Social Evaluation Survey on Ethnic Relations in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

As urban and rural centres in Nigeria experienced population explosion in ethnic composition, ethnic disharmony and apathy increased over social and economic policies of the government. State sovereignty can no longer be regarded as only for protection against external interference, but as a charge of responsibility, whereby the state is made to be accountable for both internal and external mandates.

In Africa, states have failed to take the responsibility for their citizens' welfare. This, to some extent, had precipitated to politics of ethnic and national identity. "Who am I? Where do I belong?"

This paper examines ethnic relations and development in Nigeria in the light of the present ethnic tension which has gripped the country in the past few years. The understanding of the feelings and thoughts of the people in terms of resource competition may help to find a common ground for solutions to ethnic inequality and conflict.

INTRODUCTION

It is often claimed that the major social and political problem the country faces in this century and will continue to face in the twenty-first century is ethnicity. This may be described as ethnic nationalism, ethnocentrism, ethnic separatism or primordialism. All these point to the fact that various ethnic groups do not get along easily with each other.

To understand the social changes which support or contradict this conception, it is important to consult Nigerian peoples. Until one can appreciate the background of their attitudes, motivations and beliefs about their world, prediction of the course of events and adequate explanation of what is happening or has already occurred is impossible.

The aim of the evaluation studies is to examine and provide valid and reliable information on ethnic relations within the framework of Nigerian historical background and culture. The country is big and complex. Its peoples are more politically aware and active than is usual in other African countries. The lessons from the study could be applied elsewhere, especially in terms of conflict management and containment.

It is difficult to separate ethnicity from political and economic development issues. There is an interrelatedness of problems of economic and social justice within ethnic issues. Development cannot be restricted to political and economic activities alone without some human activities that support and perpetuate the historical fulfilment of the community of life on earth (Engel 1990: 10-11).

Social evaluation studies may include social values, such as culture and habits, thoughts and attitudes, which influence judgements and goal-setting of a society. This, in turn, takes into account the need, aspirations, resources and capabilities of competing demands of the society. Values are important information to evaluation; hence they help in identifying the needs and problems in evaluation process.

What is the situation in Nigeria after the 1993 misdemeanour of the electoral and political process? One crucial question in the minds of Nigerian observers is that, if she could ever put bits and pieces of her units together, would she recover and achieve economic development?

During the past fifteen years, Nigeria has faced political, economic and social crisis. This has taken place because of the global economic recession on one hand, and because of local mismanagement by the civilian government and by the military dictatorship on the other hand. The Second Republic (1979-1983) and its military successors (1984-1993) exhibited economic recklessness and misdemeanour of the electoral and political process.

The aim of the study identified above called for sample survey procedures applying sampling techniques, questionnaire schedule, interview, reliability level tests and data analysis. The specifications and choices depend on the kind of inference we want or can be deduced from the survey. An exploratory 'search device' may be applied when we deal with complex, unexplored interrelationships. The type of the problem, on the other hand, may be simple enough to allow the confirmation of a certain hypothesis. In contrast, any exploratory study focuses on generating a hypothesis that will contribute to the theory building in real research field.

The survey was targeted at government functionaries, students and ordinary citizens, the so-called 'common man' who had at least a secondary school education, to obtain comparative data on ethnic, social and development issues. The study laid greater emphasis on the ordinary citizens of both sexes, who represent the grassroots level of the society.

1. METHODS AND MATERIAL

The survey was carried out in Lagos, a city of six million multi-ethnic society, and Orlu, a town of 500,000 inhabitants in Imo state of Nigeria. The study was limited to these areas because of security reasons.

A questionnaire check-list and a pocket tape-recorder were used during the interview sessions. The interviews were designed to be conducted in the following way: a. The first part was to last for 20-30 minutes. This was administered strictly on a randomly selected elite group, such as politicians and other professionals. b. The second part lasted for approximately 25-45 minutes. The responses were contrasted with the first interview to test if there was any significant correlation in perception in terms of social conditions between the two variables.

A total of 100 respondents participated in the interview. Their views and statements were sometimes vague, incomplete and needed further elaboration. This motivated me to use a 'detective device', called the 'case for theory-driven research approach' which demands that one knows at all times what is going on in the field. A researcher should also exercise his discretion because a respondent may not want to disclose his opinion in public in an interview process (Cherly 1985: 179-184). A total of 1,200 questionnaires were randomly distributed by mail and personal delivery. Because of the security risks involved, respondents were specially warned not to discuss the questionnaire with unknown persons.

1.1 DATA ANALYSIS

An impressive response rate was achieved on the questionnaire study. However, there was low response from the trade unions, local government officials and some pro-government politicians who perceived the study as an exercise sponsored by pro-democracy groups.

The discussion sessions were least remarkable as participants were afraid of reprisal by the authority if their opinion and identity were revealed, as the discussion was being tape-recorded. The majority of the responses were from teachers, students, ordinary citizens of different professions and human rights groups.

The respondents represented an accurate sample of the society, and were requested to respond to the questionnaire so that it reflected their personal opinion.

Different checks and balances have been applied to test the reliability of the answers given by the respondents in this study. No indications of unreliability of responses have been found, except in twenty cases of the discussion session that had proved to be unreliable and therefore, had been left out.

Tentative data, which provided the community's opinion and attitudes for descriptive analysis, and discussion data resulted into a total of 1,020 questionnaires and eighty discussion sessions, which form the basis of this analysis. The discussion data was corroborated with the consensus or majority of the responses in the questionnaires.

The following section presents information on national consciousness and integration, amalgamation, education, military, affirmative action, socio-economic

development, political power, minority groups, habitation and working life, system of government, election, environment and human rights.

1.2 NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

The literature on national integration, whereby national consciousness is one aspect, is vast and not possible to be summarized here. Weiner categorizes the concept into five meanings; the change from cultural diversity to national identifications, the linkage of elite and masses, the creation of central political authority, minimum value consensus, and a coordinated ability for action towards a common goal - all believed to answer to the question of what keeps a society and political system together. Nation-building is an important aspect of political development and is therefore multi-dimensional, holistic and a process in one. Some obstacles such as cultural cleavages among different groups, an elite-mass gap and a clear separation of sub-national and national identifications must be overcome, or there will be no national identity (Narain 1976: 193) and hence no integration. That is, cultural and political values need to be integrated, that is, mainly authority norms which are overlaid and reinforced by cultural diversity. The groups recognised this as important.

The creation of national awareness as part of national integration process refers to the perspectives and attitudes of the individual towards self, 'us', the group 'them', and the nation, which promote and sustain commitment to action in the service of the state, understood as a legal source of motivation. National consciousness is a response to 'who am I?' question, which includes communal loyalties acquired at childhood, an understanding of citizenship and identification with immediate groups living within the state. According to Brass (1976: 227), "merely objective distinctions between people become infused with subjective and symbolic meanings", between 'us' as citizens of a nation and 'outsiders', in order to categorise and structure the interaction of groups inside and outside reference boundary. National awareness needs, then, a 'minimum of cohesion and distinctiveness of a people', which has acquired a minimum of importance in, at least the lives of individuals (Deutsch 1966: 173-175).

This study, therefore, considers national consciousness along three main dimensions, namely: (1) self-identification including the degree of preference and commitment to one's group, identification with the nation and possibly superiority over other similar groups, and loyalty to the nation - which means willingness to make sacrifices for the common good; (2) ethnic diversity that includes tolerance, the salience of cultural differences among groups, the understanding of non-stereotype and communications ability; and (3) state legitimacy which involves a sense of citizenship and equality among members of the state, and commitment to order. These attitudes promote ethnic relations and national integration of citizens

into a common political process and acceptable formula for conflict resolution. A person is, therefore, nationally conscious when commitment to his ethnic group does not inhibit a salient self-identification as a member of a larger community, when he shows tolerance to other groups, reduces differences and stereotypes, and exhibits a degree of communications capability with other sub-national groups.

A. Identification

In the average, respondents felt that Nigeria is better off than many other African States. A total of 46% of those who disagreed may indicate emerging sentiments. The expectation that respondents would have reacted differently because of the country's prevailing predicament did not hold. The country was, however, ranked 13th among the world's poorest countries by the World Bank and was described as one of the most unstable democracies in Africa. This result may seem contradictory when contrasted with the prevailing situation of mass exodus of the citizens looking for better life somewhere else.

Identification with the nation as an important goal of socialisation was high compared to individualistic ambition and community values. The level of nationalistic feeling was high contrary to the widely-held view that Nigerians are unpatriotic. 20% of 'disagree' and 'undecided' may show anti-authority feeling because of the military dictatorship and human rights abuses. On the other hand, the generalised commitment to defend the nation, a sense of obligation overriding personal interests, was quite high - a 80% commitment. Differences on multi-ethnic component of national consciousness somehow reflected ethnic sentiments, with the exception of stereotyping. The educated class and the young ones were generally more tolerant than the older generation. Ethnicity has greater salience, and the possibility to achieve national integration without destroying cultural diversity was high. Although 80% of the respondents saw ethnic and cultural differences as an obstacle to unity, 73% believed that it is possible to be a good citizen, maintain strong ethnic ties and achieve national unity.

In the course of the study, an obstacle to unity was presented as multiplicity of groups, each retaining its cultural identity. Respondents were much less optimistic that unity with diversity can easily be achieved, than when the opposition was between the individual's identification with his ethnic community versus national citizenship. At this point, this study shows that these responses reveal a differentiation that is emerging among the respondents between individual and group action, as it affects national integration.

Respondents attached more importance to the existence of potential conflict among groups not unified by cultural or linguistic criteria and trust in an individual than group politics. They suspected that political competition will continue to be tied to ethnic sentiments and goals.

There was a low level of public-mindedness. A fairly 53% commitment to obey law and order was expressed. The government's legitimacy measured by the law and performance questions was very weak. The indication was that laws and their enforcement were seen as very unjust. They were tailored to income and status. The income distribution and the system which supports this inequity was, however, defended by those respondents who aspire to join the rewards side of the distribution. A large number of the respondents were of the opinion that Nigerians are not yet capable of making rational choices for national politics. The reason for this statement could not be verified because of the respondents' unwillingness to elaborate their views during the interview sessions. In retrospect, none of the respondents advocated for foreign rule.

B. Ethnic Relations

Ethnic differences in attitudes do not exist in a vacuum; they are determinants in interaction with a number of other socio-demographic or political factors, such as gender, education and occupation. Relations between the ethnic groups in Nigeria have a historical background in terms of competition over resources. During the pre-colonial times, ethnic marriages were often discriminatory. The way ethnic relations might threaten the security of individuals was among the most serious issues that had been suppressed and carefully managed. Majority of the respondents had mixed marriages at one time or the other in their families and 93% favoured marriages between ethnic units or at least within identical states and language groups. Friendship between the various ethnic groups at personal level is excellent notwithstanding 8% of respondents who said they had never had a friend from other groups. The Hausa were the most preferred for friendship while the Ijaw seemed unaccommodated. The reason why the Hausa are considered better friends, is unclear. They are considered to be more sincere and humble in their dealings with others than the rest of the groups, or because they are a point of influence in the political arena in the country. But again, analysing the negative view generally held by the southerners that the Hausa are 'stupid' and 'backward', there is an indication of an unresolved or unrecognised ambivalence here, which could probably be solved by further research. The high level of ethnic marriages and friendship collaborated with Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA 1994) report on Nigeria that the number of ethnic marriages has risen over 90% in the last decades.

C. National Unity

A total of 43% of the respondents could get on with simple conversation in other Nigerian languages while an equal percentage knew a few abusive words and could speak fluently. The trend re-enforced by ethnic marriages had produced a multitude

of new generation people who could communicate in three to four Nigerian languages.

Cole's view that there were no symbols of national identity before independence to attract the masses was imaginary (Tilman and Cole 1962: 49). He failed to appreciate the unifying symbolism of the nationalist movements, which made more impression, but was overshadowed by the colonial government's activities. He said that the country needs to pay more attention to symbols which encourage unity. The schemes like N.Y.S.C. and unity schools that tend to develop common ties between the youths of different groups and promote national unity, (through a reduction of prejudice, ignorance and stereotypes) should be encouraged, even though 66% of respondents rejected unity schools on the grounds that it benefitted the elite class.

The civil war motto, 'To keep Nigeria one is a task that must be done' was a public relation effort of the Gowon's government. It emphasised on keeping the country a one-nation state, a thought regarded by a large number of respondents as a unifying factor that holds for future.

The thirty-six state structure of the country allows for a greater variety of coalition than the former four regional divisions. This formula ensures that all the units of the federation get involved in reasonable share of responsibility and resources. In this sense, no one will be absolutely satisfied, but the important thing is that no one will be too dissatisfied. 67% of the people opposed the creation of more states. The fear was that the proliferation of states will make the good intentions of the government meaningless and further increase the economic problem of the existing states.

A level of 100% was achieved in the voting preference regarding party policy on maintaining national unity. This was a great shift from the earlier ethnic group voting pattern. During the First and Second Republics, all the political parties were ethnically oriented. The 1993 general elections confirmed this new trend. For example, the Social Democratic Party (S.D.P.) presidential candidate Chief M.K.O Abiola, won 30% of the votes in almost all the thirty states of the federation, before the rest of the results were cancelled. Also a northerner won the local government chairmanship election in Lagos, and so did an easterner in the north. A northerner or southerner, winning an election outside his ethnic state or political region, is an unusual phenomenon in the political history of the country. Though competition for resources and between parties within the parliament had given rise to severe conflict, the fact that localities all over the country could, in future, choose representatives without regard to their state of origin, making it a point for the idea of belonging to a nation of ethnic diversity. The experience gained from the previous ethnic strife and the increasing political awareness on the cost of human life and resources had perhaps taught Nigerians that ethnic violence were the most destructive forces in the life of a nation.

2. Socio-economic Development

The hopes and fears which most Nigerians considered as national problems and implicitly expected the government to address are basic socio-economic issues, such as food, shelter, public health, education and rural infrastructure.

These hopes were sustained until the decline of oil revenue from 1981, coupled with massive corruption and mismanagement of the economy, and an externally packaged industrialisation programme. All these combined paved the way for the Nigeria's severe socio-economic crisis in the 1980s and 1990s.

The adoption of a structural adjustment programme in 1986 (SAP), has had fundamental consequences for Nigerian society, politics and economy. Nowhere are these consequences as pronounced as in the drastic fall in the living standards. The recent consumer survey report indicated that the average household income per month in Nigeria was 5,383 Naira (about 67 US $) in 1996-1997 (Nigeria.com online news, March 25th, 1998). Also affected are social services and other development sectors. The fall in living standards has spurred the citizens to seek additional income by engaging in multiple jobs. For example, the government officials engage in the act of buying and selling of assorted goods; and school teachers in their free time become vendors of food and school materials. As a 'survival strategy', households send their maids or children to hawk commodities like fish, bread, rice or yam.

The study found that 100% of the respondents feel and think that there is an urgent need to re-structure the social and economic structure of the country, in order to improve equal development and enhance national stability. This supports Free's study of 1964, where 60% of Nigerians demanded a better standard of living as a measure of good government.

Critics say that colonial government encouraged Nigerians to look for too much from the government. Ekeh (1972: 93) blamed Nigerians for 'give me' attitude on colonialism. This view could not obviously hold in the present Nigeria, because the different governments in the past twenty-three years have increasingly become unaccountable to their responsibilities to the citizens.

The military governments have escaped such responsibilities at first by saying that politicians had left the country bankrupt and that they must cut expenditure in order to clean up the mess. Since the people were aware that the politicians had plundered the economy in satisfying their needs on wide-spread basic amenities, the military was taken by its words, and demands were moderated. However, with the turn of the economic fortune (petroleum resources), local pride re-asserted itself and the high wealth of the government then naturally made it a prey. If some sections of the country were getting a share of these abundant resources and top brass of the government functionaries were re-activating their foreign bank accounts with millions of dollars and building marble houses worth over N 200 million, a quarter of some states governments' annual budget, why should every

Nigerian not enjoy basic social infrastructure, since the country has no harmonised social security system. The pension scheme, the National Profident Fund (NPF), is limited to the public servants alone. The private sector employees depend on the gratuity given to them by their employers after retirement. The private individuals do not benefit from either pension or gratuity schemes.

During the study in Lagos, a Yoruba housewife asserted that, "the government is harsh and dictatorial. We have not derived an advantage since it came to power". A pensioner who, after retirement in Lagos, returned to his home-town in Orlu, had a less sanguine memory of help from the civilian politicians though he found the militician no better. A sixty-five year old labourer with seven children living in one room apartment in a Lagos suburb of Agege, claimed that "in the 1960s and 1970s, small villages and towns received attention by way of government amenities, but today the army government does not care for us".

The study revealed that the question was not of making these needs known, but making the government to solve them. The respondents were aware that the government knew they were suffering.

3. EDUCATION

Education is highly politicized in Nigeria. The reason for this may be due to colonial background and the country's ethnic divisions. The British colonial administration used a 'divide and rule' policy, thus creating unequal distribution of formal education in the country. The northern Muslims perceived a western type of education as an embodiment of a foreign culture which threatened their Islamic system, while the southern traditionalists regarded western education as a gateway to the so-called civilization.

The policy resulted to unbridgeable educational gap between the north and south. The gap, however, led to a complex division which, in turn, led to politicization of education. The federal constitution of 1979 made education the exclusive responsibility of the federal government and mandated it to set the minimum standards of education at all levels. Because of this, the civilian government of Shehu Shagari (1979-1983) could not enact any national legislation on education which would have specified the conduct of education throughout the federation. Each political party in the Second Republic had its own education programme and implemented it in the states it controlled. For example, Unity Party of Nigeria (U.P.N.) introduced free primary and secondary education in all the states under its control - Lagos, Ogun, Oyo and Bendel.

The government's inability to co-ordinate policy declarations and actual implementation has resulted into lack of confidence and economic crisis in the education system (Obadina 1993: No 53; Marizu 1996). This uncertainty has brought about diminishing motivation in the citizens involved in the nation's

education industry and encouraged the proliferation of tertiary education by the state governments motivated by political consideration rather than educational need.

100 percent of respondents agreed that the education system needs drastic changes vis-a-vis management, funding and curriculum to enable it achieve the aims and objectives of education as stipulated by the National Policy on Education 1977.

The present practice, that the federal government is only responsible to the unity schools and federal universities, while the state governments are to primary and secondary education, was not favoured by 67% of the respondents. The general decline in the standard of education was attributed to the federal and state government's incapability to pay teachers' salaries, which resulted to constant strikes and closure of schools, lack of school facilities and loss of universities' traditional independence in administration and research.

About half of respondents disagreed that the school system has helped integration, while 77% were of the view that the three major Nigerian languages could enhance unity if made compulsory in primary and secondary education.

Educational impact on the attitude to the citizenship and politics is grossly underestimated. This is so, because education is not compulsory at any level in the country. Different studies have proved that people who are exposed to similar stimuli during the socialisation process are found to hold similar values; the opposite was the case with Nigerian political leadership. All respondents and those interviewed advocated for political education for leadership in the country. The reason for the need was that most of the leaders were half-educated or even not educated at all, and to overcome the effect of high rate of illiteracy, an obstacle to national integration, there is the need for political awareness through education.

4. MILITARY

The military has ruled the country for 28 years out of the 37 years of Nigeria's independence. The fact that the military has been in power in some African countries does not imply that the political culture in Africa encourages military intervention. Having said this, if the fragile democracy in Nigeria is to be sustained in place of potential ethnic war, the military must be extracted from politics and decisive steps taken towards the kind of military professionalism that will serve for stable democracy in Nigeria.

The experience of these decades of military rule made Nigerians believe that the military has lost nearly all semblance of professionalism which had made it a national institution and impartial onlookers of ethnic rivalry and had become corrupted. Today, there are no civil-military relations in normal sense of the phrase.

The only existing relations between the civil society and the military was that of the civilian politicians serving in the military administration.

80% of the respondents supported the views widely held by local and international civil society organisations that the military has devastated the economy and debased the political culture of Nigeria. Instances of looting of public funds were cited. An example was the disappearance of $12 billion, receipts from the gulf war oil windfall during President Babangida's administration. (Nyarko 1997).

The motives for the military constant intervention and grip on power were not clear. Half of the respondents believed that the motive behind the military usurpation of power was to maintain one ethnic group's political domination and corruptly enrich themselves. The rest was of the view that the military was in power to preserve the Nigerian entity. The pros and cons arguments may be justified according to each one's conception of the Nigerian situation, but when we consider the history of military intervention in Nigeria, one may or may not be in doubt to draw an emphatic conclusion on the reasons for military interventions.

The military and civil-military relations need to be reformed. The military is incapable of self-reform and cannot possibly lead to democratization. A radical transformation of the military and total replacement or down-sizing of the officer corps could open the way to eliminate the military intransigence. Unfortunately, the only force capable of doing this would be a democratically elected government, even though Nigerian political economy in which political office is perceived primarily as a gateway to wealth, may mitigate against sustainable de-militarization.

To do this, however, the government must adopt a policy of zero tolerance for coups against legitimate government and actively support international efforts to politically and economically quarantine coup-plotters. The government must learn from India's ethnically regimented policy of its military. This is to suggest that the armed forces should be ethnically regimentalised and stationed in their regions or states. This will frustrate coup-makers, and if any group attempted a take-over of a government, it would be a military rule by a region, and hence lack legitimacy.

To build on and facilitate healthy civil-military relations and improve on military-society ties, the government should embark on preceptions, beliefs and attitudes toward education programme for the military and engage them in more international activities such as in ECOMOG and United Nations peace keeping operations.

5. AFFIRMATION ACTION

A total of 93% of the respondents believed that the quota system favoured one section of the country - the north, and 60% said the system has not promoted social harmony in the country.

In the federal states, the principle of quota system is supposedly applied to achieve fair representation of all the federating states in government, education, development and other areas such as the armed forces and police. In Nigeria, the problem with the system seems to be that it is pursued selectively and naively, thus down-playing merit and reinforcing ethnic sentiment.

For example, in January 1990, an Appeal Court over-ruled a Lagos High Court decision on a twelve year old girl who was refused admission into Federal Government College on the basis of her state of origin. The girl scored 293 points or 73.25% in the competitive common entrance examination. She was not invited for an interview but her counterparts from Sokoto State who scored less than 50% were invited and consequently admitted into the college. The court ruled on her favour and stated in its decision that ' the policy breached the fundamental right to freedom from discrimination as guaranteed by section 41(1) of the Federal Republic of Nigerian Constitution of 1992.

The primary means by which political power in Nigeria has been acquired since 1966, the military, has not reflected the federal character of the country. During the British rule, the majority of the military were recruited from the north (about 85%), while 15% from the south was trained and deployed in administrative services. Instead of harmonizing the imbalance, the colonial government took the advantage of the little interest shown by the southerners in the armed forces, established 79% of Nigeria's major military installations in the north (Madiebo 1990: 8-9).

The First Republic (1960-1965), under the leadership of Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) and National Convention of Nigerian and Cameroon (NCNC) federal coalition made regional balancing a policy of recruitment into the armed forces. This policy allotted 50% intake of officer-cadets and other ranks to the north, and 25% each to the east and west. The balancing act was upset during the ethnic war in 1967 in favour of the dominant north and diminutive west and mid-west. The east became severely under represented.

The political leadership seemed to abandon the idea of federal character in the armed forces despite Section 197 of the Nigerian Constitution (1979) which stipulated that 'the composition of the officer corps and other ranks of the armed forces of the federation shall reflect the federal character of Nigeria' (Kirk-Greene 1989, 1:197).

During the interviews, the author observed that the bone of contention was not the idea of federal character, but the manner in which it is implemented. Some areas do not reflect the basic principle of the federal character while in others, like

education and civil service, standards were reduced to accommodate the north in order to achieve regional balance.

6. MINORITY GROUPS

More than half (60%) of the respondents disapproved the government's handling of some of the ethnic minority issues, especially on development and environmental pollution. Less than half (40%) of the respondents felt that the government was fair enough in addressing the issues. Only two states, Lagos and Rivers out of the thirty-six states in the federation are economically viable without reliance on Federal Government (Daily Times, Press Digest, March 3, 1998). Majority of the states face high rate of unemployment, run high budget deficits and cannot regularly pay their workers' salaries.

The minority issue was not part of the Nigeria's political vocabulary until after the regionalisation process which started in the 1940s. Before then, all the ethnic groups were equal in the country regardless of the subordinate-superordinate relationships that had existed among some of them during the pre-colonial time. Originally, the British introduced the local jurisdiction principle on which the Native Authority system was based. Each distinct area was made up of a separate administrative unit. According to the Colonial Governor, Sir Hugh Clifford in 1920, 'It is the consistent policy of the government of Nigeria to maintain and support the local tribal institutions and their indigenous forms of government...I am entirely convinced of the right, for example, of the people of England,... of any of the great emirates of the North,...to maintain that each one of them is, in a very real sense, a nation... It is the task of the government of Nigeria to fortify these national institutions' (Coleman 1958: 194). Hadn't this policy changed by the so-called regionalism, the issue of majority-minority and what later became known as majority groups who were in fact, disparate groups which spoke dialects of the same generic language and had similar cultures might not have risen.

To sum up, minority groups in Nigeria are not simply numerically inferior linguistic groups or regional or state groups of second-class, as some authors perceived. Morrison (1972: 311) contends that minority groups are those whose languages are spoken by infinitesimal percentage of the total population of the country. It is also static, and hence miss the idea that minority question is not a function of the objective existence of major or minor ethnic groups but a subjective interaction which follows the objective differentiation.

In spite of the continuing majority domination, the introduction of the federal distributive system (federal character) has enhanced and greatly guaranteed the minorities the access to political power. This explains why, in spite of the ethno-regional orientation of the political parties in the First Republic, the minority groups were a force to be reckoned with in the Second Republic. President

Babangida's regime supported the minorities, but the Edo, Delta and northern minorities were favoured more than the Akwa Ibom, Cross River and Rivers.

The future of the minorities is rather bright as the nation prepares for democratization for the Third Republic. An important reason for optimism is the introduction of a five-party system. This system is expected to upset the basis of the 'balance (tripod) theory' of Nigeria's stability which supposes that the nation can only be stable if there is a balance of power among the majority groups. In the new five-party structure, majority privileges may be greatly reduced, hopefully, if the parties form alliances or emerge. In as much as states remain the major units for sharing 'national cake', and the quota system is maintained, the demise of the majority domination is inevitable.

7. SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT

The country inherited the parliamentary system of government, headed by an elected Prime Minister and a non-executive President after independence. After one hundred years of existence, the nation had experimented unitary and federal structure, cabinet and presidential systems of government.

One gets the feeling that federalism has more a symbolic than imperial meaning for most Nigerians. A dictionary might consider 'confederation' as a synonym for 'federalism'; Nigerians see it distinctly as different types of government because of political controversy. A decentralised federation of states would be acceptable to most Nigerians, provided it gave them some power in local affairs, and a sense of being equal with other parts of the country.

When asked, 'What type of system of government is best for Nigeria?', or, 'Would you favour or oppose rotational presidency?', the respondents voted overwhelmingly for a president to be rotated according to zones. However, there was a clear conflict of opinion between the respondents on the question of federal structure. While 42% of the respondents wanted a federal constitution, 36% preferred a confederal government. The 58% disapproval of the federal system of government was stronger among some Yorubas and Igbos than in other groups in Lagos. Thus, three years after political crisis resulting from the annulment of presidential and legislative elections, the people had not come to terms with the type of government they want, whether federal or confederal presidency. Nevertheless, the difference is remarkable and should be considered by a future national constitutional conference.

8. DOMICILE

Two-thirds of the respondents felt safe to live and work in any part of the country, while 27% preferred their state of origin. This could be seen as a new development in Nigerian thinking, considering the state of origin syndrome. The expression may be due to the present high rate of unemployment in the country. Some ethnic groups, such as the Yoruba and Hausa, unlike their Igbo and Edo counterparts, were known not to have keen habit of re-locating to other parts of the country.

87% of the people favoured working under the federal government establishment regardless of where it is located in the country. The reason for the preference was said to be because of work security and economic gains. The federal government establishment is reputed for good pay and good conditions of service while the states are noted for not paying workers' wages and salaries regularly. The state jobs are perceived as unsafe due to constant retrenchment of workers.

All the respondents agreed that corruption at all levels in the society is an obstacle to equal development. Accusations of corruption are frequent in Nigeria under both the civilian and military rule. Official corruption is a form of oppression which every Nigerian had had personal experience of and is often used as a yardstick in measuring government performance.

To define corruption in Nigerian concept is difficult. Actions for personal rather than public interest may be called corruption by those who lose, rather than those who profit from the action. What a Nigerian who fails to get a work after interview calls nepotism, is praised by the successful candidate as social welfare in the proper interest of one's family. In one word, what is considered in one country as just 'honest graft' is seen in another - or by another group of population in the same country - as a terrible offence. Nigerians see corruption pragmatically rather than morally. Enahoro put the case of corruption in international perspective when he pointed out that Westerners usually pay for a favour after it is received, whereas Nigerians pay before getting the favour - showing that the latter have more confidence in their fellow-men (Enahoro 1966: 35).

9. ENVIRONMENT

Environmental protection and development are agents of poverty alleviation. The world conferences in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992 and Kyoto, Japan, in 1997 will be remembered in history of mankind as the years majority of nations focused on problems of the environment. Kyoto protocol was not very far-reaching as Rio de Janeiro, but it was a significant start to solving the earth's environmental problems. The accord did not mandate developing countries like China, India and Nigeria to reduce their emissions as one of the big polluters, and United States was envisaged to produce more than 8% of greenhouse gases by the year 2000.

Nigeria was a participant in the two earth summits. How has she fared on the environmental sphere? Chukwuma (1994: 189) pointed out that water and air pollution, toxic and hazardous wastes, chemical contaminants in food and dietary intake and depletion of natural resources such as trees and wildlife are the major environmental problems in Nigeria (Chukwuma 1994: 189).

100% of the respondents agreed that the government and FEPA have relegated on their responsibilities to check on environmental pollution in the country. They especially mentioned Lagos Island and oil producing communities of the Abriba, Adoni, Edo, Effik, Gokana, Ibibio, Ejaw, Ika-Igbo, Ogoni, Ikwere, Isoko, Kalabari and Urhobo during the course of our interview. One Igbo spare-part dealer interviewed at the foot of Carter bridge in Lagos explained how they suffer the humiliating smell from the polluted water and said, 'if the government and Fepa were up to their duties, people would not be sick of the environment'.

Oil production has had severe environmental human repercussions for the people who inhabit the surrounding areas. About 2 million barrels of oil exported daily by Nigeria comes from 12% of the country's land, and the communities in these areas do not receive any economic benefit from their natural endowment. The revenue gained from the oil has benefitted the government and foreign multi-national companies more than the native populations. The communities are impoverished because of the environmental degradation from oil production and absence of adequate regulations on the multi-nationals.

The social and environmental consequences of production are vast. They included the loss of fertile soil, pollution of air and drinking water, destruction of wildlife and biodiversity and damage to aquatic ecosystems. All these had made the inhabitants more vulnerable to health hazards, food shortages, forced migration and unemployment. Pollution is caused by gas flaring, pipe-line leakages, oil waste dumping and oil spills. About 75% of gas produced is flared into the air causing ecological and physical damage to soil, water and vegetation.

The respondents see an urgent need for curricula on environmental awareness at all levels of the school system. The introduction of environment education in schools and communities may enlighten and mobilize mass support for environmentally friendly behaviour.

10. ANNULMENT OF THE 1993 ELECTIONS

The majority (79%) of the respondents thought that government actions in dealing with general and presidential elections of 1993 had not been adequate. The 21% who agreed may indicate no significant difference were the elections reinstated. A vast number of the society blamed the economic and political instability in the country on the military government's cancellation of the elections and felt the situation as a serious concern.

On the issue of political maturity, 60% of the respondents were of the opinion that the political elites are not yet capable of making rational choices for national leadership. Greed, intolerance and lack of spirit of compromise is the characteristic of the Nigerian political class. The election crisis of 1993 plunged the country into indisputably gravest political impasse after the ethnic confrontations of 1966-1970.

An appraisal of the dispute raised many issues. Was the cancellation of the election results by President Babangida, after spending over one-and-half billion naira on transition programme, justified on the point of law and public democratic thinking? As the military government had relinquished power and the interim constitution enacted to implement a proposed plan for a national government by Social Democratic Party and National Republican Convention, was the popular demand for re-instatement of the annulled elections results justified?

On legal point of view, the re-instatement was made impossible by the exit of Babangida's military administration and by the institution of the consensus interim government under a supreme constitution, which supersedes all laws of the country. No one knows President Babangida's 'Maradona of Nigerian politics' hidden plans why he eventually handed over power to Interim National Government (ING) headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan, a Yoruba from the same town with Chief Abiola. Again, the persistent prolonged demand for re-instatement with the accompanying disruption of social and economic life of the nation and the continuing uncertainty, may have provided a make-believe excuse for the military to unseat ING and assume power for an indefinite period.

Re-instatement of June 12 election, I believe, may have been possible only through the military coup against ING, since natural re-instatement would have been inconsistent with the constitution that established ING. The other option would have involved National Assembly enacting a legislation to that effect or ING humbly handing over power to Chief Abiola in violation of the federal constitution.

The overthrow of ING on November 17, 19 93 was the make of the politicians. More incredible and amazing were the calls on the military by both the pros and cons of the annulment to give up its so-called neutrality and intervene in the crisis.

These calls for military intervention were defended by the groups who called it 'mere invitation' to the military to clear the mess it caused and not to return to power. Installation of Chief Abiola as the democratically elected president by the military would have meant the ousting of the ING, in other words, an imposition by the military of a particular solution to a political crisis. Military coup is abrasion, even when its intention is to install a legitimate elected politicians. It would have also resulted into directly involving the armed forces, hitherto insulated from the crisis, thereby polarising the situation into three opposing factions - a recipe to an escalation of the crisis. Greed and political ambition of the parties to the crisis in their desperation failed to see the reality - the reality of the legal impossibility of the re-instating the election results by the National Assembly or ING, the reality of inevitable violent upheavals that would have followed, the reality of the fears of the

Northern Elders, the reality of President Babangida's intrigue and the reality of the possible consequence of war. Could it not be naive for the feuding parties to think that if the military intervenes, it would do so on behalf of either side, considering the divisions in the ranks of the military over the annulment.

It was clear from the first day when Babangida relinquished power to ING that another military junta was in succession. The sudden retirement of the service chiefs of the army, air force, and navy, inspector general of police and the deputy defence staff, excluding the chief of defence staff, the minister of defence, General Abacha and the extension of the service chiefs' retirement from 26th of August to 17th of September, 1993 by General Abacha without consultation with the head of ING was when the 7th successful military coup in the Nigerian political history was completed.

This study will hasten to say that the military intervention in Nigeria is a combination of colonial legacy, northern hegemonic desire to govern the country indefinitely and the inability of the south to unite.

11. COLONIAL RULE

Nigeria today, however infuriating or imperfect some Europeans or Americans or Nigerians find it, and despite enormous problems, is a growing concern. Scholars of Nigerian affairs have long disputed whether the emergent bitter ethnic rivalry was a colonial make or constitution.

The general consensus seems to largely blame the colonial government's design. 79% of the respondents agreed that Nigeria ought to have been left to maintain their pre-colonial status by the British. The gluing together of the multi-ethnic societies of the Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914 was believed to have intensified ethnic rivalry and tension.

The colonial administrative structure at the time of independence tended to favour one ethnic group. It gave the northerners a numerical majority in terms of power-sharing arrangement vis-a-vis leadership and military. This in turn was manifested in the general thinking of the northerners that they are destined to rule the country.

Nigeria, being a large group, has similar and different characteristics when compared to other smaller nation-states. Cohesion and conformity are important for a new nation-state like Nigeria, as it will be for any other young nation-states. However, multi-ethnic nations require an extreme form of cohesion, that is, homogeneity. This more profound need for unity and integrity has to do with the historical development that accompanied the rise of the nation. The British colonial government did not put this into cognizance before synthesizing the country into one and by intent or omission ceding power to one ethnic group.

12. ELITE POWER PLAY

There were concerns about what the respondents described as political domination by one regional ethnic group. This may explain why 93% of the participants in the survey advocated for a peaceful transition of political power. The elite power-struggle was seen as an obstacle to democratisation. What the people were saying in one word, was that, the political quarrel in the country was not economic, or which political party in the country governs in all the states of the federation; the problem is, which of the regional ethnic blocks, north and south, will the president come from.

What are the possible mechanisms of state and society interaction in terms of relations of power that explain the emergence of invincible states, and how could such invincibility be explained and dismantled?

In the 1990s, the striking features in most African politics have been, on one hand, the break down of dictatorial states from the position of domination by one major or minor ethnic group in which the prospects for change appeared bleak, and on the other, the consolidation of political dominance through the military or multi-party political systems. Zambia is probably a good example of the former process, while Nigeria is of the latter.

Entrenched political domination within the multi-party system and military is a phenomenon strongly present in Nigeria. For example, since independence in 1960, one section of the country has dominated the mantle of political leadership of the federation.

Politics is all about power in Nigeria as elsewhere. Power with whatever definition, is minimally about the balance between the control and consent that guides the relation between the governor and the governed.

13. HUMAN RIGHTS

Nigeria was a party to The United Nations Charter and Universal Declaration on Human Rights. The international community's desire to seek and re-affirm faith in fundamental human rights and belief of member states of the organisation that 'all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights'.

There is a general sense of insecurity in the country because of the absence of basic human rights. The people are apprehensive of how they talk, who they talk to and the opinion they express. 71% of the respondents are of the view that there are no human rights, while 29% said there are some elements of human rights in the country.

The violation of human rights in Nigeria reached its peak under the military dictatorship in 1984. Since then, the successive military governments had placed a

high value on secrecy than openness. Instead of implementing the fundamental human rights as entrenched in the constitution, it promulgated various decrees, thus violating the inviolable rights of Nigerians. The State Security (Detention of Persons) Decree 2 of 1984 as subsequently amended, was designed to detain and eliminate government critics and deny the people the right of Habeas Corpus. New Registration Guidelines for all Newspapers Decree 43 of 1993 and Proscription and Prohibition from Circulation Decree 48 of 1993 were enacted despite African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (Ratification and Enforcement Act Cap 10, laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1990; Marizu 1994). The majority of the respondents interviewed see the need for what they called 'the first step to human rights' - the food, shelter and health care.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The data for this study was obtained during a period of economic and political uncertainty in Nigeria. Our results may be hampered by some misinterpretations or omissions of certain questions and restricted number of targeted areas of the study due to security reasons. For example, age, sex and profession of the respondents were not included in the questionnaire and interview check list. However, a broadly based study would not likely vary much from the results nor a study that included age, sex and profession of the respondents likely provide significantly different results.

A further comprehensive study analysing the emerging trends in ethnic agitation in Nigeria will be needed for conflict management.

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