

REGIONALISM, IDEOLOGY CRISES, PARTY AFFILIATION AND FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The traditional African state that transformed into Modern Nigeria states no doubt grows out of political pursuit of political supremacy among the dominant ethnic groups. This of course has led to domination of minority groups, and fear of domination by the latter has unleashed political pressures and destroyed the peaceful co-existence of the amalgamated entities of 1914. Various ethnic groups that constitute the traditional states of Nigeria had strong ethnic identities, effective traditional system of governance and strong passion against any domination by other social groups. At independence, Nigeria states could not be united because Nigerian was essentially too passionate to adherence to their various political groups, to the ideology of ethnocentrism, the ideology that fueled the strategy of political regionalism and crisis.

Political crisis has become prevalent in Nigeria because colonialism created Nigeria as loose amalgamation of traditional African states, but did not create an appropriate political structure suitable to the ethno-political situation of Nigeria. The inappropriate political structure and inappropriate political system has continued to fuel ethnocentric ideologies in present day Nigeria as it's believed, rightly or wrongly by the various ethnic groups of Nigeria that adherence to such ideologies is the only means to secure maximum protections of ethnic identity and maximum protections against political domination and economic marginalization. The fear of political and economic marginalization have created ethnocentric groups of young Nigerians willing to risk their lives and to secure better political, economic autonomy in Nigeria.

Key Words: Regionalism, Ideology, party affiliation and democracy.

Introduction

Politics is about power and influence. It is a struggle of contending ideological viewpoints on the allocation and distribution of resources. It determines who gets what, when and how? Resistance to politics is constructed in response to the distributive mechanism adopted by the governing political party in the polity. In the practice of politics, the disadvantaged groups feel oppressed or marginalized. The

resistance to oppression manifests itself in any of the following categories; class, ethnic, race, regional, religious or gender. Elements in these categories argue for systematic changes that will eliminate the causes of their oppression, they demand for equity and fairness. The contest for political power in Nigeria like other traditional African countries is driven by the contrasting imperatives of ethnicity and regionalism, which, by implications is devoid of any sustaining unifying theme or ideology. The lessons of Nigeria political history teach that political regionalism is not compatible with the empowerment of a multiplicity of politicized ethnic groups. Once regions are established and endowed with political power, ethnic interest are routinely sacrificed to regional interests, which often prove to be the interests articulated by the leaders of large ethnic groups; while the large groups become regionalist, smaller groups look to the center for protection against their overbearing neighbours within the region (Dike,1957).

Before going into full discourse of this work, I will like to elucidate on the conceptual explanation of my topic by giving conceptual classification of key words on this paper. To start with word regionalism; **Regionalism** according to oxford advance learner dictionary is a feature of a language that exists in a particular part of a country, and is not part of the standard language; it is the desire of the people who live in a particular region of a country seeking for more political and economic independence. In most developing nations, to which Nigeria belongs, the core region is made up of a few dominant central place or enclaves, while the periphery is subordinate and extensive in nature. Both are functionally and dynamically related to each other (Friedman, 1973).

Ideology is known to be set of ideas that an economic or political system is based on like Marxist capitalist ideology; is a set of beliefs, especially one held by a particular group, which influences the way they behave. While defining what ideology is, Franz Schurmann stated that ideology is generally defined as “the manner of thinking characteristic of a class. Ideology expresses directly or indirectly the views, ideas and interests of a definite social class. Thus in capitalist society, ideology is perceived to reflect the interest of the dominant social class i.e the capitalists. Furthermore, in Marxist science the ideology of a given society is examined not only from the ideas, but from the unity of ideas and actions of the class at political and economic level. The competition on the propagation of one ideology over another and vehement rejection of such ideological beliefs by the other therefore, lead to ideological crises or conflict known as clash of ideological interests between two opposing groups. Like Nnoli has once argued, ethnicity in Nigeria has remained a reflection of class interests. He explained that “*ethnicity is an element of the ideological super structure of Nigeria society which rests on, is functional for and is determined by the infrastructure of society, the mode of production*”(Nnoli,1978) .

Party affiliation from which ideological beliefs emerge is defined as; to join or to be connected with a particular political party or group.

Long before European colonialism, much of present-day Modern Nigeria state was divided into states, which can be identified with the modern ethnic groups that trace their history to the origin of these states. These states are the traditional African states that now constitute the modern African states of Nigeria. The major traditional states of Nigeria since the early history of Nigeria were the Hausa City states of the Northern Nigeria, the Igbo states of the eastern Nigeria, and the Yoruba and Benin kingdoms of the Western Nigeria. These states had their own identity, system of government and religion and have endeavoured to preserve them in spite of colonialism and the creation of the modern state of Nigeria. Archaeological evidence, oral traditions, and written documentation tells us that for over two millennia, the people of Nigeria established dynamic societies and well developed political systems that has had important influence on colonial rule and has continued to shape independent Nigeria. This has further been buttressed by (Crowder, 1973; Cookey, 1979) that “*the birth of Nigeria could be at best termed “artificial” since the boundaries were not born out of physical, cultural, social, religious, economic, and environmental homogeneity, but conceived mainly as a geographical organization for the administrative convenience of British imperialism*”.

For example, the history of Nigeria has been greatly influenced by the three regionally dominant ethnic groups- the Hausas, the Yorubas, and Igbos. In the South are the Ijaw people a dominant minority ethnic group in the Niger Delta, whose history also has influenced politics and its power play (Ayandele, 1979).

The Pre-Colonial Nigeria States

Hausa States of Northern Nigeria

The origin and traditions of the Hausa people of Nigeria created a strong ethnic identity that has been the unifying force against domination by other ethnic groups. According to tradition, the rulers of Hausa descended from a mythical figure- Bayinjida, who is believed to have founded the Hausa states of pre-colonial Nigeria. The states are Daura, Gobir, Katsina, Zamfara, Kano, Kebbi and Zaria. As a result of common origin, the Hausa people of Northern Nigeria developed

common identity and have fiercely protected their identity against any form of domination. To protect their common identity and their economic interest, each of the Hausa states acquired special military, economic, or religious functions. Although, no one state dominated the others, but at various times different states assumed a leading role. The Hausa states of pre-colonial Northern Nigeria quarreled with each other and failed to create a political unity and as a result they came under the political domination of Songhai Empire and Kanem Borno Empire. However, even while the Hausa states were not united in pre-colonial Nigeria; they have been much more politically united during and after colonialism as a present day political necessity to prevent another political domination by other African ethnic group (Areola, 1978).

Igbo States of Eastern Nigeria

Pre-colonial Igbo states of Nigeria did not develop centralized political institutions. According to history and tradition, the Igbo people were egalitarian people who lived in small, self-contained groups of villages organized according to a lineages system that did not allow social stratification. There was no chief and an individual's fitness to govern was determined by his wisdom, age and experience. To maintain social order and ensure impartiality in setting disputes between communities, the Igbo people relied on priests. In spite of non centralized political institutions, history has revealed that Igbo people of Nigeria created strong ethnic identity and have resisted political domination right from the advent of colonialism to the present, a fact that has contributed to political crisis in Nigerian political development.

Yoruba Kingdoms of Western Nigeria

Like the other social groups of Nigeria, the Yoruba people of Nigeria developed a strong ethnic identity as a result of their beliefs of descending from one mythical hero called "Oduduwa" the founder of the ethnic Yoruba kingdom at Ife, a traditional home, religious and political centrally ruled by the Oni of Ife (the King). Ife is famous for its beautiful sculpture associated with its tradition. During the fifteenth century, Oyo and Benin surpassed Ife as political and economic powers, yet Ife preserved its status as a religious center even after its decline. Respect for the priestly functions of the Oni of Ife and recognition of the common tradition of origin were crucial factors in the evolution of Yoruba ethnicity. The Ife model of government was adopted

at Oyo as old Oyo Empire, where a council of state, the Oyo Mesi selects the Alafin of Oyo (King) from candidates proposed from the ruling dynasty and acted as check on authority of the King. Oyo developed as a constitutional monarchy; while actual government was in the hands of the Bashorun (Prime Minister), who presided over the Oyo Mesi. By fifteenth century, the kingdom of Benin emerged to become a major trading power in its right. Political power and religious authority resided in the Oba (the king), who according to tradition was descended from Ife dynasty. The Oba was advised by a council of six hereditary chiefs, who also nominated his successor. Responsibility for administering the kingdom lay with sixty trade guilds. Like Ife and other Yoruba states, Benin, too, is famous for its sculpture. The strong belief therefore, in a common origin of the Yoruba state before European colonialism created a strong ethnic identity of the Yoruba people of Nigeria and strong passion against any form of domination by other socio ethnic groups in Nigeria (Adeniyi, 1978).

Colonial Nigeria

These groups of entities were in existence as traditional African states with widely varied cultures and different modes of political organization when Briton, the colonial master declared Northern Nigeria a protectorate and instituted indirect rule using the local rulers through the Emirs. The successful implementation of indirect rule in Northern Nigeria had made Lord Lugard to continue with policy of indirect rule following his amalgamation of Southern and Northern protectorate Nigeria in 1914 with the endowment of exclusive power to Oba, and the institution of local administration of District officers (DO) and Warrant Chiefs in the Southwest. It is no doubt that Governor Lugard policy of Indirect Rule; aggravated the increased differences between the Northern and Southern protectorate (Burn, 1964). The uneven administration and preparation of budget for the two Nigeria's resulted in social and economic disparities being created between the two regions by the colonial administration, as well as the emergence of confrontational ethnicity. Undoubtedly, economic growth between the two regions became spatially different enough that Lugard went as far as diverting revenue from the South to balance the Northern deficit (Crowder, 1973). In Nnoli's words, "...*indirect rule widened the social distance among the communal groups in Nigeria, thereby reinforcing the ethnocentric factor in the emergence of ethnicity*" (Nnoli 1978).

By 1916, the British Governor, Lord Lugard had been persuaded to form Nigerian council, a consultative body that brought together six traditional leaders including the Sultan of Sokoto, the Emir of Kano and king of Oyo to represent all parts of the colony. What has been the problem from beginning was that Nigerian Council did not address the ethnic concerns and political aspirations of the traditional states since the council was used exclusively to implement British policy. Thus right from this period, the seed of political struggle to secure ethnic supremacy of Nigeria through non-traditional government was sown. It could not have been a surprise that by the mid 1940s, the major ethnic groups of Nigeria had formed such ethno centric associations as the Igbo Federation, the Egbe omo Oduduwa (Society of descendants of Oduduwa), a Yoruba cultural movement and the Northern people's Congress (NPC) of Northern Nigeria. The development of a primordial phenomenon is based on the perspective derived from sociological, anthropological, economic, and psychological variables which include regional areas, means of livelihood, kinship, customs or ways of life, religion, language and literature (Hall, 1979; Rothschild, 1981). Group makers initially create an avenue for "collective identity system" which constitutes moral and cultural values and beliefs, common perceptions and interpretations of historical events, and a set of well defined rituals that reinforce and perpetuate this consciousness (Spicer, 1971).

Azeez (2004) views ethnicity as a sense of people hood that has its foundation in the combined remembrance of past experience and common aspiration. Nigeria as a plural society, made up of over 250 ethnic groups with many subgroups three ethnic groups as Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo who dominate the political landscape. With this dichotomy, all other ethnics groups have been swept under carpet. Ekeh (1973) has argued that ethnicity has flourished because the Nigerian elite who inherited the colonial state have conceptualized development as transferring resources from the civil public to the primordial public. It is against this background that this writer x-rays in a laconic manner the interplay of ethnicity in the body politics of Nigeria in pre-independence era and from independence till today. It has been argued that "Nigeria's political misfortunes in the past and the failure to evolve a united, prosperous and just nation can be blamed partly on inadequate and defective structures and institutions as well as on the orientation which British colonialism bequeathed to the young nation at independence and the reluctance of succeeding Nigerian governments to tackle these problems decisively" (Political Bureau Report, 1987)

There was a brief period and very brief indeed, when the various ethnic groups of Nigeria coalesced to form a nationalist's political movement. This was when the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) was formed, a political movement that could have established a solid foundation of a true national political party which would have prevented the politics or political party affiliation tendencies. This was very glaring for example in 1938 election when the NYM dominated the legislative council and moved to establish a genuinely national network of affiliates. This promising start however, was stopped three years later by internal divisions in which ethnic loyalties emerged triumphantly. The departure of Igbo leaders from NYM left the organization in Yoruba hands as at then assumed by the Igbo's that the party has been dominated by the majority Yoruba and Lagos elites. This assumption might have being right during 2nd World War when the NYM was reorganized into a predominantly Yoruba Political party, the Nigeria Youth Movement, thus setting the stage for a Yoruba-Igbo rivalry that has become a major factor in Nigeria politics (Ayeni & Mabogunje, 1982).

Undoubtedly, strong ethnic identities and the fear of political domination by other ethnic groups, which were developed during the pre-colonial Nigeria, created ethnic cleavages in pre-independent Nigeria. Ethnic cleavages therefore, cultivated to ethnic regionalism; that in the postwar period, parties' lines were sharply drawn on the basis of ethnicity and regionalism, a strategy employed by all groups to protest identity and resist domination (Geary, 1965). With the demise of NYM, nationalist splintered into Hausa and Fulani-backed Northern People's Congress (NPC), the Yoruba-supported Action Group, and Igbo-dominated National Council of Nigeria and the Cameron (NCNC), later called National Council of Nigerian Citizen. In the absence of national unity political parties, the NPC dominated the Northern Region, the NCNC controlled the Eastern Region and the Action Group controlled the Western Region. Each of the three dominant ethnic group of Nigeria succeeded in their first objective, which was to dominate their respective region. Having realized their first objective, the next one was to control the national government so as to maximize political power to protect their ethnic interest. To achieve this in its own part, NPC objective was to mobilize the North's large voting strength, so as to win control of the national government. With advantage of North's large population, NPC political strategy used local Northern issues to win national political power, a successful strategy that has been a major cause of political instability in Nigeria political system.

To protect ethnic identity, the NPC platform emphasized the integrity of the North, its traditions, religion, and social order. The party has been created to counterbalance the activities of Southern based political parties. So support for broad Nigerian concern as at this period occupied a clear second place. For instance, a lack of interest in extending the NPC beyond the Northern region during the period in question was corresponding to this strictly regional orientation (Nnoli, 1976). In its attempt to protect ethnic identity and prevent Southern domination of the North, the people of Northern Nigeria through NPC resisted unity national political platform. That any activity in the North that might include participation by the federal government and consequently by Southern Civil Servants was regarded as a challenge to the primacy of the emirates of the North. Even the broadening political participation and expanding educational opportunities and other social services were also viewed as threats to the status quo, which essentially represents the fundamental social identity of the Hausa ethnic group of Northern Nigeria. It became imperative to preserve the status quo of the North to protect Northern ethnicity. With no doubt, uncompromising protection of the Northern power base by the NPC was found to have been the major factor in creating ethnic division that have precipitated political crisis in Nigeria.

Like the NPC political party of the Hausa –Fulani, the Action Group known as political party of the Yoruba of Western Nigeria took advantage on its regional sentiments to control Western Nigeria. Even while it lacks the population size that can enable it to control the national government, AG employed a different political strategy of creating autonomous states in order to dilute the political power of Northern Nigeria. The Action Group was the heir of a generation flourishing cultural consciousness among the Yoruba and appealed essentially to regional sentiments of the Yoruba people. The Action Group has been reported to be a vehicle for Yoruba regionalism that resisted the concept of unitary government supported by NCNC. The party was a consistent supporter of minority-group demands for autonomous states within a federal structure. This move assumed that comparable alterations would be made elsewhere especially in the North, an attitude that won the party minority voting support in the other regions. This political strategy of Action Group for example, backed Yoruba irredentism in the Fulani-ruled emirate of Ilorin in the Northern Region and separatist movements among non-Igbo in the Eastern region. Just as regionalism was a political means of monopolize power in the West and creation of autonomous states, was a political means to break the national political monopoly of

power by the North. The underlying objective of Action Group like that of Northern People Congress was to protect Yoruba ethnicity and to avoid political domination by other ethnic groups.

The NCNC likewise appealed to regional sentiment but, unlike the NPC and the AG, it advocated autonomous regions within a unitary government. Without gain saying, it is clear that the three regional political parties jockeyed for positions of power in anticipation of the independence of Nigeria. The 1946 constitution add more impetus to the politics of regionalism as it devolved deliberative authority to the regions, thus recognizing the country's diversity. Although with its realistic assessment of the situation in Nigeria, the new constitution undoubtedly intensified regionalism as an alternative to political unification. The 1950 constitution reinforced the dual course of constitutional evolution, allowing for both regional autonomy and federal union. Though the three political parties, NPC, NCNC and AG negotiated with the British government over constitutional changes, but cooperation among them were the result of expediency rather than an emerging sense of national identity (Ukiwo, 2005). These political parties were essentially regional political movements designed primarily to exploit the federal arrangement to attain regional and national power. They were created mainly to wrestle political control of a new nation that was being constituted through the amalgamation of traditional African States.

This power of regional sentiment and ethnic identity manifested itself in elections. It restricted political discourse to local issues, discourage regional compromises and granted the region with larger population more political power. The NPC was seen entering candidates only in the Northern region, confined campaigning largely to the northern region. For instance, the election of the House of Representative after the adoption of the 1954 constitution gave the NPC a total of seventy-nine seats, all from the Northern region. Elections were held for a new and greatly enlarged House of Representative in December 1959. 174 of the 312 seats were allocated to the northern region on the basis of larger population. The northern region, having more than half of the country's population, controlled a majority of the seats in the House of Representatives. Among other major parties, the NCNC took 56 seats, wining majority in both the Eastern and the Western regions, while the Action Group captured only 27 seats. So while the North succeeded

in their political strategy of using local issues to win national political power, the success exacerbated ethnic divisions in Nigeria, and accentuated political rivalry (Nnoli, 1978).

The political rivalry of Nigeria's regional parties was accentuated by ethnic competition for control of the political machinery and the economy as the presence of the British was receding. Ethnic favouritism by government authorities became the norms as the British receded, it generated great resentments because it magnified the political marginalization of some ethnic groups. This eventually led to economic favouritism as well as economic marginalization. The discovery of oil in 1956 at Olobiri in the Niger Delta at commercial rate increased the prospects of economic expansion of Nigeria, yet it further accentuated political rivalries on the eve of independence. This was very ironical because while the fear of political marginalization by other ethnic groups sowed the seeds of political crisis, the discovery of oil accentuated the crisis. Therefore, with intensified ethnic resentments and discovery of oil on the lands of minority ethnic groups, political crisis in Nigeria become inevitable (Boulder, 1983).

Independent Nigeria

What is very surprising was that the independence of modern African state of Nigeria did not unite its amalgamated entities. As we have seen in our previous discussion, the ethnic divisions that resulted from disagreement on the composition of states within Nigeria were due essentially to the passionate adherence of the various regional political groups to the ideology of ethnocentrism. This was conspicuously displayed by the political parties after the independence; that the attitude of the major parties toward the formation of new states that could accommodate minority aspirations varied widely. To consolidate in the Eastern Region of Nigeria and to break the national power of the Hausa- NPC, which was acquired because of population size, the Igbo- NCNC espoused self-determination for ethnic minorities but only in accordance with its advocacy of a unitary state. Similarly, to dilute the power of the Hausa-NPC, and to consolidate their power in the Western region of Nigeria, the Yoruba- Action Group also supported self-determination for ethnic minorities, including the restoration of the northern Yoruba area (Ilorin) to the Western Region, but as part of a multi-state federal Nigeria. On the other hand, to continue to monopolize the national power of Nigeria that is based on northern population size, the Hausa-NPC steadfastly opposed separatism in the northern region and attempted with some

success to win over disaffected minorities in the middle belt. Thus, the jockeying for political supremacy as means to protect ethnic identity and prevent ethnic domination continued unabated after the Nigeria independence (Geary, 1965).

The political jockeying for political supremacy in Nigeria by the major ethnic groups intensified political agitation by the minority ethnic groups. This was found on political agitation by the minorities to create meaningful political autonomy within modern state of Nigeria as a device of the groups to end political domination. To this end, proposals were introduced for the creation of three states as a means of restructuring the regions along ethnic lines. The most extensive revision sought the separation of the middle belt from the Northern region, a move the united middle Belt Congress promoted. Serious riots that followed in Tivland in 1960 and 1964 respectively were proving evidence to the agitation. Very close to that event was plan put forward by the Edo and Western Igbo to create the Midwestern region by separating the whole tract adjacent to the Niger River from the Yoruba-dominated Western region. At the same time, the Ijaw and Efik-Ibiobio ethnic group proposed that the coast between the Niger Delta and Calabar should become a new region in order to end Igbo dominance in that area. All these agitations and political strategies by the minorities are designed for internal restructuring Nigeria to create more regions, to reflect ethnic identities and break the political dominance of the major ethnic groups.

Furthermore, as contemporary Nigerian history has clearly revealed, while the major ethnic groups jockeyed to secure political domination of national power, the minority ethnic groups agitated to end political domination. Therefore, political jockeying to acquire national political supremacy and political agitation in Nigeria are indicative of a burning desire of traditional Africa for true autonomy within Modern Africa states. However, Nigeria like other Modern African states had ignored the legitimate cry for genuine democracy. As its revealed political maneuvering and the political protest exacerbated ethnic divisions in Nigeria and has laid the foundation for political crisis. The political crisis emerged in Nigeria because the political structure of independent Nigeria was not politically conducive to the socio-geopolitical aspiration of the amalgamated traditional African states that constitute the modern Africa states of Nigeria. As history has indicated, the intense ethnic resentments that caused ethnic divisions

so endemic during the colonial period continued unabated in post independent Nigeria and that has provided the seeds that germinated into periodic eruption of political crisis including the three years of Nigerian civil war (Nigeria, 1984).

The Nigerian Civil War- The Dawn of Military Confrontations

Instead of elections to have eliminated political tensions, it rather intensified it, thus resulting in the outbreak of the Nigerian civil war. The January 1966 coup when a group of army officer consist mostly the Igbo young officers marked another phase of political dilemma in Nigeria politics. The coup had led to overthrow of the northern dominated government, killed the prime minister, a northerner, took control of government and got rid of the federal system of government to replace it with a central government with many Igbos as advisor. Because the coup has been observed as Igbo domination and control of Nigerian army, in July 1966, a counter coup was organized by a group of northern army officer as a revolt against the new government, the army chief of staff, a northerner, was appointed as the head of the new military government. In his attempt to consolidate his regime, the new head of state split the existing four region of Nigeria into twelve states. This however, was refused when attempt was made for the division of the Eastern region by the military governor of the then Eastern region. In reaction to Nigerian government posture, he declares the Eastern Region an independent republic called Biafra. This of course led to civil war between Biafra and remainder of Nigeria. The war which started in June 1967 continued until Biafra surrender on January 15 1970. Over one million people were reported to have died during the period under survey. Thus, majoritarian democracy imported into Nigeria did not and have not prevented political crisis in Nigeria because that democracy does not guarantee equal sharing of political power between traditional Africa represented by the ethnic groups of Nigeria and Modern Africa represented by Nigerian (Cohen, 1997).

With the demise of civil war, the Ijaw ethnic group of Niger Delta started threatening all out war on Nigeria government; asked foreign oil workers to leave the Niger Delta. The Ijaw people have promised to fight Nigeria government with the last drop of their blood. The groups' demands are based on reform in Nigeria government to better their lots in the Niger Delta where more than two thirds of people live in poverty despite the huge mineral riches pumped from their ethnic

lands. These demands have created a political crisis in Nigeria today under the revenue allocation formula. The crisis has become persistent because of the inequality in the distribution of the endowed resources found in large commercial quantity in the land of later. To secure an equal share of political and economic power of Nigeria so as to protect ethnic identity, the Ijaw people have called on the Nigerian government to guaranteed and facilitate attainment of the legitimate rights of the Niger Delta peoples in their demand for self-determination and resource control.

The Current Political Crisis in Nigeria

Although in the second republic, regionalism was played down a bit. This was made possible because of 1979 constitution; the constitution has stipulated that; for a political party to be registered, it must have a national outlook. This implies that, it must have a wide geographical spread across the country. Still yet, the new parties that were registered at 1979 had their leadership replicated along ethnic lines as in the first republic. Notable among them were: Chief Obafemi Awolowo retaining the leadership of A.G which has metamorphosed into Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN); Nnamidi Azikiwe controlled Igbo speaking area under the National People Party (NPP) which is an offshoot of the old NCNC; National Party of Nigeria (NPN) dominated the Hausa Fulani area of Northern Nigeria, People Redemption Party (PRP) in Hausa speaking while Great Nigerian Peoples Party (GNPP) led by Ibrahim Waziri controlled the Kanuri speaking area. Therefore, ethnic colouration and affiliation still played out in political parties' formulation and their operations during the second republic. The voting pattern behaviour of Nigerians also showed the ethnocentric line in the elections all through the period in question.

It is worth mentioning that political parties' formulation had a different dimension in the third republic; this could not have been possible without the political ambition of General Ibrahim Babangida who has all along been a midwife to their formation. Two parties were formed and founded by his government. These were the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC). Even though these parties were formed by government, ethnic and religious cleavages were visible in the membership and composition of the parties. For example, while the SDP favoured the Southwest, NRC was seen as a party for the Hausa and Fulani North as could be observed from their operations. The repeated ethnic approach to

political development and their pattern of voting behavior in the third republic explained that Nigerians are very adherent and passionate to their various ethnic affinities, to the ideology of ethnocentrism as a means of protecting their ethnic identity, avoid political domination and prevent economic marginalization (TELL;1993).

The annulment of June 12, 1993 presidential election which was confirmed as ever freest election in the history of Nigeria election by the international observers however sprang up the ethnic sentiment in the fourth republic. The annulled election that has been won by a Yoruba candidate from Southwest became a seed of discord in the history of Nigeria politics, and as agenda of north to retain the monopoly of power. The annulment and the death of acclaimed winner, Chief MKO Abiola brought about the formation of different groups along the ethnic divide, and ethnic based political movements. Prominent among them were associates formed by Yorubas, popularly called Afenifere and Odua Peoples' Congress representing the Yoruba ethnic group, while the Igbo is represented by Ohanaze Ndigbo, and the Union of Niger Delta speaks for the South-South. An Arewa Consultative Forum stands to defend the core interests of the Hausa-Fulani who feel threatened by these challenges to their power by other mentioned groups (Alulo, 2003).

This development and aspiration was later transferred into current political dispensation the fourth republic, of which some of the present political parties could as well have had their history rooted from ethnic consideration. With ANPP considered as party predominantly occupied by the Hausa- Fulani even the decamp of General Buhari, and his immediate formation of CPC could not make a difference. AD which is now called ACN, is consider as a direct descendant of Chief Awolowos' Action Group party and Unity Party respectively. The ruling People Democratic Party (PDP) which is seen to have deviated a bit from the usual ethno religious dominated party politics of the past with its membership and formation cutting across the clime of Nigeria have been later caught on the web of repeated history epoch in 2011 general election; and violence that followed in the North. Ethnic, religion and regional politics has beginning to play its roles even among the members of the ruling party. This has occurred because with the demise of President Musa Yar Adua, some people in the north felt power should not be shifted to the south, and as a result of power shift; they have started kicking against the presidential

candidate of their party. While the PDP which seems to have national outlook has begun to have internal crisis with series of experiences in Nigeria since April 2011, it is clear that ethnic and religious politics is still with us and will continue to plague the body politics and unity of Nigeria as a sovereign state (Ukiwo,2005).

Sincerely speaking none of these political parties can be said to represent the interests of general Nigerians. This is because most of the time, the process and the formation of these parties are monopolized by the wealthy few that control access to power. The interests of the Nigerian poor are excluded in their agenda. Even in the areas of articulating capitalist ideological policies, the ruling political parties have demonstrated gross ineptitude. The primary motive of Nigerian political leaders has been the promoting of their respective ethnic groups. The emphasis is not on developing economic infrastructures that will benefit the entire country, but rather it is on which ethnic group will produce the next president. Defined in this context therefore, the construct of political alliance and alignment in Nigeria is driven by inter-ethnic coalition, and not by any reasoned ideological framework that cut across ethnic divide. As a rule, when people of diverse ethnic groups establish their respective political parties in ethnocentric methodologies, the motivation has always been how to embezzle public funds and further the underdevelopment of the country.

For example, President Obasanjo when addressed his Peoples Democratic Party member in their 3rd national Convention Abuja on March 31, 2001, seems to lament the lack of an ideology among the membership of ever called the largest political party in Africa. According to him, *“The PDP is no more than a dynamic of amalgam of interest groups”* He continued; *what has held us together, if anything at all, is that our party is in power and there is strong expectation of patronage, our party lacks cohesion”* Itemizing the properties of a political as “cohesiveness, organization propelled by strict discipline, ideology-based human ideas and solidarity and socially motivated unity of purpose, *“he asked his PDP members; “can we in all honesty say that we are such a party?”* (Guardian, 2001)

The dynamic amalgam of interest groups that President Obasanjo referred to is the group of Nigerians whose main raison d’être in politics has been to make money and deplete the national treasury in the process. Not much thought has been devoted to nation building. This phenomenon

is not restricted to only PDP party members; it forms the basis of other political parties. The fact that some prominent leaders and members of these parties, including a former presidential aspirant of AC and ACN in the 1999 and 2011 respectively have decamped or cross carpet into PDP explained by their desire to belong to the “party in power” because there is strong expectation of patronage” to be gained in the PDP. It becomes doubtful if such leader has focus, vision for his people or the advancement of political agenda for the generality of the whole Nigerian.

Conclusion and Solutions

Ethnocentrism has been a major driving force which has fueled and perpetuated regional imbalance in the country over time. For the problems of ethnicity to be ameliorated in the country, a concerted effort by the local, regional and federal government is needed urgently. The effort will ensure that all references that vilify individuals or incite unwarranted division and unnecessary competition are removed by law from the mass media and instrument of propaganda. According to Nnoli, the concept of existing “North, South and East, West” that mark the social, cultural, historical and ethno-linguistic divisions and affinities for socio-economic development planning should be applied with caution. At times in Nigeria this creates the notion of “*us versus them*”.

A new set of references is needed which explains the country’s present socio-economic predicaments. For example the concept of developed and backward or depressed regions stems from differences of regional distribution of natural and mineral resources including income, employment and welfare, should replace the North/South and East/West distinction or dichotomy. Moreover, in order to realize a long term solution, strategies to accommodate the minority ethnic groups in the development process should be pursued. For example, the languages and histories of major ethnic groups should be taught in schools for the understanding and appreciation of each other; information for important social services (public or central services) should be provided in major languages, and the political system and its policy and decision making apparatus should be representative of multi ethnic groups in the country. In order to allay the fears of the minorities, socio-economic planning administration, and

management based on the new concepts are likely to enhance socio-economic and political equity if constantly pursued over a long time period.

A cogent remedy to regional inequality also lies in the creation of a nationally integrated economy rather than on the creation of mushroom states based on ethno-linguistic sentiments for sharing the national wealth. The suggestion here is a gradual shift of emphasis from existing center down, urban-biased, production centre organization to a sustainable, self-reliant, people-centre development where both paradigms are operative. According to Korten, (1984) if people-centered development is to emerge, it will be an offspring of the production-centered industrial era. Therefore, the new paradigm in Nigeria should focus on rural and regional development based on the community or basic needs approach. The Nigeria federal government system should make use of its authority to improve the relative and absolute share of the poor regions or states because the free market mechanism does not operate in Nigeria to guarantee the redistribution of benefits of socio-economic development. With this, Nigeria market has been made imperfect, corrupt and not well developed. To put an end to incessant conflict, and political sentiment in the allocation of resources, job opportunities and others, industrial decentralization should be given priority to lagging states; job training programmes as a targeted policy for the poor, the underprivileged and the minorities; and direct income transfers. The aim is to improve on the economic base of those states, as well as their employment potential and income which will eventually make the local economy richer.

In order for the resources to be adequately managed and for long-term economic sustainability to be entrenched in Nigeria, the federal government should embark on capacity building. This will enhance the existing management capacity of Nigeria public institutions and private economic agents, and also help provide the much needed top-level managers and policy-makers. Capacity building will achieve little without political development. To this end therefore, Nigerian government must develop a form of government that permits free expression and full participation in the development process. Participation empowers the local people to take charge of their lives by increasing their potency, as their alternative ideas, social techniques and technologies are released. Political development on the other hand is likely to create society-wide trust and predictability, and foster stable political order that is the *sine qua non* for a long

economic growth. What this meant is that, without creating more states in Nigeria, which often depends on ethnocentric sentiments, a decentralized administrative structure can be achieved which is capable of providing stability, creativity, and civic commitment of every Nigerian, and more importantly, capable of reducing regional inequality and political insecurity in Nigeria.

The relentless crisis in Nigeria is due mainly to the incompatibility of political realities and ethnic interest. Today Nigerian political realities are the existence of inappropriate political structures and it is incompatible with the ancient, resolute, ethnic interest of Nigerian Modern States. It is the unsuitability of the current political structure to the socio-political condition of Nigeria that is causing the never-ending crisis in Nigeria not really the fundamental social temperament of the African ethnic groups. So the pursuit of ethnocentric regionalism in Nigeria is not due to the social temperament of Nigerian ethnic groups, but by an underpinning ideology that compels the pursuit of maximum monopoly of state power to attain maximum protection given nonexistence of appropriate political structure. The existence of inappropriate political structures in Nigeria has perpetuated divisive ideologies, making ethno-regionalism, as the only means to attain maximum social protections, for Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western Nigerians. Thus, the causes of the crisis in Nigeria and in many parts of Africa are not the distinctiveness of Africa's ethnic groups because various social groups in Africa have lived and can live harmoniously and cooperatively on the same land forever.

The regional inequalities can be alleviated through political development, especially in terms of administrative decentralization. The recently created local government areas throughout the country could be strengthened and employed as a “seeding” agent for local and regional growth, development, and modernization. There exist today 777 local government areas with their headquarters. These local governments and their capitals calls “third-order centers” will play a pivotal role in redistribution process during a deliberate national development effort, especially in strategically arrangement or approach. For example, the local government area capital should be targeted as development and modernisational diffusion agents, and also as the agro political units for the provision of basic needs using local materials, manpower and small scale enterprises. That is, these capitals can be deliberately employed to act as innovation nodes or poles by which growth and modernization impulse could diffuse or trickle-down to their

tributary areas. In other words, they should provide development stimuli and act as change agent to their hinterlands procedure or catchment areas.

Therefore, to end the frequent crisis in Nigeria and other part of Africa, modern African state Nigeria inclusive must be politically restructured to enable a proper African ideology. Autonomy within the Nigerian federal system is appropriate but the system of majoritarian rule based on population size must be abandoned in favour of African democracy. However, to make Nigerian federalism a solid indivisible, Nigeria must be part of a wider stronger unity of African state, that is to say, Nigeria must be made the role model of African Democracy. Therefore, the unity of modern African states and traditional African States, built on African Federalism and African democracy is the permanent solution to crisis in Nigeria political system and other parts of Africa. The production (top-down) development strategy that characterized post-independence Nigeria policy which has generated a great deal of socio-economic inequality must be changed. Today a new development strategy that is self reliant, sustainable, and people centered should be advocated.

Lastly, a review of regional inequality with ongoing constitutional review is necessary in order to understand the underlying causes of the existing disparities and inadequacies. It will provide the policy makers, who often rely on regional sentiment and ethnic favouritism and religious bigotry among others with adequate information on the spatial attributes of the Nigeria's socioeconomic, administrative and political development. The policy makers need the information to be able to arrive at rational decisions, as well as formulate the policies that have the much needed impacts for better democratic and representative government of federal republic of Nigeria.

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