

## **NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN NIGERIA: A PHILOSOPHICAL INSIGHT**

by

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### **Abstract**

The issue of national integration and the peaceful co-existence of the pluralistic and multi-cultural Nigerians in Nigeria has been a national discourse in the country since it secured independence in 1960. Despite global states' adoption of the constitutional principle of "unity within diversity" among nations, national integration remains a major challenge to most nations, including Nigeria. The state of national integration in Nigeria has been under the persistent negative influence of the issues of insecurity, poverty/deprivation, illiteracy, and ignorance, corruption, poor leadership/governance, etc. The paper argues that the application of philosophical insight – by the way of seeking and upholding the fundamental value of truth has the potential to positively renew our collective consciousness, perception, thoughts and behaviour to relate and co-exist for the good of one another and the nation and also change the narrative of national integration in Nigeria. It recommends that Basic Philosophy should be made compulsory course for tertiary institution students; governments and organizations should put more emphasis on seeking and upholding the truth at all times in the course of governance/management in every capacity and position.

**Keywords: National, Integration, Philosophical insight**

### **Introduction**

The challenge of integrating the multi-cultural and pluralistic nation like Nigeria remains a major one. The very many ethnic groups and socio-political inclinations and antecedents only deepen the challenge of uniting the different peoples of Nigerian as a united democratic nation. The issues of making Nigerians properly integrated with one another not minding the tribe or geopolitical zone, for their individual and collective good and progress are some of the

challenges that call to question Nigeria's state of preparedness towards development, let alone, sustainable development. National integration as a national interest and project in Nigeria is challenged by the issues of gross intolerance, distrust, ethnicity, corruption, and most dangerously insecurity which seems to be a formidable force undermining national cohesion and unity in high measures. These issues are practically creating conflicts, disorder and instability and needs to be tackled to the benefit of all

citizens of the nation. Abia (2006), advocates that “for a state like Nigeria to survive, there must be ways of harmonizing areas of conflicting interests and integrating the various groups to produce some measure of value consensus”.

However, this paper explores how philosophical insight into the issues and challenges of national integration can help reinvent the spirit of true nationalism and patriotism that can build up effective national integration in Nigeria. It explicates that philosophical tool such as the fundamental value of truth has the potentials to unlock the negative structures and practices that support and reinforce the very elements that propagate disunity, distrust, antagonism, intolerance and other forms of hate-based relationships that undermine our oneness, cohesion and unity, as a nation that has been together for more than one hundred years (counting from the year of amalgamation – 1914). There is no doubt that Nigeria at this stage of its development requires that its citizens despite the different cultures, ethnic origins, ideologies and beliefs hold on to one another in order to energize the nation in full for the maximization of its potentials towards the actualization of greatness. This kind of solidarity, oneness, unity and cooperation is what national integration stands for and this experience to a reasonable and practical extent seems to be lacking in the country (Okoroafor, Nzenwa and Ezeibe, 2016).

This paper, therefore, argues that the attainment of meaningful and effective national integration (which is imperative if Nigeria is to build up appreciable efforts towards sustainable development) is best approached through the proper understanding of the fundamental issues and challenges of national integration with a philosophical insight that can empower Nigerians to pursue and ensure the true actualization of national integration through a more wiser and truth-seeking breed of

Nigerians for a more integrated, united and better Nigeria. It mainly attempts to proffer philosophical insights for promoting conscious and effective measures that can strengthen national integration in Nigeria. The methodology employed is library research, while descriptive method is used in analyzing this paper. The paper focuses on the following:

1. Conceptualization of Integration, National Integration, Philosophy, and Philosophical Insight.
2. The usefulness of Philosophy in National Life
3. Interface between National Integration and Philosophy.
4. Some Challenges undermining National Integration in Nigeria
5. Employing Philosophical Insight for Promotion of National Integration in Nigeria.
6. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations.

### **Conceptual Clarification Integration**

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, International Students Edition (2014), defines integral as 'necessary to make something complete; essential; having to containing all parts that are necessary to be complete; whole". The same dictionary explains the word integrate to mean, " to become or make somebody fully a member of a community rather than remaining in a separate group, e.g. because of one's race, colour, ideology, etc". Considering the meaning of 'integral' and 'integrate' the word “integration” can be perceived as the process or phenomenon through which different things, objects, systems, components or people are brought together for some reasons or needs. It is basically about the harmonization of things or people in a context for some purposes.

## **National Integration**

National integration can be seen as a concept and phenomenon. National integration is mainly the process of bringing the various peoples of different cultural and social background together in a given social context or polity for their collective interests and good. The classic definition of national integration according to Weiner (1967), states that “national integration refers specifically to the problem of creating sense of territorial nationality which overshadows – or eliminates – subordinate parochial loyalties”. In furtherance, Weiner and Laparambola (1969), aver that “national integration primarily involves the amalgamation of disparate social, economic, religious, ethnic and geographic elements into a single nation state”. Again, Hogan (2006), postulates that “national integration involves the uniting of formerly separate groups into one group with the obliteration of any previous social and cultural group differences as well as the obliteration of separate group identifications”. In a nutshell, national integration implies both the capacity of a government to control the territory under its jurisdiction as well as a set of popular attitudes towards the nation generally described as loyalty, allegiance, and intelligence to place national above local and parochial concerns (Abia, 2006).

## **Philosophy**

This great field of knowledge has been defined by different authorities in different but related ways starting from ancient Greece. Some of the definitions are as stated below:

- (i) A way of simplifying complex ideas and statements about our experiences in life in order to make sense out of (make us understand) them;
- (ii) A rational attempt in finding solutions to fundamental problems of man;
- (iii) What an individual accepts as his guiding principles, which prompts him

to act, in different ways at different times, places, and circumstances;

- (iv) A rational investigation, which examines nature and the reasons behind events happening in the world.
- (v) A constant and endless quest by man in trying to find out many riddles of the universe, so that he can find out a meaningful framework for the expression of all thoughts, actions and observable phenomena (Enoh, 2001).

Moreover, the above definitions of Philosophy may appear too abstract for a layman to comprehend easily except if the nature and usefulness of Philosophy is explained. Philosophy deals with the possibility and foundation of knowledge, the theory and analysis of knowledge. It deals with the foundation of the world or cosmos (its origin, causes, and destiny, meaning, essence and existence, the meaning of its activities, attitudes and commitments, its personal condition, its social and political being). Most importantly, Philosophy is a critical inquiry into ultimate causes of things. This function as a critical inquiry is the soul of Philosophy. It is a critical, reflective and contemplative activity (Akinpelu, 1981).

## **Philosophical Insight**

Philosophical insight is used to refer to the extended application of philosophical institution, knowledge and ideas in the understanding of a subject, issue, concepts, etc, resulting from the identification of relationships and behaviours of the given subjects within a given scenario or context. It is the conscious, well detailed and focused philosophical approach to understand the origin, causes, meaning, essence and existence, attitudes and commitments, conditions and socio-political nature of things in the world.

## **The Usefulness of Philosophy in National Life**

The place and relevance of philosophical knowledge and insight in a nation's development and life can never be overemphasized in these contemporary times. According to Enoh (2001), Philosophy is useful in many ramifications to a people's daily life and that of their nation's in the following dimensions:

- (i) Philosophy helps us to develop our mind and enables us to take good decisions and actions. Through the questions it raises, it makes us aware of our numerous unsolved problems;
- (ii) it improves our ability to organize, analyze, synthesize and express our feelings and thoughts;
- (iii) it enables us make value judgments and differentiate the good from the bad, the right from the wrong as studied in ethics, religion and arts;
- (iv) it enables man to know the meaning of rights, duty, freedom, equality and encourages harmony and coexistence and stress the need for a proper organized society (Political Philosophy);
- (v) Philosophy helps to train the mind, broaden the horizon of our perception and knowledge. It helps us to become more reflective, critical and objective so as to present our work in a systematic, consistent, constructive and logical form (Philosophy of Education);
- (vi) it helps man to gain insight on how to improve human relationships and social organization. (Social Philosophy)
- (vii) Philosophy enhances public relations, enables us to foster business relations, take quick decisions for the growth of business. Ironically, while philosophy can make someone rich, one cannot buy philosophy with money.

## **National Integration and Philosophy: The Interface**

National Integration as a concept and phenomenon has interface with the field of philosophy in three main perspectives:

1. Firstly, as a concept and phenomenon, national integration means to create a sense of national consciousness, uniqueness of identity and loyalty among people with different socio-cultural identities into a single territorial political society. It demands that the citizens of a nation conduct themselves in a disciplined, responsible, organized and wholesome manner that helps to bind them together as one people and one nation; and Social Philosophy (a sub-discipline of Philosophy) fundamentally equips man with the knowledge and insight on how to improve human relationships and social organization. It enhances public relations, enables us to foster interpersonal and business relations and take quick and better decisions that build healthy relationships, partnerships and cooperation for the growth of business and all these culminate into positive nation building and effective national integration as well as a positive national philosophy. (Uchendu, 2014)
2. Secondly, as phenomenon and national challenge, national integration is connected and interwoven with the political state of a nation. As national integration builds up in any polity or nation, it helps to create an enabling, stable and enduring political system that can allow for meaningful and concrete development to occur. This, in essence, links national integration to Political Philosophy which as a sub-discipline of philosophy, gives man the knowledge that enables him to understand and appreciate the meaning of rights, duty, freedom, equality and encourages harmony and co-existence while stressing the need for a proper organized

society. Socio-political consciousness empowers the citizens to seek for good leadership and governance that can further bring about the dividends of democracy and strengthen cultural and national ties that helps to build effective national integration in any polity in the world.

3. Lastly, national integration as a concept and phenomenon has a lot to do with a nation and its citizen's level of awareness and quality of education. Despite the numerous factors that influence the status of national integration in any nation, the factor of the literacy and knowledge capacity of that nation's citizens is quite significant in determining the trend and level of the nation's unity and cohesion. Philosophy of Education, as a sub-discipline of Philosophy helps to train the mind, broaden the horizon of our perception and knowledge. It helps us to become more reflective, critical and objective so as to present our ideas and work in a systematic, consistent, constructive and logical form. An educated society is more likely to have people who easily reach value consensus more than a less or uneducated society. National integration, therefore, thrives more among "philosophically educated" populace.

### **Challenges of National Integration in Nigeria**

The following are some of the major challenges undermining the actualization of effective national integration in Nigeria:

1. **Absence of Rule of Law** One of the major challenge before the issue of national integration in Nigeria is the lack of rule of law which is evident in government's lack of respect for the constitution, the action of some powerful and wealthy individuals who feel that they are above the law and the increasing cases of extra-judicial killings, violations of

fundamental human rights and many other issues that are clearly undermining the proper adherence to the rule of law. As a nascent democracy, Nigeria needs its citizens and governments to conform to the rule of law if it hopes to strengthen its constitution, institutions and national integration. Onosode (2013) observes that "the rampant incidence of flouting of the constitution and the instrument of rule of law portends danger to building the Nigerian nation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century".

2. **Poverty/Deprivation** This is a social problem that is devastating a greater majority of the Nigerian population. It appears that each day the passes, Nigerians become poorer and more deprived. The state of the nation's economy is so worrisome that it is contributing to individual(s) frustration and submission to all sorts of vices and crimes as a way of survival or as a way to let out desperation and hopelessness. Johnson (2016) opines that "poverty is the masterminder of all sorts of problems and destabilizes individuals and organizations to the level that only its reduction or elimination can bring relief and hope". The poverty levels in the country leave Nigerians hungrier and less interested in seeking or working towards building effective national integration and unity.

3. **Insecurity** The issues of terrorism occasioned by Boko Haram bombings and attacks, kidnappings, herdsmen/farmers clashes, increasing armed robbery and banditry as well as rising levels of religious intolerance and hate-motivated speeches and actions portray Nigeria as a field of steady bloodshed and conflicts and probably one of the most disunited and disorganized nations of the

world. The panic state of the nation is a reflection of the state of mind of its citizens and their fear for the future of the nation. Insecurity stands as one obstacle confronting the building of strong national integration that can help the country to forge ahead with significant development strides (Udeh, Okoroafor & Ihezue, 2013).

4. **Inequality and Uneven Development** The existence of gender inequality and other levels of social inequality in Nigeria has not helped that state of national integration in the country. The marginalization of girls and women at various levels of society continues to contribute to a more divisive and disgruntled population. The increasing inequality and uneven development only help to increase agitations, conflicts and national distrust. The nepotistic manner of employment, siting of national projects and general atmosphere breed inter-tribal suspicion, disharmony and antagonism which collectively undermined efforts towards national integration (Obialor, 2016).

5. **Illiteracy/Ignorance** The poor knowledge and understanding capacity of many Nigerians and the intentional and rogue perception and actions of some of our leaders have all posed as setback to national integration. The issues of falling standards of education, immorality and indiscipline which are easily connected to the syndrome of mass illiteracy and ignorance are rising to the detriment of the unity and oneness of Nigerians. Ogunlami (2013) submits that “the necessary and fundamental ingredient for fast-tracking national unity and togetherness in Nigeria is the provision of good and functioning

education for its citizens”. The level to which education can empower understanding, tolerance and value consensus among Nigerians as well as facilitate national development can never be imagined nor over-emphasized (Okoroafor *et al*, 2016).

6. **Corruption:** The issue of corruption has eaten deep into the fabric of the Nigerian society to the extent that it is fast becoming an integral part of our mainstream culture. It pervades our life so completely today that one may be justified in calling it condition par excellence of contemporary Nigeria. Udenwa (2012) paints a picture of the state of corruption in Nigeria with this thought:

*“I can tell you that from independence till now, we have been corrupt, but the level of corruption today in the country is unprecedented. We have not had it as bad as it is today. Infact, there is corruption everywhere you go, it is regrettable. At times, I fear for the future of this country”.*

The last two sentences from this quotation clearly underscore the challenge of corruption on national integration in Nigeria.

7. **Poor Leadership/Governance:** The quality of leadership and governance in Nigeria leaves much to be desired or appreciated due largely to the insensitivity and gross mismanagement of the nation’s resources in the past decades. Achebe (2001) states that “the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility of the personal example which are the hallmark of

true leadership". Good leadership is said to beget good followership and therefore the poor leadership and governance in the country is breeding a weak, docile and unpatriotic citizens who are aggrieved with the state of the nation and seem to be motivated towards disintegration of the nation to satisfy ethnic sentiments and other primordial interests.

8. **Ethnicism/Nepotism:** To say that many Nigerians are tribalistic and nepotistic may be a clear understatement of the situation in the country. A lot of Nigerians are ethnocentric in their perception of issues concerning the integrity of the nation as a united democratic entity. Their behavior exhibits the ethnic/tribal inclinations and antecedents that only aggravate the poor state of solidarity and unity among the nation's many ethnic groups, creating social tension and disorder. The attitude of nepotism which further fuels disunity has not helped Nigeria's efforts towards nation building and national integration. Okoroafor *et al* (2016), posit that "this status quo is obviously anti-national unity because it breeds national discord, disunity and fear that undermines national integration".

### **Employing Philosophical Insight for Promotion of Effective National Integration in Nigeria:**

Philosophical insights have been found to be unquantifiably useful and problem solving in many situations and challenges (Morgan, 2016). Philosophical insight as an approach to understanding and tackling the challenges of achieving effective national integration in Nigeria cannot be ignored nor misplaced, judging from the usefulness of philosophy in

our individual life, interpersonal communication and relationships as well as in our national life. Philosophical insight can be defined as an extended application of philosophical knowledge and ideas in the understanding of subjects, issues, concepts, etc, resulting from the identification of relationships and behaviours of a given subject within a given scenario or context (Okoroafor, 2017). From this definition, it is clear that philosophical insight into any phenomenon is a tedious task that requires critical approach, analysis and interpretation of the basic elements underlying the phenomenon (subject) through the identification of the essence, relationships and behaviours surrounding the phenomenon in a given context.

The interaction between national integration and philosophy can be seen from the fact that they are particularly linked through the sub-disciplines of Political Philosophy, Social Philosophy and Philosophy of Education (core areas of Philosophy). Philosophy is a kind of learning, learning to live, developing the power of discrimination that distinguishes a human from a beast. The task that philosophy undertakes is to introduce one to a deeper reflection, and try to explore the possibilities of giving a response to questions arising from the reflections. By asking ultimate questions, and pointing to ultimate principles, philosophy contributes to the unity and completion of our knowledge by showing how things are related. As human beings (particularly the educated ones), we have moved far in the various branches of knowledge but the power of critical thinking has not been developed especially in Nigeria and in Africa in general (Ogbonna, 2005). This has not helped to improve our levels of national unity, cohesion and togetherness (Nkwuocha, 2008).

Logical coherence and philosophical speculation are the supreme achievement of reason and without it man remains primitive. The lack of this among Nigerians explains

why we have more learned people today that are lacking in wisdom. The consequence is that such people have crown on their heads but inside is all worry (Ogbonna, 2005). The perceived increasing lack of logical reasoning among many Nigerians (both the educated and uneducated) calls to question our level of seriousness and devotedness to the pursuit of effective national unity and integration, and brings to the fore, the import of applying philosophical insight into interpreting, analyzing and comprehending the various issues relating to and undermining our togetherness as a people of one nation.

In understanding the need to apply philosophical insight into tackling the challenge of national integration in Nigeria, it is pertinent to clarify the reason man should philosophize. The motive for philosophy is found in the Socratic saying that: an unexamined life is not worth living, which is why he moved to philosophize. This is actually the real motive. Therefore, there is urgent need for Nigerians to examine their life individually and nationally (philosophize) in order to find worth and meaning in our collective existence as a nation. Perhaps, we can borrow the perspectives of the Greeks (founders of Philosophy) in understanding the deeper advantages in employing philosophical insights for promoting effective national integration in Nigeria. Greek philosophers identified three fundamental values:

- The good (the ethical interest of man is concerned with the good)
- The beautiful (the esthetical interest of man is concerned with the beautiful)
- The true (the intellect or reason of man is concerned with the true which is also known as the theoretical interest)

In relation to the need to apply philosophical insight to solving the challenge of poor

national integration in Nigeria, the fundamental value of the true is an imperative that needs to be emphasized to show how its application can strengthen the nation's pursuit of concrete cohesion, unity and oneness in this fast changing competitive 21<sup>st</sup> century. The truth is the concern of learning because it particularly emphasizes theoretical interest which is in the domain of academic enterprise, and more intensely the field of philosophy (Enoh, 2001). True, as a fundamental value may be said to be more fundamental than the other two values – the good and the beautiful. It is also more relevant to finding the way forward for national integration in the country. Truth as a value exerts an enormous attraction and thrust on man. Truth is a power that fascinates man. It is a sacred value. A value of the magnitude of truth is essentially lovable. If only this attitude of love of truth will be enhanced (Nigerians) by our study/knowledge of philosophy, we can get to solve many of our problems that are propagating disunity and disintegration among us. The need for Nigerians to imbibe the philosophical intuition and value of truth at this point of the nation's development cannot be over-emphasized. True love of truth makes individuals, families, groups and institutions available to go along with it anywhere it leads them. It makes them independent of any establishment or vested interests but as a compensation or counter-balance, it requires them to have a great deal of purification and discipline. It requires a tremendous amount of sincerity (Ogbonna, 2005). Also the potency of truth is affirmed in the Bible according to the Gospel of John (8:32) "and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free". Again, the motto of the Guardian newspaper (a national daily in Nigeria) states that, conscience is an open wound, only truth can heal it. The need for Nigerians to live a truthful life by professing the truth and standing by the truth at all times, can encourage many Nigerians to begin to understand each other better, learn to tolerate

each other's differences and love one another in truth and fairness. This will no doubt empower inter-ethnic, inter-religious and interpersonal cohesion and unity that will strengthen national integration.

Philosophy advocates that man is different from other lower animals who by birth are already biologically equipped with instincts to be adjusted to their environment, man on the other hand, is equipped with intelligence by which he is free from the immediate situation before making any instinctual reaction. It is this situation that empowers man to act with reason and freedom and not follow pre-determined patterns of acting or reacting. This further empowers man to face the task of creating his own meaning and taking charge of challenges and possibilities that are presented before him. This has led man to fundamentally be a being in search of truth that gives meaning to his life, and also helps to maintain and sustain man's peaceful co-existence with one another and even between groups and nations (Macleans, 2007).

It is based on this above stated impact of the value and essence of truth as a philosophical tool and insight that the state of national integration in Nigeria today is x-rayed and diagnosed. The absence of truth in different aspects of our individual and national life is not in doubt given the level of corruption, insecurity, intolerance, inequality, uneven development, poor leadership/governance, etc. The need for every Nigeria whether young, old, male, female, educated, uneducated, poor or rich, etc, to imbibe a lifestyle that is based on truth and constantly seek for the truth in every situation/condition or challenge is imperative to strengthen our collective values, consensus, unity and nationhood. Nigeria as a nation cannot continue to thrive on falsehood, hate, animosity, distrust, tribalism and incomprehensible levels of intolerance and hostility. The deliberate and conscious

adherence to truthful living and co-existence will empower the true integration of the various peoples of Nigeria into a truth-seeking nation working towards its own sustainable development for the sake of its present good and that of unborn generations (Ogunlami, 2013).

The power of the truth to present things, ideas, opinions and issues in their real and pure state and essence can never be extinguished or over-stated. The truth upholds that which is right, sincere, honest and transparent and even good and beautiful. The act of always saying the truth and seeking for the truth is a virtue of inestimable value and greatness. It is therefore, an attitude and quality of life that Nigerians can adopt, imbibe and apply at all times in all situations/circumstances because it will positively renew our collective consciousness, perception, thoughts and behavior to one another in such a way that will breed cordial and healthy relationships between the different peoples of Nigeria in spite of tribal, political, social, ideological and economic or even psychological inclinations and preferences. The truth unfolds that which is fair, equal, right, moral and good to all and sundry and therefore upholding the truth at all opportunity and times brings out the good, the beautiful and possibly the best in everyone for everyone's happiness, stability and progress. This is presently lacking to high levels among Nigerians.

Obialor (2015), claims that "Nigerians are ranked among the most corrupt and dishonest people in the world because of their insincerity and dare-devil escapades in different parts of the world". Again, the actions of many political leaders in Nigeria who often promise several things in the course of their political campaigns but when they get into office, they do not keep those promises depicts political dishonesty. Even while in office, they say one thing and do

another. These attitudes are baseless and untruthful and contribute to the forces of disunity and conflict in the country. Also, cases of falsification of documents, forgery and lying on oath and other forms of dishonesty abound in the Nigerian society. When we (as individuals and a nation) stand by the truth, it has the capacity to change the narrative of the phenomenon and status of national integration in the country.

### **Summary**

The paper focused on the need to employ philosophical insight to approaching and understanding the challenge of national integration in Nigeria. The main terms and concepts were conceptualized within the context of the work, and interface between the concept and phenomenon of national integration and the field of philosophy was established to an extent. The fundamental value of true was identified and discussed as a philosophical intuition and tool that Nigerians need to imbibe at this stage of the nation's developmental journey particularly because it can strengthen national cohesion and unity and therefore help to create conducive environment for speedy development. The paper ends with a summary, conclusion and some recommendations for promoting national integration in Nigeria.

### **Conclusion**

From the discussions on this paper, it is understood that the need to apply philosophical insight into comprehending the challenge of and proffering solutions to the issues of national integration is an imperative for the Nigerian nation of today. The paper advocates that Nigeria and Nigerians should wholeheartedly inculcate and imbibe lifestyle that is based on truth and by so doing will be sincere to one another and tolerate each other in such a way and manner that will create more trust and cooperation between individuals, ethnic groups and institutions, etc, thereby promoting effective national

integration for sustainable development in the country.

### **Recommendations**

The paper submits the following measures as the way forward:

1. Basic Philosophy (which should cover areas of Political Philosophy, Social Philosophy and Philosophy of Education) should be made compulsory at the first year of study in all tertiary institutions. Students should be acquainted with this knowledge in order to begin to breed a new generation of Nigerians who will always seek philosophical insight, through the instrument of truth, to relate and live with one another not minding ethnic, ideological or personal interests, etc.
2. Governments (Federal and States), religious organizations, civil societies, non-government organizations and other corporate organizations and groups should place on their motto and vision statement "seek for truth", and also led exemplary life by upholding the truth at all times in whatever situations. This will no doubt strengthen the status of national integration in Nigeria.

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