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Power and Ethnicity in Nigerian Politics

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Abstract:

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic nation with cultural differences between its component ethnic groups. From the north to the coast, the range in types of social system, dress, diet and languages far exceeds that to be found elsewhere in the world. This diversity has resulted into two major problems namely: problems 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 this power and ethnicity in Nigerian politics.

Keywords: Ethnic group, ethnicity, politics, political power, democracy

1. Introduction

The quest for imperial hegemony inspired the cartography demarcation of ethnic boundaries (Ukiwo 2005) Ethnicity simply defined is a social phenomenon associated with interactions among members of different ethnic groups Nnoli (1980)

Jinadu (2004) viewed ethnicity as a social coxistruct which mobilization for competitive purposes includes political parties, public intellectuals and university students, the military, public bureaucracies, trade unions etc. for him, political sailence of ethnicity is situated within the structure of social relations of production in the country.

Ethnic groups as a social concepts are social formations differentiated by communal boundaries. In Nigeria, colonialism introduced the concept of ethnicity, first through its policy of segregation which engendered mutual distrust and acrimony.

The socialization of Nigerians into this colonialists world view has resulted in the internalization of this form discrimination. The relevant communal factors could be language has been a most fundamental variable as people tended to relate more with those they share a common language with. Ethnicity as a phenomenon is behavioural in form and conflictual in content in the series that people from different ethnic groups see each competitor in the quest for resources rather than compatriots. It can only exist within a plural political state such as Nigeria with over two hundred thousand and fifty language groups within the political states that produces ethnicity. In the case of Nigeria, its conflictual nature stems from inter-ethnic competition for scarce resources. It is often characterized by Inter-ethnic discrimination in jobs, housing admission into tertiary institutions, scholarship, marriages, distribution of welfare services etc. This is often accompanied by nepotism and corruption. Merit is quite often sacrificed conflict especially in the competition for scarce resources.

The fact that Nigeria is a violent political polity and under developed is not in dispute. The U.S prediction of its disintegration come 2015 lends credence to this assertion. While many scholars have consistently argue that ethnicity is the problem of Nigeria, an analytical and critical conclusion assert that power and not ethnicity is the problem of Nigeria. Power as a concept has been one of the prominent issues that Nigeria as a nation has been confronted with before the attainment of political independence in the country.

The concept of political power as described by Bruke Hartford (2008) that political power is the ability to change or maintain some aspects. of society or government policies. Political power in the hands of an individual or a group allows administration of some public resources and also allocation of state resources among the people in the society. This implies that a political power wielder possess the ability to control the action of others. This is why Harold Lasswell posits that politics centers our "who gets what, when and how" Essentially, all politics by definition and in political terms revolves around the pursuit of power and its exercise whether at the domestic, national or international level as power ensure access to distribution of state scarce resources.

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Issues Ethnic Group

An ethnic group has been defined as consisting of interacting members who defined -themselves as belonging to a name or labeled social group with whose interest they identified and which manifests certain aspects of a unique Culture, while constituting a part of a wider society.

Okwudibia. Nnoli defines ethnic groups as social formations distinguished by the communal character of their boundaries. The relevant communal factor may be language, culture or both. He also emphasized that as social formations, ethnic groups are not necessarily homogenous entities both linguistically and culturally. This implies that there can be minor linguistic and cultural within groups forming the basis for the delineation of sub-ethnic systems. Furthermore, ethnic group may be defined as categories

of people characterized by language, value system normative behaviour and whose members are anchored in a particular part of a new state territory.

The above definitions have tended to emphasis on common interests, common identity, common language and sentiments. Certain general core value which tends and distinguish members of one ethnic group from other groups in the society.

3. Ethnicity

There have been numerous efforts in defining what ethnicity is all about. In Eghosa Osaghae's view ethnicity involves the employment and or mobilization of ethnic identity or differences to gain advantage in situations of competition conflict or cooperation. Similarly Okwudibia Nnoli argues that ethnicity arises when relations between groups are competitive rather than cooperative. It is characterized by cultural prejudice and political discrimination. It therefore follows as Eghosa Osaghae submits that ethnic conflicts ensue from situations in which people from different-ethnic groups decide to employ their ethnic groups decide to employ their ethnic differences in pursuing competing interests.

Ethnicity as arising from the desire of individuals to organize themselves in ways to enhance their competitive efficiency in a situation where they perceived each other as competing for resources and positions. Thus political offices and appointments are seen as battle field among the various ethnic groups where the battles are fought with all available weaponry a group can muster.

4. Politics

Politics is a pervasive human endeavor that prevails in all spheres of life that is as old as human history. Given that nature and character of politics, it has witness a plethora of definitions. Politics has however been defined by Harold Lasswell as an 'empirical science that studies the shaping and sharing of power about who gets what when and how'. This implies that politics extend beyond the realm of states affairs. It therefore bothers on whether power -the main object of politics- is obtained as an end in itself to ensure binding decisions or as a means to an end. Another political theorist David Easton defines politics as the persistent pattern of human interaction in a society mainly oriented towards authoritative allocation of values. This indicates that politics has to do with authoritative or binding decisions concerning the distribution of state resources.

In a nutshell, politics can be said to refer to all the issues and events that involve the struggle for acquisition and use of power and all the benefits and resources it confers. Politics therefore deal with the state and the political society that is a people organized for law within a definite territory.

5. Power

The concept of power means many things to many people. 'Men can exercise power in the market, on the lecture platform, in sport or in erotic relationship, (R. Bendix, M. Webber, 1966) Thomas Hobbes defines power as 'the present means to secure some future apparent good' used in this sense, we cannot delineate power from wealth. Hobbes goes on to say that wealth is a form of power, 'life', he says, 'is but a ceaseless search for power after power'(Anifowose, 2008) Dimensions of power include, economic power, political power, judicial power, family power, military power, traditional power e.t.c all these forms of power have their unique sphere of influence in the society while two or more may be wielded by an individual at the same time. The political power is our core concern in this seminar paper while other forms of power, like economic, have cogent influence on politics.

6. Political Power

Since the time of the Greek City-States, political power philosophers have focused on power as the key aspect of the political situations. Despite the omnipresence of power in political life, political theorist, have not reached a widespread agreement on its meaning. Political power has however been defined as the capacity to affect another's behaviour by some form of sanction or threat. Power in this sense therefore implies the ability to compel compliance. Power therefore can be define as the use of resources, assets and capabilities to secure compliance or conforming conduct of others. Power is primarily a relationship for the wielder exercises control over some other person's resources. There are several dimensions in any power situation. These includes the goals, the means, by which resources are used and the outcome of the power situation.

Generally, political power can be regarded as the ability to make or carry out binding decisions affecting the whole or large society. This may intend to use that means and the outcomes to be in a position to making binding decisions affecting people and resources.

7. Theoretical Framework Elite Theory of Power

The choice of this theory in this paper is informed by its more suitability in analyzing the power politics in Nigeria vis-a-vis ethnicity. The theory was principally propounded by Vilfredo Pareto, Gaetano Mosca and Robert Michels. Elite theory asserts that in every human society, decision making, resource allocation and rulership is found in the hands of a minority that possesses the qualities necessary for its accession to full social and political power. These qualities are Consciousness, Coherence and Conspiracy (3Cs) Michels(1949) adds Organization to the qualities of this minority, and refers to the rule of the 'Iron Law of Oligarchy' (Onah 2010) This minority is the elite and consist of the best and successful persons who rise to the top at every level of endeavour in the society. The majority in the society are the non-elite or the mass of the people, who are always content to be ruled. The elite are divided into two- the governing elite and the non-governing elites. The governing elite rules society through a mixture of the instrument of force and cunning, with the circumstance determining which will predominate at any point in time(Onah,2010) So the elites possess characters of Lion(force) and Fox(cunning) which are used to manipulate the masses under different guise as the condition require per time.

This theory essentially elucidates how elites operate in the socio-political system of the society, the instrumentality and goals.

The issue of power and the hedonistic predisposition to rule on the part of elite elements, the interactions between power and material reward are crucial factors for understanding the cause of ethnic nationalism and conflict in Nigeria. The elite as the holders of pre-eminent positions in society manipulate the non-elite in their attempt to optimize their access to gain maximum resources. They achieve this through their actions and inaction, utterances, ethnic symbols and language also through provocation of ethnic identity. The fear of losing out on power relation that determines the level of benefit in resource distribution in Nigeria has irrationally occasioned internecine inter-ethnic struggles and conflicts.

In Nigeria, the governing elites predominantly found among few civil and military men who have occupied the control machinery of the Nigerian society have applied both cunning and force schemes to achieve their goals at different times in the Nigerian political system, their inter-play determines the state of the nation today.

8. The Colonial and Post-Colonial State as a Trigger for Ethnicity

In Nigeria, the colonial urban context constitute the context constitute the context for ethnicity. It was within the colonial urban context that ethnic group acquired a common consciousness. Ethnicity is therefore a product of the colonial and post-colonial state. The proliferation of communal associations which attracted a large proportion of urban dwellers triggered inter-class and inter-individual socio-economic competition especially among the various towns unions. Nnoli (1980) opines that, the pervasive scarcity and inequality of the peripheral capitalist state challenge and stretched the resources of the unions.

The failure of the state to provide employment and other services to the citizenry boosted the importance of the unions. They became the only instructions through which the individuals could find a meaning to their lives. This unions and greater cohesion within the unions and greater dependence by the individuals and the union became stronger; his loyalty was transferred from the state to the union which gave meaning to his social existence. The transfer of loyalty was rewarded materially and emotionally, thus further alienating him from the state. Any wonder that the unions joined forces heightened inter-ethnic competition which often time result in conflicts. These conflicts increased the social distance between the ethnic groups. Nnoli(1980) posits that the activities embarked upon by their unions outside their ethnic enclave reflect integrative endeavours, Thus a combination of group loyalty within group cohesion enabled the unions to successfully challenge any super ethnic institution. This group cohesiveness was made possible by the consistent support of the elites who manipulates the group to ultimately fulfill the elites interest.

Sensing the dangers of these parochial associations and the hidden influence, Eyo Ita in 1945 warned Nigerians to " seek coordination among national consciousness" This conflict of economic interest set the stage for the events that propelled the country unto the politicization of ethnicity. The logical deduction is that ethnic politics was born from the quest of some factions of the elites to achieve their economic interest. This was why politics during the period of the struggle for independence was dominated by conflict arising from the assertion of interest of the various faction of the elite. Nnoli (1980) argued that the class character and interest of the nationalists parties were reflected in their activities when Nigerians assumed political position of authority" They embarked on the use of political machinery to pursue their narrow political interest of amassing wealth ' to the detriment of the majority.

The politicians and bureaucrats became the new men of wealth in the country. Thus the se. arch for petty bourgeois and comprador bourgeois fortunes dominated the struggle for power. Its inevitable consequences were the regionalization of politics and the politicization of ethnicity (Nnoli 1980) the petty bourgeois and comprador bourgeoisie of each region perceived their needs and interests as unconnected with those of their counterparts from other regions. The colonial administration contributed to the abuse of ethnicity through their reinforcing regional politics through its policy of Sabon-Gari in the North to ensure that the north had no closer interaction with its southern brothers and sisters (Soyombo and Attoh,2009)

9. Nationalist Movement and the Struggle for Power

The Nationalist movement started as a result of the educated elites not being satisfied with their position so there was need to attack the state. The Nationalist movement is a petty bourgeois affair. The society having been re-stratified into three major classes namely Chiefs, Obas who are transformed by indirect rule. The educated elite who are transformed by the colonial education system and the mass of the people.

As a result, the colonial period became a dynamic period because constitution kept changing particularly from 1922. Social structure kept changing with the creation of councils, districts, local government and policy kept changing as those other tools were changing. The Nationalist movement became .a struggle for position that is, desire for office and not true liberation. The movement was describe as class struggle.

The two classes are local petty bourgeois and the metropolitan Bourgeois (colonialists) This brought about factionalisaton among the nationalist uses power as a form of domination. When the colonialists left , the Nationalists took over, they occupy the superstructure which was administration and politics. They begin to use their position to acquire wealth. The centre became attractive and the three major ethnic group namely Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba were struggling to capture power at the centre which will be used to allocate resource and for domination. This makes the internal basis of the state to become weak and the emerging state became very fragile because they do not have the substructure which is the economic base to govern the country.

Six years after the civil war broke out, this struggle for power continue through independence even till now. The dominant class was pre-occupied with fusing economic and political power as a result of that, intra-class struggle for power and resources became their pre-occupation and thus, the colonial state became a subject of disputes.

10. Ethnicity and Power Struggle in Nigeria

The quest for political power by the Nigerian political elites under the guise of ethnic loyalty found expression through the formation of political parties of along ethnic lines. By 1953, the three major political parties in the country namely: The Action

Group, Northern People Congress and the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons had become associated with the three major ethnic groups: The Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo respectively. This reflected an attempt by the regional elites to carve out economic spheres for themselves. The regional elites succeeded in creating the false impression that the political parties were the champions of the interests of the various ethnic groups. They openly used emotive ethnic symbols and played on alleged ethnic conflicts to canvass for votes. Their struggle for power and positions generated antagonism and hostility along ethnic divide Nnoli (1980) was of the view that their propaganda emphasized alleged conflict of interests among the various groups with each party claiming to be protecting and advancing the interests of the ethnic nationalities. However, the covert reasons for deploying ethnic propaganda to canvass for votes has always been the diversion of national resources to the elites in each region and to increase its spheres of influence while weakening those of its opponents. A good example is the declaration of a state of emergency by the National Council of Nigerian citizens/Northern People's Congress (NCNC/NPC) coalition in the Action Group controlled Western region in 1962 whereas the violent crisis in the same Western Region in 1965 did not culminate in the declaration of a state of emergency because the party in power was in coalition with the N-P-C controlled Federal Government.

Even with state creation, consideration of national unity assumed secondary interest. The various ethnic elites gave vent to their personal interests to enable them increase their economic and political spheres. The elites succeed in this respect because most Nigerians believe that unless their own men are in government they will not secure socio-economic benefits. Hence, government decisions about sitting of industries, construction of roads, award of scholarships and appointments into public services are usually viewed through ethnic prism. For instances, it is the norm that the president and vice-president should come from different sections of the country and from different religions persuasions. It is this distrust among the various ethnic groups that brought about the enrichment of the federal character clause in the Constitution and the federal character commission to ensure that all ethnic nationalities are duly represented in appointments into public service.

The "ethnic watchers" constantly put government on its toes by assessing the differential benefits of the various ethnic groups. For a fact, most ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria were as a result of the distrust and perceived wrongs by those involved in such conflicts. For instance, the recent ethno-religious conflagration in Jos the capital of Plateau State was because the indigenous population felt that the Hausa-Fulani was trying to exercise hegemony over them. The Tiv/Jukun conflict was also as a result of perceived marginalization by one of the parties to the conflict.

11. Elite Manipulation of Ethnicity

Sumner (1959) notes the tendency for inter-human tension to be aroused by the competition for scarce resources. This tension is further reinforced by ethnic intellectuals and ideologues who fan the embers of inter-ethnic prejudice and hostility through the promotion of ethnic ideas and beliefs. This struggle for socio-economic ascendancy often results in nepotism and its antisocial consequences.

The political society is the state which controls the instruments of coercion while the civil societies comprises of institutions such as the church, trade unions, the mass media and the political parties. He saw the state not as an institution but rather in terms of the activities of the dominant class. He averred that if the ruling class gains the approval and consent of members of the society that it has achieved hegemony. Hegemony is achieved by persuading the population to accept political and moral values of the ruling class. He stressed that effective ruling class control was achieved to the extent that it could retain command of the beliefs of the population through the civil society. Hegemony is therefore possible where there exist some sort of alliance between a fraction of the ruling class and the subject class. A reason why complete hegemony was impossible was because the state always makes concessions to the subject class, this is a form of balancing to maintain stability. He concluded that power derived only in part from economic control that is equally originates from control over people's ideas and beliefs. To this end, the ruling class can never act as a monolith as they canvass different ideas and beliefs. This inability to form a monolith through the use of a common ideology has caused ethnic jingoists to fan the embers of ethnic prejudices and hostility. This has been the genesis of ethnic movements in Nigeria and their quest for greater autonomy promoted by the elites from the various ethnic groups. The tendency has been for the ethnic elites to promote their ethno ideas and beliefs such as language and religion, in order to gain control of the subjects class in its quest to corner the resources of the state. In Nigeria political parties are formed along ethnic divide with the elites manipulating the subject class along such divide -to garner their votes and in situations of conflicts the tendency is to fan the members of ethnic tension by accessing the others of marginalization. For instance, the non-consummation of the June 12 1993 presidential election believed to have been won by chief M.K.O Abiola and the events that followed it galvanized both the Yoruba intelligentsia and ordinary folks to support the Dr Fredrick Fasheun, led Oodua people's Congress (OPC). The OPC and the civil society organization provided the platform through which many citizens gave vent to their frustrations. The June 12 phenomenon was viewed as an ethnic injustice and brazen arrogance of the military elites by the citizenry. The reluctance of the military elites to compromise on the issue was viewed as evidence of ethno nationalism given that top hierarchy of the military came from a section of the country.

However, the decision to hand over power to former President Olusegun Obasanjo a Yoruba from late Chief Abiola's home town by the same military elite could be viewed as not only a compromise but a balancing act to ensure political stability, Olusegun Obasanjo a Yoruba from late Chief Abiola's home town by the same military elite could be viewed as not only a compromise but a balancing act to ensure political stability. The thrust of the argument is that despite the manipulative efforts of ethnic elites, the same elites find it politically expedient to seek a compromise when the stability of the polity is threatened and such compromise are needed and should be canvassed to build a virile state.

Equally interesting is the recent political crisis which culminated in the presidency of Dr Goodluck Jonathan. Recall that at the beginning, a faction of the ruling elite was not favourably disposed to Dr Jonathan becoming the president because they felt power should reside with the North for two terms irrespective of the dictates of the constitution. But the moment the Niger/Delta

militants issued the threat to the country ungovernable, they send the need to invoke what was termed the doctrine of necessity by making Dr. Jonathan the acting president thus, ensuring a form of balancing which in turn to stabilize the polity.

12. Military Intervention and Its Effects

In Nigeria's fifty years of existence as an independent state, civilian rule has existed for only twenty years, while the military have held sway for thirty years. Evidently, the nature and impact of military rule on the Nigerian state overtime has continued to generate serious concern as to the justification of the involvement of the military in Nigerian governance. Since the first Military intervention in Nigeria politics on Jan.15, 1966, the positive impact of the military have been considered marginal in relation to its disastrous effect on the country, in fact its regimes constitute contradictions and distraction in the nation-building process.

In view of observable and objective evidence, military rule in Nigeria is both an aberration and a retrogressive phenomenon. As an illustration, the military institution represented by its Leadership is a sub-class of the national controlling elite. Based on the inter-relationship within the class, military intervention in politics is a stop-gap on latent public outcry against government. Each time there is a possibility of a mass revolt by the people against oppressive and scandalous leadership, and each time the masses became restless and ready to effect a change in leadership due to the inability of the ruling class to respond adequately to the inability of the ruling class to respond adequately and effectively to popular demands, the military would intervene. This ritual of abortion of mass revolt for change through military intervention signifies the military as anti-change, though they often promise an overhaul of the system in their maiden broadcast to the nation after seizing power, experience shows that the military, having toppled the previous government use state power to restore normalcy, maintain an uneasy calm, law and order and return the country to the status quo. Experience has also shown that the leaders of successful coups may even execute some hastily conceived and cosmetic populist policies to legitimize their illegal seizure of power and therefore win public sympathy to their cause.

But inspite of all the justifications that the military might cite for seizing power from a former government, there is usually the continued use of the old, decadent, corrupt and bankrupt socio-economic and political strategies with some nominal modifications and amendments (Alao, 1990) The ruling elites in Nigeria not only use ethnicity to wield state power, they also comprise in the military applying 'force' on the populace to kill revolt against the status quo. There is high 'conspiracy' between the ruling elites to ensure allegiance from the populace and to establish hegemony.

Specifically, the greatest damage done by the military to Nigeria's political system is the over-centralization of power coupled with the erodement of democratic values in the Nigerian federation. It is a well-known fact that, given the nature and command structure of the military institution, military rule is antithetical to both federalism and democracy. It has altered the federal-state relation in relations in favour of the former to the extent that Nigeria ultimately became more of a unitary state than a federal one. Worse still, subsequent civilian regimes have not been able to muster the necessary political will to return the country to true federalism.

13. Power and Intra-Class Struggle in Nigeria

Heterogeneity in itself does not lend itself to ethnic nationalism or conflict. Rather ethnic nationalism results from interaction among groups or from the social processes namely: the organization of production, the exchange and consumption as well as competition for state power. In the Nigerian context, the struggle for state power is the critical factor. It is the inability of some factions of the elites to secure positions of prominence in the existing structure that pushes to further factionalize, most time using ethnicity as a pretence. In reality, according to Nnoli (1978: 177) "Nigerian politics was the struggle among various faction first to dominate the wealth in their own region and second to use these regional dominance as a spring board for the acquisition of some of the non-regional wealth".

However, where these fails, these elites then push for state creation where they hope to occupy privileged positions, Nnoli further state,

The most ardent of advocate of new states or regions have always been aspirants to high to high positions in the political administrative, professional and business fields who have failed to attain positions of pre-eminence at the national, regional or state levels and who hope to attain such height in smaller constitutional entities' (Nnoli, 1978: 161)

While ethnicity operate at the level of ideology, it is important to note that usually, the historical circumstance under which an ideology emerges is important for its understanding. An ideology serves the different classes in the society differently (Nnoli, 1978:21) Specifically, Ideology and ethnicity serve the interest .of the dominant class. This class is incoherent in Nigeria thus, instead of working for class interest; this dominant class is divided more or less along ethnic line, especially when a faction of it is disadvantaged in the struggle for state power. State power assumes significance as the means of creating an economically dominant class. Ekekwe(1986:103) concurs hence, the importance of access to or control of the state apparatus.

The state becomes the source of economic power as well as the instrument for attaining it, thus, because those who holds state power used it to serve their own selfish economic ends and those of their cronies the particular segment of the dominant class that is not favoured by the status quo seeks to gain access to state power by all means, which often results in violence, in doing so, they weakened the solidarity of the people at a great cost. They created not only strong divisions within their own ranks but strong antipathy and exclusivity in the society Ake(1996:5) The empirical validation of the above assertion is not farfetched.

Consequently, the ethno-regional origin of the AG and NPC forced the NCNC to increasingly assume an ethnic and regional character. The ethnicity introduced in Nigeria by colonialism nurtured by the ethnic based classes, still pervades the Nigerian political landscape. This is one of the reasons why Obasanjo's PDP entered into an ad-hoc alliance with the West-based AD during the 2003 presidential elections. AD refused to field a presidential candidate because Obasanjo, a Yoruba man, was contesting under PDP which was perceived as a northern party

14. Power and the Politics of State Creation in Nigeria

There have been continuous calls for more states in Nigeria as the National Assembly prepares to amend the 1999 constitution. The agitators for more states argue that state creation will bring development closer to the door step of most Nigerians. Also that such exercise will create an opportunity for the marginalized people or ethnic groups to have access to power.

In their argument, the Federal Executive Council is rested on the number of states in existence and most times decisions are democratically reached by the body through votes. This will therefore give some regions or ethnic groups more weight in their bargain for the allocation of values. They also maintained that the creation of more states will ensure mass employment for youths and other qualified graduates. In a word, various nationalities hinged their developmental aspirations on the need for their own state. As early as 1957, the minority groups in the three regions (North, West and East) demand creation of more states for an effective federal structure, and these agitation led to the establishment of numerous political parties such as the Benin and Delta Peoples Party in 1953, Mid west State Movement (1956), United Middle Belt Congress and the Bornu Youth Movement etc The reason given is to ensure political stability and ensure a convenient administrative system.

As Gowon put it:

"The main obstacle to the future stability of this country is the present structural imbalance in the Nigerian federalism. Even decree no 8 or confederation or loose association will never survive if any one section of the country is in a position to hold others to ransom"

As essential as state creation seem, it was flawed in many respects. First, it was decided and implemented hastily, involving many compromises. Each state intended to form a geographical compact and boundaries should reflect administrative convenience, the fact of history and the wishes of The people but the process created new minority groups and this strains inter-ethnic relationship. The agitators for new states in the present democratic dispensation (1999 till date) reached a crescendo in 2005 during the inconclusive National Political Reform Forum convened by the administrative of former president Olusegun Obasanjo (1999-2007).

In that conference, the Igbo delegates from the South-East who feel short-changed by the present structure in the country had gone to the conference with the creation of additional state for the zone as its main agenda. In their argument, the South-East has only five states against six states in the South-West, South-South, North-Central, North-east and North- West which has seven. Although this dream did not materialize in that conference, it has not douse the demand of the zone, for at least one additional state in the spirit of fair play and equity.

Furthermore, the creation of state has always been influenced by political rather than developmental considerations. For instance, the creation of the mid-western state in 1963 was done out of the conspiracy by the coalition government of NPC/NCNC to divide the opposition AG's stronghold.

The creation of 12 states by Gowon was also believed to have been motivated by the desire to whittle the influence of the then Governor of Eastern region, Odimegwu Ojukwu, at the height of hostilities between the regional and the federal government. In the subsequent exercises, the struggle for access to national cake has been the main consideration in the creation of states. In many cases, champions push for creation of new states for their people, not because they have the interest of the people at heart, but because they want political power in order to corner state resources to themselves or to prove a point to their political opponent.

Besides, state creation in Nigeria remains entirely an elites affair. It is an enterprise controlled, prosecuted and employed by the elites for -the satisfaction of elite craves for power and relevance with all the opportunities that accompanies it. State creation has not only failed to solve the problem of ethnic minorities or even the ethnic majorities, but it has also become a veritable tool with a string of unitarist leaders have dealt a fatal blow on the Nigerian federalism.

In Other words, successive Nigerian leaders, driven by the desire to privatize political power with the attendant primitive accumulative tendencies have systematically undermined the structure of the Nigerian federal system by creating states in an exercise designed as it were to weaken the so-called federating units vis-a-vis the central government. With the state creation assuming the role of the panacea of the solution of virtually all socio-economic and political problems in Nigeria, it would be expected that there would be rapid increase in the demands for state creation with dangerous consequences or implications for Nigeria federalism.

15. Nigerian Federal Structure

There is a general consensus that after 53 years of independence, Nigeria is yet to resolve its many problems prominent among the blames is power sharing and its relation in the Nigerian polity. The issue of power sharing among ethnic groups tends from the nature of Nigerian Federal Structure.

Federation is widely regarded as the appropriate governmental principles for countries with huge ethno-cultural diversities. Nigeria, with over 250 ethnic groups inherited a federal system from Britain in 1960 and ever since, successive government have attempted, with varying degrees, of commitment and success, to operate federal institution that can accommodate the country's ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic diversities and nurture a sense of unity. But the question is how correct is this federal structure? Can its nature address the political and social demand of Nigeria?

That the origin Nigeria federalism is traceable to the British colonial rule is no longer new. However, opinion varies on the basic reason for its adoption:

Some scholars opine federalism was introduced in Nigeria by the British for her administrative. convenience being of various ethnic composite.

Some argued that the British imposed federalism in order to maintain imperialist control of the country after independence lacks force (Obiyan, 2010)

Though regardless of the state of each of these arguments, all the view point are useful in tracing the origin of federalism in Nigeria, but another question is how correct is this federal structure?

Nigerian federalism became consolidated at independence, and since then, it has been operating in both political and fiscal contexts, although not in full consonance with the basic principles of federal practice. Historically, Nigeria's federal system has oscillated between the excessive regionalism that marked the First Republic (1960-1966) and the excessive concentration of power at the centre. Though effort at balancing were made by moving away from the initial 3 regions structure at independence to a four-region structure by 1964 then to its current thirty-six states structure including 774 local governments. However, these changes have increased imbalance in the Nigerian federation as exemplified in continued centralization and concentration of power at the centre with its attendant consequences. The weakness of the Nigeria federal structure basically lies at the dominant and domineering posture of the Northern region over the other sections of the country, and this is traceable to the advert of the structure in Nigeria. Extant sources show that the North's 281,782sqmiles constitute three-quarter of the country's total land mass (Kolawole, 2012) This uneven structure, gives the northern region a dominant position in the federal structure, even after state creation reached its present number, the North still occupies over 50% states in the country, this gives the Northern geopolitical zones certain advantage over other states, this arrangement is a clear violation of the core federal principles of federalism of 'relative equality of component units in a federation'.

The arrangement is also a fulfillment of Mill's law of federal instability which states that 'no federation can be stable when one part of it constitutes a permanent majority in joint deliberation'. This has deepened the problems of Nigeria.

Concerning fiscal federalism, access to political power at the centre is perhaps the most crucial factor in resource distribution and revenue allocation. In such a situation, the 'group' that controls the political power at the centre ultimately controls revenue allocation and thus has the opportunity to expropriate a larger share to its own advantage to the detriment of the wealth producer. This is exemplified by the consistent and systematic relegation of derivation principle of revenue allocation since 1951. According to Kenneth Whare, 'if the central government is able to finance itself while the regional governments are able to do so, true federalism will not be possible, no matter how much the latter desire a federal union or enact a federal constitution because the units would soon find it impossible to discharge their functions, or can only do so by depending on central government. This assertion explains the contradiction in the Nigeria federal arrangement in which all the 36 states run to Abuja every now and then in order to get allocations to fund their state projects. This is due to the federal government claims to larger portion of national resources. The face-off between the former Lagos state government and the Obasanjo-led federal government over the latter's withholding the former's local government structuring allocation is a good example here which testify to the evils of overconcentration of power and resources at the centre. This has consequently stimulated agitation for more state creation which to some extent is the aspiration of political elites in 'marginalized portion' of the country to lay hold on political power and control resource allocation.

The nature of Nigeria federalism fuels the problem of Nigeria both at the national and sub-national units. Given the enormous resources at the centre, political elites see the national level as the determinant of 'who gets what' hence, the clamour for the centre and the waning influence of the sub-national units.

16. The Struggle for Power among Ethnic Groups in Nigeria and Its Implication on National Development

The struggle for power in the Nigerian polity have taken various dimensions, ethnic conflict, class struggle, electoral fraud, clamour for state creation e.tc Since Nigeria gained independence, there have been various attempts by the elites of the ethnic groups in Nigeria under the guise of ethnic interest to control state power in order to corner resources at the national government. These over the years have proved to be in the interest of the few and not of the common man. This is sought through agitation for state creation, ethnic conflict, federal character, resource redistribution, militancy among others.

17. Ethnic Conflict

According to Obiyan (2010) 'factor are linked to (internecine) ethnic conflict and /or rivalry in the country. These factors relate to the struggle for political power, the quest for economic resource, concern for control over land, inter-ethnic distrust and the expansionist tendencies of some elements within some ethnic groups, religious intolerance and ill-thought out policies of government such as the creation of some local government have all contributed to inter-ethnic tension' Looking at the above explanation, it is evident that ethnic conflict does not engulf a society without stimulation, the cause of ethnic conflict in Nigeria is power tussle because power (both economic and political) is a critical determinant of social relation..

Extreme poverty have been said to breed ethnic conflict. This is explainable on the fact that the quest of Nigerian political elite to get economic power finds ethnicity as a ready tool or means to get power. This is achieved by inciting ethnic differences through the stimulation of ethnic sentiments, symbols and language against other group, this scheme is born out of the desire of local elites to maintain fiefdom in their respective domain. The recent economic recession experienced in Nigeria and its consequence of high unemployment avails youth to these selfish politicians who instigate conflict in order to wrest power from rival groups. This act is pervasive in Nigeria, even in the words of Obiyan (2010) 'Many of the educated elites have been known to use ethnicity as a manipulative strategy for the achievement of their personal objectives'

While some scholars sees ethnicity as the problem of Nigeria, this they claim is due to discrimination and the level of intolerance borne out of different cultural background, language and religion, we contradict this view in this seminar because, firstly, ethnic conflict is of dual dimensions these include Inter-ethnic conflict and Intra-ethnic conflict. While the earlier scholars derive such view basically on inter-ethnic dimension of ethnic conflict, the intra-ethnic dimension of ethnic conflict invalidates the earlier assertion that difference in ethnic identity is the problem in Nigeria, this is because, there have been cases of intra-ethnic conflicts in Nigeria, this involves conflict within an ethnic group which has thesame or similar ancestral lineage, language, culture and

tradition. Example of such conflict include, the intra-ethnic conflict between Modakeke and Ife of Osun state, also between Umuleri and Aguleri of Anambra state also the recent face-off between the governor of Rivers state, Rotimi Amaechi and the president, Dr Goodluck Jonathan (of the same ethnic background) which political analysts asserts as 'a power contest over 2015 election' the consequence of this conflict is the cross-carpeting of the latter from PDP to APC in November, 2014 this lends credence to the fact that ethnicity is not the problem of Nigeria but power which is a common denominator of every social relation. If conflict is between numerous ethnic groups is the problem of Nigeria then how do we explain intra-ethnic conflict? Even inter-ethnic between the indigene and settlers in Jos, Fulani and Igbo, Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba in Sagamu, Ogun state in 2002 among numerous examples have their bone of contention which is resource distribution either (natural or products).

18. Power Struggle and Ethno-Religious Conflict in Nigeria

Federalism is widely acclaimed as the appropriate governmental principle for societies with vast religious and cultural diversities, the Nigerian federation has been bedeviled with bitter ethno-religious crises since independence. Prolonged military rule manifested in the forceful suppression of the ethnic aspirations of many minority groups while the monopolization of power by the majority groups stimulated violent conflicts. The shift of presidential power to the south led to some agitations which were given religious coloration and these agitations also elicited reactions from some elements in the south which continuously clamoured for a favourable system of revenue distribution and resource control. Ethno-religious conflict in this era have been further heightened by citizen/ indigene syndrome like Modakeke and Ife etc as mentioned earlier in this paper. These disputes have dealt devastating blow on the polity in terms of large scale destruction of lives and properties.

Ake (1981) According to him, the post-colonial state involves itself in the class struggle. That is to say that the state was highly politicized, the state is an instrument of wealth accumulation, said he" partly because of this fact whose significance is the perception of the state as being very partial and partly because the state power in question is highly developed, there is a better struggle to gain control of it, a critical focus of this struggle is the control of government, which is the formal access to state power, thus in Africa those in Africa, those in office do all they can to perpetuate their hold on it, and those out of office do all they can to get it, there is hardly any restraint beyond prudence as to permeable means for this struggle Because of the state and the ruling class, the boundary between them is blurred, the implication of this and he went on "is a crudely oppressive class rule; because the state and government are too involved in the class struggle, and because of the high premium placed on political power and the tone in politics is highly authoritarian and hegemonic faction of the bourgeoisie adopts a siege mentality. Fortunately, the tendency to accumulate through the use of state power rather than through productive activities makes post Colonial capitalism less conducive to the development of productive forces and the increase of surplus".

The country has continued to witness unhealthy Inter-ethnic relations as well as Inter-sectional and inter religions disharmony. In essence, decades after independence, Nigeria has not yet been able to harness its diversities and effectively deploy them for optimal national development. A consequence of these developments has been the inability to consolidate the process of nationhood. Understandably, a basic problem confronting ethnically diverse countries is how to have the citizens imbued with a sense of nationality ensure the attenuation of solidarity along primordial lines and foster increased loyalty to the nation, give to each citizen and group a sense of belonging and feeling of oneness among them.

19. Leadership Crisis

The various challenges of nation-building have been compounded by leadership crisis. Nigeria is a nation born of hope and optimism but has lived in anxiety for most of its fifty-three year history , due to the country's failure to produce a nationally acceptable leadership that transcends ethnic, regional and religious boundaries and that can unite its diverse people for mobilization towards national development.

Nigeria's political history since independence has shown clearly through her various conflict, coups and counter-coups, civil war, power struggle are handiworks of the ruling elites and that they are divided along ethnic lines. As a consequence, various issues like election, census, state creation, religion, political appointment, revenue sharing and lately resource control have ignited serious socio-political crisis due to struggle to gain power which is used to manipulate the issues already highlighted.

20. Conclusion and Recommendation

Though the political elites found their way into political power especially at Nigeria's independence without control over the economic base of the nation sought to construct an hegemony over the political system but reality proved otherwise, hence the scamper for control over all the societal elements in order to build an hegemony through the sole manipulation of political instrument and force. These manipulative scheme involve the use of social elements such as religion, ethnicity, state creation, election to get political power and economic which in turn has been used to suppress and oppress any perceived enemy.

Be it as it may, the military legacy has bestowed on Nigeria an authoritarian political culture. The struggle for power and consolidation of same on the part of the political elite, more often than not , have helped to exacerbate violence through ethnic disguise in the state, because as alluded to earlier, political office seekers see ethnicity in itself as a viable tool for achieving political relevance. This has constitutes a problem to Nigeria national development as it encourage militancy, gangsterism within the political terrain.

The failure to encourage a genuine power sharing has triggered dangerous rivalries between the central government and the thirty-six states governments over revenue from the country's oil and other natural resources. The defective federal structure has also promoted bitter struggles between interests groups to capture the state and its attendant wealth; and facilitated the emergence of violent ethnic militias, while politicians exploit and exacerbate inter-communal tensions for selfish reasons.

We therefore contend that the failure by the various post independence Nigeria leaderships to evolve an equitable mechanism for the distribution of political power and economic resource is it the root of Nigerian problem. We maintain that there is an immutable nexus between the desire of Nigerian people for equitable access to power and resources on one hand and the plethora of obstacle to nation-building on the other.

Therefore, based on the evidences provided in this paper, we say it is most appropriate to say that power and not ethnicity is the problem of Nigeria.

21. Recommendation

The six geo-political zones in the country should be converted into regions and the state as provinces under the six regions, this would make the centre less attractive.

The power allotted to the federal government should be decentralized, so as to operate a true federalism.

The Nigerian fiscal policy in which the federal government lay claim to most of the state resources should be reviewed.

To address leadership crisis, A- people-oriented constitution should be fashioned out while the final product should reflect the peculiarities of the different entities in the country. This can be harnessed by the joint effort of the selfless leaders from different background at the national level

Really all these are possible if there is political will and behavioural change both in Nigerian leaders and the led.

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