Strategic Significance of the Deconstruction of Hate Speech Phenomenon in Contemporary Nigeria: A Conceptual Discourse

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Abstract

The paper discussed the strategic significance of the deconstruction of the Hate speech phenomenon in contemporary Nigeria. To achieve this, the paper adopted content analytical approach with a focus on conceptualizing hate speech in various and varied dimensions with the connotations and colorations adduced to its comprehension. It described hate speech as one that offends, threatens or insults groups based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability or other traits. The paper used frustration, aggression theory to expatiate the growing phenomenon of hate speech in Nigeria. Also, the paper cited instances and incidences as well as explosion and implication of hate speech in Nigeria. The paper further unraveled the nexus between hate speech and the right to freedom and the necessity for separate law to curbing hate speech. Ultimately, the paper concluded that hate speech has become so endemic in political, economic, social, ethnic and religious life of Nigeria and has taken a new dimension in the last few years with the advent of social media networks. The paper thus recommended among others that good governance should be enhanced since it is a key element in a democracy; insecurity should be checked by the government and adequate laws should be put in place to check the rascality of self acclaimed journalists and individuals who propagate hate speeches on the social media networks.

Key Words: Hate speech, Social media, freedom of speech, discriminating epithets and character assassination.

Introduction

Hate speech is not a new concept in the history of mankind and indeed in Nigeria. The ethnic induced of hate speech has defined the people's daily lives. The Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, Kanuri, Ijaw, Edo, Efik, and over 250 other ethnic nationalities that make up the

entity called Nigeria all have hate tag for one another but it has assumed an alarming proportion in recent times most especially in the past few years. It has created a lot of havoc in the world's political and social scenes. It has taken a new dimension in the political, ethnic, religious, and social terrain to the extent of threatening the unity and progress of the country. The hate speech of one group has provoked other ethnic nationalities to rise up against each other and making provocative statements. For instance, in June 2017, the Arewa Youths gave the Igbos living in the Northern part of the country an ultimatum to leave the region before or on 1stOctober, 2017 or face war. (Adeboye et al, 2017) in (Adeniji and Adie, 2017). A similar notice was served the herdsmen living in the Middle Belt by the Middle Belt Youths under the auspices of the Middle Belt Renaissance Forum to vacate the region before 1st October, 2017 or face war.

Hate speech has never yielded any form of peace and unity or cohesion, instead, it breeds hostilities, crises and war between and amongst people within a nation. Example is the Rwanda genocide, the Jewish Holocaust in Germany and other parts of Europe, the Sudanese civil war which brought about the division of Sudan into Northern and Southern Sudan, Kenya post-election crisis, which led to the death of thousands of people and the destruction of unquantifiable amount of properties.

The growing tension and crises in the country today and the threat of wars are the products of hate speech and has led to killings by one ethnic nationality of another. The struggle for power and all forms of political positions in the nation, the threat of secession by some ethnic nationalities and the growing demand for restructuring have created a wide gap in the unity and development of the nation and has created hatred, suspicion and fear in the lives of people in the federating units. The threat of secession and issuance of ultimatum from one group to the other to leave a particular region has become prevalent in a country that is regarded as one entity. It is based on these that this paper is looking at the issue of hate speech which is part of the catastrophe bedeviling the Nigerian society presently.

Conceptualizing Hate Speech

The concept of hate speech has attracted varied definitions and dimensions even amongst scholars. Different connotations and colorations have been adduced to its meaning. Nevertheless, in a paper of this nature, there is need for clarification of concepts in order to give a clearer picture of the key words. When looked at separately, the concept 'Hate' and 'Speech', it can be deduced that 'hate' is the opposite of 'like'. To hate is to have a dislike for something, object, group, actions, or behaviour of individuals or group and so forth. Hate is a deep and extreme emotional dislike especially invoking feelings of anger or resentment. It can be directed against individuals, groups, entities, objects, behaviours

or ideas. Hatred is often associated with feelings of anger, disgust, and a disposition towards hostility.

According to Article 19 of the U.N., (2015) "hate is the intense irrational emotions of opprobrium, enmity, and detestation towards an individual or group because of having certain actual or perceived protected characteristics". Speech on the other hand, "is any expression imparting opinion or ideas bringing an internal opinion or idea to an external audience. It can be done in many ways, like written or non-written, verbal and non-verbal, visual or artistic, or through any media, like television, radio, internet, or print"(Adeniji and Adie, 2017).Elaborating further, The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (2013) noted that hate speech includes:

> *(a) all dissemination of ideas based on racial or ethnic superiority or hatred, by whatever means; (b) incitement to hatred, contempt or discriminationagainst members of a group on grounds of their race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin; (c) threats or incitement to violence againstpersons or groups on the grounds in (b) above; (d) expression of insults, ridicule or slander of persons or groups or justification of hatred,contempt or discrimination on the grounds in (b) above, when it clearly amounts to incitement to hatred or discrimination; (e) participation in organizations and activities which promote and incite racial discrimination.*

Oyeleye(2017), described hate speech as speech that offends, threatens or insults groups based on race, colour, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability or other traits. He went further to say that hate speech employs other discriminatory epithets to insult and stigmatize others on the basis of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or other forms of group membership. According to Nzeakor (2017), "hate speech is when a speech is laced with hatred. When any speech is laced with hatred, it becomes hate speech". Furthermore, he stressed that "hate speech refers to speeches of individuals or groups that are aimed at disparaging, aimed at bringing down, aimed at exposing to danger anybody or group of persons or species of people". Akinola (2017) sees hate speech as 'a speech which attacks a person or group on the basis of attributes such as race, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability or gender. Nnanna (2017) describes hate speech as any speech made targeting any human being or group of people with a view to dehumanizing them and removing certain inalienable rights that the constitution has conferred on them, either a right to live in any part of the country without hindrance, the right to life, the right to owning properties and the right to free expression of their own aspirations. Senator AliyuSabiAbdulahi, National Assembly member who presented a bill

on hate speech to the Senate did not define hate speech but rather described hate speech offender as "a person who uses, publishes, produces, plays, provides, distributes, and or direct the performance of any material, written or visual, which is threatening, abusive or insulting words or behavior, if such person intends thereby to stir up ethnic hatred or having regards to all the circumstances" (Azimazi and Okpara, 2018).

According to Duverger in Ojo (2009), national integration is "the process of unifying a society which tends to make it a harmonious city, based upon an order its members regard as equitably harmonious "Morrison et al in Onifade and Imhonopi (2013) see it as a "process by which members of a social system develop linkages and locations so that the boundaries of the system persist over time and the boundaries of the sub-system become less consequential in affecting behaviour. In this process, members of the social system develop an escalating sequence of contact, cooperation, consensus and community. To Ake (1967), integration is defined by "the extent that the minimal units (individual political actors) develop in the course of political interaction a pool of commonly accepted norms regarding political behaviour patterns legitimized by these norms".

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopted the frustration aggression theory in explaining the growing phenomenon of hate speech in Nigeria.

The frustration aggression theory put forward by Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mower and Sear (1939) is based on the Psychodynamic explanation of catharsis. They proposed that if we experience frustration it will lead to aggression. The aggression is a catharsis released of the built up of frustration. Dollard et al explain that if the individual is prevented from achieving a goal by some external factors then this will lead to frustration which will always lead to aggression. The aggression cannot always be directed at the source of the aggression which may be abstract such as lack of money or lack of time to accomplish a given task. The question is, what is 'frustration' and 'aggression'? Frustration is defined as a feeling of irritation and annoyance when something blocks you from achieving a goal. Put differently, frustration arises when an obstacle prevents people from doing something they want to do or from reaching a goal, need, desire or expectation. Frustration often leads to anger, and aggression frequently follows. Among common frustration and angering situations are: violation of personal values or wishes, socially unacceptable behavior, negligence or carelessness, lack of foresight and damage to personal pride or self-esteem (Averill, 1982). Aggression is a malicious behavior or attitude towards someone or something, usually triggered by frustration.

The political class has decided to hide under the canopy of freedom of speech and criticisms of government policies to promote hate speech to assassinate the character of their political opponents when their chances of getting to their goals are blocked by any obstacle. They sponsor other people as agents to sow the seed of discord amongst competitors in the political class to express their frustration by employing hate speeches to assassinate the character of those who blocked their ways or the 'scape goat'. Ethnic nationalities use this same means to express displeasure over their blocked ambitions by other ethnic groups of those things they believe that would have been naturally theirs. The religious groups also believe in their own right of access to the share of the national cake and when this is not fort coming, they can as well result to the use of hate speech to insult, demean, ridicule, slander and incite against their perceived enemies..

Hate speech is a reaction to series of actions exhibited by combination of factors ranging from bad governance, marginalization, unemployment, violation of fundamental human right, insecurity, ethnic sentiment, religious differences, etc. When any of the above sets in, it can amount to frustration which will lead to aggression and eventually leads to hate speeches. A frustrated man becomes aggressive and an aggressive man can say or do anything to demean or destroy that which causes his frustration or can incite others to help him harm the target (who is the actual cause of frustration) or scapegoat (somebody or something else) so that that frustration can be a bit released.

Some Instances of Hate Speeches in Nigeria

In the early 1960s, there were instances of hate speeches by prominent political actors in the country then. They include the following:

1. TheIgbos are too dominating. If you employ an Igbo man as a labourer, he will like to take over as foreman within a short while – Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto.
2. The God of Africa has created the igbo man to lead the children of Africa from bondage of ages. – The first republic President. Dr. NnamdiAzikiwe
3. NnamdiAzikiwe policy was to corrode the self-respect of the Yoruba people as a group to build up the Igbos as a master race- Chief ObafemiAwolowo. (Seng and Hunt, 1986) in (Ezeibe, 2017).
4. Others credited to Armadu Bello include the following:
   "the new nation called Nigeria should be an estate of our great grandfather . Othman Dan Fodio, we must ruthlessly prevent a change of power .we must use minorities in the North as willing tools and the South as

conquered territories and never allow them to rule over usor have control over their future" October 12, 1960

"I am set and fully armed to conquer the Action Group (AG) in the same ruthless manner as my grandfather conquered Alkalawa, a town in Sokoto province during the last century" May 3, 1961.

The following table gives some instances of hate speeches by individuals and groups in Nigeria between 2010 and 2018.

Year	Author	Speech	Source
2010	The former Governor of old Kaduna State AlhajiLawanKaita.	The North would make the country ungovernable if president Goodluck Jonathan wins the 2011 pools… Anything short of a Northern president is tantamount to stealing our presidency.	Jason (2011)
2010	ShehuSanni, a Kaduna State Civil Right activist	President Goodluck Jonathan should not contemplate contesting the 2011 presidential election. Any attempt by him to contest amount to incitement and a recipe for political instability.	www. nigerian best forum.com
2010	National Co-ordinator of the coalition of Northern politicians Dr. Junaidu Mohammed.	It must be a Northerner or no Nigeria. If Goodluck Jonathan wins the PDP's endorsement to contest the 2011 presidential, there would be violence.	Interview with Guardian Newspaper 2nd November, 2010.
2012	National Co-ordinator of the coalition of the Northern politicians. Dr. Junaidu Mohammed.	Unless efforts are made to ensure that the 2015 general election are free and fair, it may turn out to be the last election in the history of the nation.	Leadership, March29, 2012.

2013	AbukingShuluwa	Nigeria will disintegrate if Jonathan contest 2015 election.	Daily Independent Friday March 8, 2013
2013	Former Chairman of PDP. Colonel Ahmadu Ali	The Yoruba are ungrateful set of people who do not appreciate what others have done for them	Sun Newspaper March 16, 2013.
2013	Femi FaniKayode, a former Aviation Minister	The Igbos are collectively unlettered Uncouth, uncultured, unrestrained and crude in all their ways ….. money and the acquisition of wealth is their sole objective and purpose in life.	Daily Post August 8, 2013
2013	The leader of the Niger Delta Peoples Salvation Force, DokuboAsariMujahid	There will be no peace not only in Niger Delta, but everywhere if Goodluck Jonathan is not president by 2015, except God takes his life, which we do not pray for.	Vanguard newspaper May 5, 2013.
2013	Chief Arthur Eze PDP chieftain	That short man called Ngige, we gave him power and he joined the Awolowo people; the people that killed Igbos	Premium Times November 13, 2013.
2014	DokuboAsariMujahid	2015 is more than do or die. You are a man and I am a man. We are going to melt at the battle field.	News Express, 3rd May 2014.
2014	DokuboAsariMujahid	If they Contest (Northerners) they are wasting their time. He who pays the piper will dictate the tune. We own them, we are feeding them. They are parasite. A beggar has no choice ….. they are beggars and parasites.	http.www vanguard ngr.com 2014/12/31

2015	Wife of former President Dame Patience Jonathan	Our people do not give birth to uncountable children. Our men don't give birth to children they dump in streets. We are not like people from that part of the country (apparently the Northern Nigeria.)	Presidential campaign in Calabar the Nation March 10, 2015.
2015	TheGovernor of Ekiti State, Peter AyodeleFayose	Buhari would likely die in office if elected, recall that Murtala Mohammed, SanniAbacha, and UmaruYar'Adua all former heads of state from the North West like Buhari had died in office.	January 19, 2015, This Day.
2018	Former Inspector General of Police Ibrahim AhmaduCommassie	We all know that without the North Nigeria can never survive. We still stand by it. Now is the time to walk the talk in the interest of our people.	Daily Sun March 21, 2018.
2018	Former Chief of Army Staff Lt. Gen. T. Y.Danjuma	The armed forces are not neutral. They collude with the armed bandit that kill people and kill Nigerians …. They facilitate their movement, they cover them. If you are depending on the armed forces to stop the killing, you will all die one by one. This ethnic cleansing must stop in Taraba State. It must stop in all the states of Nigeria. Otherwise Somalia will be a child's play.	Sunday Tribune 25 March, 2018

Source: Ezeibe, C. C. (2015) Hate speech and electoral violence in Nigeria. And The Author.

The above table shows that hate speech cuts across all sections of the society. The North and South, Christians and Muslims, political parties and others are not left out. This is a demonstration that ethnicity, religion, and political parties play prominent roles in determining the direction and escalation of the hate speeches in Nigeria. The resultant effect of these speeches were crises of all kinds.

Incidence of Hate Speeches in Nigeria.

The incidence of hate speeches in Nigeria is becoming too alarming

The Centre for Information Technology and Development (CITAD) reveals that 6258 incidence of hate speeches were recorded between June and December 2016. A monthly average of 1043 incidence. Hate speeches directed at religion accounted for 2,603 or 41.59 per cent while those directed against ethnicity or tribe accounted for another 39.13 per cent. In other words, between them, religion and ethnicity were the focus of 80.72 per cent of the incidence of recorded hate speech. With considerable understatement, CITAD concludes that "this means that Nigerians are becoming more ethnically and religiously insensitive, even intolerant." In March 2018 alone, 221 cases of hate speeches were monitored. Ethnic and religious related hate speeches occupied the highest percentage of 39.9% and 37.7% respectively, farmers/herders clash was 3.1% while that of election was least with 2.2%.(CITAD, 2018). The figures indicated above show a vivid picture of the glooming nature of a united country. If it is allowed to continue, there may not be any country called Nigeria in few years to come.

The Explosion and Implication of Hate Speech in Nigeria

The spate of hate speeches is on the increase in contemporary Nigeria and may not be unconnected with factors that are prevailing in the society and activities that have been perpetuated over the years by different groups in the struggle for allocation of scarce resources in the country. Hate speech is not something that happens out of context but a reaction to actions. It is a germinated seed of discord planted over a period of time. Nzeako (2017) believes that the major cause of hate speech is bad governance. "The government has failed to nip in the bud, the problem regarding issues surrounding hate speech and the problems we find ourselves". Lack of transparency in governance; perception of marginalization; poverty and inability of government to address previous conflicts which range from ethno-religious to sectional. There are also many other factors responsible for the aggravation of hate speeches ranging from inability of some individuals to access what they perceived as their right to achieve their goals to others trying to actualize selfish aims. Political differences may provoke hate speeches i.e. differences in political interest or ideology. Others include; insecurity, ethnicity, religious differences, inequality, gender biases, and so forth.

Hate speech is a dislocating factor that can create long term crisis that may be difficult to overcome for life. It has created enmity between and amongst ethnic nationalities that make up a nation. Hate speech has created wars between individuals, groups, ethnic nationalities and societies, thereby derailing the developmental stride of such a nation. According to Oyeleye (2017) hate speech in other countries has led to violence and death of innocent citizens, and this explains why many liberal democracies from Canada to Denmark, Germany, India, South Africa and the United States enacted hate speech or hate crime laws. He further stressed that the social, economic and political consequences of hate speech are too obvious for any society with a sense of self- preservation to ignore, especially those with such diverse social cultural and religious orientation as Nigeria. Hate speech can cause a dislocation and disunity in a country that is hitherto united. Akanji (2017) asserts that "The recent potential threat to national unity posed by hate speeches emanating from various parts of the country has created anxiety and doubts on whether or not Nigeria will still remain a sovereign entity. The dangerous effect of hate speech is threatening the foundation of Nigeria's national unity and it is daily pushing the nation closer to the precipice, perhaps more than any other time since the end of the civil war.

On the economic and social effects, it is said that "money is coward, it runs away from violence and instability. Investment, local or foreign, will take flight away from the spectres of war and violence". Another consequence is that they serve as a distraction at best. As we find out every day, we are unable to come together as one to find joint solution to the myriad of problems afflicting the country because of distrust. The more we wallow in hate speeches and self-loathing, the worse our situation will be. Furthermore, he said a more serious consequence is on the emotional level. We have had so many years of intertribal marriages that this new doctrine of East is good and West is bad or vice versa can only scramble the lives of the product of this liaison. (Adeliba, 2017).

In June 2017, a Coalition of Youth Groups in the North issued an ultimatum to the Igbo living in the Northern part of Nigeria to leave before or on 1st of October 2017 or face war. In reaction to this ultimatum, the Niger Delta militants demanded that Northerners leave their region before October 1, 2017. It was also reported that another group known as the Niger Delta Agitators threatened to resume attack on oil installations in the region should Northerners and Yoruba people remain in the oil rich region. Within the same period, the Middle Belt Youths asked the Fulani herdsmen to vacate their region before October 1, 2017 (Punch news, 2017). These were reactions to hate speeches purported to have been made by Nnamdi Kanu, leader of Independent People of Biafra (IPOB) in the Biafra Broadcasting Service that Nigeria is a Zoo and that everybody living in it are all animals that they (BIAFRA) want to leave the zoo country. These actions built up tension and threat

to war in the Nigerian nation. Ogwuonuonu (2017) recalls that the incessant and unprovoked hate utterances rending electronic and print media in Nigeria is a threat to national unity. Ethnic strategists use subtle and inciting statement to create platform in order to voice out their ethnic sentiment. Taking a critical look at the trend of events in Nigeria gives room for fear and uncertainty. He went further to say that "some ethnic or tribal leaders in Nigeria indulge in making hate speeches to achieve their selfish ambitions to the detriment of the people they claim to be protecting". Hate speech or inciting statement, he said, would give room to disunity, nepotism, discrimination, acrimony and doubt for one another.

Hate Speech and the Social Media

The internet has proved to be the most potent and fastest way to disseminate information across the globe. It offers the possibility to create, publish, distribute and consume media content thereby fostering space for networking, engagement and self-expression. With the development of social media, everybody can participate in cyberspace in a variety of ways, ranging from keeping in touch with friends, developing new contacts to sharing content and exploring self- expression (Oyeleye, 2017). However current trends have shown that the online space is becoming an avenue for abuse and human rights violations. Among these violations are cyber bullying, fake news and hate speech. Social media, however, affords hate groups an opportunity to spread their hate without restraint. With the growth of the internet and the freedom of publication, provocative speech assumed unprecedented proportions. People spreading hate speech now have the liberty to publish whatever they want, because they are the authors, editors, and producers of their content; all they need is an account and data. Promoters of hate speech can therefore publish content that can never appear in conventional media.

It has been observed that many Nigerians have joined the bandwagon of persons who hurl invectives at one another online. A look at 'comments' that follow most articles online — whether in newspapers, blogs or on the numerous online news — and features aggregator sites in the country, will give a fair understanding of how hate speech has become so pervasive in Nigeria. (Oyeleye, 2017). Oyeleye(2017) further stressed that there is nothing wrong with people exercising their freedom of speech, there is everything wrong with demeaning or insulting others through speeches. This is because the self-esteem and Self-confidence of victims of hate speeches may be affected in the worst cases, victims may self-harm, become suicidal, or carry out many other undesirable acts.

Hate Speech and Right to Freedom of Expression

Freedom of expression is a fundamental right of every citizen in Nigeria and many other nations of the world. Hylton (1996) compared hate speech with free speech doctrine of J.S Mill which is enshrined in the constitutions of nations. He however noted that hate speech is not free speech. Hylton conceived hate speech as negative while free speech is a landmark achievement of democracy. Hence, most developed democracies added a clause on freedom of speech against the use of hate speech. For example, Article 10 (2) of the European Convention on Human Rights provides that "the exercise of freedom of expression may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law... the interest of national security, for the protection of the reputation or right of others".

However, most doctrines that established freedom of speech and expression in Nigeria added a clause to guard against hate speech, promote human dignity, societal cohesion and peace. For instance, section 39 (1) of the 1999 Constitution as amended in 2011 provides that "every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression..." More so, section 45 provides that nothing in section 39 shall invalidate any law that is reasonably justifiable in a democratic society in the interest of public order, public morality and for the purpose of protecting the rights and freedom of other persons. A careful examination of section 39 of the constitution suggests, that freedom of speech and the press is a qualified right. That is to say that the right to freedom of speech and the press is not absolute. Thus, citizens are enjoined not to abuse their freedom of speech. Where it seeks to harm another person, such behavior will not be condoned by the law. It is within this limitation that transgressions such as slanders, libel, and other excesses of freedom are punishable and these include hate speech. (Ugwummadu, 2018). Similarly, sections 95 and 96 of the 2010 Electoral Act prohibited the use of any language in campaigns that will hurt tribal, religious and or sectional feelings. Other legal frameworks that abhor the use of derogatory language in Nigeria are the Political Party Code of Conduct (2013) and the Abuja Accord (2015). Despite these legal frameworks, there has been notable growth in hate speech before, during and after the 2011 and 2015 elections in Nigeria.

The Need for Separate Law to Curb Hate Speech

One way to deal effectively with hate speeches is to create laws and policies that will discourage such behaviuors amongst Nigerians. For example, hate speech is prohibited in several jurisdictions such as Canada, South Africa, United Kingdom, Kenya etc. In Canada where advocating genocide or inciting hatred against any 'identifiable group' is an indictable offence under the country's Criminal Code with maximum prison terms of two to fourteen years. In the United Kingdom, several statutes criminalize hate speech against

several categories of persons. In South Africa, hate speech (along with incitement to violence and propaganda for war) is specifically excluded from protection of free speech in the Constitution. The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 2000, in fact, contains the following clause: "No person may publish, propagate, advocate or communicate words based on one or more of the prohibited grounds, against any person, that could reasonably be construed todemonstrate a clear intention to (a) be hurtful; (b) be harmful (c) incite harm and (d) promote or propagate hatred" (Elebeke, 2017).

In Kenya, after the 2007 electoral crisis that led to the death of over 1000 people, there was a new law on hate speech. This is the national cohesion and integration Act 2008 (Akinola, 2017). According to Okupe (2017), there are over 25 countries of the world that have made specific laws against hate speech. In spite of their belief and adherence to freedom of speech, furthermore, 'we must not give the impression that we want to suppress freedom of speech but I have always believed even before the consideration of the hate speech law that every freedom comes with some sense of responsibility". According to Gambari (2017), 2019 general elections are threatened because the media space had been hijacked by the drivers of hate speech, saying that concerted action must be taken by government and Chief Security Officers(CSOs) to adopt a national law which will check the excesses of hate speech. There is currently a bill on the floor of the National Assembly in Nigeria on hate speech presented by Senator AliyuSabi Abdulahi of APC Niger State proposing a death sentence for those found guilty of the crime. On this, it is argued that it is unnecessary for a new law to be put in place in the country that the existing laws are enough to take care of hate speech offences. Oladipo (2017), accused the government of having a plan to gag the press, warned government to stop playing around by bringing in new law but should apply the existing law to check the menace of hate speech. He stressed that there are existing media regulations which can be used to address hate speech, the Advertisers Practitioners Act, National Broadcasting Code and the Press Council Code of Ethics. These regulators should be able to sanction all media houses that violate the codes (Yahu, 2017).

However, a new law has become necessary since the existing laws are not potent enough or had not been evoked to stop the practitioners of the hate speech menace. It is understood that most people register their names on social media with fake names and fake addresses which will make it impossible to trace such individuals. Some hide under the right of freedom of speech to perpetuate their nefarious act of spreading hate speech on the social media. The new law should be formulated in such a way that would not endanger the

polity by using it to fight political opponents and those who make genuine criticisms of government policies and programmes that are not in the interest of the people.

National Integration Efforts in Nigeria

The federal governments at one time or the other had come up with different policies, systems, institutions, and programmes aimed at promoting national integration knowing fully well that the country is a host of varied ethnic nationalities, religions and cultures. Apart from the colonial efforts of amalgamation and federalism before independence, concerted efforts had been put in place to solidify the integration and bring about cohesion in the country. The creation of states was a step towards this direction. It was a bid to weaken the regional allegiance and enhance federal allegiance to foster unity among the federating states. Another step towards national integration was the Federal Character Principle initiated by government to achieve fair and effective representation of the various components of the federation in the country's position of power, status and influence. The unifying National Policy on Tertiary Education is another factor Akpan (1990) considers to be aimed at national integration in Nigeria. Nigerian federal universities were seen as instrument of fostering national unity. Creating unity schools and other federal institutions to cater for all citizens of the federation irrespective of state of origin is an effort towards actualizing national integration. Also the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) is a scheme designed to promote national integration and unity amongst youths in Nigeria. To serve in states other than their own was to enhance interaction among the educated elites in the country and promote the understanding of the culture, language and the general life styles of other people outside their states and to promote inter-tribal marriages. The National Sports Festivals are organized to bring the youth in the entire federation together to compete on various sports events and also the organization of the national cultural festival to showcase culture of different ethnic nationalities. It is based on these efforts that a lot need to be done to nip the issue of hate speech in the bud before it deteriorates to agent of disintegration, crisis and war.

The effect of this misdemeanor is the widening of the social distance among the different ethnic nationalities that make up the country and an exacerbation of the crisis in the country's nation building. Hate speech brings division on the already existing unity in the country. The nation's unity is said to be settled and not negotiable as stressed by President Muhammadu Buhari in his national broadcast on 21st of August, 2017.

Conclusion

Hate speech has become so endemic in the political, economic, social, ethnic and religious life of the country, Nigeria. It has created a form of disconnection and distrust amongst the

various ethnic nationalities in the country. Though hate speech has been in existence in Nigeria since the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates by Lord Frederick Lugard in 1914, it has taken a new dimension in the last few years with the advent of social media network like the Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Imo, Twitter, etc. Every individual is now a journalist posting all sorts of things on the internet without hindrance or supervision by the body in charge of regulating journalistic practices. It has been seen to be an overbearing evil to any country or community that has used it. It has caused many of the civil wars in Africa and it has caused tensions and distrust among the various nationalities in the world. Nigeria as an indivisible nation has been in existence since the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914. The various governments have done much to integrate the various divisive features that characterized the different nationalities that make up the nation to bring about cohesion. Amongst the efforts of the governments are; the creation of states, establishments of Federal Universities, creation of Unity Schools, introduction of N.Y.S.C. scheme, introduction of Federal Character Principle in the Nigerian constitution and so forth. The aim of the government could not be realized as a result of incessant hate speeches rocking the foundation of the nation's existence and has dwarfed the cohesive efforts of these policies. Hate speech should be discouraged by the government of the day by creating laws to check and control it so as to achieve national integration and cohesion.

Recommendations

From the foregoing discussions, the following recommendations are proffered;

1. The government should as a matter of urgency ensure equity in the distribution of the dividends of democracy;
2. No part of the country should be favoured at the expense of the other in appointments, employment, service delivery, resource allocation;
3. The issue of unity should be handled, with sincerity of purpose by applying the federal character principle with equity. It should not be seen to favour one side of the divide at the expense of the other;
4. Good governance should be enhanced since it is a key element in a democracy;
5. Insecurity is a major cause of hate speech and should be checked by the government so that the people can sleep with their two eyes closed;
6. The security personnel should as a matter of fact, deal with the situation of security with
   sincerity of purpose and not colluding with one side against the other when there is crisis;
7. The level of poverty should be kept at its lowest ebb by creating employment and providing an enabling environment for people to create wealth and investment;

8. It should be acknowledged that no part of the country is better or more powerful
   than the other in any way. Hence they are to be handled with equity;
9. Adequate law should be put in place to check the rascality of the self-acclaimed journalists and individuals who propagate hate speeches on the social media network but care should be taken not to gag political opponents and those who criticize the government and its activities;
10. Freedom of speech should be protected to enhance democratic practices; and
11. The government should checkmate the activities of politicians hiding under ethnic
    and religious coloration to incite people against one another;

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