



Multi Ethnic Nations and Multi Cultural State of Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic nation with cultural differences between its component ethnicity groups. From the north to the coasts. The range in type of social system, minority allocation Federal character and Revenue allocation. This diversity has resulted into major problems namely: Problem arising between the larger ethnic groups and the hostility that derives from competition between peoples for wealth and power. This paper examines the political implication of the diversity and the problems created by it for the survival of Federalism in Nigeria by using secondary sources of information and made recommendations based on the findings of the study.

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Introduction

Ethnicism in Nigeria Politics according to analysis dates back to the colonial policy of “divide and rule”. This later reinforced by the 1954 Macpherson Constitution which has regionalism as its operation model. “The Politicization of ethnicity in Nigerians Politics had its services in British Colonial Polices, which through the obnoxious divide and rule Policy encourage the use of different application of colonials Policies on the Traditional Institutions and Structures of the various ethnic groups in Nigeria ”with its over 140,000,000 people (2006 Population Census) and over 250 tribes, Nigeria is a land of great climatic, territorial and ethnic variety, from the four hundred miles long coast of tangled Swamp and mangrove, a belt of dense rain-forest ran in hand to a depth of between a hundred and a hundred and fifty miles.

This land later became Southern Nigeria and was split in to two (Eastern and Western) by the power Niger Flowing South from its confluence with the River Benue at Lokoja. On the other hand, North of the Niger River lay the forest line and Woodland, varying into Savannah grass and prairie (wide area of Land with grass but no tress) and finally to semi desert and Scrub. Along the Southern fringed of this enormous area runs the middle Belt inhabited by numerous non-Hausa peoples mainly Regan and in the Words of Fredrick Forsyth “animist in religion” mere believed to the vassals of the Hausa/Fulani Empire.

The North was the land of the Hausa, the Kanuri and the Fulani, the later having originally come South from the share in Conquest bring with them Islamic religion. They alone mentioned three ethnic groups (Hausa/Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba) found in the East, Western and North respectively from the biggest and major ethnic groups in Nigeria. The British Colonial Policy of divide and rule which was further reinforced by Macpherson regionalism agenda saw Nigerians being governed by the same government but with different administrative Framework (North as a whole and South Partitioned to East and West). The result of this observes

Emezi (1999:28) is unequal impact of colonial polices in the perpetration and dynamism of the forces of modernization. The consequences according to him have been the distrust, rivalry and lack of cooperation that have characterized the relationship between these ethnic groups in the country.

Inevitably, this phenomenon has been used by each ethnic group, its geographical size and numerical strength as the basis for political activism and support. The military came and repeatedly vowed to dominate this social malady called ethnicity and establish a strong, united and prosperous country Nigeria with freedom from fear of domination and to redress tribal priority and inferiority syndrome.

“Despite these edifying sentiments of the army, ethnicity has persisted and deepened” It would be recalled that since Nigeria gained her independence from Britain in 1960, ethnic politics manifest and impacts in concert ways by which it affects citizenship and the interests of persons and groups who are usually neglected, manipulated and discriminated against because of their relative.

What is the impact of ethnicity on Nigerian body politics?

- i. What are the causes of ethnic politics in Nigeria?
- ii. How does revenue allocation impact on ethnic politics in Nigeria?

Powerlessness in relation to other persons and groups due to their handicap in social and biological uniformity and scant population. Hence the conflicts among the various ethnic groups in the country for the promotion and advancement of ethnic interests at the expense of those the nations has posed more questions than answers to Nigerian dream of achieving a united strong and self-reliant federation. It is believed by observers that the issue of ethics, politics spells doom for any people for instance Rwanda, Burundi etc are good referential points. Then to Nigeria what future for your federation as ethnic politics ranges on unabated.

Ethnicity

In a lecture titled “Ethnicity in Nigeria” implication for National Development at National Institute for policy and

strategic studies Kuru on 18th April, 1983, Alhaji Shehu Musa then secretary of the government of the federation defined ethnic group as “a district category of people within a particular society who are bound together by certain physical, mental or cultural characteristics that clearly distinguish them from other groups within the society” often such community is bound by certain putative commonalities such as a common language, race, religion, tradition etc. in other words, ethnic groups behaviorally seek the fulfillment of their objectives in terms of claims to symbolic and material gains in relation to other groups. That is why Osaghere, (1994:39) insists that of the several instigations of ethnicity that material conditions of the individual and group is the most important. Accordingly, he wrote “... one other, hypothesis which underscores the close linkage between ethnicity and material forces is that the salience of ethnicity tends to increase under conditions of economic depression” The above assertion may have the reason why Chazan as in Ndo and Emezi (1997:41) stressed the fact that when an individual is confronted with material uncertainties and hardship is likely to learn on ties which he believed can ameliorate and redeem him. They argued that ethnic ties are among the most effective rock to learn on.

Based on this feature Ndo and Emezi assert that rural areas are usually ethnically uniform and because ethnicity regime, ethnic heterogeneous and a consciousness of differentiation to come into being, that is incidence where it exists is relatively insignificant in the rural areas. In a related development, Nnoli (1978:31) in a bid to conceptualize the term “ethnicity” declared; “it is a social phenomenon associated with interactions among members of different ethnic groups”. He explained that ethnic groups are social formations distinguished by the communal characteristics of their boundaries. According to Nnoli, the relevant communal boundaries may be culture, language or both. In the Nigerian experience, language has clearly been the most crucial determinant factor, Nnoli stresses that as social formations, that ethnic groups are not necessarily homogenous entities even linguistically and culturally. Minor linguistic and cultural differences according to him often exist in the group, forming the basis for demarcation of sub ethnic systems, it is claimed that contrary to wide held view that both are synonymous and could be used interchangeably, he said that through ethnocentrism like ethnicity is associated with the interaction of ethnic groups, that the two are quite different phenomena. In his words, ethnocentrism is attitudinal in form and perceptual in contents. It represents the subjective dimension of ethnic behavior. Their attachment to and pride in the group reflect what is called ethnocentrism like ethnocentrism, ethnicity has such characteristics features Nnoli insist that ethnicity is conflictual in content and behavioral in form. He posits that ethnicity exists only within a political society consisting of different ethnic groups. Ethnicity is characterized by a common consciousness of being one. In relation to the other relevant ethnic groups. This factor more than any other defines the boundary of the group that is relevant for understanding ethnicity at any historical point in time.

Group Theory

The group theory is a classical theory used in explaining the concept “Ethnicity and Federalism in Nigeria”. Group theory mainly deals with the group rather than the individual. The aim of group theorists was to relate social groupings and social power to the political process and decision making.

Group theories regard groups or the larger society, rather than individuals, as the basic unit of analysis on the study of politics. Federalism in Nigeria context, is seen as comprising different ethnic groups which is pursuing or promoting their interest, make competing claims against one another which is the major thesis of group theory of politics.

The study of group competition for positions and advantage in a political system allow us to gain insight into the distribution of power in that society. Group analysis will also enable us to know the manner with which interest are organized and expressed. According to David B. Truman: Any society is composed of group the habitual interaction of men any society-even one employing the simplest and most primitive techniques – is a mosaic of overlapping groups of various specialized sorts”.

Group constitute the basis politics and the political process can be understood and analyzed in terms of the role of groups. According to him ethnicity is characterized by a shared attitude. A political interest is according to Truman, one that makes claim upon and through the institution.

Colonialist introduced and engendered racism on the line of ethnic sentiments and consequently consciousness, Ibejiana (2000:16) pointed out the colonial racism served as an instrument in the struggle of the colonialist within the Nigeria for scare local resources. Similarly, in his attempt to secure some benefits from colonial production observed that competition among Nigerians created and reinforced common consciousness amongst the various competing ethnic groups, the origin of ethnicity in Nigeria at times the historical and competitive aspects of this consciousness were inter-linked amongst the various ethnic nationalities.

He observed that they may have been a historical competition amongst Nigerians which created and reinforced their varied identity, he correctly argued that contemporary competition among them may have reinforced inherited historical identification. In all Ibejiana subscribing to Nnoli’s view wrote:

“...contemporary may create a common consciousness among warring sections of the same ethnic group. It is therefore important for understanding ethnicity to know when and how this common consciousness was brought about”.

This practically leads one to seek the rise of this common consciousness called “ethnicity” having identified some of its attributes.

Origin and Cause of Ethnicity in Nigeria

An ethnic group “is a district category of the population in a larger society whose culture as usually different from its own. The members of such group are themselves thought to be bound together by common ties of race or nationality or culture”.

Naturally, in order to understand any phenomenon, including ethnicity it is usually imperative to trace the historical circumstances under which it emerges. In other words, one cannot vividly understand the issues of ethnicity in Nigeria without adequate compression of its historical origin and objective socio-economic basis. This means that the issue of ethnicity would vary from one country to another depending on their histories and class structure “...Different Africa countries display historical patterns and class struggle and cohesion of their ruling class, they encourage determination and leadership of the underprivileged. The degree of foreign influence the pervasiveness and the power of the dominant, ideology, social custom and form of government.

Olewele (2000:29) argues that ethnicity in Nigeria can best understood through the analysis of its colonial background. His argument reinforced by Nnoli's assertion that ethnic consciousness in Africa was the "offspring of colonial racism whose objective basis was the alienation of the Nigerian nation for easy foreign exploitation. He agreed with Nnoli that it was in the colonial enslave that the colonized Nigerian made contact with the colonialist environment and infact other Nigerians from different communal groups. Adding that it was the effect of this unholy intercourse that gave rise to ethnicity in colonial and part of independence argued that in the nature of administrative tactics adopted by colonialist made it very difficult for the colonialist migrant Nigerians to relate meaningfully on the conquest of his physical and biological environments. The discrepancy between the resources used in the enclaves and traditional consumption habits rendered him unable to adopt to and manipulate the new environment.

The migrant Nigerians aside other colonialists generated uncertainties and was victim of a complex International, national, and local division of labour which thoroughly alienated him from the products of the work. "Worse still, the victimized Nigeria receive in the words of Nnoli barely subsistence wages for his labour and artificially low prices for his products"

Under the hopeless labour conditions, Nnoli lamented that labour ceased to be a cherished means of good livelihood and liberating force but rather became repressive instrument. Consequently, this humiliating relationship between the Nigerian and his colonial master gave birth to anguish, disorientation and hopelessness. Nnoli contends that since the colonial master dominated the most lucrative section of the economy through the ownership and control of means of production, distribution and exchange including foreign production which according to him exploited the labour of vast majority of Nigerians directed the work role and expropriated the surplus values from production. Continuing he said that the exploited Nigerians soon saw their colonial masters' evil antics, racial segregation and prejudice in the areas of wages, job, housing, church and even burial ground where they still see a dead Nigerian not worth burning in the same place with his white colonialist. Amid this trend of events, the migrant Nigerian can neither lay tight claim to his pre-colonial setting which event had effectively and systematically rated him to his local environment and culture nor the much descried Luxious and glorified world introduced by his colonial masters. The accompanying frustration and humiliation affected his socio-economic and political activities. In order to mind his bruised ego, the Nigerian applied the law of defense mechanism and directed his anger to his fellow country man. To effectively wedge a calculated onslaught against this ugly developments, the Nigerian inevitably fed to the patronage of his Kinsmen Diasporas an alignment which gives him a seined stand to attack his fellow colonized Nigerians. This is why Nnoli and Ibejianya (2000:29).

"The resultant anomic and alienation affected his socio economic and political activities. Even in interaction with his fellow Nigerians he experienced tension, anxiety and insecurity disoriented, subjugated and humiliated by the colonizer, he directed other colonized 'natives' with whom he completed on the basis of equality. Ethnic group membership was useful for this competition

In a similar vein the colonialist gingered the categorization for Nigeria people into tribe. As posited by Nnoli (1999) "... the colonialists categorized Nigerians into tribes, their emphasis on what was different among them and not what they shared in common information about the tribal origin helped in small measure to stimulate and galvanize ethnic sentiment in Nigeria.

"...The colonial reminder by official forms and documents of his communal homeland's constantly reinforced ethnocentric sentiments and the parochial loyalty of the colonized... the Nigerian is aware of the fact that since he is regarded as a member of an ethnic group by other's he would likely be discriminated against by them and would be lost in the struggle for socio-economic gain if he fails to identify with tribal homeland...

Again, the colonial masters encouraged the emergent competitive grouping to run along linguistic and communalizes. This is indisputable because the colonialist chose administrative units which coincided with the communal homeland developed socio- economically than others. The seeming high development rate in areas of industrialization, commercial activities and education etc. in the southern part of Nigerian vis-avis its Northern counter part is a particular reference point. Obele (1999) stressed that this imbalance galvanized and depend "antipathies" and bigotry between ethnic groups in the country.

Incidentally, the modernization which follows industrialization saw the various tribal homelands converging in the centers of excellence leaving his tribal homeland where urbanization process in the cities has made his stay in the tribal homeland significantly irrelevant. Capitalizing on the sheer desperation to eke out a living in the Urban Center. The colonialist exploits the migrant Nigerian through poor wage and other hostile work conditions. Compulsorily, the migrant must survive to do this, he does not stand along since it is aptly impossible

Again, analyst argue that the colonialist in their bid to checkmate the march to independence sponsored reactionary political parties. The political parties often sponsored are basically ethnic in content and orientation with the colonialists manipulating the prevalent fears of ethnic domination, exploiting regional imbalances or capitalizing on inter-ethnic hostility and tension, for instance it is believed that the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) was used for this purpose given a series of flimsy excuse it gave for not supporting the self-government motion moved by Enahoro in 1953. In yet another postulation, Chukwulele (2000) while writing under the caption "Ethnicity in Nigeria, from whom and to whom? Argued that ethnicity has its genesis from the colonialist since they prepared ground for its sustenance. Chukwulele posits that ethnicity served the colonialists as a mechanism to divide the colonized, and therefore maintain domination over them. As a political line Chukwulele agreed that the colonizers used ethnicity to curb Nigeria nationalism and maintain their power. Buttressing his view, he pointed out that in 1920 when the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA) was organized and demanded reform in British. West African colonies, that the then governor of Nigeria Sir Hugh Clifford immediately sought to divide the rationalists claiming that the West African people do not belong to "the same stock" and one not of common decent. In order words, what Sir Clifford meant was that Nigerians are not of the same front to make any useful agitation. The effect

of Sir Clifford's unguarded outburst as tribal consciousness. Similarly, Nnoli (1978:38) in a related view contended that colonialist stood against all moves to form a united Nigeria. That was why Nnoli wrote;

"the colonialists encourage it because they contended that any suggestion of a nation was "mischievous because it is the consistent policy of government of Nigeria to maintain and support the local tribal institutions and indigenous forms of government which are to be regarded as the natural expressions of Nigerian political genius. Not only was the ideals of a West African national inconceivable. True patriotism and nationalism were attributes that must be associated with the natural and self-contained, tribal homelands".

One of such administrative systems adopted by the colonialist was the "Indirect Rule" policy. Indirect rule as a British administration system was introduced in Nigeria in 1960 in the Northern region. After about sixteen years of experimentation in the North, it was extended to the East and by 1937, all parts of Nigeria were governed by it except Lagos municipalities, Port Harcourt, Enugu, Kaduna, Kano and Azare (Nnoli 1978). The different time frame at which indirect rule was introduced in different parts of the country has some atoms of tribal ethnic undertone. One wonders what stopped Britain from introducing the system simultaneously in all part of the country has some atoms of tribal ethnic simultaneously in all part of the country. The above claim is further strengthened by Nnoli as in Obele (2000) "this encouraged ethnicity was reflected structurally by British administrative system of indirect rule and regionalization. Indirect rule started out as an instrument for overcoming the pervasive financial, personal and communication problems of the colonial administration in Northern Nigeria, worse still, its introduction in the country at different times in the North West and East ended up as a means for reinforcing communal identity where none existed and providing a new symbolic and ethnocentric factor in the emergence of ethnicity".

In the words of Obele, one other important consequence of indirect rule for the emergence of ethnicity concerned the land and nature rights Ordinance of 1910. It would be recalled that this ordinance formally proclaimed most lands in the North as native land to be used, controlled and administered by the colonialists. The governor used this Ordinance to limit the activities of southern traders, businessmen, and especially missionaries and lawyers. Obele argued that the Northerners believed that the liberal ideals of Southerners could undermine the authority of the emirs and therefore, destroying that alliance between the Fulani ruling class and colonial administration which the governor regarded as essential for colonial exploitation. Continuing Obele posits that the 1910 ordinance land and Natural right Ordinance assist indirect rule by discouraging the free and uncontrolled immigration of Southerners to the North who according to Obele might undermine the traditional authority. But determined Southerners who surmounted the huddles enacted by the 1910 ordinance were barred from living on the areas with the Northern indigenes. This policy led to several different policies. Writing Ibejiyanya as an Obele Wrote;

"the Southerners...were forced to live in housing areas segregated from indigenous population... the colonial policy to several different settlements viz, a walled city housing the indigenous population, Tudun Wada Created by the British to house Northerners who were not indigenous to the town and

Sabon Garis "for what the colonialist call native foreigners" and there were mainly "Southerners" it is widely believed by analyst that this type of segregation served as the cradle in Nigeria ethnicity. Again, the segregative British colonial policies of divide and rule, indirect rule policy further reinforced ethnicity in Nigeria

Federalism: An Overview

Ideally, Federal ideals have been systematically conceptualized in two different ways. First, it has been conceived according to skills as a means to unite a people already linked by bonds of nationality through distribution of political power among the nations or constitute the federal system. In such cases, the Federal government is generally limited in its scope and powers, functioning through constituent governments which retain their plenary autonomy, and to a substantial degree is dependent upon them.

"...Federalism is a complex partnership of national, state and local levels of government power constitutionally allocated both to a central government and to government of the state making up the federation, within a complex and continually evolving set of constraints, the national and state government share some functions and exercise others autonomously" Continuing, they wrote that the success and failure of Federalist system depends largely on how effectively it organizes relations amongst the three ties of government federal, State and Local. According, whereas in OWUNWA (1999) wrote "by federal principle, I mean the method of dividing powers so that the federal and regional governments are each within a sphere coordinate and independent". Accordingly, there are three (3) major elements of Federalism viz

- i. The division of powers among level of government
- ii. A written constitution showing this division
- iii. Co-ordinate supremacy of the two level of governments with respect to their respective functions

This definition has faced serious criticism on the ground that it is too legalistic i.e. it places much emphasis on legal dimension of federalism. Owunwa emphasis that there is no doubt that federalism involves a legal constitutional arrangement which spells out the political competence of the levels of government. This according to him necessitates for the existence of a Supreme Court which performs the tedious task of constitution interpretation. This is why Garman as in Ndo and Emezi (1997:24) defined federalism.

"...Federal Government may therefore be defined as a system of central and local government combined under a common sovereignty, both the central local organization being supreme with definite sphere, worked at for them by the general constitution or by act of parliament which creates the system ... federal government is not as often loosely said. The central government alone but it is a system composed of central and local government are as such part of the federal system as central government is although they are not creation or subject to the central government.

A federal state is "one in which a part of the authority and power is vested in the Local areas while another part is vested on a central institution deliberately constituted by association of the local areas". In the other hand a French born celebrated poetical thinker Montesquieu simply described federalism as "follows" Federalism is a convention by which several similar states agree to become members of a larger one "A Federal State is a sovereign power superior to the associated states but in which however the latter

participates". However, in a bid to find a concise definition of federalism,

Nigerian Federation

There are two schools of thought on the coming into being of Nigerian Federalism. This first analysis posits that geographical and historical factors was the basic determinant of evolution of Nigeria Federalism. This heterogeneous state could not have been governed for long from one center.

The second school of thought contends that the British government could have de-emphasized the particularizing tendencies of the different ethnic groups by not giving a region a larger measure of political autonomy, the proponents of this school upholds that the fleeing colonizers tactically fashioned the structural and organizational framework of Nigerian society in a manner that certain imperfections were left behind to sustain and perpetuate inter-ethnic competitions and conflict in the post-independence era.

Federal principle could be traced in Nigeria to the period before 1914 when the Southern and Northern protectorates were amalgamated by the then Governor General Lord Fredrick Lugard. Though with unitary form of administration, since then government powers that existed in Nigeria started to be shared between the central and the protectorates headed by the Governor General and Lieutenant – Governors respectively. Hence, with the existence and recognition of these components units as quasi-autonomous entities – i.e. the Northern and Southern Province, the administrative system in the country reflected federalism. This federation attribute was further enhanced by Sir Author Richards in 1946 when he for administrative convenience divided Nigeria into three (3) regions (by splitting the radical South into Western and Eastern regions leaving the conservative North as a whole).

Then, the federal principle began to be formally rooted in Nigeria in 1951. It was however obvious by 1954 when parliamentary system of government was introduced that federalism was the best administrative option for Nigeria given its administration expressed by the various ethnic groups in the country. For instance, the North has long been afraid that the Southerners especially the Igbos would dominate and exploit them because of their intellectual and skill superiority vis-avis the North. On the other hand, the South feared that the educationally and intellectual inferior North would overwhelm them with their numerical strength. This analyst argued was one of the reasons for the collapse that the imperial authority refused to allay the fears of ethnic domination in order to maintain and sustain the domination of the South by North (structurally).

As earlier pointed out, Nigerian federation formerly started with three (3) regions which later increased to four (4) in 1964. In 1967, Gowon once again altered the internal structure and increased the number to twelve (12). In 1976 the General Murtala Mohammed led government increased the number of states to nineteen (19). However, following much agitation for creation of more states, the Babangida regime yielded to pressure and in 1987 and 1991, increased the number to twenty-one (21) and thirty-six (36) in 1996 by Gen. Sani Abacha. Presently, Nigeria is a federation of thirty-six states and Abuja (F.C.T) with about seven hundred and seventy-four (774) recognized local government area councils. Nigeria has operated different constitutions as a federal state. Since it adopted federalism as a system, Nigeria has not only amended or reviewed its constitution, but has rewritten it on different occasions. The reason is that Nigeria is a federal state governed like a unitary government. Nigeria

like any other state in the world that operates federalism has a written constitution but unlike most federal states, Nigeria has had at least four constitutions. Since 1960. This implies that all is not well with Nigerian federalism. According to Owunwa, the operation of federalism very much depends on the constitution. The constitution according to him amongst other things defines the power or functions of different levels of government. It states the functions of different forms, arms of government and spells out the right and obligation of citizens.

The first indigenous constitution of Nigeria is the independence constitution of 1960 and the Republican constitution of 1963 which was suspended by the Ironsi regime gave way for the use of decrees for administration of Nigeria. Later in 1979, the Obasanjo led military government introduced the presidential constitution fashioned in United States Model. This constitution was again suspended in 1983 following. Buhari/Idiagbon military patch. When Babangida, the first Nigeria military President came in power, the 1979 constitution was reviewed in 1989 on the excuse of ensuring the viability and practicability of presidential system in Nigeria. In the words of Eleazar as in Owunwa (1999:41), this was geared towards the securing of those needs for which the federal government was instituted. But as Babangida's Successor Ernest Shonekan was ousted in November 1993 by Abacha, Babangida's 1989 constitution was reviewed to produce the 1995 constitution. As it were, circumstances could not permit the adoption of the 1995 constitution as it was replaced by 1999 constitution drafted under General Abdulsalam Abubakar's administration. Presently, the 1999 constitution is undergoing yet another constitution review, a development which analyst say will definitely usher in another constitution. One thing to point out here is that all these constitutions has the basic attributes which institutes and legalizes federalism. Thus the various constitutions of federal Republic of Nigerian has three distinctive qualities as earlier illustrated by Owunwa,

- i. The constitution is written in form
- ii. There is division of power between the central and component units and
- iii. It has a Supreme Court (Judiciary) which moderates the actions of the various tiers and arms of government and ensures due observance of constitution, as has been pointed out earlier, the first Nigerian Republic hosted two indigenous constitutions in the sense that they were the first constitutions wholly and entirely drafted by Nigerians, ideally, 1963 constitution allowed the two levels of government some degree of autonomy. Ozemena as Ndo and Emezi (1997) pointed out that federal government is empowered to legislate for peace, order and good governance of the entire country in specific matters, these and all the powers reserved for the central government are contained in the federal exclusive list which comprises areas which both the federal and state governments have legislative powers. The 1979 constitution, like 1954, 1960 and 1963 as pointed out by Akpan in Ndo and Emezi was a reflection of the federal and pluralistic nature of Nigeria political community. The 1979 constitution was not silent to this direction as it wrote, according in chapter II, Article, 14, Section 3,

"The composition of the government of the federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity and also to command national loyalty thereby ensuring that there shall be

no predominance of persons from few states or from few ethnic and other sectional groups in the government or any of its agencies.

It would be recalled that the term federal character was first used by the constitutional drafting committee of 1978 Chairman by Chief Rotimi Williams (SAN). The above declaration emphasizes the imperativeness for Nigeria to take care of its multifarious nature on distribution and authoritative allocation of values in the Nigerian Federation necessitates the adoption of this phrase "Federal character" it was on the debate on ensuring equity and national loyalty in a multifarious diversified society that the constitution drafting committee declared that there had in the past been inter-ethnic rivalry to secure the domination of government by one ethnic group to the exclusion of others. It is therefore essential to have provision to ensure that the predominance of person from a few states or from a few ethnic groups or other sectional groups is avoided in the composition of government or the appointment or selection of persons to high offices in the state. This is not to mean that all is well with federalism in Nigeria federalism. That is why Forsyth (1978) wrote that Nigerian federalism is a "marriage of irreconcilable". Nkwobi (1999:29) equally observed this when he asserts that Nigeria's experience with federalism is problematic in areas including;

i. Power sharing

ii. Revenue allocation

iii. Minority issues, just to maintain but three, (Nkwobi 1999). As earlier emphasized power sharing is always enshrined in the constitution. The legislative lists are three viz the exclusive, the concurrent and residual lists. (in most federal states Nigeria inclusive such power as that of defense, printing and minting of currency, foreign affairs etc.) are contained in the exclusive list. This is the legislative list in which the federal government has exclusive power to legislate upon. These includes issues of common and strategic important to the survival of the nation (Owunwa 1999:85) as a sovereign entity. On the other hand, there is the residual list which are more or less oversight functions of power of legislation (Owunwa: 87) According to him, these are items not contained in both exclusive and concurrent list. In Nigeria and some western federations residual function are assigned to the component units (states). In the concurrent list are items which both the state and federal government have power to legislate. The Supreme Court plays important role to this direction. As earlier posited, issues contained in the concurrent list have been an area of conflict and disagreement between the center and the units (state).

The system also creates lack of uniformity in legislation as the legislation on a particular item differs from one state to the other. This issue of power sharing gives the central government the constitutional right to exercise emergency powers in any part of the federation where there is break down of law and order, it will take over temporarily the administration of the area involved. Regrettably, the right to evoke emergency powers could and have been abused in several occasions in Nigeria.

This assertion is further buttressed by the federal government declaration of state of emergency in Western Nigeria in 1962. The 1962 state of emergency was criticized to have serious political undertone. Notwithstanding the then prime ministers claim that it had been motivated in his words (solely by the desire to ensure that peace, order and tranquility were maintained throughout parts of the

federation) Udele (1999:28) argued then that it was a conspiracy between congress to destroy Action Group (A.G), continuing, he said that more serious disturbances have taken place earlier in Tiv/Jukun areas of Northern Nigeria and even in Okrika in the Eastern Nigerian but the Federal government could not evoke the power of emergency conferred on it by the constitution.

Revenue Allocation

Closely related to the issue of power sharing is the problem of revenue allocation. The allocation of revenue earned from productive enterprises in the federation has been a bone of contention among the component states of the federation (Owunwa (1999:21). This problem is not so pronounced in a nation that depend on taxation as her major source of revenue. Some of the criteria used for allocation and sharing of revenue includes;

- The principle of need. This is hinged on the numerical strength (population). In other words, the state with very large population have more need for money and as such gets falter allocation.
- The principle, according to Udele stresses the equality sameness of states irrespective of landmass need, derivation etc, in terms of distribution of fund.
- The principle of even development. This principle of states encouraged even development amongst the various component units that made up the federation. This principle makes sense in a situation whereby the states do not get equal allocation because of the application of principle of derivation.
- The principle of national interest which has to do with resources transfers which may be made in the interest of the nation as a whole. It is a formula that is not easily explicable unless one has access to working of the mind of the policy maker or the disbursers of the revenue (Owunwa 1999:48). In fact, it is a vague term that admits of just and unjust appropriation to the federal government or to the state.
- The principle of derivation which sees the reasonableness in giving those regions from where the revenue is derived some proportion of their contribution to the national wealth. Suffice to stress at this juncture that the determination of formula for sharing of nationally collected revenue is a difficult exercise. The primary objective according to Ulega (2000:15) is no doubt the need to ensure that each level of government gets enough money for discharging the responsibilities that have been assigned to it, but this needs were the only determinant factor, the formula would have been arrived at without much difficulties Okelewe (2000:27). This posits to the issue of unhealthy competition for the national cake.

Again, there are a lot of political considerations at work. For instance, Owunwa and Okelewe (2000:14) wrote that whether the center is strong or weak will depend on the formula of fund distribution adopted. Continuing he said that as the source of wealth of the state is not equally allocated in the states of the federation, it becomes the formula of revenue allocation that determines whether the states will get equal share of the federally derived revenue in spite of the inequality of its distribution.

▪ In an attempt to fashion out an acceptable formula for revenue allocation in Nigeria, several commissions have been consulted, constituted between 1946 and 1988. These commissions include;

- The Philipson Commission (1946): This commission recommended derivation and even development as the main principle for revenue allocation
- The Hicks Phillispson Commission (1951) Hicks Commission (1951) Hicks Commission recommended that revenue allocation in Nigeria should be on the principles of national interest, derivation and needs.
- The Chicks Commission (1953), This commission recommended the principles of derivation and fiscal autonomy as the best revenue allocation formula for Nigeria.
- The Riasman Commission (1953). The Riasman Commission, recommended that Distributed pool account (DPA) with fixed regional proportional shares be created, the principle of derivation, it allocated 40% to the North 45% East 31%, the West 24% and the Southern Cameroun 5%.
- The Binus Commission (1964) Binus Commission adopted Riasman recommendation altered the shares of the regions in the following order. The North 45% East 30%, West 20%, Mad-8%.
- The Dina's Commission (1986) Dina's Commission report which was rejected on some political reasons recommended the principles of derivation, need and balanced development tax efforts.
- The Aboyade Technical Committee (1977). This Commission recommended the principles of equality of ancestral development 25%, national minimum standards for national integration 22% absorptive capacity 21%, independent revenue efforts. (18%) and fiscal efficiency (15%). Aboyade recommended that (57%) of the Nigerians total revenue be given to the federal government the state (30%), local government (10%) and 3% for special fund.
- The Okigbo Commission (1980) the Okigbo Commission of 1980 recommended the principle of population (155) and internal revenue effort (5%) the federal (central) government had (53%) allocation, the states (30%) local government (10%) and for special fund (7%) was allocated.
- The allocation of Revenue Act 1981 which came into being in 1982 made the following recommendations, federal government (55%) allocation. The sates (30%) local government (10%) and for special fund (7%) was allocated.
- The Allocation of Revenue Act 1981 which came into being in 1982 made the following recommendations, federal government (55%) state government (35%) and 10% for local government.
- The Danjuma Commission: The Danjuma Commission otherwise called the National Revenue Allocation Mobilization and Fiscal Commission made the following recommendations, federal government (50%) the state (30%), the local government 15%, and the special fund (5%).

Minority Agitation

Another strong log on the wheel of progress of Nigerian federalism is the issue of minority ethnic groups in a federating state, one can establish two level of minority groups which on their respective states are the majority but which in the larger context of the federal structure are minorities Onwunwa (1999:32). The other level according to him, are units where population also comprises elements of both the major and minor ethnic groups. Owunwa asserts that one would have thought that on a federalism of disaggregation, the problem of minority element at the level of federating units should have been adequately taken care of. He regrets that it is not possible to constitute every Linguistic or cultural grouping unto an autonomous state as agitated by minority groups if such an exercise were attempted in any

federation there would be a myriad of enviable state. The crafty colonial government was very cautious in handling this issue, Olelewe (2000:43) observed this when he wrote: "the colonial administration instead of allaying minority fears cleverly avoided carrying out new states from the old ones so as to maintain the status quo in favor of the north"

Furthermore, he maintained that British colonial policy accentuated the North South divide and set the stage for the secession of political crisis which attended the direct confrontation of the divergent cultures and values after the attainment of independence in October 1st, 1960.

The problem which is common to minority elements at both state and federal levels in the fear of abomination and discrimination by the major ethnic groups. It is an attempt to arrest this fear that certain fundamental human rights are entrenched in the constitution of federal, state some of these fundamental human rights as codified in the constitution.

Conclusion

The various colonial policies accentuated ethno-cultural dichotomy which reinforce north/south divide and set a stage for the succession of political crisis with attendant direct confrontation of the divergent cultures and values after the attendant of independence in 1960 (Oganna et al 1995).

In a similar vein, it is convincingly clear, that ethnic politics is further reinforced by the desperate need for Nigeria to increase their capacity for socio-economic competition. We made it abundantly clear in this write up that the ethnic diversity in Nigeria does not itself constitute any threat to national integration but are convinced that the threat to Nigeria federation has been unpatriotic politicians who manipulate ethnic plurality and sub-culturally differences in their competition for power at the center. Our former President Olusegun Obasanjo confirmed this in his speech during a political rally making the kick off Obasanjo –Atiku 2003 presidential campaign held in Kogi State. He said in his usual slow pace that "... ethnic diversity in Nigeria, is in itself a source of power and pride, but the problem is that our leaders use it to destabilize the country".

In essence, I therefore conclude based on veritable data, that given a myriad of obstacles to national integration and development such as antagonism between the various ethnic groups structural imbalance of the federation the dissatisfaction of the minority on Nigeria polity, and the die-hard approach of the political class to rules of politic, and the attendant political crisis in the country, the future of Nigeria federation is in complete jeopardy, that unless Nigeria adopts "true federation" as advocated by well-meaning Nigerians, its federation may some-day collapse like a park of cards Because, when people of different ethnic groups compete for the same scarce resources their ethnicity matters more and reinforces differences between the groups creating more inequality, an ethnically divided and economically stratified societies with a clear economic division of labour and segregation of housing and social life and where ethnic loyalty overrides national interest is prone to conflict, thus causing great strain on the national interest. That is typical of Nigeria.

Recommendation

For a virile and progressive federal republic, there should be a change on our value system that is a firm belief in the unity and indivisibility of the Nigerian state not because we have been compelled to accept it but because of our genuine conviction for our collective interest to remain united and therefore strong.

- The paper recommends for a sovereign national conference rather than constitutional conference be convened since the later has successively failed to produce lasting solution. In this regard dialogue becomes indispensable and compromise unavoidable solution to the unity of the nation.
- There should be aggressive national re-orientation aimed at obliterating negative colonial influences having conceded that our federation is a marriage of irreconcilable and a “colonial mistake”.

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