

ISIR Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (ISIRJAHSS)
ISSN: 3048-7463 (Online)
Frequency: Bimonthly
Published By ISIR Publisher
Journal Homepage Link- https://isirpublisher.com/index.php/isirjahss

INDEGENIETY AND CITIZENSHIP IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS.

By

ENOCH IBU OTOR, PhD, BL[1], QUEENETH O. WOKORO, PhD, BL[2],
[1,2]Margaret Lawrence University Abuja campus Lugbe

Article History

Received: 23/12/2024
Accepted: 15/01/2025
Published: 05/02/2025

Vol – 2 Issue – 1

PP: -39-46

Abstract

The nature and character of the Nigerian state is promoting the issue of indigeneity which in a way is affecting the survival of Nigeria as a geo-political entity. Despite the constitutional provisions guaranteeing the citizenship status of Nigerians, yet within the country, the issue of indigeneity is making Nigerians to becoming second-class citizens in states other than their own. Indigeneity is becoming albatross in the goal of national integration and is creating problems for Nigerians as they are denied their constitutional rights in states other than their own. Therefore, for the goal of national unity, political stability and political development to be achieved, the issue of indigeneity needs to be discouraged while promoting citizenship. The study is of the opinion that state of residence rather than state of origin should be a major determining factor in national politics, appointments and employment. This will de-emphasize the relevance of indigeneity in Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The notion of citizenship defines the mutual relationship of give and take between the state and an individual. It connotes "relationship of reciprocal rights, duties and obligations between the state and the citizen" (Fred, 2007, p 48). Both the state and citizen owe mutual obligations and duties to each other. For instance, the primary obligation of the Nigerian state to its citizens as prescribed in Chapter Two of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic is to "promote the security and welfare of the people and their participation in government". The duty of the citizens is to provide both tangible and intangible support towards the upkeep of the state. The state needs the support of the citizens in order to be able to meet up its obligations to the citizens which include the protection of the rights of citizens and non-citizens alike. The common rights of citizens are the right to permanent residence within the political community, the right to freedom of movement within the state, the right to vote and be voted for or appointed to public office, the right of access to public services, the right to diplomatic protection when outside the country and other rights that are guaranteed to noncitizens as well as citizens. Indegenity and citizenship refer only to the legal bond between a person and a state. It is worth stressing the point that citizens do not have any legitimate basis to withhold support to the state if the state has demonstrated consistent faith in meeting its obligations to them. This reciprocal relationship between the state and citizens is what is referred to as social contract or charter. Ideally what one requires to enjoy the rights of a citizen is membership of a national political community and sworn loyalty and allegiance to the community. However, the mode of acquiring citizenship rights differs from country to country. The ability of a state to capture and retain the affective attachment of its citizens depends to a large extent on how fair and equitable it distributes public goods especially in a society characterized by pronounced segmental cleavages like Nigeria. Lack of equity and fairness in the distribution or allocation of values can easily deconstruct such a plural community into competing primordial identities like ethno-regional platforms (Ohaneze Ndigbo, Afenifere, Arewa Consultative Forum, Ijaw National Congress, Middle Belt Congress, etcetera.) religious platforms (Christian Association of Nigeria, Jamatul Nasril Islam, Pentecostal Movement of Nigeria, etcetera.) all competing for space and resources in the polity (Ibrahim & Igbozor, 2002) All these pan regional associations and religious bodies have assumed greater importance in the articulation of responses to national issues than the state within which they are located. They have therefore, wittingly or unwittingly, acquired the status of federating units. Providing what might seem to be legitimate weapons for some discriminatory practices and has brought about unnecessary divides along the lines of indigene, non-indigene, settlers, migrant and so on.

*Corresponding Author: **ENOCH IBU OTOR, PhD, BL.**

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

Indigeneship on the other hand refers to primordial claims of people who see themselves exclusively as owners of a given space by virtue of their being there earlier than other groups that have joined them later. It is the claim that this place belongs to us and therefore all the rights associated with such claims are exclusively for the indigenes or natives. Indigeneship is a social construct which seeks to exclude other people from enjoying certain rights and privileges within the community. For instance, in 1996, the Hausa-Fulani in Wase Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria, sought to exclude the Tarok community from participating in a nationwide Local Government election on non-party basis. The slogan of exclusion was *"Wase banda Yergam*" (meaning: Wase without Yergam, a pejorative term deliberately used to provoke the collective political sensibility of the Tarok in Wase). The implication of this ideology of exclusion is that the Tarok people who are believed not to share in the ownership of Wase Local Government Area, are not stakeholders in the Wase project. Indigeneship is constructed on a primordial platform which is utterly devoid of civic orientation. Indigeneship and citizenship dichotomy is akin to modernism versus traditionalism. While the domain of citizenship is an all-inclusive one characterized by the dominance of civic orientation, the domain of indigeneship is not only exclusive but also dominated by primordial orientation and attachment. Nigerian citizenship has been discounted for primordial considerations of who first settled or inhabited a particular location and how the period of arrival entitles and denies people rights and opportunities (Alubo, 2006). As reprehensible as this practice is, the Nigerian state has not been able to articulate any effective response to it.

BACKGROUND TO THE CITIZENSHIP-INDIGENESHIP CONTROVERSY IN NIGERIA

The controversy surrounding the citizenship-indigeneship dichotomy as expressed in Nigeria today is not a recent phenomenon. If anything, it has only acquired greater potency with the steady diminution of Nigeria's socio-economic fortune since the 1980s. As socio-economic opportunities were fast diminishing, contestations over scarce but allocatable resources got heightened among competing groups engaging each other on conflicting identity platforms. Conflict in Contemporary Nigeria expresses itself along ethnic, religious and regional identities. Each group feels it has not been fairly and equitably treated and the tendency is to attribute this unfair treatment to the rising influence of some groups. The adoption and implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programme to fast-track economic recovery has ironically brought about a swift decline in the ability of the Nigerian state to provide for the basic socio-economic needs of the people. (Alubo, 2006) (Jega, 2003). This massive loss of capacity to engage in basic social provisioning by the state has actually fueled the resurgence of identity-based contestations over scarce resources. Politics of exclusion became widespread in the critical sense that only the constituencies and clients of those who control the state continue to maintain access to state resources through patronage. Thus, under this condition generated by the structural adjustment programme, identity-based groups emerged within the political space to either protest exclusion and oppression or to make demand for fundamental rights and socio-economic provisioning (Jega, 2003).

There is therefore, a sense in which one can contend with considerable vehemence that the emergence of identity-based groupings as platforms for contest over scarce socio-economic opportunities was spawned by severe hardship inflicted on Nigerians by the economic recovery programme foisted on the people by an unresponsive and insensitive authoritarian military government in the 1980s. The failure of the state to come to the aid of distressed citizens in a traumatized economic environment, led to the development and deepening of primordial consciousness at the expense of civic consciousness. This has created legitimacy problem for the Nigerian state and has accordingly "forced citizens to increasingly retreat from their Nigerian identity which the post-colonial state had sought to promote, into communal, ethnic, religious and all forms of identities thereby making it unrealizable the goal of constructing a citizen with solid Nigerian identity, a detribalized, secular, and patriotic identity" (Ake, 1994, p 105). This is pretty much in agreement with the argument that the "state in Africa has not become a reassuring presence but remains a formidable threat to everybody except the few who control it" (Ake, 1994, p 105). The consequence of this negative perception of the state is that most have turned away from it to seek fulfillment in their community, ethnic group or nation. The demands which they make on these social formations have turned them into informal polities in active competition with the state. This competition is particularly more acute at the level of citizens' affection, attachment and loyalty.

Competition over loyalty and attachment of citizens becomes more critical when the state fails to effectively discharge its constitutionally prescribed obligations to the citizens. The sense of emotional attachment to the state is easily lost to a primordial group that is exclusively and purposefully constructed to fill in the lacuna erected by the consistent failure or inability of the state to meet the legitimate needs of citizens. Primordial groups are able to tap a sense of common purpose and a common destiny and a considerable degree of public spiritedness (Ake, 1994, p 119). in the sense that they are more caring and protective than a failed state. The failure of the state to minister to the basic socio-economic needs of the people could engender a wide and deep gulf between the two with grave implications for the integrity of the state. On the whole, it can be asserted that a combination of the policy of structural adjustment programme and an authoritarian military rule facilitated the deconstruction of civic citizenship into primordial based citizenship identities. The consciousness generated by these two factors brought about the construction of primordial citizenship in keen contest with civic citizenship. This bifurcation of citizenship fits into the construct of colonially determined dual citizenship structure in Africa. These are the civic and ethnic. While the civic

*Corresponding Author: **ENOCH IBU OTOR, PhD, BL.**
This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

identity is the identity of a citizen, ethnic identity is the identity of an indigene that is culturally constructed (Gana and Egwu (eds), 2001). Here lies the context of the citizenship and indigeneship conundrum in Nigeria.

CONSTITUTIONAL CONUNDRUM AROUND CITIZENSHIP AND INDIGENESHIP DICHOTOMY

Much of the controversy around citizenship and indigeneship dichotomy could be attributed to the imperfections of the subsisting 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, especially as it relates to the provisions on the determinants of citizenship (CFRN, s 25). In chapter three of the 1999 Constitution, three modes of citizenship acquisition are prescribed. These are citizenship by birth, registration, and naturalization. The provisions relating to citizenship by birth is particularly of concern to us because there lies the conundrum over this sensitive and emotive issue. Section 25 focuses on citizenship by birth and provides as follows:

i. Every person born in Nigeria before the date of independence, either of whose parents or any of whose parents belongs or belonged to community indigenous to Nigeria;
ii. Provided that a person shall not become a citizen of Nigeria by virtue of this section if neither of his parents nor any of his grandparents was born in Nigeria; and
iii. Every person born in Nigeria after the date of independence either of whose parents or any of whose grandparents is a citizen of Nigeria.

These are the qualifications for citizenship by birth as prescribed by the Constitution. The first qualification is quite explicit about who a citizen of Nigeria is. It makes reference to "community indigenous to Nigeria." The implication of this is that citizenship is derived from indigeneity and unless you belong to a community indigenous to Nigeria, you have not met the constitutional requirement to be a citizen of Nigeria. The Constitution fails to explicitly indicate the supremacy of national citizenship over indigeneity (Floyd, 1999, p 265). The United States of America's experience is worth capturing here to show the extent of insensitivity of our Constitution to the critical issue of citizenship in Nigeria. Under article four of the Constitution of the United States of America, it is plainly provided that a "citizen of any state must receive, in all the other states, all the privileges and immunities that he has as a United States citizen" (The Constitution of the United States, 1999, p 54). Clearly, the American experience shows that citizenship is not closely tied to indigeneity as it is the case in Nigeria but rather it is determined by residency factor.

The practice of citizenship on the basis of indigeneship is injurious to the interest of Nigerians who migrate to different parts of the country for different motives and considerations. Generally speaking, citizenship is a carefully articulated principle of equality applied to all members of a political community, but in Nigeria, citizens are not treated equally throughout the country (Fred, 2007, p 97). People migrating from one part of the country to another are treated as settlers with consequent exclusion from rights, privileges and opportunities as enjoyed by others (Agagu & Femi (eds), 2004) The principle of residency as a determinant of one's citizenship status is discounted in favour of indigeneship This Constitutional lacuna is at the core of the current agitations over who is counted as a citizen and who is labeled as an indigene. Dual citizenship structure within the same country does not help in cultivating civic citizens with strong affective attachment to the federal framework. It also negates efforts at building national unity and integration.

INDIGENEITY AND THE NIGERIAN STATE

Indigeneity is simply a discriminatory concept employed in the Nigerian state to distinguish between the indigenes or natives of a state or locality and those who are referred to as non-indigenes or settlers. For example, an Ebira man living in Ekiti State for over 25 years making necessary contributions to the development of the state is not regarded as an indigene of the state. Irrespective of the number of years he has spent in Ekiti State, he and all members of his family are still regarded as settlers and non-indigenes hence, they cannot have access to or benefit from what is purely reserved for the indigenes, even if such indigenes have not been in Ekiti State for over 30 years. Indigeneity, according to Abdullahi Adamu (the former executive governor of Nasarawa State, Nigeria) (Ahmadu 1962, pp 15-16) is a biological term that has assumed serious social and political meaning in Nigeria and around the world. Indigeneity is used in Nigeria to distinguish natives of a particular place from other Nigerian citizens found in that locality. It is also used to confer special privileges which are beyond the reach of non-natives on the natives. There is no gainsaying the fact that Nigeria is a pluralistic multi-national state. Hence, there is deep attachment of Nigerians to their states of origin, regardless of whether or not they are residing there. The concept of the Nigerian state does not offer much attraction to Nigerians; what gives them hope is mostly their ethnic groups to which they owe more allegiance and loyalty. Some of the founding fathers demonstrated aptly the notion of the Nigerian state in the consciousness of Nigerians. For example, Obafemi Awolowo noted that the Nigerian state is a mere geographical expression (Obafemi, 1947). Ahmadu Bello also observed that the establishment of the Nigerian state is the mistake of (1962). These notions about the Nigerian state are still as real as those nationalists saw them then. In corroborating this, Osoba and Usman noted about indigeneity in Nigeria thus: ... state citizenship (i.e., indigeneity) is even more stringent and biologically determined than national citizenship in the sense that it does not make state citizenship comparable provisions to those on national citizenship by registration or naturalization (Osoba and Usman, 1976). No matter how long a Nigerian has resided in a state of Nigeria of which none of his parents is an indigene, such a Nigerian cannot enjoy the right to participate fully in the public life of that state (Diamond (ed), 1989). It needs to be noted that the

*Corresponding Author: **ENOCH IBU OTOR, PhD, BL.**
This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

introduction of regionalism by the Richards Constitution in 1946 and the subsequent state reorganizations in 1963, 1967, 1976, 1987, 1991 and 1996 in the country have not only encouraged sectional consciousness, loyalties and sentiments but have also made these states centers of attraction to Nigerian citizens. Indigeneity is seen as a weapon commonly employed by various groups depending on the degree of scarcity of resources and the forms of competition that may arise. In emphasizing the import and centrality of indigeneity to the Nigerian state, Nwosu attributed it to the cake sharing syndrome and the 148 distributive pressures associated with Nigerian federalism. Indigeneity is a weapon of the elite for access to the resources of the state. In other words, indigeneity has become a powerful political weapon in the hands of the political elite in the struggle for state power and resources. As Nwosu eloquently put it: The political elite has fanned religious and ethnic factors in the pursuit of their selfish and acquisitive interests (2000). This attitude of the elite, fueled by distributive pressures of the cake sharing syndrome of Nigerian politics, underpins the perennial divisive crises of our nation concerning revenue, federal character, and the struggle for new states. All of these are distributive centrifugal forces in Nigeria's federalism (Osoba and Usman, 1976). One of the things that make the issue of indigeneity deep-rooted in Nigeria is the factor of land. Land ownership is a matter of life and death in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general. Africans and indeed Nigerians, see land as an inheritance from God and, as such, nobody wants outsiders to encroach on his inheritance. Land is handed over from one generation to the other. In Nigeria, the state and citizenship have little or no appeal in the consciousness of the people. As such, they are not bothered about what happened to the Nigerian state and their citizenship status. In other words, people see the state as highly incapable of guaranteeing and protecting their rights and offering them privileges. And where the state fails the indigenous groups excel. No matter the status of an individual in this country, he has more attachment and loyalty to his indigenous group than to the nation itself. This is as a result of the fact that indigenous groups offer a lot of assurance and protection to the individuals. Indeed, the elite seek protection and advancement from their indigenous groups rather than the state itself. What is worse, Nigerians do not have any right to indigeneity outside the state of their parent's birthplace. Owing to this phenomenon, many Nigerians who are linguistically and culturally assimilated into a community different from their parents own are denied indigeneity of the place, irrespective of the number of years of living in the place.

EXCLUSION OF MINORITIES; SOME SALIENT ISSUES (Ibeanu and Onu, 2001, p 8)

The citizenship-indigeneship form of identity contestation is not an independent or discrete variable but rather a function of confluence of some salient factors. In other words, the heightened primordial consciousness of Nigerians in contemporary times derives from some critical issues which we will explore and analyze in this section. The exclusion of minorities and the consequent uprooting of citizenship rights is a function of a multitude of factors that have conspired to generate this ugly situation. First and foremost is the issue of governance which is at the core of Nigeria's problem of nation building project. Since independence on October 1, 1960, successive governments have dismally failed to cultivate and promote the culture and practice of good governance to make Nigerians radiate with happiness and contentment. The management of the public space has not been reassuring. Political power has not been prudently utilized to meet the legitimate socio-economic needs of the people especially the vulnerable and marginalized groups such as women, children, and the hard-to-reach in the society. Regrettably, even as the most deprived, marginalized and neglected, they are more often than not, the worst victims of identity-based violent conflicts.

The critical problem of development in Nigeria today is the exclusive process of public policy making. Public input to policy process with a view to correcting mistakes in policy design and implementation is hardly encouraged in Nigeria. The argument puts forward by Diamond; that Institutionalized participation "provides channels for settling or at least narrowing the conflicts over interests and values and making broadly legitimate policy choices," is potent and pungent one (Diamond, 2004, pp 204-206). Policies are likely to remain stable and enduring when they enjoy broad public support and understanding at the levels of articulation and implementation. This requires some means for distinct organized interests, and historically marginalized groups, such as women and minorities, to make input into governmental decisions and some means of protesting policies and actions that are obviously injurious to their interests.

Good governance is critical to the resolution of the citizenship-indigeneship crisis as it promotes inclusion and not exclusion, transparency and accountability which promote openness of government conduct to the scrutiny of other actors. Public officials are likely to be more responsible and responsive in their conduct if they are conscious of the prying eyes of the public into governmental affairs. The principles of rule of law, constitutionalism, effectiveness and efficiency, consultation and broad participation are fundamental building blocks of good governance. Good governance is likely to be fostered through democratic governance because of their compatibility in terms of principles and mode of operations. Diverse interests of diverse groups are better met in an environment of democratic governance which is pretty receptive to the operational principles of good governance than in an authoritarian environment (Egwu, 2005).

Another salient issue in the citizenship-indigeneship controversy is the vanishing domain of the civic culture. This is evident by the contestation over citizenship even within communities that are arguably homogeneous. For instance, somebody in Langtang North cannot seek to occupy either elective or appointive political office in Langtang South in spite of the fact that they claim common ancestral descent and they share common socio-cultural characteristics. In a sense, they are one people but split into two local government

*Corresponding Author: **ENOCH IBU OTOR, PhD, BL.**
This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

areas for administrative convenience. This is an expression of primordial sense of attachment at a micro-level. If this is the common experience of people sharing the same socio-cultural and ethnic attributes, it is easy to comprehend why contestation over citizenship-indigeneship is frequently expressed violently. The Ife-Modakeke violent conflict fits into this construct. This is often caused by the growing scarcity of socio-economic and political opportunities and the diminishing capacity of the state to respond appropriately to the legitimate demands of citizens. Ake's contention that when the state cannot adequately respond to the demands of the citizens, the tendency is for them to withdraw from the public or civic space into their ethnic or primordial enclaves where they seek fulfillment and safety (Ake, 1994). The citizenship- indigeneship controversy will continue to characterize the collective existence of Nigerians as long as the state is unable to reconstruct its responsive and distributive capacities and to make strenuous effort to address structural violence in all ramifications.

At the moment, Nigerians are left to provide for their security, potable water, power or energy, and a host of other social welfare services which the state has withdrawn from making them affordable to Nigerians. Effective resolution of this issue will require the state to resume social provisioning in order to reclaim its legitimacy and respectability from the competing primordial polities. Egwu averred thus;
there is need to build a society based on social justice, equity, mutual trust and tolerance for one another. Such a society must take as its basic goal, the promotion of genuine development and the attenuation of grinding poverty which most Nigerians have found themselves (Gana & Egwu (eds), 2003).

This is a vision of a society where conflict between civic and primordial orientations is eliminated as the benefits of national development liberally permeate all strata of the society and eliminating the fear of want which has been identified as catalyst in the generation of violent conflicts (Golwa & Ojiji (eds) (2008), pp132-157).

The existing 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is not protective enough of Nigerians with considerable entrepreneurial spirit. The provisions relating to citizenship are not explicit enough in terms of which one is superior to the other. Is it national citizenship or indigeneship derived citizenship? The Constitution is conspiratorially silent on this very weighty issue that has inflicted untold hardship on some Nigerians who are driven by passion to walk the tight rope by exiting from their ethnic enclaves to explore opportunities that are copiously available in other places. The Constitution should make a definite statement concerning hierarchy of citizenship in the country. In the United States of America for instance, national citizenship is superior to any state citizenship which protects American citizens from all forms of discriminatory and exclusionary practices. Nigeria's Constitution relating to citizenship should be carefully reviewed to give protection to all Nigerians and to encourage free movement as a deliberate strategy of promoting national unity and integration. The section should declare in explicit terms the supremacy of national citizenship over any primordially derived citizenship. Citizenship should be predicated on residency to foster strong sense of belonging and inclusion among citizens (Golwa & Ojiji (eds), 2008, pp 167-169).

It is observed that all ethnic groups that cohabit in Nigeria's territorial space do not have comparable numerical strength. The frontline majority hegemonic ethnic groups are generally feared by the minority non-hegemonic ethnic groups widely scattered in the country. The basis of the fear is that as majority groups, they are so populous as to overflow their states and penetrate the minority enclaves but the minority groups lack comparable numerical strength to counter penetrate the enclaves of the majority ethnic groups. This fear, even though different from the one being articulated here, was vividly expressed by the late Premier of Northern Nigeria, Sir Ahmadu Bello and Sardauna of Sokoto through the Northernization policy at the twilight of colonial rule. The Northernization policy was targeted at fencing out the educationally advanced Southern elements from dominating political appointments in post independent Nigeria. Similar fear is being expressed by minority groups, especially those located in the northern part of the country. And more recently in the southern part of the country. The concerns of some minority groups are the preservation of their peculiar socio-cultural values and the desire to find space at the national level to accommodate their developmental aspirations. Their resistance to the influx of people from other places is driven by the sense of fear of being swarmed or overwhelmed by the intruding groups. All these fears are needless because of the benefits the so called natives stand to enjoy. The presence of other groups in the midst of the natives could challenge the dormant sense of entrepreneurship as they face stiff economic competition.

Corruption is another critical issue in the citizenship-indigeneship controversy in Nigeria. What actually fuels and feeds the controversy are the widespread corrupt practices perpetrated by public officials with impunity. The belief is that when you have your own appointed into high profile political office, such appointment brings with it robust prosperity for immediate relations and cronies of the appointee. This provides the motivation to seek to exclude other Nigerians labeled as settlers from such appointments so that locals are considered and favoured. The elite in Nigeria have not cultivated in sufficient quantity, a good sense of civic orientation. They easily play the ethnic card to create access to the national coffers so as to liberate themselves from the pangs of poverty and other disabilities associated with exclusion from the corridors of power. Their sense of probity and accountability is weak and makes them more often than not, prone to corrupt behaviour while in public office. As long as corruption continues to thrive luxuriantly like colony of trees along the river bank, the tendency of the primordially constructed elite to inflame passion against other Nigerians wrongly regarded as settlers cannot be discouraged. There must be a strong and credible resolve to combat corruption in our public life, so as to make public

*Corresponding Author: **ENOCH IBU OTOR, PhD, BL.**
This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

offices less attractive with consequent reduction in competition over same.

From the foregoing analysis, there is enough evidence to suggest that the Nigerian federal system is critically sick and is urgently in need of diagnostic attention to determine the exact nature of the ailment for precise curative measures to be taken to redeem it from demise. Inter- group relations have been characterized by pronounced animosity such that regional and ethno- religious violence have become so common and frequent. This is a potent threat to peace and stability of the country. The notion of civic citizenship must be promoted to help narrow the range of fissiparous tendencies with their destabilizing effect. It is only this notion of civic citizenship that fuel national consciousness and patriotism. Once citizens are sufficiently imbued with these national ethics, they can live in harmony with one another and this helps in achieving the national ideals as articulated in the Second National Development Plan, 1970-1974. These national ideals relate to the building of "a united, strong and self-reliant nation; a great and dynamic economy; a just and egalitarian society; a land of high and full opportunities for all citizens; and a free and democratic society". The inability of successive governments in Nigeria to translate all these well articulated national objectives into concrete deliverables is accounted for by the persistence of the national question. The citizenship-indigeneship controversy which is violently expressed in some parts of the country is indeed, symptomatic of the absence of values of social justice, equity and fairness in the enterprise of governance. This condition breeds structural violence which we are witnessing in Nigeria today.

CITIZENSHIP IN NIGERIA

The various Nigerian democratic Constitutions of 1979, 1989 and 1999 provided legal basis for indigeneity. For example, Section 318 (1) paragraph (vi) of the 1999 constitution states, inter alia: "Belong to or its grammatical expression when used with reference to a person in a state refers to a person either of whose parents or any of whose grandparents was a member of a community indigenous to that state." The earlier simply reinforces the earlier submission that Nigerian citizens have no right to indigenity outside their states of origin. In Nigeria, because of the issue of indigeneity, long-term residency does not guarantee any serious commitment to one's state of residence (Imobighe, 1987, 19). Irrespective of the years of residence, one cannot freely participate or benefit from what is indigenous to one's place of residence once it is not one's state of origin. With regard to this, Raufu noted that, long-term residence, cultural assimilation into the host community and a clear commitment to one's state of residence are not recognized criteria for membership of a state (Nnoli (ed), 1998). This amount to constitutional ossification of stranger hood, contrary to a historical dynamic of intergroup relations in many Nigerian communities. While foreigners can and becomes Nigerians, indigenous Nigerians can hardly belong to any state of the federation other than those to which either of their parents are indigenes. Many Nigerians are then denied certain basic rights which should ordinarily be guaranteed to them by our common citizenship. There is no doubt that many Nigerian citizens are being denied basic rights that are guaranteed by the constitution because of the issue of indigeneity. While foreigners are allowed to naturalize after spending some years and become citizens of Nigeria, enjoy those rights and privileges reserved for free born Nigerians, while such opportunities are not given to Nigerians living in states other than their own. Attempts have been made somewhere else to show those factors that promoted or gave rise to indigeneity in the country (Agagu and Femi (eds), 2004). Such factors include the following: the constitution, the principle of federal character, ethnicity, quota system, among others. All these have pushed citizenship to the back burner in the country to the detriment of national integration. Owing to this problem, non- indigenes are prone to periodic violent attacks in areas other than their own. In most religious violent crises in Northern Nigeria, non-Hausa and Fulani Nigerian, particularly Yoruba and Igbo are often attacked, killed and their properties looted simply because they are non-indigenes of the area. For example, in Zongo Kataf in Kaduna State, the claims of the indigenous Kataf against the immigrant Hausa Community exploded into violence in February 1992. Also, a similar violent conflict was recorded in 1990, 1991 and 1992 between the indigenous J ukun and the immigrant Tiv communities in Wukari and its environs. In all these violent conflicts, so many citizens lives were lost, thousands were wounded while a lot of houses and properties were completely burnt or destroyed. Apart from this in Nasarawa State, there were violent clashes between Bassa and Ebira ethnic communities. These conflicts could be traced to the problem of indigeneity. All these problems had their root cause in the issue of land ownership as earlier identified. Unfortunately, Nigerians are more concerned about their indigenous status and are ever ready to guard it jealously. This has a lot of implications for Nigerian citizenship, as it creates discriminatory practices in crass contravention of constitutional provisions. Non-indigenes in Nigeria are at best second-class citizens in the states other than their states of origin. Hardly can one get job placement in the civil service of states outside one's state of origin. If at all one is lucky to be employed, it is usually contract jobs, which is not pensionable. Apart from this, such non-indigene cannot be given some positions or be allowed to rise beyond a particular level in the system. This is not only dysfunctional to the system, it is equally antithetical to the spirit of development and national integration, as qualified manpower is underutilized. The seeming contradictions in the Nigerian 1999 Constitution are actively promoting the problem of citizenship in Nigeria. The constitution, as earlier indicated in this study, guarantees fundamental human rights and also guides against discrimination of any form. Unfortunately, the same constitution is encouraging discrimination, particularly on the basis of the state of origin under the guise of federal character and quota system, among others. For example, the concurrent legislative list openly encourages states to freely discriminate and operate distinctions between their indigenes and non-indigenes in job placement, admission to schools and colleges, payment of school fees, etcetera. Apart from this, to

*Corresponding Author: **ENOCH IBU OTOR, PhD, BL.**
This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

benefit from federal service, Nigerian citizens are being discriminated against on the basis of federal character, quota system, catchment area and state of origin (Imobighe, 1987, 19).

The point being emphasized here is that there exist contradictions between the formal provisions of the constitution on citizenship rights and the practical applications of these rights because of the labels of indigenes, natives and settlers. It was observed that these issues have tended to undermine the very essence of Nigerian citizenship in the sense that one is not really a citizen of Nigeria but rather a citizen of the place to which he/she is indigenous.

CONCLUSION

The citizenship-indigeneship dichotomy has generated intense controversy Nigeria. The controversy is more often than not, expressed violently as some Nigerians living in communities other than their birth places struggle against exclusionary treatment meted out to them. In a sense, their citizenship rights are being uprooted and are ascribed the identity of settlers in places where the controversy has snowballed into violent conflicts. The contest is essentially over who is included and who is excluded for purposes of distributing socio- economic and political opportunities.

The deprivation of citizenship rights is materially induced against the backdrop of poor social provisioning by the state with very weak extractive, responsive and distributive capacities in the 21st Century.

The emergence and persistence of this knotty and weighty issue is attributed to a confluence of some factors such as bad governance, weak constitutional provisions relating to citizenship and indigeneship, crippling and degrading poverty making the mass of the Nigerians vulnerable to the manipulation of some elite with sinister agenda, lack of equitable development which makes some groups to blame their backwardness on those that are believed to have enjoyed disproportionate fortunes from the country's ruling elite and a host of others.

WAY FORWARD/SOLUTIONS

The paper contended that the present citizenship and indigeneity conundrum can be effectively tackled through careful and painstaking constitutional review to make explicit statement about who is a citizen and who is an indigene and which of these two is superior to the other, cultivating the culture of good governance within the current democratic environment which holds considerable promise of bringing equitable development in the country thereby narrowing the range of fissiparous tendencies associated with uneven development, promotion of civic education by civil society organizations to undermine the potency of primordially constructed identities which fuel the controversy around citizenship- indigeneship dichotomy and the imperative of making public offices less attractive than they are now as a means of curbing the monstrous social problem of corruption in both public and private lives. Above all, residency and not indigeneity should serve as a basis of citizenship. This is a common practice in most countries of the world and Nigeria cannot be an exception to this. Nigerians should be painstakingly mobilized to accept the principle of residency as a basis of citizenship because it benefits everybody and not some few.

References

1. Ake, C., (1994) *Democratization of Disempowerment in Africa*, Lagos: Malthouse Press Ltd.
2. Alubo, S. O., (2006) *Nigeria: Ethnic Conflicts and Citizenship Crises in Nigeria*, Ibadan: Programme on Ethnic Studies.
3. Femi, O., 2004. Citizenship and Indigeneity in Nigeria. In: Issues in Citizenship Education for Development, Agagu, A.A and O. Femi (Eds.). Julius and Julius Associates, Lagos.
4. Fred, O. (2005) *The Citizen and The State*, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.
5. Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (As amended).
6. Ibrahim, J. and O. Igbozor, 2002. Memorandum Submitted to the Presidential Committee on Provisions and Practice on Citizenship and Rights in Nigeria. CFCR, Lagos.
7. Nwosu, A.B.C., 2000. The politics of ethnicity and religion on Nigeria: Time for a change of focus and groupthink. Thirtieth Founders' Day Lecture, University of Benin, Nigeria.
8. Obafemi, A., 1947. Paths to Nigerian Freedom. Faber and Faber, London.
9. Osoba, O. and Y.B. Usman, 197 6. A general report on the work of the constitution drafting committee: A minority submission. Federal Ministry of lnformation, Lagos.
10. Raufu, M. A., 1998. Identity Boundaries, Ethnicity and National Integration in Nigeria. In: Ethnic Conflicts in Africa, Nnoli, 0. (Ed.). CODESRIA, Dakar.
11. Diamond, L. (2004) "Building a System of Comprehensive Accountability to Control Corruption" in Agbaje, A. et'al *Nigeria's Struggle for Democracy and Good Governance*, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.
12. Egwu, S. G. (2003) "Ethnicity and Citizens' Rights in Nigeria's Federal State" in Gana and Egwu (Eds) *Federalism in Africa: The Imperative of Democratic Consolidation*, Vol. 2, Asmara: AFRIGOV
13. Floyd, G.C. (1999) *The Constitution of the United States: An Introduction*, USA: A Mentor Book.
14. Mobighe, T. A. (1987) "Problem of National Integration: The Issue of Nigerian Citizenship and State Indigenes," *Nigerian Journal of Policy and Strategy*, Vol. 2. No. 1.
15. Jega, A. (2003) "The State and Identity Transformation under Structural Adjustment in Nigeria," Jega (Ed) *Identity Transformation and*

*Corresponding Author: **ENOCH IBU OTOR, PhD, BL.**

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

Identity Politics under Structural Adjustment in Nigeria, Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.

16. Mamdani, M. (2001) "Kivu, 1997: An Essay on Citizenship and the State Crises in Africa," in Gana and Egwu (Eds) *Federalism in Africa: The Imperative of Democratic Development*, Vol. 2, Asmara: AFRIGOV.

*Corresponding Author: **ENOCH IBU OTOR, PhD, BL.**

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.