THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Interrogating Politics of Rancor in Nigeria Fourth Republic and Its Implication to Ethnic Divide, National Unity and Democratic Development

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Abstract:
The paper interrogates politics of rancor in Nigeria's fourth republic and its implication to ethnic divide, national unity and democratic development. Politics in Nigeria during post-independence and fourth republic is been played along ethnic, religious and regional linings and this has culminated to ethnic divide, national disunity and low political development. The distinctive code of conduct that depicts fairness and equity has eluded Nigerians thereby leading to behavioral derailment and attitudinal change in our political system and culture. Issues with regard to political appointments, promotions and heads of institutions are determined by ethnicity, religion and party affiliations thereby promoting political crisis and feelings of alienation. Political actors from various regions neither pursue issue of national interest rather active on politics of patronage and clientage. The paper adopts a qualitative method using secondary data and conflict of interest theory is used as a framework to the study. The paper revealed that the rationale behind politics of rancor is anchored on the notion that national leaders are recruited on the basis of their ethnicity, religion and region lining rather than their ability, experience, vision and national outlook in character. The paper recommends that Nigerians should do away with hate and bitter expressions which had for a long time undermine Nigeria quest to attain good governance and elect visionary leaders base on their abilities not ethnic and religious cleavages.

Keywords: Interrogating, politics of rancor, ethnic divide, national unity, democratic development

1. Introduction

Politics in Nigeria during post-independence and fourth republic is been played along ethnic, religious and regional linings and this has culminated to ethnic divide, national disunity and low political development. This has been a major problem that perturbs the existence of Nigeria as a nation and has prevented development and stability in the polity. Politically, there had been violence since the inception of politics in Nigeria. Our moral, social and economic problems is traceable to our myopic attitude geared towards politics in which the distinctive code of conduct that depicts fairness and equity have elude Nigerians thereby leading to behavioral derailment and attitudinal change in our political system and culture. Issues with regard to political appointments, promotions and heads of institutions are determined by ethnicity, religion and party affiliations thereby promoting political crisis and feelings of alienation. Political actors from various regions neither pursue issue of national interest rather active on politics of patronage and clientage. Politics in Nigeria has been polarized along ethnic and religious linings which in return precipitate disunity in the country, as all sensitive issue are giving ethnic, religious and regional colorations. In view of this, Osinubis (2006) uphold that: In Nigeria, the colonial masters provided urban setting, which constitutes the cradle of contemporary ethnicity.

Apparently, the challenges of ethnic divide have created destructive security and development challenges bedeviling Nigeria's fledgling democracy. The struggle for political power, control and distribution of the country's resources, amidst other agitations, has continued to heighten insecurity and promote divisive tendencies. It is in search of solution for the things that have fallen apart in Nigeria that such concepts like; Federal Character, Quota system, Zoning Formula, Oil producing and Non-oil producing states dichotomy, among many others were introduced. These were made to create sense of belongings and address feelings of alienation which was a major challenge to Nigeria unity. Despite all efforts at ensuring a peaceful Nigeria, politics of rancor which has created fear, bitterness, division and disunity still persist. Leaders in the fourth republic through their actions, utterances and policy directions has failed to pursue issue of common interest and this has generated conflict and agitation for secession by groups of various regions. Issues of

lopsidedness in infrastructural development, appointments and uneven distribution of resources or common wealth has breed various forms of conflict which continue to threaten our cooperate existence as a nation. The polarization of Nigerian state along ethnic linings, party affiliation, religion, patronage has continuously undermined the peaceful co-existence of Nigeria, affects the state development and democratic sustainability. These situations have become increasingly worrisome, leaving Nigerians at home and in Diaspora disillusioned (Mbalisi, 2012). Hence, it is against this backdrop that this paper is poised at Interrogating Politics of Rancor in Nigeria Fourth Republic and its Implication to Ethnic Divide, National Unity and Democratic Development.

2. Concept Clarification

2.1. Ethnicity

It is an abstraction of the ethnic group as it has no independent existence (Egwu, 2007). It is sometimes seen as an obstacle to development policies in a multi-ethnic state (Thorne, 2007). Ethnic manifestations should be understood in the context of individual and collective socio- political experiences (Seol, 2008). Irukwe (1996) perceives ethnicity as a belief in superiority of one's own cultural group. Achebe (1983) view ethnicity as discrimination against a citizen because of his place of birth. Nnoli (2007), maintained that ethnicity is a social group within a cultural and social system.

Ethnic Divide – The concept of ethnic divide relates to the classification of mankind into groups, especially on the basis of racial characteristics denoting or deriving from the cultural traditions of a group of people. Ethnic divide date back to colonialism when the British used divide and rule method of governing. Ethnic divide is formed by both tangible and intangible characteristics, such as shared culture or common visible physical traits are important because they contribute to the group's feeling of identity, solidarity and uniqueness. On the other hand, ethnicity is just as much based on intangible factors namely on what people believe, or are made to believe, to create a sense of solidarity among members of a particular ethnic group and to exclude those who are not members. Nigerian politics have been characterized by ethnic divide since independence in 1960. Politics at first, second and fourth republic, are played along ethnic linings and divisions which has promoted inequality and national disunity.

- Politics: Politics is the activity through which people make, preserve and amend the general rules under which they live (Dzurgba, 2008). It is about the acquisition and use of power. Onyekpe (1998) defines it as the struggle for power.
- National Unity: National unity is a process of unifying a society which tends to make it harmonious city, based upon and order its members regard as equitably harmonious (Ojo, 2009). In the words of Morrison quoted by Onifade (2013), national unity is a process by which members of a social system become less consequential in affecting behavior. Schumpeter (1950:269), defines democratic development as "institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of competitive struggle for the people's vote". The concept of a democratic development is part of the current development discourse advocated by international aid agencies, deliberated on by the academics, and embraced by policymakers in many emerging economies in the world on the view of attaining dividends of good governance and development subsume within the context of democratic practices.

3. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical disposition adopted in this paper is Group theory. The proponents of this theory are Arthur F. Bentley, David Truman, David Garson, Olson, M. The group theory comprises of the elitist perception and the pluralist conception of the society. The assumption of this theory holds that the interactions of groups are the basis of political life (Bently,1908:22). The theorist emphasized and recognizes the pluralistic and multi ethnic nature of a state. He argued that politics is a group affair and each group is competing against each other power. He also added that group theory helps one to understand the pattern of process involving mass of activities and not a collection of individuals. For example, Nigeria is a conglomeration of ethnic groups, each pursuing agenda and interest of their group and these groups are products and results of historical, political, socio-economic and various other contexts. The activities of ethnic group and the impact of ethnicity in Nigeria politics have affected governance in all entireties. Elections in Nigeria are polarized along ethnic and regional linings thus undermining the voting of credible candidate to pilot the affairs of the country. Most at times, based on ethnic interest and cleavages, leaders were seen pursuing agenda of single ethnic group thereby creating discontentment, bitterness and crisis within a political system. In order for the competing group to pursue their interest, formation of non-state actors was used to pursue their interest. This then results to 'pressure politics' where groups use various means to exert pressure on policy makers A typical example is the formation of MOSOP, OGONI, IPOB, EGBESU BOYS and many others. However, our leaders should take cognizance of the fact that Nigeria plurality nature makes it possible for ethnic cleavages to pursue their interest either legitimately or illegitimately. There is need to play politics of inclusion that is devoid of rancor, alienation, separatism for this promote conflict and political crisis in a state. The current condition of Nigeria state attests to this practice. This is the reason for tension, agitation, instability in the polity.

Formation of political parties and political association in Nigeria during post-independence era has toll the lines of ethnic groupings. Thus, party with major ethnic groupings was used to influence decision in the favor of their ethnic groups. This has created inequality among the political class and citizens from other ethnic groups and regions. The present situation of Nigeria represents this, where the ruling APC were seen from other regional groups as party protecting the interest of the north and not to the generality of Nigerians. This has further heightened ethnic tension among cultural groupings representing every region, deepened the discontentment, hatred and loss of confidence in the

Nigerian state which has adverse effect on democratic development and sustainability. Critics to this theory such as Ayoade (2008:62), contends that while the group theory gives us insight into how groups function especially within a political party, it fails to address critically individual interest. However, the relevance of this theory underscores the need for good governance to address the problem of plurality and multi-ethnic societies

4. Politics of Rancor Uprising in Nigeria

There was an aggressive competition among the parties based on ethnicity during the first republic as such Nigeria was in state ethno-political tension right from the first republic (Trzciński, 2016). On this note, Onuoha (2014) lamented that struggle for power has remained the main issue central to the major ethno-regional groups of Nigeria since her independence in 1960 (Ojo, 2016; Nwozor, 2014). The South East/Igbo people cry more for marginalization and generally lagging behind in national political leadership since the first military coup and the Nigerian Civil-War (Onouha, 2014; Ojukwu and Nwaorgu, 2013). The geo-historic, ethno-religious and traditional background of Nigerians are very significant and must be recognized in Nigeria's process of attaining state/nationhood and development (Falola and Heaton, 2008: 17-18). All along her history, Nigeria as an emergent federation has been influenced by inherent diversities on a tripod region(Erk, 2014; Watts in Loughlin, et al., 2013: 26-27).

As ethnic consciousness motivated the majority ethnic groups (Cooper, 2002). The Yoruba's formed the Action Group (AG), a regional political party dedicated to strengthening ethnic politics in the west (Coleman, 1960).

Suffice to say however, Politics in Nigeria is grossly affected by religion. While the actual role that religion plays in politics has remained debatable, the nexus between the two concepts has been established for long (Falana,2010). Thus, the domains of religion, secularism and politics are becoming increasingly intermingled in both overt and covert ways. Invariably, sectarian politics is inherently problematic (Tar and Shettima, 2010). This has been the trend in Nigeria's fledgling democracy which in turn undermine the citizenry quest for good governance which have elude Nigerians right from the inception of democracy in the country. It had become an important factor in political discourse (Adigwe and Grau, 2007). Thus, Nigerian politics is characterized chiefly by politicization of religion and regionization of politics (Adogame, 2006). It has been observed that politicians openly espouse religious sectarian sentiments in campaigning for public support. In addition, it was observed that no one can aspire to, or hold political office in Nigeria without pretending to be religious (Kukah, 1993). Invariably, religion goes hand-in-hand with politics, and it will be difficult to hold a public office without hold on religion (Bujra, 2006). Furthermore, usually, there are three ways in which religion can influence politics (Omoregbe, 2003). Regrettably, Politics of Rancor in Nigeria Fourth Republic had to a large extent profound implication to ethnic divide, national unity and democratic development.

5. Politics of Rancor and Its Implication to Ethnic Divide, National Unity and Democratic Development

Nigeria as an entity is bedeviled with plethora of challenges culminated from the political structure of the state. The trajectories underpinning decolonization process and the turbulent nature of ethnic, regionalism, and religion politics played in Nigeria has in no small means contributed to the rising profile of politics of rancor. The manipulation of ethnicity, regionalism and religion by some powerful individuals who hide under those guises to pursue selfish interests, and greediness of some religious leaders who patronize corrupt rulers remains part of the negative effects of those trends on the polity. Ethnic politics has always been the major source of growing political tension in Nigeria which has resulted in periodic outbreaks of violence between different ethnic groups in the country. According to Imobighe (2003:14) and Alebo (2006): Ethnic and inter-communal conflicts have become so pervasive that there is hardly any part of the country that has not been affected.

Suffice it to say however, there is emerging dissonance among the regions in Nigeria over who should and benefit more from the national wealth and this has often been characterized by despises, resentment, rivalry all subsume within the context of politics of rancor. Elections in Nigeria are polarized along regional cleavages, thus undermining the voting of credible candidate to pilot the affairs of the country. On this note Agbiboa (2013) has lamented that Nigeria is an entity in which the colonial masters brought rival ethno religious groups who struggle for both political power and resource control and allocation to the detriment of the entity's overall unity and survival. As noted by Dlakwa (1997), between 1945 and 1959 the political scene was characterized by a series of intrigues. The pan African perspectives and the nationalist posture of the political elite during the earlier period gave way to regionalism and ethnicity. The driving force was the personal taste for power by the political elite and an avid defense of their financial empires. Ethnicity thus served as a convenient cover-up for personal gains (Dlakwa,1997: 108). And this has been the trend up till date. Falana (2010) quotes BalaUsman who says that: The real basis of the manipulation of religion in Nigeria today is the need to obscure from the people of Nigeria.

6. Conclusion

Conclusively, the concepts explained in this inquiry no doubt constitute great barrier to good governance and national development. The pervasive incidences of ethnicity, regionalism and religion have threatened the existence of Nigeria as a federated state. The politics of rancor play a key role in Nigeria's political and economic development as well as its role in Africa and the world in general. It is the major source of growing political crisis in Nigeria. It undermines the selection of responsible and responsive national leadership by politicizing ethnicity, regionalism, and religion. National leaders are recruited on the basis of ethnicity and region, rather than their ability, experience and vision. This in return retarded Nigeria quest towards attainment of good governance a concept which centers on the responsibility of governments and governing bodies to meet the needs of the masses as opposed to select groups in society.

7. Recommendations

- To ensure a purposeful leadership, community building, social justice, law and order, peacemaking, reconciliation, forgiveness and the healing of wounds that perturb the existence of Nigeria as a federated State. Politics and political activities across the world ought to be characterized with ethics and in ethics. Hence, ethics in politics makes politician to live for themselves and enact laws that do not favor the electorate and deprive the citizens of the dividends of democracy. True ethics of politics make politicians govern well, enact laws that favor the electorate, shun corruption and live legacies that will outgrow their generations.
- Politicians should avoid rigging of election, abide by its parties' rules and regulations and seek the welfare of others. Politicians should also shun every act of betrayal of one another, eradicate killing one another, promote love and unity and encourage development in our states and nation.
- In addition, the practice of plurality of religion in Nigeria should be geared towards attaining sustainable development and political stability. This is essential in being a developed country.
- Leaders and representatives of government should see themselves as leaders of united Nigeria and not to pursue agenda of one or two particular ethnic group. This action and policy direction promote bitterness, disunity and anger among other ethnic nationalities. Both major and minor ethnic group should be carried along in the act of governance. With this, national cohesion, stability and development are achieved. It also helps to reduce tension and conflict, and bring stabilization to the polity.

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