

ETHNICITY, RELIGION AND THE STATE OF NIGERIAN FEDERALISM

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Abstract

Fifty-Nine years after independence, Nigeria still hassles, with one of the major fallouts of federalism, the politics of trying to appease all sections of the polity. This study highlights and assesses the nature, quality and value of particular issues and matters that have dominated the Nigerian Federal polity and which has created untold unpleasant experiences and pains at one point or the other since independence. Such issues include religious crisis, recourse to emergency powers in setting issues in a democratic federal setting, resource control, and the loop-sided resource allocation formula, creation of states and local governments, and inadequate representation of the various ethnic groups at the centre. This is a result of the multi-ethnic nature of the society. Different governments have at one point or the other derived methods to cope with this ever present problem of power distribution in both the political and economic spheres. This study particularly appraises many of these issues and concludes that all stakeholders in the Federal policy should thread softly, be objective, rational, altruistic and monogamous in order not to make the existence of true federalism, social, political and economic cohesive existence of the people, peace and tranquility a fleeting illusion and a mirage.

Introduction

Under the peculiar circumstances of the emergence of the Nigerian state, the adoption of the federal system provided the most logical platform for the survival of the state. It is no gainsaying that Nigeria is one of the countries that operate a federal system of government alongside some other countries of the western world such as the United States of America, Canada, etc. Given the territorially delineated cleavages abound in Nigeria and the historical legacy of divisions among the ethnic groups, religions and other sectors, the federal imperative was so fundamental that even the military government - characteristically Unitarian, hierarchical and centralist - attached importance to the constitution of the federal system of government. But it must be said here that while the system benefits most western countries, the reverse is the case for Nigeria, considering the high level of political instability, ethnic crises and ethno-religious crises, socio-economically induced crises, among others (Source).

Nigeria is a country of extraordinary diversity and as such, one of extraordinary complexities. These complexities are reflections of the avalanche of ethno-cultural and multi-religious groups co-habiting the territory and the intricacies of interactions among them. Indeed, Nigeria's adventure into pluralism of religions and ethnic diversities, owes its origin to colonial conquests which permeated the entire continent of Africa beginning from the 19th century (Source). Principally, the adoption of the federal

system was informed by the factors of necessity for both autonomy and collaboration among various groups that make up the Nigerian state.

However despite the realization of the level of appropriateness of the federal system for Nigeria, stake holders are yet to apply the principles of federalism to solve the numerous challenges confronting the Nigerian State. In this paper, some of the variables that have not been adequately handled by the Nigerian ruling class to provide a suitable federal system which include ethnicity and religion are addressed. Regrettably, in this regard, federalism in Nigeria has very often come to be regarded as a crippled one as a result of the various ethno-religious conflicts that have continued to engulf the nation since independence.

Statement of the Problem

The core challenges and putative benefits of federal governance have been identified as unity, democracy and development. And of these elements, according to Suberu (1990), Nigeria has been most unsuccessful in coming to terms with dilemmas of maintaining unity in diversity. Religion appeals to the emotion and psychology of the people and spurs various reactions, usually violent reactions, as seen in the various riots like the Sharia riots.

In the real sense of it, religion itself is not bad but the way in which it has become prominent in Northern Nigeria resulting to tension because the rich and the powerful who are indeed the real culprits of various religious tensions now use it to achieve selfish political ends. Accompanied with religious riots are tribal riots and ethnic riots, which have often threatened the foundation of Nigerian unity. Such occasions, have been followed by calls from relations of the victims of such riots, to come back to their homes where they can be assured of their protection and safety. Still evergreen in the minds of Nigerians of such ethnic riots is the 1966 pogrom and the subsequent Nigeria - Biafra war which was a tribal war between the Eastern part of Nigeria and the rest of Nigeria, the Maitasine religious sect riots in the northern Nigeria, the Boko Haram insurgency in the North, among others which often turn into violent riots often targeted against the Igbos by the rest of the Nigerians. The implications of the above crises on Nigeria's national integration cannot be fathomed. What has continually agitated the minds of several well meaning, objective and real Nigerian federalists has been: In the face of all these, how can the diversities in Nigeria be properly managed so that true federalism can be attained in Nigeria for a cohesive National integration?

Research Questions

The questions to be answered by this paper include the following

- (i) To what extent has ethnicity and religion affected the development of Nigeria's federalism?
- (ii) How can ethnicity and religion be managed in order to further the development of Nigeria's federalism?

Hypotheses

HO_I: Ethnicity and religion has undermined the development of Nigeria's federalism.

HO_{II}: Ethnicity and religion can be managed or order to forward the development of Nigeria's federalism. In answering the above research questions and hypotheses the authors will refer to Journal articles, Books, Newspaper publications, Government official publications, etc. Therefore content analysis is the adopted analytical tool of this paper due to its inherent relevance in this regard.

Conceptual Discusses

Ethnicity, Religions and Federalism: the Nigerian Situation

The structuring of the regions at the inception of Nigeria's Federation also created an anomalous situation in which each region had a dominant majority and several oppressed and exploited minorities (Osaghae, 1986). This form of ethnic structure and inequality between the dominant majority ethnic group

and the exploited minority ethnic groups has resulted to unhealthy situation and fear of domination which has manifested as threat to nationhood either as agitation state creation or resource control.

Ethnicity, religion and federalism are but clutches, they are inter-wined and experience has shown that they are more likely to be together than being separated. This is because federalism is the only system of government that accommodates and satisfies the desire for a national identity. Coincident with the retention of separate local identities and for a concomitant distribution of government power naturally and locally. "Federalism is a compromise solution in a multi-national state between two types of self-determination. The determination to maintain in super-national frame work of government which guarantee security for all in the nation-state on one hand, and protects the self determination of components groups which seek to retain their individual identities on the other hand" (Source?).

However, it is assumed that no federation is tension free. Tension usually arises in a federation if the units have varying interests in opportunities and potentials, the economically advantaged units have been known to exhibit reluctance in sharing their wealth with the less endowed units. The result is that while fiscal imbalance remains a common feature of all federations, the issue of how to share national wealth among the component units that make up the federation in a manner generally acceptable to all has been problematic. This could therefore create tension and crisis; in such situation therefore ethnicity and religion can serve as a means for peace and order.

Ethnic leaders perform this role by sensitizing their people on the importance of peace and orderliness, while religion through its moral preaching can as well restore peace in a federation. Even Karl Marx who asserted that religion only helps to perpetuate patterns of social institutions and the social order as a whole. Asides most federations in the world are heterogeneous in nature. That is, there is usually the composition of various groups in a federation. This is because the basic principal of federalism entails the methodology of dividing powers so that general and regional governments are each within a single nation of several territorial units, but are also distributed between national and unit governments that each within its own is substantially independent of others. From the aforementioned discussion; one can argue that the three variables are dependent on each other. This is so because when federation causes conflict or crisis, ethnicity and religion restore order and vice-versa. This explains why federalism has often been defined as a process of unifying powers within the unified status.

Effect of Politicization of Religion on Nigeria Federalism

The impact of politicization of religion has gone a long way in jeopardizing the unity and peaceful co-existence of the diverse culture and religious background that make up Nigerian Federalism. Enwerem (1995) argued that the problem of politicization of religion particularly in the northern parts of Nigeria and the entire nation, is that it goes with intolerance and violence making both Northerners who are Christians and those who are Muslims and non-Muslims from other parts of the country to feel unsafe in their country and denied of political and economic empowerment. He stressed that the spirit of unity in diversity was a characteristic of African traditional beliefs with the philosophy of tolerance (a live and let live principal). Politicization of religion which often results to religious crisis has threatened the foundation of Nigerian unity. Each sect has always sought for a way to use their privileged position to protect their members and marginalize others.

The first attempt by the Christians in this direction was the establishment of the Northern Nigerian non-Muslims league following a motion raised in 1949 on the floor of the Northern Nigeria House of Assembly for the restriction of the activities of the Christians in Nigeria. This was also influenced by the exigency of securing its preponderant influence on the educational economic sector. There had been a Christian – western educational link that created a good opportunity for the Christians right from the period of colonialism to have better access to education to acquire occupational skills and to dominate the public service.

In addition as suggested by Falola (1998), this link created a good rapport between the Christians and the West even after colonialism, which guaranteed over-flowing external funding which set machinery for the dominance of the educational and economic sectors in the Christian dominated south. Muslim students

were denied Islamic education and forced to receive Bible Knowledge in these missionary schools. Given this, Christians were able to successfully dominate the political landscape of the south despite the presence of a large number of Muslims with particular reference to the South-West. In Lagos for instance, Bienen, (1985) shows that Christians over whiningly dominated the politics of the state from the 1920s up till the 1960s.

Ethnicity and Identity Crisis: Challenge to National Integration in Nigeria

Our ethnicity remains a major obstacle to the existence of a Nigerian State since the transition from colonial to neo-colonial dependence and till present day branded democracy. The conflict spiral generated by ethnicity can be seen at all the critical phases in Nigeria, its democracy, the party system, the electoral process and her economy and resources. The question of who or which ethnic group has stolen more continues to arise; Is it the Yoruba, or Ibos, or who has abused power, the Hausa, or Fulani or who has produced president most, which religion has governed most are questions we still see with our so-called class to intelligentsia (Dickson, 2013).

The truth is that as much as some form of true federalism or on the extreme confederacy, resource control and largely self-determination is desirable however, the silence of ethnicity in Nigeria can only be properly understood in the context of power struggle among various factions of the ruling class, especially within the context of the lower class ignorance through manipulation. The empirical fact being that ethnicity cannot be deconstructed because we have a faulty form of state and morally self-centered people in power. The issue of ethnic politics has been on the fore rather than the politicization of ethnic identities, with each passing phases our ethnicity has been constantly shifting because of a fluid and dynamic nature of changing interest. At a time in Nigeria, it was zoning of presidency by the then ruling party (PDP), today is a perception that a part of the North does not want President Jonathan to succeed. The resurgence of ethnic identity only smacks off the total disillusionments that it was people in the present “regime” that then brought about the insecurity and uncertainty that pervade the air today. The renewed ethnic agitation surely has an implication both positively and otherwise. However, with a deaf and near-sighted government like the present one, the common and regular practice is to wish the real issues away. As Ake (2003) once put it, conflict arising from the construction of ethnicity to conceal exploitation by building solidarity across lines; conflict arising from appeals to ethnic support in the face of vanishing legitimacy, and from the manipulation ethnicity for obvious political gains which are pinned on ethnicity has often been destructive to true federalism and cohesive national unity.

Federalism: Problem and Prospects of Power distribution in Nigeria

Many controversial issues with consequential painful experiences and centrifugal tendencies dominate the Nigerian Federal Polity. These issues center on the various interests, cleavages and diversity in the system. These constitute travails, unpleasant experiences that unsettle the Nigerian Federalism. Such issues include the incessant religious crises as a result of the heterogeneous nature of the Nigerian federal state. The view was echoed by Alhaji Shehu Shagari, the then Nigeria’s first Executive President in the Second Republic when he said in a speech at the symposium in the National Constitutional Conference at the Music Society of Nigeria (Muson) center in Lagos, “that the Federal System which we have been operating since independence has been badly battered by the military command, the system which the military rulers applied in the governance of Federal Republic our country has been ruled for 24 years on the unitary system rather than the Federal System and no doubt as a dictatorship instead of democracy (Ola, 1995).

According to Ojo, by this unequal sharing of power, Nigeria is transformed from a political community to an administered state (Ojo, 1989). He goes further to argue that a political community is one characterized by or is based on convocational values, while an administered state is a state where there is absolute subjugation to an absolute centralized authority where there is complete disregard for consociational political relationship. Awa (1976) emphasized this must in his book “Issues in Federalism”, when he did emphasize that the component units of the federation must be able to control their affairs in

their own way and with their own resources. What this tells us is that in a federal system of government, there has to be both constitution and constitutionalism.

The constitution must be the fundamental reflection of the aspiration or wishes of the people on how they wish to be governed at the time of its adoption, modification and amendment. Dudley (1982) in line with this thought argued that the following factors were responsible for the adoption of a federal system of government in Nigeria: The dominant missionary schools, given the strong value attached to western educational and civilization in this part of Nigeria. And in a similar vein, Muslim students were denied Islamic education and forced to receive Bible Knowledge in these missionary schools, given this, Christians were able to successfully dominate political landscape of the south despite the presence of large number of Muslims, with particular reference to the south-west. In Lagos for instance, Bienen (1985) shows that Christians overwhelmingly dominated the politics of the state from the 1920s up till the 1960s (Bienen, 1985).

Religion in Nigeria's Democracy

Shortly after the historic transition to democracy regime in 1999, the news that brought Nigerian politics to the limelight again was the over-flogged Sharia issue following Ahmed Yerima's introduction of the Sharia Islamic legal system in Zamfara State October 1999. Yerima earned widespread support and acceptance from the people of Zamfara for his governorship ambition owing to his campaign promise of implementing Sharia as a major strategy to address widespread societal decadence among them. Hence, Yerima's plan was actualized under the platform of the All People's Party (APP) which later transformed to All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP). APP as a political party was strategically structured to possess the image of the old ruling political parties in the North that were synonymous with their conservative Islamic ideology such as the NPC and National Party of Sharia actors in the North that: If Sharia was from God, it will survive but that if it was from politically motivated it will fizzle out, today the so-called Sharia introduced by the selfish governors is dead. (Punch News, 12 August 2007).

Truly, by 2007, when Umaru Musa Yar'adua of the North emerged as the president, Sharia had died a 'natural death' in most of the states that embraced it, except for Kano. The case of Kano is particularly different because of the background of the governor who was a Muslim cleric. Religion again featured prominently in the political process that informed the emergence of the circumstantial presidency of Goodluck Jonathan in 2010 and the general elections that followed in April 2011. It began with the failed attempt of Olusegun Obasanjo to unconstitutionally prolong his regime in a process dubbed in 'third term agenda' in 2006. As a result, Obasanjo was left with no choice than to quickly arrange for a successor that would better protect the legacies of his regime.

The Theoretical Framework

The first explicit and systematic development of this group theory as it relates to analytic study of political system was provided by Ballard in his book "the process of government" which was published in 1908. Other Scholars of this theory are Robert Dahl, John Stuart Mill among others that make up the polity under study, for example, the nature of perpetual struggle for power and admonition over each other by major ethnic groups. In a nutshell, this framework is associated with this work because of the characteristics nature of the groups. The exponents and principal promoters of the group theory are of the view that every society includes within it a large number of groups which remains engaged in perpetual struggle for power and domination over each other.

The group theory is suitable for this research work because it explains the reason behind every political phenomenon as to having the interest of the group they belong to at hand before the interest of the rest of the citizens and this explain where there is strife, chaos and perpetual struggle between these groups. When these groups take hold of power or positions, they tend to keep the interests of their groups sacred and this leads to agitation and struggle between other groups. For instance, religious groups i.e. Christianity versus Islamic groups. In Nigeria, the principles of federalism is being trampled on i.e. unity

in diversity and this is as a result of the different religious and ethnic groups which are engaged in perpetual struggle for power and domination over each other.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis I: Ethnicity and religion has undermined the development of Nigeria's federalism.

In analyzing the hypothesis, research question one in this paper was answered using facts from articles and journals.

RQI: To what extent has ethnicity and religion affected the development of Nigeria's federalism?

Ethnicity, Religion and the Development of Nigeria's Federalism

Fifty-Nine years after independence, Nigeria's still hustles with one of the major fall-outs of federalism, the politics of trying to appease all sections of the polity. This research work highlights and assesses the nature, quality and value of particular issues and matters that have dominated the Nigerian Federal polity and which has created untold unpleasant experience and pains at one point or the other since independence. Such issues includes religious crisis, inadequate representation of the various ethnic groups, recourse to emergency powers in settling issues in a democratic federal setting, resource control, etc. This is as a result of the multi-ethnic nature of the society.

Different governments have governed this country and had at one point or the other derived various methods to cope with these ever present problems of power disruptions in both political and economic spheres. There has been accusations and counter accusation from all sections of the politic as to how power is being distributed or how they ought to be distributed. Federalism is a system meant to integrate people in a society who are diverse ethnically, cultural, geographically and even religiously, it therefore becomes imperative that once a government is in place, it must endeavor to adequately and equitable distribute power, functions.

Federalism is a system means to integrate people in a society who are diverse ethnically, culturally, geographically and even religiously. It therefore because imperative that once a government is in place, it must endeavor to adequately and equitably distributes power, functions and resources among these diverse groups. But in Nigeria, there are instances where governments have openly violated these principles of federalism. Suffice it to say that in theory, Nigeria can be said to be operating the federal system of government but in actual practice the country is tending toward a unitary system.

Power distribution is a volatile issue which if not properly handled could lead to various forms of crisis which are bound to crop up. Ethnic tension in Nigeria is the resultant effect of improper distributions of functions and resources. This is because the people who now feel left out in the scheme of things sees it as a necessity to rely on their ethnic group which will provide will provide them a good ground for competing with others for resources and against domination by the ethnic groups. This can escalate further and lead to open confrontation among the groups. Also, ethnic politics has become the order of the day as it is believed that an alignment with one's ethnic group enables an easy access to resource (Uhimiwi, Shangho and Epelle, 2007). Diversity represents one of the major defining characters of societies. The concept of diversity in relation to political entity refers to a conglomeration of both ascribed and naturally acquired attributes that distinguish individual/groups characteristics.

These variables meet at the point where individual impact on the governance of the state. Instructively, individuals do not exist in strait-jacketed isolation; they are members of groups, whose defining characters are in regular contact. To this extent, each political-entity is diverse whether homogenous or heterogeneous. Ordinarily, one would assume that Nigeria's diversity ought to be a source of strength but the contrast appears the case. The country is diverse in every way imaginable; culture, religion, ethnicity etc. yet aspires to be united , hence the official by-line "unity in diversity" An analytical dissection of the by-lines implies an intention to unify a diverse society-a scenario whereby the society assumes a sacred "Nigerianess", and relegates individual identities to the background. This has been an almost impossible task to achieve, true to type, individuals and groups have always found reason to recline to their various cocoons depending on the issues at stake.

The religion aspect of the diversity is much more volatile than the ethnicity aspect. Although, the state professes secularity, which by extension affects the component units (indeed the constitution prohibits both local and state governments from adopting any religion), thus, the state has respect for religious freedom in practice. The provision of section 38(1) of the 1999 constitution has yet to strengthen the ability of the states to enforce respect for religious freedom or to prevent violence between religious groups. The state's competence in this regard has been called to question a couple of times. An accurate figure of the spread of religious groupings has never been established, this move is meant to, avert the political undertones that would be generated by the claim of numerical preponderance of any of the religious groups especially two the major ones (Christianity and Islam). The religions spread between the major ethnic groups are, Hausa -99.9% Islam, and 0.10% Christianity, Ibo -97% Christianity, and 3% traditional beliefs, Yoruba – 60% Christianity, 36.38% Islam and 3% traditional African beliefs

The nature of the geographical spread of the two dominant religious has courted lamentations from close watchers of Nigeria's political processes (Falola, 1998). It is believed that the continued existence of "the religion geographical polarization of Nigeria into the pre-dominantly Muslim Northern region and the largely Christians South without integration the two units" (Falola, Ajayi, Alao & Babawale, 1994:103) is an anathema to future political stability of Nigeria.

The relationship among the ethnic groups in Nigeria remains one of the fundamental issues in Nigerian's federalism. The ethnic minority question has dogged Nigeria federalism since inception till date. The major and most forceful minority groups in Nigeria are found to be ethnic groups and have continuously expressed their perceived insecurity ever since the creation of the federal arrangement with its regional tripod basis. Ethnic-religious conflicts in Nigeria have presented many challenges that borders on security and the corporate existence of the country which is the fundamental reason for the adoption of federalism. Following the articulated journals and articles that helps to justify the stated hypothesis I: politics, Ethnicity and religion has undermined the development of Nigeria's federalism, it is justifiable to accept the alternation hypothesis using all the information gotten from various scholars and books.

Hypothesis II: Ethnicity and religion can be managed or order to forward the development of Nigeria's federalism.

In analyzing the hypothesis, question two in this research work was answered using articles and journals.

RQ-2: How can ethnicity, religion be managed in order to forward the development of Nigerian's Federalism?

Ethnicity and Religion in Nigeria Federalism and Prospects

Federalism as a system of governance is pragmatic, dynamic, utilitarian and evolving. It can only strive on consultation, negotiation, compromise, bargaining and agreement between the constituent governments (Fatile and Adeduwon, 2009). Federalism represents a unique form of governmental arrangement. This is because; it involves organization of the state in such manner as to promote unity while at the same time preserving existing diversities within an overarching national entity.

The division and sharing of powers between is general union government and the constituent political communities could resolve not only the need to restrain the power of both the federal government and the constituents governments for the sake of freedom but also the cultural and political demands of the constituent political for the preservation of their governmental integrity (Eme, Onyishi and Sam, 2011) Federalism is a system meant to integrate people in a society who are diverse ethnically, culturally, geographical and even religiously. It therefore becomes imperative that once a government is in place, it must Endeavour to adequately and equitable distribute power functions and resources among these diverse groups.

The problem with federalism in Nigeria is the mix-application or no application of this cause especially as it has to do with power distribution (Awa, 1977).

Nigeria is a country of extraordinary diversity and as such, one of extraordinary complexities. This complexity is a reflection of the avalanche of ethno-cultural and religious groups co-habiting the territory and the intricacies of interactions among them. Federalism was adopted in Nigeria as a compromise device to help the country avoid the prospects of piecemeal independence for the British. Some contend that it was a clear imposition by the British to appease the reactionary North. Despite what may or may not have been the real reasons or causes, four things are incontrovertible. One, Nigeria federalism was not arrived at through social contract or plebiscite. It was a model agreed to by a handful of political leaders at the pre-independence London constitutional conference. Two, Nigerian federalism is very sick, unbalanced and lopsided especially in terms of the over-centralization of power. Three, national integration has remained an illusion at best, even after forty-nine years of independence, with few prospects for change. Ethnicity has remained a state rather than a nation. Four, pronounced injustice exist in the Nigerian federation. Nigeria's federal system is highly centralized in all its ramifications. On this problem, Coleman, Peil (1976), observed that "excessive centralization and statist of most developing countries not only means greater vulnerability as a result of non-fulfillment of populist expectation, it also means heightened inefficiency. In line with the military's command structure, Nigeria's Federal system has been over-centralized to the extent that it reflects more of a unitary government than a federal one (Elaigwu, 1998).

Ethnic tension in Nigeria is the resultant effect of improper distribution of functions and resources. The abandonment of true federalism in Nigeria has led to the neglect and marginalization of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, where the bulk of the country's wealth is produced through the exploration and exploitation of crude oil which is the colossus of Nigeria's economic base. The people of this region have been agitating for fair share of the country's wealth, the bulk of which comes from their region. From a socio-economic perspective, Agbu (2004) believe that the contestation over federalism in Nigeria has manifested itself not only in the quest for access and control over political but also as an access to federally generated revenue one thing that makes Nigeria's federal system/solution problematic is that of structural imbalance, if Mill's law of federal instability is anything to go by that "a federation is morbid if one part of the federation is bigger than sum to sum of the other parts" (Ayoade, 1988 and 1987:9), the system is indeed far from being valence.

The division of the country into three turned the federation into an asymmetric territorial association in which one part (North), was equal to the sum of the other two parts ie. East and West. It is true that "there are federal systems in the world in which the constituent states or regions are even or nearly equal size, population, political power, administrative skills, economic development or relative geographical location" (Frankel 1996:66). But where ever the disparity is as great as to make one constituent state permanently dominating collective decisions, it results in unitary centralism rather than federalism which is the case in Nigeria. Indeed, from all indications, this structural imbalance generated fear of domination among various groups in the country, most especially the minority ones.

In terms of landmass, Northern region then had 77.0% Eastern region 8.3%, Western region 8.5% and the Midwestern region 4.2% with the 1963 census figures, the northern region accounted for 53.5% of the total population of Nigeria, the Eastern 23.3% then Western region 18.4% and the Mid-Western Region 4.8%. Thus, for three Southern regions, the Federal structure as existed made it virtually impossible for the South to control political power at the Centre, given the ethno-regional politics in the country. The South thus feared Northern political domination by population and landmass, while the North is equally Afraid of Southern edge in skills, it got through Western education acquired earlier than the North (Elaigwu, 1977:147)

Table 1: Empirical Indication of Power (Presidency) Between 1960-Date.

No.	Dates	Identities	State	Zones
1	Oct. 1, 1960-Jan. 14, 1966	T.E BALEWA	Bauchi	North-East
2	Jan. 15, 1960- July 29, 1966	J.T.U AGUIYI-IRONSI	Abia	South-East
3	July 30, 1966-July 28, 1975	Y.I GOWON	Plateau	North-Central
4	July 29, 1975-Feb 13, 1976	M.R MUHAMMED	Kano	North-West
5	Feb. 14, 1976-Sept 30, 1976	O. OBASANJO	Ogun	South –West
6	Oct. 1 1979-Dec 30, 1983	U.A.S SHAGARI	Sokoto	North-West
7	Dec. 31, 1983-Aug 26, 1985	M. BUHARI	Katsina	North-West
8	Aug. 27, 1985-Aug 26, Aug 1993	I.B BABANGIDA	Niger	North-Central
9	Aug. 26, 1993-Nov. 17, 1993	E.A SHONEKAN	Ogun	South-West
10	Nov. 18, 1993-June 8, 1998	SANI ABACHA	Kano	North-West
11	June 9, 1998-May 29, 1999	A.ABUBAKAR	Niger	North Central
12	May 29, 1999-May29, 2003	O. OBASANJO	Ogun	South-West
13	May 29, 2003-May 29, 2007	O.OBASANJO	Ogun	South-West
14	May 29, 2007- June, 2011	U. M. YAR’ADUA	Katsina	North- West
15	June, 2011- May 29, 2015	DR. G. E. JONATHAN	Bayelsa	South-South
16	May 29, 2015- Date	M. BUHARI	Katsina	North-West

Source: Sunday Tribune, 7th August, 1994, Ibadan, 7-9 and updated by the authors (2020).

It is the foregoing that breeds the problem of hegemonic traits by the major ethnic groups in the federation. It is also for these reasons that ethnic minorities who seem not to be reckoned with are restless. If anything the greatest travail of Nigeria federalism is the problem of asymmetric power relationships between and among the disparate component units of the federation. Empirical data from 1960, when Nigeria became politically sovereign, buttresses this position that the federation is tilted in favour of the North. Table 1 speaks for itself.

Table 2: Empirical Indication of Representation in the ruling body both Military and Civilian Governments (1960 to 1998).

No	Regimes	Regions	Degree of Representation (%)
1	Balewa (Federal Executive Council)	North West East	37.3 37.3 35.4
2	Ironsi (Supreme Military Council)	North West East	50 33.3 16.7
3	Gowon (Supreme Military Council/Federal Council Executive)	North West East	60 41.7 16.6
4	Mohammed/Obasanjo (Federal Executive Council)	West East North	36.4 4.5 57.5
5	Shagari (Federal Executive Council)	West East North	20.25 20 60.1
6	Shagari (Federal Executive Council)	West East North	27.7 11.1 50
7	Buhari (Supreme Military Council) (1985)	West East North	36.7 13.3 54.5
8	Babangida (Armed Forces Ruling Council)	West East North	36.4 9.0 55.6
9	Babangida (Provincial Ruling Council) (1992)	West East North	38.8 5.6 4.79
10	Shonekan (Interline National Government) (1993)	West East	31.2 21.9

Source: Compiled and updated by the author from Osisioma Nwoli

Since 1960 when Nigeria assumed sovereign status, political power has been monopolized by the North as empirically demonstrated above, Elaigwu puts it this way;

...There was a relatively delicate division of power between the North and South. The North's control of political power was counter-balanced by the South's monopoly of economic power in the country. We may go further to suggest that the January coup of 1966 tilted the delicate balance between the North and the South, it concentrated both political and economic power in the South, the North felt its sense of security threaten and reacted accordingly. (Elaigwu, 1997:147).

In an in-depth study, Ayoade (1987:184) observed that “religious bias too proved another form of poor distribution in Nigerian federalism more so, when equity and justice was put into abeyance. Also, in the second republic (1979-1983), country wide, Moslems obtained about 70% of all executive and board positions”.

Managing the Convolution Federalism

Despite all the highlighted problems facing Nigerian Federalism, the Country is still often regarded as a pioneer and exemplar in Africa in the use of power-sharing mechanisms and practices to promote inter-ethnic inclusiveness or discourages sectional imbalance and bias in decision making processes. Federalism as a political philosophy aims to create harmony from intrinsic or inherent political, social and economic asymmetry vis-a-vis ethnic heterogeneity. To have a situation of masters and servants, or a situation of graduated citizenship is a negation of true federalism. In restructuring Nigeria Federalism, thought must be given to the idea of basing it on ethnic nationalities.

Nigeria should aim at fashioning out a political culture that will downplay, if not totally eliminate of feelings of mistrust, deep-seated animosity that exists among the various ethnic groups in the country and also examine the issue of perceived domination of some section others.

One of the many ways of doing the above is to operate a political culture that will promote equal opportunities for all Nigerians. The idea of state and local government creation should be discouraged and put on hold for now, the creation of states and local government has led to ethnic violence in the past and exacerbated lingering ones. This is not condemning state and local government creation but it must be pointed out that states and local government has led to ethnic violence in the past exacerbated lingering ones. This is not condemning state and local government creation but it must be pointed out that states and local governments failed to solve the problem they are meant to solve.

Ethnic violence also arises out of political situation ie. the race to occupy public offices becomes a do or die affair. Today, we still have ethnic, sectional or zonal backing of political aspirants from a particular section of the country. This sort of backing are needed by these sectional or ethnic groups to push home the demands and in cases like this, ethnic violence could not be avoided. There is the need for the country to encourage alignments based on national and collective interests’ rather than ethnic or sectional consideration.

From the above solutions or ideas, it can be said that politics, ethnicity and religion can be managed by integration the interests of the various ethnic groups, religious groups, religious group into the federal system.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that ‘ethno-religious’ violence retards the practice of federalism in Nigeria, contaminates social relations and undermines the economy of the state. Ethnic religious bigotry Nigeria has become of fulcrum of various forms of nationalism ranging from assertion, language, cultural autonomy and superiority to demand for local political autonomy and self-determination. The realities of ethnic and religious conflict in Nigeria are alarming and require very urgent, apt and continued attention. The use of ethnicity, religion and politics should rather unite us as Nigerians in order to promote peace, harmonious, peaceful co-existence and unity. The reverse of this has consequences for Nigeria as there were “ethno-religious” conflicts that claimed so many lives and property.

Put simply, the spate of “ethno-religious” conflict in Nigeria since independence has produced a catalogue that resulted in an estimated loss of over three million lives and unquantifiable psychological and material damages. Most importantly, from the study, we are able to understand that excessive politicization, religious bias; ethnicity would definitely undermine Nigeria’s federal system.

Lastly, this study has so far revealed that “ethno-religious” conflicts are inevitable in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society like Nigeria. In spite of the widespread of “ethno-religious” conflicts in Nigeria and their long history, the Nigerian governments (past and present) have failed to tackle this problem through articulate policy actions. A federal system that claims to be secular is presently enmeshed

in religious in religious upheavals because of the adoption of Sharia in some Northern parts of the country. Despite the continued arrangement as articulated by the ruling class, the systematic dysfunction has resulted in a service of violent, dramatic and traumatic inter-ethno regional confrontation, ventilating the essence of the debate.

Recommendations

The recommendations of this paper are as follows:

- ❖ The government should set machinery in motion wherein there should be mutual respect for different religious views for this would unfailingly create a commonwealth of free believers united to one another by love and justice.
- ❖ There should be the provision of qualitative and affordable education to teeming population, for education is a sine-qua non for social interactions, national integration and development of any nation. It helps individuals to live in harmony with one another regardless of various in their classes, occupation and races, political and religious orientation.
- ❖ Nigerians should see themselves as brothers and sisters created by the same God, although tribe and tongues may differ. This will make Nigerians see themselves in the virtues of peace, tolerance and understanding which are the tenets of every religion and civilized behavior.
- ❖ Again, in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country like ours founded on the principle of federalism, there are certain indices of coexistence. The secularity of the states as enshrined in the constitution belongs to this category and as a factor must neither be negotiated nor compromised.

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