

Federal Character and Political Integration in Nigeria

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Abstract

Given the complexity of Nigeria's political formation, and the federal character as well as its chequered political history before independence and after, it became increasingly necessary for Nigerians to define the processes whereby the corporate existence of the nation-state and the peaceful co-existence of its people could be ensured. Thus, the quota system as a national policy was reviewed in 1967 and adopted for filling vacancies into federally owned schools and institutions. Ironically, the policy was carried out without having in place a body constitutionally designed with the responsibility of implementing it. By 1975, the issue of "Federal Character" had become a serious political issue. The setting up of a Constitutional Drafting Committee in 1977 by late General Murtala Muhammed's government was part of the efforts to resolve the problems of inequality and marginalization that were expressed by many Nigerians. Thus, as part of its proposals, the Constitution Drafting Committee adopted "Federal Character" in discussing issues of marginalization. The extent to which this federal character principle has resolved or impacted on political integration in Nigeria is the main focus of this presentation. In addition the study examines the necessity for affirmative action in Nigeria and the effectiveness of the federal character principle on political integration of the country.

1. Introduction

Prior to 1960, when Nigeria got her independence, the desire of many Nigerians was to have a country devoid of injustice, where all citizens (irrespective of their ethnic origin, cultural affiliation), class religion or gender will enjoy the rights, privileges and opportunities that the country offers. However, as the clamour for independence deepened, the expectation of an egalitarian society was far from being consummated. For example, in 1954 when Nigeria opted for a federal form of government, certain observations were apparent.

In the first instance, it was observed that within the Nigeria nation, there was dichotomy in culture, stages of social and economic development and level of political awareness of the citizens. Secondly, it was observed that disparities existed in the educational development of different sections of the country. This has however, resulted into some sections of the country having recognizable advantages in the employment of their indigenes in the public service. Therefore, in 1954, when Nigeria opted for a federal system of government, the concept of QUOTA SYSTEM as a policy of government was adopted in the recruitment into the Officers' Corps of the Armed Forces and the Police as well as in admissions into educational institutions.

On the attainment of independence in 1960, the need to define criteria for the equitable spread of development in Nigeria became more pertinent. Consequently, from the first day of independence, and since 1954 when she adopted federal form of government, the country has attempted to practice the 'quota system' in one way or the other. Understandably, the aim of adopting a federal form of government was to foster unity and cooperation among the distinct entities of the nation. It was hoped that this form of government would make for a union of the federating units while the Federal Government will retain the central control of vital aspects like defence, security and foreign policy. It was also expected that this form of government would allow the federating units considerable control and administration of aspects like health, agriculture, education etc. It was anticipated that with such a system in place, there would be healthy competition between the various units of the nation in their economic, social and political development, while receiving equitable share of resources from the central government.

Although and all through the years before and after independence, the leadership and citizens of Nigeria acknowledged the need for equity, there were no specific guidelines for the realization of fairness. Sharing and allocation of resources as well as the distribution of infrastructural amenities were done voluntarily, arbitrarily, and not mandatorily. In addition, there was no defined procedure of sharing resource and manpower of the central government. As such, there were differences in levels of social, economic and political development of the federating units. Over time, many citizens and various sections of the country began to feel excluded, marginalized and ignored in the scheme of things in the nation.

Despite the efforts to reduce the lopsidedness in development among sections of the country, the “Federal Character” principle still remain non-justifiable and therefore, not scrupulously observed. With the disruption of the democratic process of the second republic upon where the 1979 constitution was based, the Federal Character Principle was also affected as various military governments clearly ignored the principle both in appointments and allocation of resources. Imbalances still existed with deep feelings of real and imagined marginalization and deprivation expressed by many Nigerians. Crises arising from deprived sectors and sections of the nation were known to disrupt the peaceful co-existence of Nigerians for years.

The Principle of Federal Character

Federal character is the distinctive desire of the people of Nigeria to promote unity, and foster national loyalty and give citizens of Nigeria a sense of belonging to the nation, notwithstanding the diversities of ethnic origin, culture, language or religion which may exist and which in their desire to nourish and harness to the enrichment of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (<http://w.w.wfccnigeriaorg/aboutushum>).

It was in a bid to achieving the above that the principle of federal character was entrenched into the Nigerian constitution of 1979. But it is only pertinent to trace the development in Nigerian history that reveals ethnic, economic, educational and social inequalities which brought about affirmative action programmes aimed at overcoming the profound inequalities between different segments of the population.

The Nigeria Situation

Nigeria's population is estimated at 150 million. The country has between 250 and 400 ethnic groups depending on the criteria used. A total of 374 ethnic groups were identified by the eminent sociologist, Otite (1990). These ethnic groups are broadly divided into ethnic 'majorities' and ethnic 'minorities'. The numerically-and politically-majority ethnic groups are the composites Hausa-Fulani of the north, the Yoruba of the southwest, and the Igbo of the southeast. The three majority ethnic groups constituted 57.8% of the national population in the 1963 census. That census has the Hausa (without the Fulani) at 11,653,000 (20.9%), the Yoruba at 11,321,000 (20.3%) and the Igbo at 9,246,000 (16.6%) (Jibril 1991). Eleven of the largest ethnic minorities put together constituted 27.9% of the population in the 1963 census (Afolayan 1983). The numerical and hegemonic strength of these three ethnic groups within the Nigerian federation has meant that Nigeria has a tripodal ethnic structure, with each of the three majority ethnic groups constituting a pole in the competition for political and economic resources. The ethnic minorities are forced to form a bewildering array of alliances around each of the three dominant ethnicities. Tripodal ethnic structures are inherently unstable, especially compared to countries like Tanzania which has a fragmented ethnic structure. In Tanzania, no ethnic group constitutes more than 12% of the population (cf. Nyang'oro 2006), so alliance building is the norm in politics. By contrast, ethnic politics in tripodal Nigeria is often conflictual as each of the three hegemonic groups tries to build up sufficient alliances to ensure its preponderance in government, or to prevent its being marginalized by competing alliance.

The interplay between this tripodal ethnic structure on the one hand, and administrative divisions and communal identities on the other, has led to eight major cleavages in Nigerian political life (Mustapha 1986), the most important of which are: the cleavages between the three majority groups; between the majority ethnic groups on the one hand and the 350-odd minority ethnic groups on the other; between the north and south and between the 36 states of the federation and the six zones-three in the north and three in the south-into which they are grouped; and finally, between different religious affiliations. Some of these cleavages overlap, for example, the southeast zone overlaps with Igbo ethnicity and Christian religious affiliation, while the north central overlaps with northern ethnic minorities.

The ethnic, regional, and religious cleavages in Nigerian society are made more problematic by systematic and overlapping patterns of inequalities that correspond to the cleavages.

These inequalities are caused by a complex range of factors, including history, geography, cultural orientation, religious affiliation, natural resource endowments, current government policies, and past colonial policies.

Educational Inequalities

Starting from the colonial period, there has been a structurally embedded pattern of educational inequalities which persist to this day. These long-standing patterns of educational inequalities have been reproduced in the inequalities in manpower and human capital development across the country. It was reported in 2003 that the northern zones with 53% of the population had only 10% of engineers, 15% of professors, 10% of architects, 25% of lawyers, 8% of bank executives, and less than 2% of insurance practitioners (Adamu 2003).

Economic Inequalities

Economic inequalities are another feature of Nigerian national life. For example, in 1986-90, 70% of the registered companies in Nigeria were located in the southwest, with 16% in the three northern zones and 14% in the two other southern zones (Hamalai 1994). By 2001, 46% of the industries located in the northern zones had closed down as a result of infrastructural and macro-economic difficulties; de-industrialization, associated with economic liberalization, has disproportionately affected the north (Adamu 2003). Another index of economic inequality is the preponderance of Lagos in banking operations. Lagos accounted for 48% of all deposits and 69.96% of all loans in 2006, while the three northern zones combined accounted for only 10.75% of deposits and 8.5% of loans (Soludo 2007).

Economic inequalities may be due to differences in drive, motivation, cultural disposition and geographical opportunities. But they may also be due to intended and unintended effects of public policy. While the effects of macro-economic liberalization may have unintended polarization effects, discriminatory practices by the state or its officials, which give some groups unfair access to economic resources, could also fuel inequalities. There are many examples of complaints of economic bias in Nigeria. For example, many Igbo elites complained that the indigenization of the 1970s, shortly after the Civil War, was hurriedly carried out so that the Igbo, destabilized in the aftermath of the war, would not be able to take full part in the exercise. Similarly, Niger Delta activists like Ken-Saro-Wiwa complained bitterly about well-connected northerners lifting oil under the dictatorships of Babangida and Abacha, when they did not have similar access to the oil wealth from their area. More recently in 2006, Northern Elders raised an alarm claiming 'a systematic edging out of the region and its peoples from the command sectors of the economy like oil/gas, telecommunications, banking and energy. As theorists like Horowitz have suggested, when state policies threaten the individual economic interests of elites whilst at the same time creating group apprehension, the consequence is likely to be inter-group conflict and even separatism.

Social Inequalities

Structurally embedded social inequalities correspond to the educational and economic inequalities. While all the 10 states with extremely high levels of poverty are from the three northern zones (NW, four; NE, four; NC, two), all the states with relatively low levels of poverty are from the three southern zones (SW, three; SE, four; SS, three). Most Nigerians may be poor, but some are poorer than others, leading to a strong and damaging sense of relative deprivation.

As might be expected, the combination of: (a) a tripodal ethnic structure; (b) deep cleavages; and (c) systematic educational, economic, and social inequalities have led to a conflict ridden political system with political and bureaucratic inequalities. Nigeria never developed a common nationalist movement or a single nationalist icon like Nkrumah in Ghana or Mandela in South Africa. Instead, Nigerian nationalists kept one eye on the British colonialists and the other on their ethnic and regional competitors from other parts of the divided country. According to Kirk-Greene (1975:19).

Fear has been constant in every tension and confrontation in political Nigeria. Not the physical fear of violence, not the spiritual fear of retribution, but the psychological fear of discrimination, of domination. It is the fear of not getting one's fair share, one's dessert.

This constant fear of being short-changed by competing alliances has led to what some have referred to as 'aggressive ethnicity' (O'Connell 1967) From the terminal colonial period when it was clear that the British were leaving, competition for succession heated up between the different ethno-regional groups in the country.

Shut out of the upper segments of the bureaucracy by colonial racism, the prospects of independence invoked a strong desire within the Nigerian elite for inclusion in the bureaucracy:

Observers had indeed noted the preoccupation of colonialists with bureaucratic office, and had characterized it as being even more central to their concern than political reform. Throughout the British Empire, the natives were restlessly pursuing their claim to self-administration or at least, participation in the administration of their country.

(Krislor 1974: 16-17)

The period from 1945 therefore, witnessed a scramble for bureaucratic appointment along with many confrontations over the ethno-regional composition of various government agencies. The North was deeply suspicious of southern domination, even of the Northern Regional Bureaucracy, and developed a strategy of political containment. To protect themselves in the North, Northern politicians promoted the 'Northernisation' policy in the 1950s, when official colonial policy was 'Nigerianisation' policy in the level, northern politicians sought to inject northern civil servants into the federal bureaucracy, usually at the higher levels. At the same time, there was intense conflict and competition between Igbo and Yoruba elites for access to various federal institutions. While Azikiwe asserted that "the God of Africa has especially created the Ibo [Igbo] Nation to lead the children of Africa from the bondage of the ages..." a Yoruba politician accused the Igbo of 'striving might and main to penetrate the Western [Yoruba] economy thereby exploiting our wealth and riches for the benefit of themselves. In federal institutions and agencies, accusations and counter-accusations of nepotism and 'tribalism' between the two groups were rampant. For example, it was suggested that 'out of a grand total of 431 names on the current staff list of our Railway Corporation, 270 are Ibos [Igbos] and 161 belong to other tribe. The Chairman was Igbo. Nigeria's post-colonial experience is clear proof that 'social cleavage has bureaucratic consequences. (Krislor 1974:73).

Why the Federal Character Principle?

The need for the inclusion of the principle of "Federal Character" into the 1979 constitution was informed to

- i. Offset past discrimination
- ii. To counteract present unfairness; and
- iii. To achieve future equality.

All these steps are aimed at political integration in Nigeria. The first is often referred to as 'compensation,' the second 'a level playing field,' and the third 'diversity' (Cahn 2002: xiii).

In Nigeria, all three motives for affirmative action were implied in the drive for reforms. Alleged victims of nepotism and 'tribalism' wanted action to correct past discrimination; champions of ethno-regional interests wanted to counteract present unfairness; while ardent nationalists wanted the stability and effectiveness that would result from the promotion of diversity. There are two distinct waves of reforms, culminating in the creation of the Federal Character Commission (FCC).

The first wave of reforms started in 1967 and included dismantling the old regional institutional framework and replacing the regions with smaller states, making ethnic mobilization more difficult. The objectives were to: (a) deny regional elites the instructional framework for ethno-regional politics; (b) create administrative cleavages with ethnic majorities; (c) give administrative autonomy to ethnic minorities; and (d) shift the balance of power away from the regions in the direction of the centre.

Another set of reforms in this period sought the deliberate creation of a national as opposed to the erstwhile regional-political dynamic, again titling the centre of gravity away from the regions. This was achieved through the deliberate dismantling of relics of Native Authority power in the north and the concerted effort to defeat Biafran secessionism. Finally, there was the introduction of informal quotas as the basis for representation within the federal cabinet and in the admission process in federal educational institutions.

The second wave of reforms started in 1979 with the introduction of majoritarian presidency that must: (a) get a national majority of votes cast; and (b) cross a threshold of not less than 25% of votes cast in at least two-thirds of all the states. This phase also witnessed the introduction of pan-ethnic rules for the formation of political parties, and the entrenchment of consociational power-sharing rules (Federal Character). These were all institutional designs aimed at forcing politicians out of their ethno-regional cocoons towards the promotion of diversity. It is this reform process that led ultimately to the creation of the FCC. Has the FCC lived up to the promise of fighting discrimination, and promoting fairness and diversity? Has Nigeria been integrated politically?

Political Integration in Nigeria

Nigeria has been democratizing since 1975. Democratization is closely associated with the enabling environment for political integration and development. Paradoxically, the history of democratization in Africa and in Nigeria in particular, has remained the history of political disintegration. Nigeria's efforts at achieving political integration have remained largely unconsumable. The integration crisis facing Nigeria is manifest in the minority question, religious conflicts, ethnic politics, resource control youth restiveness and the call for a sovereign national conference. These have jointly generated the disintegration of the productive sector, and the institution of food insecurity, social in-security, deterioration of the physical and social infrastructures, fall in the living standards of a vast majority of Nigerians and their alienation from the political system.

The entire social matrix in Nigeria is characterized by inter community/intra-community, inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic, inter-religious and intra-religious strife. Some of these conflicts are as old as the history of the Nigerian nation. Armed quasi militia youths have been combating detachments of the Nigeria army in the Niger Delta region. On Tuesday May 4th 2004, Yelwaq in Bauchi State was turned into a theatre of death and horror as Christians battled Muslims. The inferno quickly spread to Kano where more lives and property were destroyed. This orgy of violence has become a permanent feature in the northern states. The influenza is threatening to penetrate the East in the form of reappraisal attacks on Muslims. The magnitude of the problem caused President Obasanjo to declare a state of emergency in Plateau State.

Most of the socio-political problems which are threatening the foundations of the Nigeria nation have lingered through the ages. For instance, the chiefs of the people of the Niger Delta region protested the exploitation of the resources in the area in 1899. Kuka M.H. (2000) has stated that the current discussion about Sharia is 95% about power and perhaps about 5% about religion. He related this current resuscitated quest for power to the Anglo-Fulani Hegemony established in 1903 after the British overran the Sokoto caliphate. Ethnic anxieties are also as old as the nation itself.

The contradictions of the conflicts and anxieties fuelled by these problems have culminated in a major civil war, several military coups, fragile attempts at democratizing, religious, ethnic and tribal crises, and the rise of ethnic militias. Civil society in Nigeria through all these processes has been subjected to considerable pain, anxiety, poverty, cynicism, frustration and disillusionments.

Recently Enahoro identified "justice and fair-play" as two elements that could ensure Nigeria as an indivisible whole. He added, "with flagrant abuses of the judiciary and other organs of the state, our future is unpredictable" (cited by Lawrence B. in FORUM TEL No. 21 May 2004:56).

Democratization has been closely associated with political integration. Recent surveys of ethno nations conflicts around the world, cited in Kynlicks (1999:185), contend that self-government rights, is likely to escalate the level of conflicts Babawale (2000), made this same point when he argued that political liberalization allows for open expression of dissent even in unusual forms, for him, the beauty of a democratic environment is that it allows for a negotiated resolution of conflicts either ethnic or otherwise. Ake (cited in Kukah 2000.1) portrayed the beauty of democracy by contrasting it with the military. He emphasized that:

The military addresses the extreme and the extraordinary while democracy addresses the routine, the military values discipline and hierarchy, democracy values freedom and equality, the military is oriented to law and order while democracy to diversity, contradictions and competitions, the method of the military is violent aggression, that of democracy persuasion, negotiation and consensus building.

It is a fact that the military has dominated Nigerian politics since 1960. It is also true that Minorities Commission listened to all our grievances fifty years ago. More striking is the civil war that was fought to keep Nigeria one over forty years ago. Then followed the several democratization experiments which midwived three republics. In the last fifteen years, Nigeria embarked on yet another democratizing experiment that supposedly marked the end of military rule in Nigeria on May 29, 1999. Yet there is no end to the shades of crises which have rendered the Nigerian democracy palpable. While the Uba-Ngige saga in Anambra State; the rise of ethnic militia in all the geo-political regions, the assassination of key political players, the alleged Mustapa led coup etc represent the socio-political perspective on the crisis of democratization, the declaration for Sharia and the spate of religion motivated attacks portend the religious version of the crisis.

To be sure, the Nigerian state is currently battling with the problem of insurgency and counter-insurgency led by the Boko Haram sect. the congregation of the People of Tradition for Proselytism and Jihad (Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad), known by its Hausa name Boko Haram figuratively meaning "Western education is sin"), is a terrorist organization based in northeastern Nigeria, north Cameroon and Nigeria. Founded by Mohammed Yusuf in 2002, the organization seeks to establish a "pure" Islamic state ruled by sharia, putting an end to what it deems Westernization. Violence linked to the Boko Haram insurgency has resulted in an estimated 10,000 deaths between 2002 and 2013. Nigerian president Goodluck Jonathan in May, 2014 claimed that Boko Haram attacks have left at least 12,000 people dead and 8,000 people crippled.

The group exerts influence in the northeastern Nigerian states of Borno, Adamawa, Kaduna, Bauchi, Yobe and Kano. In this region, a state of emergency has been declared. The group does not have a clear structure or evident chain of command and has been called "diffuse" with a "cell-like structure" facilitating factions and splits. It is reportedly divided into three factions with a splinter group known as Ansaru. The group's main leader is Abubakar Shekau. Its weapons expert, second-in-command and arms manufacturer was Momodu Bama.

The Boko Haram leadership has international connections to Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Al-Qa'ida core, Al-Shabab, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), Mokhtar belmokhtar's factions, and other militant groups outside Nigeria. Attacks by the group on international targets have so far been limited. On 13 November, 2013 the United States government designated the group of terrorist organization. On 22 May, 2014, the United Nations Security Council added Boko Haram to its list of designated al-Qaeda entities, bringing "funding, travel and weapons sanctions" against the terrorist group.

Many of the group's senior radicals reportedly partially inspired by the late Islamic preacher known as Maitatsine. Others believe that the group is motivated by inter-ethnic disputes as much as by religion, and that its founder Yusuf believed that a campaign of "ethnic cleansing" was being waged by Plateau State governor Jonah Jang against the Hausa and Fulani people. Amnesty International has accused the Nigerian government of human rights abuses after 950 suspected Boko Haram militants died in detention facilities run by Nigeria's military Joint Task Force in the first half of 2013. The conflicts have left around 90,000 people displaced.

The insurgence of Boko Haram; particularly, the adopted mode of prosecuting their objective have posed serious danger to our Nation called Nigeria.

Security Challenges

By security challenges, it means the effect of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria on security of life and property as well as other consequential effect. The insurgency of Boko Haram in Nigeria have posed serious security challenges to Nigeria in the sense that people were been denied the choice of exercising their natural freedom of movement due to fear of attack from members of Boko Haram. Particularly in some parts of Northern Nigeria where Boko Haram have taken over through planting of bombs as well as brutalized attack on innocent souls which history have shown that the attack is not Boko Haram to nurse their personal and ethnical agenda through brutalizing of people.

Corroborating this, one of Boko Haram Leader: Sheikh Abu Mohammed Abdulazeez Ibn Idris stated that the group is aware of the fact that some criminals have infiltrated their movement and continued to attack and kill people using their names (The Nation Newspaper, 2013, 3). It could also be recalled that kidnapping have also been used by some group of people hiding under Boko Haram crisis during the cause of which innocent souls were been kidnapped with demands for ransom with fruitless effort in rescuing some of the captive which have even led to the death of numbers of the captive. Also, the insurgencies of Boko Haram in Nigeria have exposed the security lapses in Nigeria because of attacks that have been done on some unexpected places like Police Headquarters in Abuja, Abuja United Nation Office among others. This seems constitutes serious threat to Nigeria's interrogation agenda.

Also confrontations that have occurred between Boko Haram and security forces during the causes of which serious casualty were recorded even among the security agencies, have also exposed Nigeria security lapses to the extent of exposing that Nigeria Police are only professionals in using forces to quench peaceful protest, but cannot quench deadly once like Boko Haram insurgency. Boko Haram tragedy have also exposed further some of the fatal inefficiencies in the system by which Nigerian leadership has often sought to arrest or even prevent such recurrent civil crises (DCNN, 2009:24). The situation of things among others have led President Goodluck Jonathan to replace service chiefs in his administration; National Security Adviser also inclusive.

Economic Effect

The economic effects of militancy insurgency in Nigeria simply connote consequential effect on people and government's life which can be viewed from two different perspectives. They are the effect on the State that is, Nigeria and individual member of the State that is, Nigeria; particularly residents of Bauchi, Borno, Yobe and neighbouring State. The militants; not limited to Boko Haram alone by their nature are used to crippling the economic activities of any place they spread their tentacles as well as led to migration of people from the affected place due to restiveness. No wonder the Nation Newspaper (2013:3) reported about the activities of Boko Haram thus: Borno and neighbouring Yobe State – the epicenter of the activities of the sect – have been crippled economically.

Thousands of people have died in the sect's bloody campaign. It must be noted that Boko Haram have not only led to closure and or abandonment of people's business activities within affected region but also led to migration of people from the affected Region as well as once led to reduction of people's patronage of product from Northern Region because of rumour that member of Boko Haram are planning to send poisonous product from their region to other parts of Nigeria. No wonder Mr. Umar Ibrahim Yakubu (Leadership Newspaper: 2012) opined thus in respect of Boko Haram:

We discovered that 97 per cent of businesses were negatively affected by the security problem. Some of them had to close down, some of them had to retrench their workers, and others had to cut down in the number of hours of operation.

It must be noted that Boko Haram and other groups that have arose in Nigeria do not emerged out of vacuum; that is there emergent can be traced to available lacunae in the system which this section aimed to fill. It is on the basis of the above fact in recommending the following as way forward toward managing Boko Haram sect and or preventing insurgence of another sect of militants in Nigeria.

In 1995, the group was said to be operating under the name Shabaab, Muslim Youth Organization with Mallam Lawal as the leader. When Lawal left to continue his education, Mohammed Yusuf took over leadership of the group. Yusuf's leadership allegedly opened the group to political influence and popularity. The group was originally established in Ibn Taymiyyah mosque, which was named after Boko Haram's spiritual head.

Yusuf officially founded the group in 2002 in the city of Maiduguri with the aim of establishing a Shari'a government in Borno State under then Senator Ali Modu Sherrif. He established a religious complex that included a mosque and a school where many poor families from across Nigeria and from neighbouring countries enrolled their children.

The centre had ulterior political goals and soon it was also working as a recruiting ground for future jihadist to fight the state. The group includes members who came from neighbouring Chad and Niger and speak only Arabic.

In 2004 the complex was relocated to Yusuf's home state of Yobe in the village Kanamma near the Niger border.

Beginning of Violence

The group conducted its operations more or less peacefully during the first seven years of its existence (with an exception of some skirmishes in Kannama in 2004). That changed in 2009 when the Nigerian government launched an investigation into the group's activities following reports that its members were arming themselves. Prior to that the government reportedly repeatedly ignored warnings about the increasing militant character of the organization, including that of a military officer.

In the wake of the 2009 crackdown on its members and its subsequent reemergence, the growing frequency and geographical range of attacks attributed to Boko Haram have led some political and religious leaders in the north to the conclusion that the group has now expanded beyond its original religious composition to include not only Islamic militants, but criminal elements and disgruntled politicians as well. For instance, Borno State Governor Kashim Shettima said of Boko Haram: "{They have} become a franchise that anyone can buy into. It's something like a Bermuda Triangle."

The group has also forcibly converted non-Muslims to Islam. When the government came into action, several members of the group were arrested in Bauchi, sparking deadly clashes with Nigerian security forces which led to the deaths of an estimated 700 people. During the fighting with the security forces, Boko Haram fighters reportedly "used fuel-laden motorcycles" and "bows with poison arrows" to attack a police station.

The group's founder and then leader Mohammed Yusuf was killed during this time while in police custody. After Yusuf's killing, a new leader emerged whose identity was not known at the time.

According to Human Rights Watch, during the period between 2009 and beginning of 2012, Boko Haram was responsible for over 900 deaths.

On 14 May 2013, President Goodluck Jonathan declared a state of emergency in the states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa in a bid to fighting the activities of Boko Haram. He ordered the Nigerian Armed Forces to the three areas around Lake Chad. As of 17 May, Nigerian armed forces' shelling in Borno resulted in at least 21 deaths. A curfew was imposed in Maiduguri as the military used air strikes and shellings to target Boko Haram strongholds. The Nigerian state imposed a blockade on the group's traditional base of Maiduguri in Borno in order to re-establish Nigeria's "territorial integrity". Here, we see a practical demonstration of insurgency and counterinsurgency.

On 21 May, the Defence Ministry issued a statement that claimed it had "secured the environs of New Marte, Hausari, Krenoa, Wulgo and Chikun Ngulalo after destroying all the terrorists' camps". Armed Forces Spokesman in Borno, Lieutenant Colonel Sagir Musa said that the curfew that had been imposed was not relaxed with the curfew timings being 18:00 to 7:00; however there was minimal traffic in Maiduguri.

My fellow brethren from all over the world, I assure you that we are strong, hale and hearty since they launched this assault on us following the state of emergency declaration. When they launch any attack on us you see soldiers fleeing and throwing away their weapons like a rabbit that is being hunted down.

On the same day, Nigeria's Director of Defence Information Brigadier-General Chris Olukolade said that Shekau's unnamed deputy was found dead near Lake Chad and that two others from Boko Haram were arrested in the area. However, the military's claims were not verified. Satellite photos raise questions about the government's retaliatory attack on Boko Haram on April 16 – 17, 2013. Over 180 died, mostly from fires that appeared to be deliberately set during the government attack. Boko Haram fighters and civilians died in the attack. The people of Maiduguri were unhappy with the declaration of war on the group and instead said the issues of poverty and inequality needed to be tackled first.

Chibok Girls Episode

It was reported in August 2013 that Shekau had been shot and deposed by members of his sect, but he survived. He had been described as "the most dreaded and wanted" Boko Haram leader and the United States had recently offered a US\$7m bounty for information leading to his arrest. He has taken responsibility for the April 2014, kidnapping of over 200 school girls. On 6 May 2014, eight more girls were kidnapped by suspected Boko Haram gunmen. In a videotape, Shekau threatened to sell the kidnapped girls into slavery. On 12 May 2014 Boko Haram released a video showing the kidnapped girls and alleging that the girls had converted to Islam and would not be released until all militant prisoners were freed.

On 17 May 2014, Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan and the presidents of Benin, Chad, Cameroon and Niger met in Paris and agreed to combat Boko Haram on a coordinated basis, sharing in particular surveillance and intelligence gathering. Chad President Idris Deby said after the meeting, African nations were determined to launch a total war on Boko Haram. Western nations, including Britain, France, Israel, and the United States had also pledged support.

On 22 May 2014, Boko Haram was officially declared a terrorist group affiliate to Al-Qaeda and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb by the United Nations Security Council. International sanctions including asset freeze, travel ban and arms embargo were imposed against the Islamist extremist group.

During May 2014, Nigerian soldiers shot at the car of their divisional commander whom they suspected of colluding with Boko Haram and it was reported that nine Nigerian generals were being investigated for suspected sale of weapons to Boko Haram. These are great indices of disintegration rather than integration of the Nigeria State.

Several questions become pertinent at this point. For instance, why has democratization not signaled the end of militarism in Nigeria? Why are we still far away from freedom and equality? Why has cultural diversity continued to be a burden on political integration? Why is it still extremely difficult to define, in primary terms, the meaning of indigeneship in Nigeria? Why are Nigerians members of minorities that do not constitute any form of majority?

What are the factors militating against the use of persuasion, negotiation and consensus building for national political integration? Is Nigeria really democratizing? Do we still need the ongoing Sovereign National Conference (SNC), or better still, can the outcome of the ongoing National Conference impact positively on these disintegration tendencies in Nigeria? Do we still need true federalism, and restructuring?

Policy Implications

The Federal Character principle and the Federal Character Commission are unavoidable necessities forced on Nigerian national life by the cleavages and inequalities that have scarred the nation. Carrying out the implied affirmative action demands, however, firstly that the policy be carried out fairly and transparently in the short to medium term.

Secondly, that on the long-term, efforts must also be made to overcome the inequalities which give rise to affirmative action in the first place. Affirmative action and group derogative cannot be a permanent feature of national life; compassionate political engagement must be rigorously pursued. In the all encompassing consociational model worked out at the Abacha constitutional conference of 1994, 30 years was the shelf life of the special arrangements for power-sharing written into the constitution. After that, Nigeria was to return to 'national' politics. Incentives and sanctions-carrots and stick-must be applied to ensure that every segment of society has the opportunity and the responsibility to contribute to removing or reducing the structural inequalities. The Federal Character Principle's attempt at political integration in Nigeria has completely failed.

Nigeria therefore needs an exist strategy from affirmative action. Currently, Federal Character is about sharing existing educational and bureaucratic facilities. This narrow emphasis on 'sharing the cake' causes war, Nigeria's social history of communal and regional groups strive to overcome educational and social disadvantages through collective action. In the 1920s and 1930s when Igbo of the southeast wanted to close the educational gap with the Yoruba southwest, they carried out a massive community mobilization to build schools and offer scholarships to their kin. Similarly, as independence approached in the 1950s, northern politicians, barely aware of the educational gap with the south, invested heavily in education and mobilized the collection of donations to give scholarships to northern students to study in England. Unfortunately, contemporary Nigeria is driven by 'a concept of citizenship that is almost entirely about entitlements' (international crisis group 1964:4).

Conclusion

Presently, political integration is aimed at economic development determined by the power elite whose only obligations to civil society is explanations. This is basically why the Nigerian society approximates a society in disarray. Nigerians hate each other, they fear each other, they do not know each other because they cannot communicate with each other.

They are separated strategically by a power elite that arrogates powers to itself and exercises and retains such powers by upholding the principle of divide and conquer. It is doubtful therefore, if institutional framework or affirmative action as entrenched in the articles of the Federal Character Commission can bring about the much needed political integration in Nigeria, God safe us.

Recommendation

Every segment of Nigerian society; governments, communities, families, and individuals has a responsibility to contribute to eradicating the structural inequalities. The challenge is to develop policy with the right mix of encouragement, information, support, and sections to ensure that every segment plays its rightful part. Experience from elsewhere shows that there is in fact a connection between the short/medium term agenda and long-term agenda. Affirmative action, properly undertaken, can become a motor for our social change by having self perpetuating positive effects on employment and economic growth, even when the initial policy prop has been relaxed (Krisher 1974, Boston 1999). The initial opportunity masters' (Boston 1999.3), and the responsibility falls on the Federal Character Commission to provide this in the most fair and official manner. This is what can guarantee political integration in Nigeria.

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