in a multicultural state? Given the deadly confrontations that generally greet multicultural contacts, the response of many Governments have been determined by an aversion to diversity and the perception that diversity threatens the welfare of the community. It has been the priority of this article to indicate the ways through which we could deal or govern multicultural diversity especially in Nigeria society.

Among them are the need for respect and recognition of different cultures, as well as, making policies and programs that works towards promoting cultural understanding and eliminating segregation

It is said that Justice should not only be done; for justice to be ensured to the minority groups of a multicultural state, they must be made to have a feeling of belonging through participation in the leadership of this nation, either through federalism or through reasonable representation in the government of the country. Above all, the politicians should be multicultural persons, embodying the attributes and characteristics that prepare them to serve as facilitators and catalysts for contacts between cultures. The variations and flexibility of this identity style allows them to relate to a variety of contexts and environments without being totally encapsulated by or totally alienated from any given culture. This is what Nigeria as a multicultural state needs rather than fundamentalists who fan the ember of discord and conflicts at a least possible opportunity.

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