

INTERROGATING THE CHALLENGE OF SOCIAL DISINTEGRATION IN NIGERIA WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF AXEL HONNETH'S THEORY OF RECOGNITION

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Abstract

The paper examined Axel Honneth's idea of 'recognition' as an 'intersubjective, dialogical and historical construction through which the subjects seek their realization in three essential domains: love, rights and social esteem from which arise, respectively, self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem'. The paper affirms that, Nigeria is a multicultural and heterogeneous society, hence, the enormity of the task of ensuring social integration amidst the apparent diversities. The paper interrogates the factors that accounts for the social disintegration threatening the Nigerian state in recent times; further, it argues that the recent agitations within the country indicate that Nigeria has failed in its task of ensuring social cohesion and integration. The renewed agitation for an independent republic of Biafra by the South-Eastern geo-political zone, the resurgence of militancy in the oil-rich Niger Delta region, Boko Haram insurgency in the North East, Fulani herdsmen and farmers vendetta, inter-ethnic and religious crises among others, indicate strongly that Nigeria is heading towards social disintegration if the root cause of these agitations is not exposed and formidable resolution proffered. Following the discourse, the paper identifies lack of proper mutual intersubjective, intercultural/interregional and political recognition of human dignity, plights and rights as a fundamental cause of these agitations threatening the unity of the country. Thus, using Axel Honneth's idea of recognition, this paper submits that with a mutual recognition of the other person, region or group and their contributions as co-possessors of rights and dignity, the separatist tendencies in Nigeria will be alleviated and the imminent disintegration averted for greater unity, integration and cohesion.

Keywords: Recognition, Honneth, Nigeria, Social Disintegration, Cohesion

Introduction

Integration of a social system implies the mutual healthy and goal-oriented interaction of segments of that society. Every society must therefore demonstrate a reasonable degree of integration among peoples, regions, religions and ideologies if common goals must be set and reasonably achieved for meaningful development. Consequently, social actors and governments are in persistent search for new strategies of integration and often have to concentrate all their skills in order to take advantages of available opportunities (Beresnevièiûtë, 2003). Often times, however, societies are faced with the challenge of social disintegration, mostly resulting from, among others, some internal factors like injustices which polarize the society into the 'favoured' and the 'affected', 'disfavoured' or 'rejected'. Under such circumstances, those in the latter group tend to put up antagonistic dispositions and actions towards the earlier group in the bid to react to their alleged marginalization and agitate for a better life, in which case, commitments become stronger towards private and regional interests at the expense of common commitments and collective progress.

In a similar vein, "Nigeria has been pushed hither and thither by recurrent crises of regional or state illegitimacy, often impairing efforts at economic transformation, democratisation, national cohesion and stability" (Osaghae and Suberu 2005). This is validated by the historical and renewed agitation for an independent republic of Biafra by the South-Eastern geo-political zone of Nigeria, the resurgence of militancy in the oil-rich Niger Delta region, Boko Haram insurgency in the North East, Fulani herdsmen and farmers vendetta, banditry, inter-ethnic and religious crises among others. Some of these groups feel marginalized and dissatisfied with the diversity management system of the government and are unwilling to feel part of, or contribute anything positive to the progress of Nigeria as a country. Rather, they expend their energies and resources agitating for independence and/or restructuring and resource control as the case may be. All these indicate strongly that Nigeria is heading towards social disintegration if the root cause of these agitations is not discovered and formidably tackled. The question is, what is the fundamental cause of this impending social disintegration in Nigeria? In the first instance, one may consider the pluralistic nature of Nigeria as the root cause but when examined more closely, it becomes clear that even though pluralistic societies are more prone to the challenge of social disintegration, a prudent management of such diversity can result in formidable cohesion. It will be appropriate therefore to

identify the fundamental cause of these threats of social disintegration to poor diversity management amplified by nepotism and corruption. Any formidable solution that fundamentally tackles this impending social integration must therefore revolve around proper diversity management of the various peoples, regions, ethnicities, religions and cultures that are present in the country. It is in view of this that this paper considers 'recognition' as a formidable method of diversity management and inclusiveness that will sustainably address this challenge of social disintegration and integrate all parties in Nigeria for common interests.

Basically, the concept of recognition holds that the way one becomes a conscious subject and a full political agent is only through being *recognized* as such by another. Likewise, one must simultaneously reciprocate this acknowledgment in order for *both* to be elevated to the position of full subject. Axel Honneth's interesting societal perspective on this subject of recognition shall serve as the cornerstone of the claims in this paper.

Axel Honneth's Notion of 'Recognition'

Although the German Idealist philosophers, J.G. Fichte and G.W.F. Hegel were the primary developers of the concept of recognition, its renewed prominence in the early 1990's came with the work of critical theorist Axel Honneth and Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor. Recognition has become a central term in the study of the nature of social struggle and identity politics.

Traversing between the traditional ideas of justice and rights common to the liberal political tradition on the one hand, and notions of class struggle, redistribution and community more common with Marxism and communitarianism on the other hand, the politics of recognition attempts to show how neither can adequately account for the political ills of the 20th and 21st century. The general focus of the argument for recognition theory in contemporary debates is that by focusing exclusively on the notion of equal rights, or concentrating solely on the notion of class struggle, we undermine claims concerning identity and common history that have caused critical injustices and that cannot be fixed simply by granting individual rights or redistributing resources. Thus, recognition stands at the intersection between liberalism and communitarianism.

As Axel Honneth suggested in the introduction to a volume of essays titled *The Fragmented World of the Social*, his turn to recognition was a way of critiquing critical social theory, which in his assessment, has lost some of its capacity to tackle contemporary social problems within the context of the ever-dynamic nature of our world. He also wanted to introduce a more overarching, systematic paradigm to guide critical theory (1995a: p.xi). In order to provide this critique, he turns to the work of Hegel, who projects *recognition* as the essential concept of political and social life after having worked through Fichte.

In his critique of this tradition, Honneth declares that the task of emancipatory philosophy has to be completely reconceptualised. His solution to this challenge is to foreground a theory of intersubjectivity and the 'struggle for recognition' as the decisive berth points for future efforts in critical theory. Honneth argues:

The reproduction of social life is governed by the imperative of mutual recognition, because one can develop a practical relation-to-self only when one has learned to view oneself, from the normative perspective of one's partners in interaction, as their social addressee (1995a, p. 92).

For humans to achieve mutual productive relationship (an identity), humans require an intersubjective recognition of their abilities and achievements. This is the basis of one's moral consciousness and of society as a whole and one develops a morality in the context of the reactions (positive and negative) one receives from another human being in the struggle for recognition. Honneth argues that the struggle for recognition, based on the need for self-esteem and the experience of disrespect, also explains *social* development. In his words, "it is by the way of the morally motivated struggles of social groups, their collective attempt to establish, institutionally and culturally, expanded forms of recognition-that the normatively directional change of societies proceeds" (1995a, p. 92).

Honneth utilizes Hegel's early Jena writings as the point of departure for his theory of recognition. This theme was elaborated throughout the phases of Hegel's work in diverse ways and is crucial to his Master/Slave dialectic. Hegel considers the intersubjective nature of identity formation as emerging in the context of one's relationships or from the ways other persons encounter the self. This primarily occurs in the family, civil society and State. Each of these corresponds to a level of relation to one's self. Morality, according to Hegel, is not received through divine revelation but in the context of the positive and

negative feedback received in the struggle for recognition (Fleming and Finnegan, 2010).

Honneth advances this tripartite model but moves the emphasis from institutions to wider social spheres. In his argument, there are three different recognition domains in modern society and the different forms of recognition needs and expectations define each social domain. Recognition, a simultaneously individual and social need, necessitates love in the immediate interpersonal sphere for the 'singular needy subject' for the development of self-confidence; the recognition of the autonomous rights bearing person in law offers the basis for self-respect; and the successful formation of a co-operative member of society whose efforts are socially valued is necessary to build self-esteem (Fleming and Finnegan, 2010).

The first of the three forms of relating is self-confidence, according to Honneth, which is established and developed in the relationships of friendship and *love*. He begins with the love relationship because for him, this is where the individual originally develops, specifically in the bond between parent and child. With the mother sacrificing her energy for care of the helpless child who was basically a part of her during the nine months pregnancy and the infant incapable of fending for itself or differentiating self from environment early on, both infant and mother are incapable of individually demarcating themselves from each other (Honneth, 1995b: 99). Within the period of about six months, the infant begins to come off the earlier symbiotic relationship as it develops the ability to see the mother as an independent person. This process of giving up the symbiotic relationship is understood as a struggle for recognition (Honneth, 1995b:100). If one experiences love at this level, the capacity to love one's self and others later on is developed. One is able to form an identity by receiving recognition from others. This is the process by which individuals define themselves as distinct from others. Without a special relationship with another person, it is not possible to become aware of one's own uniqueness and special characteristics. In this way a positive image of one's abilities is developed. His concept of being 'reconciled with others' (Hegel) means that only by being recognised can we achieve an identity and this Hegelian concept of being reconciled with others was developed by both Dewey and Mead (Fleming and Finnegan, 2010). If this essential component of development is not available or a negative message about self-worth is given, then the outcome is a potential gap or missing piece in the personality that may seek and find 'expression through

negative emotional reactions of shame or anger, offence or contempt' (Honneth, 1995b, p. 257).

The second type of relationship to self involves self-respect emanating from legal recognition - when a person in a community of *rights* is given recognition as a morally and legally established person. While the love bond regulates recognitive encounters in one's immediate domain (i.e. family and friends), it is necessarily impossible that we can launch such intimate bonds with the larger society. Thus, a different set of recognitive relationships must be introduced in order for our subjectivity to develop and flourish outside of love relationship's narrow sphere of influence. The heart of Honneth's argument here, is that one can only wholly function as an agent, fully see her or himself as a subject worthy of respect, if he or she knows that they have an avenue by which their claims can be addressed. This avenue is the legal sphere. When a person is recognised at this level, one is accepted as an autonomous person who has both a right and an ability to participate in the discussions and debates of the institution concerned, i.e. state or organisation. Respect is shown to other people by relating toward them as having rights. Without rights there is no respect. The price paid for the absence of this recognition is the absence of autonomy. It is clear that the securing and development of the rights of the individual is viewed by Honneth as an important social gain. But this is not the highest form of recognition, according to Honneth.

The third form of recognition is *social esteem*. The experience of being so honoured leads to a form of self-relation that Honneth calls self-esteem. People with high self-esteem will reciprocate a mutual acknowledgement of each other's contribution to the community and loyalty and solidarity grow from this (Honneth, 2007, p. 139). In this way the individual becomes 'recognised as a person whose capabilities are of constitutive value to a concrete community' (Honneth, 2007, p. 142). This reciprocal and mutual recognition through work becomes a strong feeling of solidarity in the community and such well recognised people are capable of being, as a result, strongly motivated. People earn self-esteem from society if their activities are in tune with society and society provides the basis on which they can become worthy members of society.

At an obvious level, if a child is neglected and humiliated they may lose self-confidence. If people are denied citizenship or denied rights, their self-respect may suffer and finally if one's way of life and contribution to society is not

recognised or respected then damage is done to one's self-esteem. For these reasons, abuse, insults, ignoring people will not only be an injustice (it will harm people and deny their civil rights) but injuries are done to their understanding of themselves, their identity (Fleming and Finnegan, 2010). As a central idea of Honneth's work therefore, he considers struggle for recognition as "the moral vigor within lived social reality that is responsible for development and progress" (Honneth, 1995b, p. 143).

On the Heterogeneity of Nigeria and the Challenges of Social Disintegration

As a heterogeneous society, Nigeria houses over 250 ethnic groups with corresponding cultural, regional, religious and ideological diversity. Consequently, a formidable extent of cohesion is indispensable to keep the Nigerian society united and focused for common good and development. Historical and existential evidences show however, that Nigeria has constantly grappled with the threat of national disintegration resulting from factors ranging from nepotism and favoritism of one region at the expense of the other, neglect of the contributions and genuine concerns of some regions in favour of other regions to mutual ideological intolerance. Corroborating this claim, Ikenna, Azom and Emeka (2019) asserted:

The challenge of forging national consciousness and unity among the different ethnic nationalities has always been compounded by the inability of the successive governments to frontally address the problems associated with citizenship, religion, ethnicity, inequality, resource distribution, native-settler dichotomy and development. The negative fallout from the situation has not only promoted disunity and mistrust among Nigerians but has manifested in the resentful disposition towards the Nigerian state exhibited by the nationalities that feel disadvantaged and aggrieved remaining in Nigeria.

A brief assessment of the separatist agitation of the Southeast region, the clamour for restructuring and resource control by the oil-rich South-South region, insurgency occasioned by the religious and ideological intolerance of the North-East based Boko Haram group, rampant inter-ethnic clashes, banditry etc clearly highlight the enormity of this challenge.

Between 1967 and 1970, Nigeria experienced civil war when the South-eastern Igbo ethnic group of Nigeria attempted to secede from Nigeria by declaring an Independent Republic of Biafra, which violently pitched the Nigerian government against them in an encounter that claimed millions of lives and colossal destruction of property. Direct causes of the war included the 1966 ethno-religious riots in Northern Nigeria, a military coup, a counter-coup and persecution of Igbos living in Northern Nigeria. Struggle over control of the lucrative oil production in the Niger-Delta also played a vital tactical role. After about three years of the war, the military government of General Yakubu Gowon adopted a “no victor, no vanquished” slogan intended to reconcile and reintegrate the country. Fifty three years on and the agitation continues in different forms with various degrees of intensity. The long years of military rule, to a large extent, muffled the agitation albeit expressed through intellectual fora (Idowu and Azees, 2017). Nigeria’s return to democracy in 1999, particularly the period from 2015 to date, has witnessed a vigorous revival of the agitation with the emergence of separatist organizations and movements like the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) which began gaining influence in the early 2000s, The Biafra Zionist Movement (BZM) which sprang to limelight in and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) founded in 2012 by Nnamdi Kanu, a British-Nigerian political activist. All these groups express dissatisfaction with the Nigeria state accused of marginalization and neglect of the South-east and are, in different ways, amplifying their grievances and resolution to secede from Nigeria.

Away from Biafra agitation, Parliamentary government was the system in operation at Nigeria’s independence with the country having four independently operating regions with a weak centre. At this time, the economies of the regions were sustained by agriculture. The story, however, changed between the first coup in 1966 and the period of the oil boom between 1971 and 1979 when the value of oil increased in the international market. These two events changed the storyline of Nigeria’s political economy as regional federalism was obliterated and the agriculture-reliant economy was abandoned in favour of the new ‘lucrative’ oil based economy (Adetunberu and Bello, 2018). Consequently, “by early 2000, oil and gas accounted for about 98% of all export earnings, 83% of federal government revenue, 95% of foreign exchange earnings and more than 14% of “Nigeria’s Gross Domestic Product” (Omuta, 2014 in Omokhoa, 2017). The activities of the oil producing companies, no doubt, continues to have degrading and devastating effects on the environments and means of livelihood

of the Niger Deltans without adequate commitment on the part of the Nigerian government to remedy the messy situation. This provoked a feeling of injustice and neglect among the Niger Deltans leading to agitations under such umbrella as the Adaka Boro's struggle in 1967 followed by mass protest in the 1990s with increasing violent attacks on oil facilities and installations and many others. This situation became complicated when the Niger Delta youths who travelled to Abuja for the ten million man march saw the massive infrastructural development in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) using their oil resources at the expense of the oil producing region. Upon their return, the youth took their destiny in their hands and took to militancy. With this came the emergence of different militia groups such as the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), the Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF), the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Ijaw Youths Council (IYC) and recently the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) as unemployed youths went into all forms of criminal activities like sea piracy, oil theft (bunkering), armed robbery, pipeline vandalization and kidnapping (especially of expatriates) for ransom (Omokhoa, 2017). Obviously, there have been several attempts by the Federal Government to appease the Niger Deltans by putting several measures in place to address their challenges by Setting up several intervention programmes under the notable, Niger Delta Developmental Board (NDDDB), Niger Delta Basin Development Authority (NDBDA), Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission, (OMPADEC), the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), the Ministry of Niger Delta and the Federal Government's Amnesty Programme (AP) entailing among other things, the pardon for militants that have been involved in the Niger Delta crisis with the disruption of oil installations. But all these interventions seem not sufficient as they have not yielded expected results (Omokhoa, 2017) even though revelations from the ongoing investigative hearing by the National Assembly and forensic audit of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) indicate colossal corruption by high ranking members of the commission and the region which would make any amount of money sent to them insufficient. Buttressing this claim further, Haaga and Udisi, (2018,) affirmed that:

Another way of looking at the question of economic injustice in the Niger Delta region is considering the problem of bad, corrupt, selfish and insensitive governance in the region: government officials, both at the state and local government levels, traditional rulers and so-called elders of these communities. Most often, these people in government

personalized the entitlements that are meant for the public. The result is that the people continue to receive unjust treatment even from their immediate leaders and representatives. If government officials in the region had judiciously utilized their monthly subventions and allocations to better the lots of the ordinary people through the creation of jobs and infrastructural development of the region, the situation would have been better than the current sorry state. Rather, the jumbo monthly allocations are spent on frivolous things that have no positive effect on the life of the people.

Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast is another call for worry as their activities constantly threaten the already brittle cohesion of Nigeria. The Boko Haram sect condemns Western education with the intent of establishing an Islamic state across Nigeria, the process of which has resulted in the loss of thousands of human lives; relocation of people, especially non-indigenes from the Northeast where the strong hold and activities of the sect reside and the internal displacement of over 1.3 million Northerners (Alege and Ojoduwa, 2019). This has undoubtedly affected the economy of the region and Nigeria at large as investors wouldn't want to invest in such an insurgency volatile environment. Furthermore, so much of the country's resources have been committed into strengthening the country's military architecture and other logistics in view of overpowering and defeating the insurgents. As far back as 2011, World Investment Report (WIR) of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), indicated that the Nigerian economy lost a massive N1.33 trillion Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) owing to Boko Haram's activities (cited in Alege and Ojoduwa, 2019). This obviously forms part of the grievances of the Niger Deltans as resources generated from their region are used to service such costs emanating from the 'fanaticism' and 'insensitivity' of a group that adds no positive economic value to the country.

In addition to the activities of Boko Haram terrorists came the herders - farmers' vendetta that generated so much resentment between the Hausa Fulanis and other ethnic groups across Nigeria, especially the middle belt and parts of South-south regions where thousands of lives are lost and properties worth millions of Naira destroyed to this feud. Banditry and mass killings by "unknown gun men" as they are often called, is steadily on the increase in many parts of the country with Southern part of Kaduna state seemingly toping the chart of victims of these killings in recent times. The Northcentral Tiv - Jukun crisis, The Yoruba - Hausa

face off in Lagos, the clashes between the Itsekiri and the Ijaw in Delta state and many more are clear instances of interethnic disharmony across the country.

All these and the futile efforts of government and other stakeholders have orchestrated a cacophony of mutual suspicion, hatred and bitterness between regions, ethnic groups and religions clearly projecting Nigeria as a country at the brink of disintegration if the challenge is not frontally addressed more fundamentally.

From Social Disintegration to Social Cohesion in Nigeria: Honneth's Idea of Recognition in Context

As indicated earlier, government has made some frantic effort to address these challenges threatening social cohesion in Nigeria without yielding the desired outcome. This has provoked, from different quarters, various suggestions on ways out of this quagmire, prominent among which is the renewed clamour for restructuring of Nigeria's current political structure. Political restructuring is "a constitutional review strategy aimed at bringing government as closely as possible to the people at the grassroots" (Uwalaka, 2018). It seeks to restructure the existing federation in such a manner that the powers of the federal government are drastically reduced with a view to giving the component units or federating states, and by extension, ethnic nationalities the opportunities to participate in their own affairs as obtainable in developed federations (Harault, 2000 in Epelle and Nweke, 2019). Since federalism goes hand in glove with democracy, there is always the tendency that, there will likely be people who are dissatisfied with the existing structure, hence would press for changes to the political system for a better deal considering the fact that the political system under a federal structure has a lot to offer to geographical contiguity and ethnic differences, especially in countries where development is far from being achieved like Nigeria. Those who push for restructuring in Nigeria further strengthen their argument with the fact that federalism was a British colonial creation and foisted on Nigeria as against what obtains in the other developed climes where federalism was negotiated and accepted as one viable option for their peaceful coexistence (Epelle and Nweke, 2019). It is within this context of restructuring that the Niger Deltans and other regions of Nigeria make strong cases for internal control of the oil and other natural resources within their region. The hope is that if the country's federal structure is renegotiated and restructured, a more widely acceptable and inclusive structure will emerge which will address the fundamental issues and grievances underlying the

looming disintegration. This way, the newly restructured Nigeria will be characterized by greater legitimacy, mutual understanding, unity and cohesion at all levels.

Restructuring and similar projections targeted at social cohesion in Nigeria are obviously compelling but the argument must be extended to some more fundamental concerns if those projections must sustainably integrate and develop Nigeria. This is so because if the country's current federal arrangement is reviewed and restructured, there will obviously be a transition from an old structure to a new structure. It should be noted however, that the old arrangement, which has left mental injuries, scars, deep seated prejudices and resentments on many, has only been restructured for a fairer deal for all parties *going forward*. The fundamental questions therefore, are; does restructuring automatically wipe away those nasty memories? If not, will restructuring not look only like 'pouring new wine into old wine skin'? and if so, is it not also proper to deal with those fundamental issues as a formidable foundation upon which to 'safely' found and sustain the newly restructured country? This is the basis upon which the Honnethian theory of recognition is tipped to play a vital role in dealing with the challenge of social disintegration in Nigeria.

As stated earlier, Axel Honneth presents *love, rights* and *social esteem* as the three spheres of recognition but while the love bond regulates cognitive encounters in one's immediate domain (i.e. family and friends), the domains of rights and social esteem have wider coverage beyond family and friends to the larger society. Consequently, the analysis of Honneth's theory of recognition here will be largely restricted to the domains of rights and social esteem. Within the domain of rights, the Southeasterners feel that their rights to equitable access to opportunities and involvement in the affairs of the country have not been adequately recognized and respected by the government and people of Nigeria as it is claimed that power and greater percentage of developmental projects and opportunities are enjoyed by northerners at the expense of the Southeast region. Hence, their clamour for secession and political independence. Similarly, the Niger Deltans feel that their rights to a fair share of attention and development have not been recognized and given, considering the fact that greater percentage of the country's income comes from the region. Hence their agitation for resource control. Most of the inter-ethnic and inter-communal crises currently threatening the unity of Nigeria are consequences of non-recognition and/or breach of rights. The reverse is however the case with the Boko Haram

insurgents and bandits who invade and abuse people's rights to peaceful and secure life as so far, no rational and genuine concerns have been raised by these groups as justification for their senseless and brutal activities. Citizens must therefore be recognized by fellow citizens and government as possessors of rights. When a person, group, community or region raise genuine concerns bothering on their condition and wellbeing, their rights to what they claim must, first and foremost, be recognized and respected as without rights they will be no respect. After this, justice must be made accessible to such genuine concerns through the instrumentality of the law.

Within the social esteem sphere of recognition, the government should look for a way of *sincerely* appreciating the contributions of each region, group and person to the wellbeing of Nigeria. It is not sufficient, for instance, to create commissions and ministries through which to allocate monies to address the infrastructural needs of the Niger Deltans after series of agitations and militant reactions. Their mental self-esteem which is a product of the impression and recognition the Nigerian government and people accord them for the immense economic contribution of their region's oil is critical too. Their self-esteem will be damaged when politicians and their family members live in the best of houses within the best of cities and neighborhoods across Nigeria and beyond, drive the latest cars and live flashy lives when majority of the Niger Deltans and their poor families struggle daily to cope with life in degraded environments and limited agricultural opportunities due to effects of oil production on their lands and environments. They must be made to understand that the government and people of Nigeria appreciate their plight and their sacrifices for the country while sufficiently funding the region for genuine infrastructural development to alleviate their plight. Similarly, it is common knowledge that the Igbo ethnic group are uncommonly industrious, enterprising, mobile and hardworking. If they are given the proper recognition and inclusiveness for these qualities, they most likely won't be vehemently clamouring for an independent state. People of the Southwest are known for their rich educational heritage, agriculture, etc. The North is also known for agriculture among others, the middle belt region is known for large deposits of solid minerals, agriculture and so on. In a nutshell, every region contributes to the wellbeing of Nigeria albeit in varying degrees which must be recognized and appreciated accordingly for healthy self-esteem among citizens. This is because, people with high self-esteem will reciprocate a mutual acknowledgement of each other's contribution to the community/society and loyalty and solidarity grow from this (Honneth, 2007, p. 139). In this way the

individual becomes 'recognised as a person whose capabilities are of constitutive value to a concrete community' (Honneth, 2007, p. 142).

Conclusion

The argument so far, does not imply that recognition is exclusively the solution to the challenge of social disintegration but that it is a critical foundation for sustainable social integration in Nigeria. Proper restructuring of the country's current federal arrangement will correct many anomalies and injustices in the future but adequate recognition of rights and contributions of persons, groups and regions will help to gradually heal the injuries of dissatisfaction, mutual suspicion, hatred and resentment from the past and sustain a healthier sense of solidarity and loyalty in a newly restructured Nigeria. This is fundamental as a major problem with national integration has been identified as the fact that "people are made to feel like strangers in their fatherland" (Idowu and Sayuti, 2016) and not being properly recognized and appreciated as citizens and valuable stakeholders in the Nigerian project. Furthermore, the inability of earlier social integration strategies and programmes like the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), Federal Character etc to address the social gap in Nigeria, indicate that a more fundamental approach is required to which the Honethian theory of recognition is a formidable answer.

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