

Ethnicism and Nigeria's National Development Crisis

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Abstract : While scholars have predicted that identity politics (or what is euphemistically referred to as ethnic politics in Nigeria) were a dying phenomenon in other parts of the world, in Nigeria, it has remained the basis of political activity and has indeed become not only the unwritten law of all calculations in the political firmament of the country but also the ultimo ratio. We intend in the paper that follows to explore the reason for this unhealthy development. The paper seeks to offer explanations for the paradoxical reality of the upsurge of ethnic politics in Nigeria when in fact, the phenomenon is apparently on a downward spiral elsewhere in the world, particularly in countries that are at par with Nigeria in terms of national development. The paper is descriptive and qualitative and has relied on available data for its source of materials. Among other things, the paper locates identity politics as a tool in the hands of a national elite that has not transcended the limitations imposed by the shackles of the parsonian particularistic polar attributes which have tended to fixate their weltanschauung or world view on attachments that are unpardonably primordial. In the event, ethnicity becomes a veritable instrument not only for cheap sectional mobilization but also a means for seeking access to the so-called national cake. It is recommended that a way out of this socio-political malady is the creation of a political arrangement that conduces to the gravitational tendency which will lead to the transfer of loyalties away from the extant ethno-nationalities to the centre.

Keywords : ethnicism, development, crisis, identity politics

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