

A FEDERATION IN DISARRAY: AN INTERROGATION OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION AND SECURITY CHALLENGES OF NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC

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Abstract

The Fourth Republic which commenced in 1999 with Olusegun Obasanjo's administration up till the incumbent Goodluck Jonathan's, no doubt has witnessed a plethora of cataclysmic social tornadoes which carried the capacity and potential to precipitate disintegration. A federal state is one with a division of power between general and regional governments where each is within its sphere, independent and coordinates (Wheare, 1963). The subversion of this intergovernmental arrangement reached its crescendo in the Fourth Republic with brazen impunity by the political class. The unworkability of this system of government has evoked and is still precipitating insecurity in the nature of the unrest in the Niger-Delta, kidnapping, Boko Haram, issues of marginalization, competitive federalism that is anchored on lopsided fiscal federalism among others. Rather than reversing this trend of "unfederalism", politicians have only succeeded in coming up with mantra and propaganda to project semblance of a smooth union. Nigerian federation can therefore be called a union without unity. This paper therefore is an attempt to lay bare the grey areas of our federalism which are at variance with global practice of the system. The study also seeks to examine the pattern and trajectory of unrest that are fall outs of this unfederal character of the Nigerian state.

Keywords: Insecurity, Federalism, Nigeria and Fourth Republic

Introduction

Federalism as a system of government has always been adopted as a way of ensuring peaceful coexistence in a heterogeneous society like Nigeria. Being federal implies having a system of government in which the individual states of a country have control over their own affairs, but are controlled by a central government for national decisions (Olayiwola, 2012). Nigeria has tried her hands on both the presidential-type and the parliamentary - type of federalism. Nigeria, a dis-aggregative federal state has witnessed a number of challenging security issues that had tended to precipitate breakup of the entity. The most pronounced among these was the Nigerian Civil War which raged between 1967 and 1970. The dust raised by the war is yet to settle, particularly with the recent statement of Chinua Achebe with regard to the deleterious Biafran war. The January 2012 fuel subsidy crisis in the country, where the government unilaterally removed the subsidy of fuel which led to serious protest that was coordinated by the coalition of the civil society groups, Nigerian Labour Congress and well-meaning Nigerians who came out enmasse to stand against a most anti-people and obnoxious policy. The protest almost led to revolution if not that the Nigerian state coercively brought it to an abrupt end. The concern of this paper is to beam its search light at the operation of federalism and the dis-integration that stares the nation in the face in Nigeria's Fourth Republic which commenced in May 29, 1999. The forcible amalgamation of Nigeria with inequality in size and natural resource endowment can be adduced as the prime reason for some of these challenges.

The years of military rule in Nigeria have also undermined the practice of federalism in Nigeria. Some scholars are of the opinion that federalism died in Nigeria when the coup of January 15, 1966 took place. With the mindset that military rule was the bane of Nigerian development, the reverse of this came to bold relief with the return of the civilians to the political radar. "When the world became hostile to all forms of military rule, our boys returned to the barracks leaving the civilians to take over the reins again, but things have not improved since they took over in 1999, the problem remains" (see The Nation, Aug.2012). The entire social firmament in Nigeria is characterized by inter- community/intra-community, interethnic and intra-ethnic, inter-religious and intra-religious strife (Ifeanacho and Nwagwu, 2009). The paper is sectioned into four parts, the introduction, conceptual clarification, a union without unity- a paradox of the Fourth republic and recommendation.

Conceptual clarification: Federalism

A federal state is a state with a written constitution which apportions the sovereign power between a central or “federal” legislature on the one hand, and a system of local legislatures on the other, in such a way that each is sovereign within its prescribed sphere (Olayiwola, 2012). Federalism according to K. C Wheare the father of federalism is the division of authority between general and regional government such that each is within its sphere coordinate and independent of each other (Wheare, 1963).

National Integration

This implies a collective effort to bring seemingly loosely-structured ethnic societies into the federation. It can also be seen as efforts at engendering centripetality within a federation. The integration crisis facing Nigeria is manifest in the minority issues, religious strife, ethnic politics, resource control, youth restiveness and the call for a sovereign national conference (Ifeanacho and Nwagwu, 2009).

A union without Unity- Paradox of the Nigeria’s fourth republic

After a long period of occupation of the political arena by the military, Nigeria is now on the path of transforming perpetuate democracy. Since independence several efforts at democracy have often met with brick wall either in the hands of the military or greedy politicians. Odeh noted that:

“The collapse of the past few democratic administrations came as a result of the weak foundations of democracy paving the way for military incursion into politics and governance. The demise of the First Republic in 1966 marked the beginning of 'soldier go, soldier come' syndrome which was detrimental to the process of democracy in Nigeria. Colonialism, ethnicity and religious bigotry have been identified as inhibiting factors in democratization in Nigeria (Nnoli, 1995), Other constraining factors identified by Ihonvbere (1997) include the failure of a workable federal system, the debate over resource control and corruption” (Odeh,nd)

Despite the fact that this paper’s focus is on the fourth republic, it will serve some purpose to do some flash back into where we are coming from as a guide to the sorry pass we have found ourselves. Since the parliamentary system of the first republic was abridged, several other endeavours at democratizing could not be sustained let alone integrating. Nigeria began its fourth republic on May 29, 1999. This saw Chief Olusegun Obasanjo of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) winning a general election. Abubakar Abdulsallam had headed a military government consequent upon the untimely death of General Sanni Abacha in 1998. The Yoruba of the South-West Nigeria felt cheated and shortchanged when Chief M.K.O Abiola of the Social Democratic Party (SDP)’s free and fair election was annulled by General Babangida’s administration in 1993. In view of the cancelation, a nationwide protest was embarked upon by the Yoruba people especial in the Yoruba states. In order to pacify and compensate the Yoruba, the two prominent political parties in the 1999 general election fielded two Yoruba men in Chief Olusegun Obasanjo (PDP) and Chief Olu Falae (Alliance for Democracy). By 2003, the Hausa/Fulani who have had more shot at the presidency than other ethnic groups wanted it again. As a result of the afore stated narration, Nigeria has sat on the edge of the precipice precariously with no solution at sight. This ugly situation has given rise to various challenges which this section seeks to appraise. These are:

Political Violence

Violence according to Anifowoshe is a universal phenomenon (Anifowoshe, 1982:1). Alanamu (2005), further clarified it by arguing that violence is "the expression of hostility and rage through physical force directed against persons or property". From this scholar’s postulation, it can therefore be inferred that anywhere, collective decision of a people is being taken, there is bound to be violence. Political violence has remained one of the banes of the Nigerian state. Frustration –aggression theory can simply be used to explain this away. The central premise of the theory holds that: aggression is always the result of frustration (Anifowoshe, 1982:6). That the component units of the Nigerian federation are replete with frustrated minorities is stating the obvious. These frustrations have always precipitated the various violence that has always resulted in the orgy of violence that have been witnessed for some time. Political violence has taken its toll on the Nigerian state. Political killings

almost became one of the features of the fourth republic. In this republic alone, Chief Bola Ige, Engr. Funsho Williams, Chief Harry Marshal were brutally murdered. According to Erinoshio "virtually all those responsible for politically motivated murders in the past fifteen years have not been brought to book" (see The Nation, Aug.22, 2012). All of these have tended to weaken our democracy and have resulted in making our democracy a fragile one. Well-meaning politicians who can move Nigeria ahead are afraid of joining the fray because of the morbid fear of being killed, hence the political terrain has been turned into a fierce battle ground and it is the "survival of the fittest". The negative influence of the political godfathers also contributed to making political violence an albatross to the fourth republic. Adedibu held saw in Ibadan and without him, any potential governor in the pace setter state will be strewn with thorns. Andy Uba called the shots in Anambra state. They operated in such a way that everything at their disposal is always mobilized during election to ensure victory for their candidate, failure to achieve that often end in violence of geometric proportion.

The latest of these crises was the fuel subsidy protest early 2012 when the federal government on 1st January decided to remove subsidy on fuel thereby causing astronomical increase in the price of fuel. Major cities in the country erupted in violence that neared revolution. The situation was not helped by the uprising in the Arab world. At a point, there had been call for the resignation of the president. Militancy in the Niger-Delta was another case of serious political violence against an insensitive nation. Agitation for resource control has been on for some time, particularly with the slashing of the derivation from 50% to 1% later to 13% but it was silenced by the military junta of Abacha with the killing in 1995 of the 8 Ogoni including the environmentalist and writer Ken Saro Wiwa. This shoddy treatment which negates the true practice of federalism which also did not sit well with the Niger-Deltans and they resorted to kidnapping of expatriates and other top shots of these multinationals who had caused enormous ecological damage to their environment without due compensation. If not for the amnesty Programme of the late Yar'Adua, the worst could have been seen.

Religious violence

This is yet another index of a fractious state on the fringe of collapse. Nigeria, a secular state has not being insulated from certain religiosity. One feels that being a secular state, space for religion should not always exist in most of our official forms and this should always be downplayed in most of our national engagements, because this sometimes unofficially counts in admissions, recruitment and bureaucracy despite the federal character principle. Aside the marginalization and peripheralisation that often result from it, wanton pogrom that it has caused has left much to be desired about the essence of religion as a means of social ordering in a human community. The introduction of the Sharia legal code in Zamfara state by the governor of the state started the religious issue in the fourth republic. Watchers of public affairs were afraid if the code will not be used on non-Muslims. According to Osaghae, a lot of devastating religious crises have erupted in Nigeria leading to loss of lives and properties in religious-volatile states like Kano and Kaduna (Osaghae, 1998). Ali (2004) quoted in Odeh posited that "different interest groups have at one time or the other employed or deployed religion as a political instrument for their mobilization. Most times politicians capitalized on religious crises to vent their pent up anger on the enemies and opponents, because naturally none of the holy books preached violence rather they encouraged peaceful coexistence. The extant Boko Haram which came with religious coloration, has shown that it has religious dimension to it, in that the number of churches that have been razed and worshippers killed are sufficient pointers to this fact. The December 25th killing in Madalla Catholic church was a case in point and the gruesome mother of Deeper Life worshippers in Okene, Kogi State shows the how hellish religious violence can get. This religiosity has not really robbed off on our body polity, in that virtually all ministers, senators, and governors belong to either of the two prominent religions which often preach honest dealings in all endeavors; however sleaze, monumental corruption and primitive embezzlement still holds way in government circles.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity is also at the root of the disintegration that is threatening the corporate existence of the Nigerian state. Nigeria, a country of more than 250 ethnic nationalities is a case study in ethnic strife. Three major ethnic groups can be identified in Nigeria-Yoruba, Hausa-Fulani and the Igbo. Others are categorized as minorities. The seed of ethnic differentiation had been planted right from the period of independence. The Action Croup (AG) dominated the West and led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the Northern People Congress (NPC) in the North was led by Sir Ahmadu Bello and the

National Council of Nigerians Citizens (NCNC) controlled the East and led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe (Sklar, 1983). One fundamental change that has been brought about is that the nomenclature of political parties must not reflect the ethnic group floating it, aside this it must have national spread, its head office must be in the FCT and the executive must reflect national spread, despite this political parties still reflect certain regions and distinct ethnic domination. For example, the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) is seen as a Yoruba dominated party because its stronghold is in the South West of the Yoruba people. The All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) is of the Eastern origin because the state it controls are in this region and the .Congress of Progressive Change (CPC) of northern extraction.

Nigeria today as many states as it does because of the need to combat ethnic related problems. In a bid to weaken the strength of the Eastern region at recession, the regions were divided into states, from three regions in 1945 with the Richards constitution up till the present 36 states arrangement all in a bid to nip ethnicism in the bud, that much has not been achieved.

Resource Control

Issue of resource control is such a critical issue in Nigeria, such that it has assumed a more worrisome dimension in the fourth Republic. With globalization sub-national units of the Nigerian federation realized the importance and workability of the resource control principles. Agitation for the resources of each region has therefore become a thorny issue in Nigeria. The South-South that is believed to have been more endowed in terms of oil resource feels it should either take control its resource or secede. Argument of resource control is hinged on the thesis that, this will no doubt encouraged other regions to discover their various resources which they have not discovered yet. Therefore drums of resources control is more vibrant in the South-south of Nigeria because of the enormous crude oil that is deposited in their land. But what the Niger-Deltans cannot stand is the brazen despoliation of their environment by the multinational oil prospecting companies with the connivance of the Nigerian government. This has led to a series of unrest, so many lives have been claimed including the writer, social crusader and environmentalist, Ken Saro Wiwa who agitated for adequate compensation for the inhuman conditions being experienced by the creek dwellers. Isaac Adaka Boro also made his voice known in this regard, yet no tangible thing is in place to ameliorate the plight and suffering of these people. Even much touted Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) has not been able to assuage the suffering of the people. Amnesty program was instituted following incessant kidnapping of both expatriates and local oil workers by the government, yet it has not been *Uhuru* for the creek dwellers who recently had corrosive flood as visitors.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Nigeria is a state on the brink of disintegration, going by recent events across the nation. From the recent attempt by a section of the South-south to host a flag which signified secession, the ever constant conscientisation of their tribes men through discreet and gradual preparation for a state of Biafra, the recurring Boko Haram unrest with a pointer to the fragile nature of our national cohesion, up to the lip service being paid to the zoning program by the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP). Federalism that is meant to put in place a cordial co-existence among the diverse nations within Nigerian federation has been subverted and its caricature is what we are practicing in Nigeria. Election was held in the United States of America, Mitt Romney the Presidential candidate of the Republican Party gallantly accepted the loss of the election in good faith and in the spirit of sportsmanship. The reverse will be the case in Nigeria. Since the process leading to the election had not been crisis free, the result of the election in the final analysis will be taken with a pinch of salt. Little wonder, it's always litigation after litigation consequent upon the conduct of election in Nigeria. For a crisis free society that will be able to achieve the vision 2020:20 as outline by the federal government certain measures must be seen and taken as article of faith. They are as follows:

- *The polity must be restructured in order to allow for popular political participation
- *True federalism must be practiced at all levels
- *Power must be devolved appropriately
- *The ongoing constitutional review must be carried to its logical conclusion.

* Issue of marginalization and power rotation are very germane and critical to the corporate survival of the Nigerian entity.

*Resource control issues must not be politicized

*The transformation mantra must be practicalised rather than the paper transformation that is being witnessed.

If all these points are taken into consideration, it is believed that to a large extent the hocus-pocus and the jiggery-pokery that has characterized governance in particular and the nation in general would be a thing of the past.

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