



ABSTRACT

Nigeria's diversity has become a burning issue. The increasing lack of peaceful coexistence amongst segments, tribes and religion in Nigeria has become worrisome due to flaws in handling Nigeria diversity by the handlers of Nigerian commonwealth, the Government. It is worthy of note in the same vein, that Nigeria's diversity if properly harnessed can serve as an advantage. Nigeria's diversity cut across issues of cultural plurality of ethnicity, religious intolerance, population lopsidedness and political inequality, vested interest and clash of interest amongst others. This

EFFORTS MADE BY SUCCESSIVE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN NIGERIA TO MANAGE NIGERIA'S DIVERSITY ISSUES

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Introduction

Nigeria is reputed as the giant of Africa and the most populous black nation on earth. Nigeria is made of over 200million people with about 300 ethnic group with over 520 languages. Nigeria occupies the land mass of about 923,000 square kilometers in the West African Sub-region.

Before the British Colonial Master advent into Nigeria, the economy was reputed for agricultural produce – cocoa in the West, groundnut in the North (groundnut pyramid) and Palm oil in the East. Upon independence, Nigeria's foreign policy in keeping with her status as giant of Africa majored over the year on "Africa the center piece of Nigeria's foreign policy". A policy that promotes Nigeria playing big brother roles to other African countries especially, those in socio-political quagmire, apartheid, civil strife etc.

Today, it can be observed that in Nigeria, there is rapid deterioration of our national life characterized by increased poverty, religious intolerance, banditry, kidnapping, monumental oil theft, mismanagement of national asset, communal and religious strife and near collapse of public service and public institutions. The disenchanted, disillusioned and angry Nigerian youths have been abandoned by successive government and their abandonment served as a recruiting ground for criminals for political and religious extremism. Record shows that majority of the county's youth of **productivity age are unemployed.**

Futhermore, Our political system has proved to be acrimonious, corrupt and self serving. According to Sahara Reporters New York, Nigerian debt stock as at 2015 was N12trillion, by 2020, it was N32trillion, the inflation rate as at 2015 was 9%, at 2020, it was 15%. Also, the unemployment rate as at 2015 was 8.18%, at 2020, it was 33.28%. The exchange rate as at 2015 was N197 to one dollar but as at



work seeks to examine the various efforts made by successive administration in Nigeria at managing these diversity issues, conclusion on the success and/or failures recorded and to make recommendations.

Keywords: Diversity, ethnicity, intolerance, interest.

2020, it was N411 to one dollar official rate. The global terrorism index of 2019 placed Nigeria as the third worst terrorist nation. (source: Sahara Reporter, New York Jan 6 2022). The total Nigeria's export including oil is under two billion dollars for over 200 million population. It appears our diversity has become a disadvantage to us.

ANALYSIS OF GOVERNMENT EFFORT ON NIGERIA DIVERSITY

REGIONALISM:

Regionalism in Nigeria is traceable to the pre-colonial Richards construction of 1946 which encouraged greater participation of African in the discussion of their own affair in the legislative house. It created seats for North, West and East region in the legislative house. Upon Nigeria's independence in 1960, these regions were sustained. The Nigerian founding father(Zik,Awolowo,Ahmadu Bello etc) acknowledged the Nigeria's diversity to an extent in the sense that as at 1963, the Revenue sharing formula was based on derivation where the East concentrated on palm oil, West on cocoa and North on groundnut as their economic mainstay.

ABURI ACCORD:

This was a meeting held between 4th and 5th January 1967 in Aburi Ghana, attended by delegates of both the Federal Government of Nigeria (The Supreme Military Council)under Gowon and Eastern delegates led by the Eastern region leader, Colonel Chukwuma Odumegwu Ojukwu in order to avert the looming civil war in Nigeria.

Agenda of the meeting:

1. Re-organization of the armed forces
2. Constitutional arrangement
3. Issue of displaced person within Nigeria

BREAKDOWN OF ABURI ACCORD

The Federal government promulgated decree No.8 as an aftermath of the accord, the decree especially section 70 and 71 empowered the supreme military council to declare a state of emergency in any part of Nigeria with at least three state Governors in agreement and empower it to legislate for any particular region whenever it deemed fit with or without the consent of the governor of the particular region. In that way, Colonel Ojukwu then governor of the Eastern Nigeria saw it that the Head of State(Gowon) has taken power to himself and thus the civil war broke out and lasted about 30months(1967-1970)



NINE-POINT PROGRAMME OF REHABILITATION RECONCILIATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF 1970

With the slogan of ‘No victor, No vanquished’ after the civil war in Nigeria, the Gowon administration sought to reintegrate “The Biafrans” who wished to secede back to the mainstream of Nigeria in order to foster national unity. It however appears that this program paid lips service to the substance of the cause of the war. The issues of “abandoned property” and the “twenty pounds policy” to Biafrans for any bank deposit made the program appear a mockery.

FEDERAL CHARACTER:

Federal character as an idea/concept or political solution to Nigerian’s diversity has been enshrined in the Nigerian constitution since 1976 in various forms. It became established in 1996 under Sani Abacha. It serves as one of the ideas that seeks to solve Nigeria’s diversity issues by ensuring that appointment to public service institution fairly represent the ethnic and geographical diversity of Nigeria amongst others. It assigned equitable quota of appointment for public officers, civil service, military etc. However, Federal Character principle has been criticized that it does not promote meritocracy. The Federal Character Commission was established by decree No. 34 of 1996 as an implementation arm of the ‘Federal Character Principle’ to ensure that no ethnic group or geopolitical zone is disadvantaged in the allocation of public offices. The Federal Character Commission is to ensure that public offices are not allocated in a lopsided manner. Section 14 (3) of the 1999 constitution states that the composition of the government of the federation or any of its agencies and the conducts of its affairs shall be carried in such a manner as to reflect federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity and also to command national loyalty thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of person from a few state or from a few ethnic or other sectional group in that government or any of its agencies. Section 14 (46) further extends the policy to the states.

STATE CREATION IN NIGERIA

To further find a way to address Nigerian diversity issue, government created regions/states. As at the time of independence in 1960, Nigeria had three regions: (1) Northern (2) Western (3) Eastern regions which were inherited from the British colonial masters. However in 1963, a new region called Midwestern region was created from Western region. In 1967, the regions were replaced by twelve states created by a military decree. Between 1967 to 1970, complaints of marginalization and unfair treatment led the then Eastern regions to attempt to secede from Nigeria and become sovereign and answer Biafra. This led to the Nigerians civil war. In order to douse the complaint of Eastern regions and other regions on diversity issues, in 1976, seven new states were created making a total of nineteen states all together.

In 1987, two new states were created making a total of twenty one states. In 1991, another nine states were created making a total of thirty states and by 1996, six new states were added making the present 36 states in Nigeria.

NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE CORPS (NYSC)

The National Youth Service Corps is a youth program set up by Nigerian military government to involve Nigerian’s graduate in nation building and development of the country in order to foster



national unity and cohesion (Agbo, 2008). It was founded during Yakubu Gowon military rule. In the program, graduate youths are trained in basic citizenship role and sent to the different parts of the country in order to appreciate Nigeria diversity and harness it. The National Youth Service Corps was introduced in May 22, 1973 as a one year compulsory service for graduates of Universities and Polytechnics in Nigeria as a contributor to national cohesion.

The objectives of National Youth Service Corps Act, (CAP) W84 laws of the federation 2004 Sec 1(13) include:

- (a) To develop common ties among Nigerian youths and promotes national unity and integration
- (b) To remove prejudice, eliminate ignorance and confirm the first hand similarities among Nigerians of all ethnic groups.
- (c) To develop a sense of corporate existence and common destiny of the people of Nigeria.

SIX GEOPOLITICAL ZONES

In 1995, Nigeria was divided into six geopolitical zones under Sani Abacha based on idea sold by Alex Ekwueme in 1993. The zones are:

1. North east
2. North west
3. North central
4. South east
5. South west
6. South-South

The Northwest has seven states making it the zone with the highest number of states/Local Government in Nigeria. The South east has a total of five states while the other regions have at least six states. There has been clamour for the regularization of the inequality in states in the zones to cater for the diversity.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS AS THIRD TIERS OF GOVERNMENT

In order to bring the government nearer to the people and give the citizens a sense of belonging in Nigeria's diversity the Ibrahim Babangida administration promoted the idea of three level or tiers of Government viz federal, state and local government (Nwanigbo, 2006). The tiers/levels ranged from federal to state to local government in order to bring government closer to the grassroots and cater for Nigeria's diversity.

UNITY SCHOOLS

These secondary schools are established by the federal government across the nation. They are also called Government colleges and are all over the state in Nigeria to foster unity among the Nigerian school age from different cultural, geographical and social background (Wikipedia).

GOODLUCK JONATHAN'S NATIONAL CONFERENCE

The conference headed by former Justice Idris Kutigi noted that the conference passed more than 600 resolutions and produced a 10,335 page report. The recommendations include:



1. Scrapping of the present 774 local authorities and states set up their local system.
2. Creation of 18 new states to spread across the nation. It also recommends that states can merge .
3. Revenue Allocation: Proposed reduction in federal revenue by increasing share of the states.
4. Modified presidential system which combines presidential and parliamentary system where Vice President is picked from the legislature.
5. Power should be shared and rotated at all levels of government. Presidency should rotate between North and South and among the six geopolitical zones.same likewise in states.

CONCLUSION

It can deduced that the continuous creation of region and states in Nigeria is a pointer to structural defects ab initio in Nigeria. It is also a pointer to efforts at managing Nigeria's diversity. Nigeria's contemporary diversity is such that even the latest Goodluck Jonathan's national confab recommended further creation of 18 states for Nigeria. However, this has not been implemented. National Institutions like the National youth service corps, unity schools, federal character commission will not be said to have achieved much at integrating and dousing Nigeria's burning diversity. The local Government in Nigeria as it today does not constitute a third tier of government as enunciated during Babangida regime.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are put up :

- 1) Structural tinkering and alteration of the parts(states) such that diversity is recognized not ignored
- 2) Devolution of authority from centre to the component states
- 3) Resource management beginning at the grassroot Government.
- 4) Establishment of National ministry of Religion affairs.
- 5) Proper implementation of Federal character laws with checks and balances..

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