Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies (SGOJAHDS), Vol.8 No.2 June, 2025; p.g. 161 – 160; ISSN: 2695-2319 (Print); ISSN: 2695-2327 (Online)

MULTI-ETHNIC COMPLEXITY IN NIGERIA: BUILDING ALTERNATIVE FOR UNITED NATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria is complexity of ethnic nations which coexist in ribbons of ethnic conflicts. There is barrage of conflicts which presented in the form of political wars, civil war and ethno- religious conflict. The post independent Nigeria is synonymous with ethnic conflict which significantly shook the foundation of the nation. Against this backdrop, this paper constructs intellectual disposition which seeks to develop model for united Nigeria. The paper relied on historical records, archives and official account as literature materials. The paper reviewed historical heritage of Nigeria political history, ethnic doctrine and incursion of political space in Nigeria. Records both in archive and historical account showed that Nigeria is bedeviled with ethnic crisis of political unrest which destabilized federal government in the post independent. Political leaders of the Nigeria post independent were ethnic parochialism and this plunged Nigeria to perpetual crisis. There was sense of population advantage advanced by northern political leaders and this was wielded to short change other ethnics in the plural state. Political conflict of the first, second, third and fourth republics were triggered by ethnic jingoism. Ethnic parochialism in federal state hampered sense of nationalism. Whereas there is room for comparative advantage to thrive in Nigeria. The paper recommends balance growth through restructuring of federal government. This strengthens regional exploitation of resources for self sufficiency and contribution to weak confederal system. This also reinforces sense of nationalism through united ethnic-nation.

Keywords: federalism, Nigeria state, multi ethnic nations, conflict, united ethnic-nation.

1. Introduction

Nigeria is rich in historical anthropology. The peoples of the east, south and north are differentiated significantly in socio-political life and sociolinguistics relationship which draw upon social differentiation. The political affiliation of ethnic people is grounded by foundation of ethnic origin (Achimugu, Agboni, Joy & Aliyu, 2013). Evidently, there is consonance of ethnicity and political fraternity which is cutting edge for most part of first republic and second republic (Damilohun, 2015). Ethnicity and language define snap spot of integration for people of Nigeria. Studies reveal that Nigeria is multiplicity of language divided into many divisive parts and language family (Harcourt, 2016). There are more than 250 languages spoken in Nigeria, each language division contains people who are sharply related and

affiliated on the basis of language spoken (Jacob, 2012). The affiliation cut across political leaning, social and religious proclivity. Interestingly, political proclivity beclouded the foundation of Nigeria history which sorted and organized feelings in sentiment of association. Right from the post-colonial era, Nigeria is entangled in the cacophony of political bilateral relationship on the one ground; whereas such relationship is tainted by many conflictual political scenes (Keffi, 2002; Nnenna, 2014). The first republic was refresher of colonial experience and transition to nationalistic movement. Regional leaders were sharply divided along ethnic affinity and identity which profoundly formed pattern of governance (Nwankwo, 2015a). The parliamentary system of government was demonstrated as reflection of ethnic apologists which were renowned in the regional government. It was evident during this period political parties and associated were defined by ethnic interest and sorted political leaders by ethnic sentiments. Although the federal parliament controlled by Prime Minister resembled federation of united nations, it was vividly demarcated by ethnic affiliation (Nwankwo, 2015b). Political parties which formed government and those in opposition were sharply defined by ethnic affiliation (Samuel, 2012). In fact, the first republic was bedeviled by threatening political relation which pitched peoples of the north against the west and east (Ukoha, 2015). There were much political hullabaloos orchestrated in Nigeria due to ethnic suspicions. Political parties such as Northern People's Congress, Action Group and National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon were locked in supremacy of ethnic division (Obiorah, 2013). These political parties were carved as ethnic jingoism and apologists which strived as projection of regional integration rather than national integration (Madubuko, 2008). Nigeria as newly independent state was mere an object of pretense for national unity. Ethnic interest was primus over national interest.

The barrage of conflict which hampered national unity during first republic in the post independent triggered military incursions in political governance. The life span of parliamentary system of government in Nigeria collapsed and was substituted by military decree and brutal coup d'état (Suberu & Diamond, 2002). It must be mentioned that the conflagration of ethnic suspicions which punctured national unity displaced democratic government and was reproduced to usher in military dictatorship. Unfortunately, military incursion was an interregnum which lasted several decades. Yet, democracy was reinstalled in the second republic. The political parties that emerged in the 1979 elections were metamorphosis of the historic ethnic parties of the first republic. This election was marred by suspicions of irregularities and ethnic favouritisms (Salawu & Hassan, 2011). There was campaign of calumny and return to ethnic animations. Soon after the takeoff of second republic, it was predicated on short span due to prevailing national apathy reinforced by ethnic genome. Ethnicity functions like genome that perennially manifests in life span of every Nigerian. This appears like naturally programmed behaviour and variation which easily predetermined pattern of behaviour. The Shagari presidency was labeled as mediocre and embodiment of ethnic corrupt gangs which hampered national unity (Salawu, 2010). Unfortunately, the stigmatization was resonance and projected nuances of national suspicions. Again, the invigorating prowess of ethnic genetic was found in the confusion that bedeviled second republic.

Abundantly, third republic was rubric of sham, cacophony, phony-ethnic and ruse symbolism of ethnic power perpetuation. It was brain child of military ideology championed by Military President led by Ibrahim Babanginda. The republic was not divorced from ethnic suspicions

which rented the Nigeria space. The military era of Babanginda was coloured with ethnic struggles, intellectual protest and national unrest (Madubuko,2008). The collapse of Babanginda regime and incursion of Abacha dictatorship gave rise to fourth republic which till date subsists. The fourth republic which began in 1999 is fraught with many challenges and reincarnation of ethnic divisionism of the yester years. Nigeria in the current republic enthrones ethnic sentiment in socio-political expression. Evidently, the inter-ethnic conflicts resurgence in the 21st century Nigeria, clamours for ethnic presidency, ethnic suspicion which label national appointment in security architecture and parliamentary appointment or election of principal officers tainted by ethnic colouration attested to strength of ethnicism in the space of Nigeria society. There is so much sense of ethnic flavour which can be found in every nook and cranny of discourse cutting across socio-economic and socio-political life in Nigeria. This suspicion thrives in the midst of multiple ethnic complexity which could otherwise be exploited as strength for greater development in Nigeria. Unfortunately, ethnic multiplicity has remained strain of development in Nigeria. This problem has persisted several decades in the post independent Nigeria. Yet there is prospect of rapid social transformation in the midst of complex ethnic groups united in common front. This is the focus of this paper.

2. Objective of the paper

This paper projects intellectual task design to build explanation for united nations in multi ethnic Nigeria. Ethnic groups found in Nigeria are nations distinguished by unique culture and intellectual property. This paper integrates ethnic materials as thrust of theoretical application. Similarly, the paper relied on historical materials, archives, and government record as literature materials.

3. Historical Overview of Ethnicity in Nigeria

Ethnicity has played a significant role in shaping Nigeria's political, social, and economic landscape. As a multi-ethnic nation with diverse cultural groups, Nigeria's historical journey has been deeply influenced by ethnic dynamics, particularly in governance, resource distribution, and national integration. This historical overview examines the evolution of ethnicity in Nigeria from the threshold of independence through the various republics, highlighting its impact on political stability, federalism, and national unity.

3.1 Nigeria at the Threshold of Independence

Nigeria became an independent nation on October 1, 1960 by an act of the British Parliament. The 1960 Independence Constitution of Nigeria conferred full independence on the entire federation and remained in force until October 1, 1963 when the country became a republic, It had a federal constitution with a parliamentary democratic system modeled after the British system that emphasized majority rule. Nigeria, like most other African states adopted the multiparty system at independence; although was regionally based (Rawlinson, 2003).

The independence constitution of the federation and its regions were established by Section 2 of the Nigerian (Constitution) Order-in-Council, 1960, made by the British government in the following order: the Constitution of the Federation Republic of Nigeria, the Constitution of the Northern Region, the Constitution of Western Region and the Constitution of Eastern Region. In case of conflict between the regional constitutions and the Federal constitution however, section 1 of the Constitution of the Federation of Nigeria 1960 provided that the

Federal Constitution shall prevail to the extent of the inconsistency and the other law shall be void (Nnamdi, 1995; McCormick, 2004).

3.2 Formation of Regional and Ethnic Based Political Parties

The period between 1960 when Nigeria became independent and 1966 when the military took over, the government is referred to as the First Republic. During this period, Nigeria operated a parliamentary democracy as earlier stated modeled along British system, although it was regionally based, it was a multiparty system. While Nigeria as a country opened a multiparty structure at this point in time, all the regions operated mainly ethnically based one-party system that could not control power beyond their various regions (Badmus, 2009). The Northern Region, for instance, was dominated by the Northern People Congress (NPC); the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons which was later changed to National Council of Nigerian Citizens INCNC) controlled the Eastern Region; and the Action Group (AG) controlled the Western Region. This development encouraged regionalism and detrimental consequences of political instability in the Nigeria State (Ayoade, 2016).

At the federal level, the government that emerged was a coalition of the NPC and NCNC despite their conflicting differences. The common factor that bound them together is power and every other thing but nationalism. According to Awoshakin (2012). "In many respects, an NPC/NCNC federal coalition government was an anomaly. It involved the cooperation of two political parties whose public image could not be more distinct or diametrically opposed." This was particularly so because "while the NPC was traditionalist, aristocratic, gradualist and regionalist, the NCNC was nationalist, radical, egalitarian and populist".

Furthermore, "while the NPC was pro-Western and anti-Israeli in orientation, the NCNC was Pan-Africanist and it espoused neutrality and nonalignment in the 'East-West' struggle (Cold War)" (Awoshakin, 2012). Augwom (2010) pointed that "the uneasy coalition notwithstanding, the NPC/NCNC coalition firmly established itself as the ruling coalition party." The differences in the parties notwithstanding, the coalition between NPC/NCNC was made possible due to the fact that some NPC and NCNC leaders had been closely associated in earlier governments at the centre between 1951 and 1959. Also, the goodwill that accrued to the coalition, largely, because of the qualities of Dr. Azikiwe and Sir Tafawa Balewa, which endeared them to their colleagues in the administration made the coalition become a possibility (Attoh & Soyombo, 2011). Attoh and Soyombo argued that as a party in opposition, the AG had a difficult time experiencing constant harassment such as intimidation of its members by the ruling party and its supporters.

Furthermore, the attitudes of these parties toward accommodating minority aspirations varied widely. While the NCNC espoused self-determination for ethnic minorities but only in accordance with its advocacy of a unitary state, the Action Group, although supported such movements, including the restoration of the Northern Yoruba area (Ilorin, Igbomina and Kabba) to the Western Region. The NPC, on the other hand, persistently opposed the division of the Northern Region and was able to win over some disaffected minorities in the Middle Belt (Arowolo, 2011). Several proposals were introduced for the creation of more states as a means of restructuring the regions along ethnic lines to satisfy the clamour of the minorities, especially those from the Northern Region. Only the Mid- Western Region achieved formal approval in 1963 because it served to further the hegemonic interests of the NPC/NCNC

coalition government to the detriment of the AG despite its opposition to its creation from the Western Region (Anugwon, 2010).

The early political life of the Nigerian federation began to exhibit a culture of political intolerance both at the regional and at the federal level. For instance, there were trumped-up charges against Chief Obafemi Awolowo and some of his supporters including Chief Anthony Enahoro, accused of smuggling arms into the country with the intent to topple the government of the day and for giving military training to 200 activists in Ghana. They were put on trial for treasonable felony, convicted and jailed for 10 years (Anugwon, 2010). In addition, Chief Awolowo was accused of criminal misuse of public funds that ran into several million of pounds from public development corporations to the AG through a private investment corporation when he was the premier of the Western Region in the 1950s (Aluko, 2009).

In the same vein, Dr. Chike Obi of the Dynamic Party (DP) and Joseph Taka of the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) who were opposed to the ruling coalition government were also put on trial and convicted of sedition and treason respectively. Following these trials and convictions, the opposition party members from the West, Mid-West and the Middle Belt regarded these actions as political vendetta and expressed doubt about the credibility of political and judicial systems of the country (Aluko, 2009)).

3.3 The Western Regional Crisis and Collapse of The First Republic

Between 1962 and 1966, the Western Nigeria remained the cockpit of Nigeria politics. The leadership of AG could not agree on common issues regarding the administration of the Western Region and as well, the National government. Chief Awolowo favoured the adoption of Social Democracy as party policy, following the lead of Kwame Nkuruma's regime in Ghana and wanted to enlarge the sphere of influence of the party to make it interregional by drawing support across the country. Chief Samuel Akintola, the regional Premier on the other hand, supported an all-party federal coalition and wanted AG to align itself closely to the ruling party instead of being an opposition party to the government so that the party leaders could have access to power and as well benefit from the national spoils usually reserved for ruling parties (Alubo, 2004). However, while Chief Awolowo as the AG leader felt he should be consulted on policy changes and major appointments in the region, and indeed exercised general supervision over all the activities of the AG; Chief Akintola, on the other hand, did not like these limitations. All the mechanisms employed by the elders of the party to reconcile the two personalities did not yield any fruitful results, which eventually contributed to the crises in the Western Region and subsequent collapse of the Nigerian First Republic (Ake, 2000).

Although the British colonial government recognized the need for federalism for Nigeria, it did not properly work out the power struggle between the contenders for federal power since one region was in a position to lord it over the other two regions combined in terms of size and population. At independence, the preponderant size of the Northern Region made it possible for the north to dominate the federation. Having more than half of the country's population, the region through the NPC controlled majority of the seats in the House of Representatives. With this structure, the Northern Region could hold the Nigerian federation to ransom in the sense that any bill that was opposed by NPC in parliament faced the

possibility of rejection (Ake, 2000). The arbitrary ethnic grouping endangered much bitterness due to actual domination of the minority by the majority ethnic groups in the various regions. This led to the demands for creation of more states and/or regional boundary adjustments (Aka, 1995; Anugwon, 2010).

Several minority political movements such as the Mid-West-State Movement, Middle-Belt Zone League and the Calabar-Ogoja-Rivers Movement were thus formed to press for separate states (Ajala, 2009). Contrarily, the three major political parties seemed not to sincerely support the carving out of the minority ethnic groups in their various regions, NPC with a policy of "One North, one people, one destiny" wanted the Northern Region to be left intact so as to maintain its hegemony over the other two regions of the East and West combined together. The NCNC in the Eastern Region on the other hand, supported the creation of additional states as long as states were to be created in other regions and based on four principles of: self-determination (majority support for separate state); relative ethnic homogeneity; geographical contiguity of such new state; and viability - that each state, as nearly as possible, should be self-sustained economic and administrative unit (Ajala, 2009).
On its part, the AG in the Western Region supported the creation of minority states but with an adjustment that brought to question the viability of the proposed Mid-West State. For instance, the AG suggested that the Igbo-speaking peoples of Asaba and Agbor should be added to the Eastern Region; the Ijaw West of the Niger should join their kinsmen in the East and the two minorities with Yoruba dialect (Akoko-Edo of Afemmai and the Itsekiri of Warri) should remain in the Western Region, the Ilorin and Kabba Yoruba of the North should be merged with Yoruba West, Ishan and Afemmai divisions should be excluded from the proposed Mid-West State because of their opposition to the Mid-Western State idea. If these suggestions were to be accepted, the implication was that the creation of Mid-West State would not have taken place due to the problem of viability in terms of population and economic strength (Aiyede, 2009).

Section 3 of the Federal Constitution mandated the creation of states in the Federation Adamolekun & Ayo, 2019; Adeniran, 1991). Consequent upon the minorities' agitation, a bill for creation of three more states (Middle Belt, Calabar-Ogoja Rivers and Mid West) was introduced in the Federal Parliament. Only the Mid-Western Region received the support of both the Northern and Eastern Regional legislatures. The Western legislature, although objected to it when Chief Awolowo was in charge of AG, but the creation of the region was formally approved in 1963, when he was already serving a ten year jail term and because, the NPC/NCNC coalition government considered its creation to be favourable to their hegemonic interests. Thus, the creation of the Mid- Western Region out of the former Western Region in 1963 finally completed the devastating blow on the Action Group as a dominant party in the Western Region (Adamolekun & Ayo, 2019).

3.4 The 1962 Census Crisis

The 1962 census also shows that Nigeria was far from being a nation. Even if there is nation-building in Nigeria, it was insignificant. The issues of size and distribution of population remained volatile in the politics of Nigeria's First Republic. This was because population distribution served as a barometer to measure the political strength of the regions and as major factor for allocating revenue, for distributing social amenities, resources, scholarships and quotas in recruitment into the armed forces among the regions. Furthermore, seats in the

House of Representatives were allocated to the regions on the basis of population. For instance, the 312 seats in the House of Representatives were allocated to the regions according to the size of their population based on the 1952/3 census figure. The Northern Region had 174 seats, the Eastern Region had 73 while the Western Region had 62 and Lagos, 3 seats (Aiyede, 2009). The parliamentary democratic system in Nigerian simply assured the domination of the Federal Government by the region with the most population (Aiyede, 2009). Since party polities in Nigeria ran along ethic/regional lines, the North with more than half of the country's population was bound to win all the elections conducted on the basis of one man one vole. The 1962 census presented the best opportunity for the NCNC and the Southern political leaders to redress the lopsided Nigeria's federal structure and the defective Northern domination. The competing regional governments, therefore, approached the exercise from this perspective (Aka 1995).

The result of the census showed a high count for both the East and the West. The North on the other hand felt undercounted and perhaps cheated in the game and therefore protested. As a result, "the census figures were never published and the whole census had to be cancelled on account of harsh criticism" (Adigwe, 1985). The Prime Minister ordered a fresh count in 1963. The 1963 census figures released on 25 February 1964 put the country's population at 55,653,821 made-up of: Northern Region 29,777,986; Eastern Region 12,388,646; Western Region 19,278,500, Mid-Western Region 2,533,337; and Lagos 675,352 (Adigwe, 1985; Osaghae, 2002).

The results apparently dashed the hopes of most southern politicians that a new census would end the age-long North's numerical predominance, and indirectly, the Northern political control of the Nigerian Federation (Dudley, 1982). The NCNC's Eastern Regional government rejected the results of the census while the Western Regional government accepted it due to Chief Akintola's political romance with the NPC. The cacophony wreaked havoc on alliance between NPC and the NCNC. The NCNC leaders accused the Northern Region's government of fraud and contested the result in the law court. Tafawa Balewa, the country's Prime Minister and Ahmadu Bello, the Northern Regional Premier and leader of the party respectively denied the claim. However, the Prime Minister declared the census results valid and final. This crisis paved the way for new political alignment and realignment to the detriment of AG and NCNC (Aka, 1995).

3.5 The 1964 Federal Election

The 1964 federal parliamentary election which was regionally aligned and lacked nationalistic character was contested by the two major political parties, Nigeria National Alliance (NNA) led by Sir Ahmadu Bello - comprised Northern People's Congress (NPC), Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) formed by S. L. Akintola after his clash with Awolowo), the Midwestern Democratic Front (MDF), the Dynamic Party (DP), and the Niger Delta Congress (NDC) - and United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) led by Dr. Michael Okpara - comprised National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), Action Group, the Northern Progressive Front (NPF) and the United Middle-Belt Congress (UMBC). The electoral process witnessed great violence, harassment, kidnapping, intimidation and killing of political opponents by the ruling regional parties, allegations and counter allegations by one party alliance on the order of plots to rig the election (Akujieze, 2004). The elections had to be suspended for several weeks and when the elections finally held, each of the regional parties

openly harassed, intimidated its opponent in the campaigns. The army had to be engaged to supervise the elections when it became clear that the neutrality of the Federal Electoral Commission could not be guaranteed. There were accusations and counter-accusations of political harassment in the North during the electioneering campaigns (Alapiki, 2005).

The electoral procedure was so flagrantly abused that at the close of nominations some 88 out of a total of 178 NNA candidates in the North had their candidature unopposed. The UPGA therefore resolved to boycott the election to protest the unlawful arrest, persecution, kidnapping and in some cases, killing of its members. Its members in the Federal Electoral Commission resigned (Alapiki, 2005). Nevertheless, the elections still held under a very tense and violent atmosphere. The results of the election showed the NNA sweeping the polls with most of the party's candidates declared unopposed. Under the conditions that were not free and fair to opponents of the regional parties, the NCNC was returned to power in the East and Mid-West, while the NPC had firm control of the North, NPC was also in a position to form the government at the federal level on its own. This led to an attempt by the Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa to call on the President - Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe to be reappointed as the Prime Minister of the new government. Dr. Nnamdi "refused, thereby creating a constitutional stalemate that set the country on the brink of collapse. After negotiations, the President - Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, invited Tafawa Balewa to reconstitute a new government to the detriment of UPGA members (Aluko, 2009).

3.6 The 1965 Western Election Crisis

The UPGA, after the devastating defeat it suffered in the 1964 federal parliamentary election, looked forward to the Western Region legislative election of 1965 as a hope of victory over the NNA. The region therefore became the "theater of war" between UPGA and NNA. The irregularities and manipulations that marred the 1964 election were only repeated in the election. Thuggery, violence, victimization of political opponents and widespread electoral fraud was alleged, and NNA won the elections. Following the announcement of the results, riots, arson and killings erupted as heartlands of the AG discovered that the election had only returned UNDP in the alliance of NNA to power. Not even the deployment of the army could placate the breakdown of law and order as burning, looting and killing went unabated in the Western Region, the home-base of AG/UPGA. When it was so clear that the government could not curtail the political upheavals, the army struck on the 1s' January, 1966. The Prime Minister, Tafawa Balewa, Premier of the Northern and Western Regions - Sir Ahmadu Bello and Chief Akintola respectively were killed and that marked the collapse of the First Republic (Alapiki, 2005; Aluko, 2009).

3.7 The First Military Rule

On 15th January 1966, a group of army officers (the Young Majors) mostly south-eastern Igbos, overthrew the NPC-NNDP government and assassinated the Prime Minister and the premiers of the northern and western regions. However the bloody nature of the Young Majors' coup caused another coup carried out by General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi. The Young Majors went into hiding. Major Emmanuel Ifeajuna fled to Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana where he was welcomed as a hero (Aluko, 2009). Some of the Young Majors were arrested and detained by the Ironsi government. Among the Igbo people of the Eastern Region, these detainees were heroes. In the Northern Region, however, the Hausa and Fulani people demanded that the detainees be placed on trial for murder (Anugwon, 2010).

The federal military government that assumed power under General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi was unable to mum ethnic tensions on the issue at hand. Furthermore, the Ironsi government was unable to produce a constitution acceptable to all sections of the country. Most fateful for the Ironsi government was the decision to issue Decree No. 34 which sought to unify Nigerians and set them on the road to nationhood (Anugwon, 2010). Decree No. 34 sought to do away with the whole federal structure under which the Nigerian government had been organized since independence. Rioting broke out in the North. The Ironsi government's efforts to abolish the federal structure and the renaming the country the Republic of Nigeria on 24th May, 1966 raised tensions and led to another coup by largely northern officers in July 1966, which established the leadership of Major General Yakuba Gowon (Aluko, 2009). This to a large extent truncated the step to nation-building mapped out by Ironsi government. The name Federal Republic of Nigeria was restored on 31st August 1966. However, the subsequent massacre of thousands of Ibos in the north prompt hundreds of thousands of them to return to the south-east which increased strong secessionist sentiment. In a move towards greater autonomy to minority ethnic groups, military divide the four regions into 12 states. However, the Ibos rejected the attempts constitutional revisions and insisted on full autonomy for the east.

The Central Intelligence Agency commented in October 1966, in CIA Intelligence Memorandum that: Africa's most populous country (population estimated at 48 million) is in the throes of a highly complex internal crisis rooted in its artificial origin as a British dependency containing over 250 diverse and often antagonistic tribal groups. The report further stated, it has been in an acute stage since last January when a military coup d'état destroyed the constitutional regime bequeathed by the British and upset the underlying tribal and regional power relationships. At stake now are the most fundamental questions which can be raised about a country, beginning with whether it will survive as a single viable entity. The situation is uncertain, with Nigeria sliding downhill faster and faster, with less and less chance of unity and stability. Unless present army leaders and contending tribal elements soon reach agreement on a new basis for association and take some effective measures to halt a seriously deteriorating security situation, there will be increasing internal turmoil, possibly including civil war (Attoh & Soyombo, 2011). On 30th May, 1967 Lt. Col. Emeka Ojukwu, the military governor of the eastern region who emerged as the leader of increasing Igbo secessionist sentiment, declared the independence of the eastern region as the Republic of Biafra. The Nigerian Civil war had an estimated 3.5 million deaths (mostly from starving children) before the war ended, with Gowon's famous "No victor, no vanquished" speech in 1970.

Shortly after the civil war a U.S analyst said …Nigeria is still very much a tribal story, where local and tribal alliances count more than national attachment (Ayoade, 2016). Nigeria emerged from the war with a heightened sense of national pride mixed with anti-foreign sentiment, and an intention to play a larger role in African and world affairs. However, on July 29, 1975 General Murtala Mohammed and a group of officers staged a bloodless coup, accusing Gen. Yakubu Gowon of corruption and delaying the promised return to civilian rule. General Mohammed replaced thousands of civil servants and announced a timetable for the resumption of civilian rule by October 1st, 1979. He was assassinated on February 13th 1976 in an abortive coup and his Chief of staff Lt. Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo became Head of State.

3.8 The Second Republic

The second republic was not far from the first republic especially in the area of party affiliation. Parties were formed and toed lines of ethnic sentiment. Nigerians see themselves more from their different ethnic nationalities than as a nation. The three major political parties among the five political parties formed then were formed along the three major ethnic groups; National Party of Nigeria (NPN, mainly for the North - Hausa), National People's Party (NPP, mainly for the South East - Ibos) and United Party of Nigeria (UPN, mainly for the South West - Yoruba). A constituent assembly was elected in 1977 to draft a new constitution, which was published on September 21, 1978, when the ban on political activity was lifted. In 1979, five political parties competed in a series of elections in which Alhaji Shehu Shagari of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) was elected president (Ayoade, 2016).

In August 1983, Shagari and the NPN were returned to power in a landslide victory with a majority of seats in the National Assembly and control of 12 state governments. But the elections were marred by violence and allegations of widespread vote rigging and electoral malfeasance, leading to legal battles over the results. On December 31st, 1983 the military overthrew the Second Republic. Major General Muhammad Buhari emerged as the leader of the Supreme Military Council (SMC), the country's new ruling body. The Buhari government was peacefully overthrown by the SMC's third-ranking member General Ibrahim Babangida in August 1985. Babangida (IBB) cited the misuse of power, violations of human rights by key officers of the SMC, and the government's failure to deal with the country's deepening economic crisis as justifications for the takeover.

3.9 The Aborted Third Republic

In 1990, the head of state, Gen. Babangida promised to return the country to civilian rule which was later extended until January 1993. In early 1989, a constituent assembly completed a constitution, and in the spring of 1989 political activity was again permitted. In October 1989 the government established two parties, the National Republican Convention (NRC) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP); other parties were not allowed to register (Ayoade, 2016).

In April 1990 mid-level officers attempted unsuccessfully to overthrow the government and 69 accused plotters were executed after secret trials before military tribunals. In December 1990, the first stage of partisan elections was held at the local government level. Despite low turnout, there was no violence and both parties demonstrated strength in all regions of the country, with the SDP winning control of a majority of local government councils. In December 1991, state legislative elections were held and Babangida decreed that previously banned politicians could contest in primaries scheduled for August 1992. These were later canceled due to fraud, and subsequent primaries scheduled for September 1992 also were cancelled. All announced candidates were disqualified from standing for president once a new election format was selected. The presidential election was finally held in June 12th, 1993, with the inauguration of the new president scheduled to take place August 1993, the eight anniversaries of president Babangida's coming to power.

In the historic June 12th, 1993 presidential elections, which most observers deemed to be Nigeria's fairest, early returns of counted votes indicated that wealthy Yoruba businessman, M. K. O. Abiola won a decisive victory. However, on June 23rd, Babangida annulled the election, throwing Nigeria into turmoil. More than 100 were killed in riots before Babangida

agreed to hand power to an interim government on August 27th, 1993. He later attempted to renege this decision, but without popular and military support, he was forced to hand over to Ernest Shonekan, a prominent nonpartisan businessman. Shonekan was to rule until elections scheduled for February 1994. Although he had led Babangida's Transitional Council since 1993, Shonekan was unable to reverse Nigeria's economic problems or to defuse lingering political tension.

With the country sliding into chaos, Defense Minister then Gen. Sani Abacha assumed power and forced Shonekan's resignation on November 17, 1993. Abacha dissolved all democratic institutions and replaced elected governors with military officers. Although promising restoration of civilian rule, he refused to announce a transitional timetable until 1995. Following the annulment of the June 12, 1993 election, the United States and others, imposed sanctions on Nigeria including travel restrictions on government officials and suspension of arms sales and military assistance (Ayoade, 2016).

Although Abacha was initially welcomed by many Nigerians, disenchantment grew rapidly. Opposition leaders formed the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), which campaigned to reconvene the Senate and other disbanded democratic institutions. On June 11th 1994, Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola declared himself president and went into hiding until his arrest on June 23, 1994. In response, petroleum workers called a strike demanding that Abacha should release Abiola and hand over power to him. Other unions joined the strike, bringing economic life around Lagos and the southwest to a standstill. After calling off a threatened strike in July, the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) reconsidered a general strike in August, after the government-imposed conditions on Abiola's release. On August 17 1994, the government dismissed the leadership of the NLC and the petroleum unions and placed the unions under appointed administrators, and arrested Frank Kokori and other leaders (). The government alleged in early 1995 that military officers and civilians were engaged in a coup plot. Security officers rounded up the accused, including former Head of State Chief Olusegun Obasanjo and his deputy, retired General Shehu Musa Yar'Adua. After a secret tribunal, most of the accused were convicted and several death sentences were handed down.

On October 1, 1995, Abacha announced the timetable for a three-year transition to civilian rule. Only five political parties were approved by the regime and voter turnout for 11 elections in December 1997 was under 10%. On December 20, 1997 the government arrested General Oladipo Diya, ten officers, and eight civilians on charges of coup plotting. The accused were tried before General Victor Malu military tribunal in which Diya and five others - Late Gen. A. K. Adisa, Gen. Tajudeen Olnrewaju, Late Col O.O. Akiyode, Major Seun Fadipe and a civilian Engr. Bola Adebanjo were sentenced to death to die by firing squad. Abacha enforced authority through the federal security system which is accused of numerous human rights abuses, including infringements on freedom of speech, assembly, association, travel, and violence against women. Abacha died of heart failure on June 8, 1998 and was replaced by General Abdulsalami Abubakar. The military provisional Ruling Council (PRC) under Abubakar commuted the sentences of those accused in the alleged coup during the Abacha regime and released almost all known civilian political detainees. Pending the promulgation of the constitution written in 1995, the government observed some provisions of the 1979 and 1989 constitutions. Neither Abacha nor Abubakar lifted the decree suspending the 1979

constitution, and the 1989 constitution was not implemented. The judiciary system continued to be hampered by corruption and lack of resources after Abacha's death. In an attempt to alleviate such problems Abubakar's government implemented a civil service pay raise and other reforms.

In August 1998, Abubakar appointed the independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to conduct elections for local government councils, state legislatures and governors, the national assembly, and president. The INEC successfully held elections on December 5th. 1998, January 9, 1999, February 20, and February 27 1990 respectively. For local elections nine parties were granted provisional registration with three fulfilling the requirements to contest the following elections. These parties were the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the All People's Party (APP), and the predominantly Yoruba Alliance for Democracy (AD). Former military head of state Olusegun Obasanjo, freed from prison by Abubakar, ran as a civilian candidate and won the presidential election. The PRC promulgated a new constitution based largely on the suspended constitution, before the May 29, 1999 inauguration of the new civilian president. The constitution includes provisions for a bicameral legislature, the National Assembly consisting of a 360 - member House of Representatives and a 109 - member Senate.

3.10 The Fourth Republic

The emergence of democracy in Nigerian on May 1999 ended 16 years of consecutive military rule. Chief Obasanjo inherited a country suffering economic stagnation and the deterioration of most democratic institutions caused by prolong military rule. Obasanjo, a former general, was admitted for his stand against the Abacha dictatorship, his record of returning the federal government to civilian rule in 1979, and his claim to represent all Nigerians regardless of religion and ethnicity. The new President took over a country that faced many problems, including a dysfunctional bureaucracy, collapsed infrastructure, and a military that wanted a reward for returning quietly to the barracks (Ayoade, 2016). The President moved quickly and retired hundreds of military officers holding political positions, established a blue-ribbon panel to investigate human rights violations, released scores of persons held without charge, and rescinded numerous questionable licenses and contracts left by the previous regimes. The government also moved to recover millions of dollars in funds secreted to overseas accounts. Most civil society leaders and Nigerians witnessed marked improvements in human rights and freedom of the press under Obasanjo. As Nigeria works out representational democracy, conflicts persist between the Executive and Legislative branches over appropriations and other proposed legislation. A sign of federalism has been the growing visibility of state governors and the inherent friction between Abuja and the state capitals over resource allocation. Communal violence plagued the Obasanjo government. In May, 1999 violence erupted in Kaduna State over the succession of an Emir resulting in more than 100 deaths. In November 1999, the army destroyed the town of Odi, Bayelsa State and killed scores of civilians in retaliation for the murder of 12 policemen by a local gang (Badmus, 2009). In Kaduna, between February and May 2000, over 1,000 people died in rioting over the introduction of criminal Shar'ia in the state. Hundreds of ethnic Hausa were killed in reprisal attacks in south- eastern Nigeria. In September 2001, over 2,000 people were killed in inter-religious rioting in Jos. In October 2001, hundreds were killed and thousands displaced in communal violence that spread across the states of Benue, Taraba, and Nasarawa. On October

1st, 2001 Obasanjo announced the formation of a National Security Commission to address the issue of communal violence. Obasanjo was re-elected in 2003.

The new president faces the daunting task of rebuilding a petroleum-based economy, whose revenues have been squandered through corruption and mismanagement. Additionally, the Obasanjo administration tried to defuse longstanding ethnic and religious tensions and to build a foundation for economic growth and political stability (Badmus, 2009). Conflict in the Niger Delta added up over the environmental destruction caused by oil drilling and the ongoing poverty in the oil-rich region. In 2007, there was general election, Umaru Yar'Adua and Goodluck Jonathan, both of the People's Democratic Party, were elected President and Vice President, respectively. The election was marred by electoral fraud, and denounced by other candidates and international observers.

Yar'Adua's presidency was fraught with uncertainty as media reports said he suffered from kidney and heart disease. In November 2009, he fell ill and was flown out of the country to Saudi Arabia for medical attention. He remained incommunicado for 50 days, by which time rumors were rife that he had died. This continued until the BBC aired an interview that was allegedly done through telephone from the president's sick bed in Saudi Arabia. In February 2010, Goodluck Jonathan began serving as acting President in the absence of Yaradua. In May 2010, the Nigerian government learned of Yar'Adua's death after a long battle with existing health problems and an undisclosed illness. Goodluck Jonathan called for new elections and stood for re-election in April 2011, which he won. However, his re-election bid in 2015 was truncated with the emergence of former military ruler General Muhammad Buhari, mainly on his inability to quell the rising insecurity in the country especially from the Boko Haram. General Muhammad Buhari was declared winner of the 2015 presidential elections. General Muhammad Buhari took over the helm of affairs in May 2015 after a peaceful transfer of power from the Jonathan led administration. Buhari served two terms until 2023, after which Bola Ahmed Tinubu emerged as Nigeria's president following the February 2023 elections. His administration has since focused on economic reforms, the removal of fuel subsidies, and efforts to address security challenges, although concerns remain over inflation, governance, and the effectiveness of his policies in stabilizing the nation.

4. Reconstructing Alternative for United Nation of Nigeria

Nigeria today is sharply divided along ethnic suspicions. The spate of ethnic crises and coloration of the early independent era is resurfacing which question the very existence of compound territory like Nigeria. The political climate is rent by numerous ethnic jingoism and apologists which fan ember of divisionism in the country. It is rife in the socio-political atmosphere which is now constructed as ethnic sentiments and state relation in appointments for many state-owned enterprises and military architecture. The Buhari led federal government is fingered as most parochial ethnic bias which reincarnated age long ethnic suspicions in Nigeria. Indeed, Buhari government is labeled as ethnic government which emasculated superiority of the Hausa-Fulani in the Nigeria history, a return to first republic domination which suffocated the west and east. Besides the current in the fourth republic lately, post independent Nigeria has been wrapped in crises which shook the foundation of unity.

The implication is that more than sixty-one years of Independence, Nigeria struggles to exploit united citizenship. There is little drive or no bite for united nations given more than 250 ethnic nations in Nigeria. Yet, building united nations adduce national citizenship and drive to unfettered development and strength for economic growth. The barrage of ethnic crisis and banters of nonchalant political presidents and military heads of state means a lot for growth in Nigeria. It is unfortunate that rather than exploiting comparative advantage for development, there is lack of political will to promote balance growth and advantage for federal units. Indeed, there is prospect for comparative advantage in the landscape of Nigeria. This also creates prospect for balanced growth model. Nigeria is cutting edge for geopolitical boundaries and each region is replete with natural resources. But the carnage of population advantage surreptitiously adopted for distribution of federal power and presidency plunged the current disarray. The constitution empowers federal government abnormally and promotes unbalanced growth through domination and exploitation of regional resources for skewed national development. It is certain that ethnic bias leader who is rigged to power by ethnic people promotes the crunch interest of cabal at the expense of national interest. This is the suspicion that manifests in most part of the Nigerian history. The Buhari administration is specifically singled in the post modern age and it is accused of expanding ethnic hegemony through ridiculous flouting of federal character law (Civil Society Coalition, 2020).

But there is way out of the quagmire to foster united nation drive. This paper recommends doctrine of comparative advantage. The model seeks to establish restructuring of federal government as it currently stands. The population advantage claimed by northern extraction is recipe of numerous conflict and blatant destabilization of Nigeria for decades. But there is strength in population, which should not be placed to exploit other units in federating government. The paper strongly align with notion of balance development through regional autonomy and weak federal power. It is a call for confederal government which strengthens sense of belonging to federal unit, promotes balance growth and build sense of united ethnic-nation.

5. Conclusion

Nigeria's persistent ethnic divisions and structural imbalances have hindered national unity and equitable development for decades. The over-centralization of federal power, coupled with ethnic favoritism in governance, has deepened distrust among regions and reinforced calls for restructuring. To foster a truly united Nigeria, there is an urgent need for a governance model that prioritizes regional autonomy, balanced development, and a fair distribution of resources. Adopting a confederal system that empowers federating units while maintaining national cohesion would help mitigate ethnic tensions and create a more inclusive and prosperous nation. Only through such structural reforms can Nigeria harness its diversity as a strength rather than a source of perpetual conflict.

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