

Managing Diversity Through Equity and Inclusive Leadership: A Recurring Governance Challenge in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examines how Nigeria has been managing its diversity in pursuit of equity through the mechanics of inclusive leadership. Institutionalizing inclusive leadership to foster a sense of belonging among the diverse ethnicities and other cultural and religious identities in the country remains a cardinal objective of successive administrations in the country. Sharing of resources such as revenue, political appointments, and other opportunities within federal institutions in consonance with the federal character principle which is a constitutionally-enabled mechanism is a recurring governance challenge. It is argued that Nigeria's diversity is not the problem but its mismanagement. The imperative of inclusive leadership for addressing Nigeria's complex challenges on account of its plurality, and the utility of some extant and pragmatic policies for managing its diversity are the essential focus of this paper. The mechanisms for promoting inclusion of diverse interests in leadership structures may reduce tensions which could have worsened in the absence of such arrangements, but they are institutionalizing the divisions. Nigeria needs an organic programme that would weld the diverse ethnicities and other social differences into a cohesive nation.

Keywords: Pluralism; Social Justice; Equity; Federalism; Inclusive Leadership

Abbreviations: RMAFC: Revenue Mobilisation Allocation and Fiscal Commission; FCT: Federal Capital Territory; FCC: Federal Character Commission; FCP: Federal Character Principle; INEC: Independent National Electoral Commission; NOA: National Orientation Agency; CNNC: Congress of Northern Nigerian Christians; CAN: Christian Association of Nigeria; APC: All Progressives Congress; NOSCEF: Northern States Christian Elders Forum

Introduction

An account in the Bible about the origin of linguistic diversity in the book of Genesis Chapter 11: 1-8 shows that the human race began as an homogenous community with one language until that linguistic homogeneity was misused in their ambitious quest to build a city and a tower that would reach heaven, and that action earned them the wrath of God which resulted in their being scattered across the earth with different languages, such that "they may not understand one another's speech". This punishment was meted out on humans by God in the belief that for as long as humans could come together and agree on any matter, nothing can restrain them from achieving their objectives. This conveys an historical fact about the divine origin of ethnic and linguistic diversity in human race. However, in the evolution of modern state system, some countries are ethnically homogenous while others are ethnically heterogeneous.

The manner in which African States evolved was responsible for their ethnic diversity. African States were created by western

powers at the Berlin Conference of 1885 without due reference to the cultural, linguistic and ethnic affinities of the different peoples that were merged into each emergent African State. Of course, Africa is not the only diverse region in the world; United Kingdom, France, Germany, Sweden, Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, etc, are also ethnically diverse, thus showcasing Europe's growing diversity which is shaped by history, migration and globalization. Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, is a melting pot of ethnicities and languages, with over 250 ethnic groups and more than 500 spoken languages, contributing to its impressive cultural diversity. The largest ethnic groups are the Hausa (27%), Yoruba (21%), and Igbo (14%) [1]. Aside from ethnic diversity, Nigeria is a highly religiously diverse country, with almost equal split between Muslims and Christians. Obviously, if this diversity is not well-managed, it poses grave consequences for national development, political stability and governance. It will be shown in this paper why inclusive leadership is required for ensuring inclusive development in the country.

Organizing the Modern State System to Manage Diversity

“Every difference is apt to create a division. The greatest division is perhaps between virtue and vice; then there is the division between wealth and poverty; and there are also divisions, some greater and some smaller, arising from other differences. Among the last we may count the division caused by difference of territory.... Heterogeneity of territory is also an occasion of sedition. This happens in States with a territory not naturally adapted to political unity” (Aristotle, *Politics*).

This characterization of diversity by Aristotle presents every modern state as a diverse entity which must continue to evolve strategies for managing its affairs in the corporate interest of the state. That means states must develop policies for its own self-preservation. This often entails how leadership structures evolve and how the different divisions, classes, groups, and territories within each state are factored into the governance machinery. The vogue in modern political systems, due to their unwieldy nature and plural character is the adoption of Representative system of government. Representation connotes the act of one person standing in place of, or representing another as when one member of a class, group, or constituency is chosen or elected to promote, project, and presents the interests of the group and class being represented. According to the *Encyclopaedia Americana*, Representative Government is:

....that form of political rule in which the major laws and executive decisions in a State or community are made by a small number of persons who are believed to represent in some way, the population or important parts of it [2].

It has to be pointed out that there are variants of representative government. The variants are derivatives of the peculiar political history and constitutional development of the different climes where these variants of representative government are practised. How representative is the representative system of government? Early practices of representative government gave higher representation to the interests of the affluent and nobilities in the State. During the colonial era in Africa, especially in the 1950s, only the literate or the ‘civilized’ were enfranchised. In some other cases during the colonial era, representation was granted only to the central or metropolitan regions or sections, while denying the local natives in the hinterlands the opportunity to participate in politics. Yet, the local natives and their traditional institutions were extremely loyal to the colonizers.

Attempts at political and constitutional development during the colonial period showed that the different components or regions of the colonized territories competed for greater political involvement, participation and representation. In Nigeria, for example, the North, West, and Eastern parts separately agitated for more seats in the legislative councils as from the inception of the Richards’ Constitution of 1946 till the 1960

Independence Constitution. This pattern of competition for political representation was the case across colonial African States. And this situation continued into the post-independence era of party politics in post-colonial African States. The most problematic of the legacies of colonialism is how the political system would not only be result-oriented but how it would take into consideration the various interests of the ethnic groups that the colonialists forcefully fused into federations. The problem of representation has its origin in the undemocratic nature of colonial administration. Instead of allowing the colonized people to choose their representatives, colonial regimes in Africa imposed compliant but unpopular locals, sometimes notorious individuals as representatives of their districts.

The formulation from the foregoing is that representative government may not necessarily be achieved through democratic means, as it is not also a euphemism for democratic governance. Representative government is a device for linking the government of a country with parts or all of its population. It is only if it ensures that the government serves in the best interest of the majority of the people that it could be considered to be truly representative of their interests. But, representative governments do not necessarily fulfil all the needs and claims that the people may put upon them. In some instances, the inability of such governments to meet the demands of the diverse social strata, non-associational groups and ethnic groups which are clamouring for political self-expression and participation may lead to protracted conflicts, to such an extent that the resultant stress and strains on the political system could be unbearable [3]. Three major dangers of representative government include:

“The danger of splitting the population into permanent majority and minority groups. If regional, racial, linguistic, economic, social, religious and other lines of cleavages come to reinforce each other, some groups and persons may find themselves condemned to the status of permanent and powerless minorities.....the second danger is that of paralyzing the government in the immobilism of incompatible and deadlocked rival interests. The third danger is that of withdrawal of the mass of citizens into apathy and alienation from an active government whose decisions and actions they no longer hope to understand or to influence effectively despite the presence of their elected representatives” [4].

If representation is justified on the basis of the fact that the society is made up of several varying interest groups, associations, ethnic groups, and linguistic differences, then these dangers that are likely to result from the practice of representative government point to the desideratum of political engineering in plural societies. But even if representation is based on these varying interests that composed societies, then there must be some meeting grounds on which compromises are struck, or else the government would be factionalized without any iota of consensus on governance. A.H. Birch’s definition of representation grapples with this problematic. According to him, there are three main

usages of the term “Representative”, each logically distinct from others. These are:

1. To denote an agent or spokesman who acts on behalf of his principal.
2. To indicate that a person shares some of the characteristics of a class of persons.
3. To indicate that a person symbolizes the identity or qualities of a class of persons.

In this regard, there can be no compromise since the representative strongly attaches great importance to the class he represents. For Birch, the members of the representative assembly are not to act as “trustees” for the nation, nor are they to act as delegates for local interests, nor are they to embody the sovereignty of the nation. He asserts that: “Their essential function is to constitute in themselves, a microcosm of the nation, so that if (leaving aside their temporary and peculiar interests as politicians) they pursue their personal interests, they will reach decisions which will maximize the happiness of the whole community [5].

To the Marxists, the most essential fact about societies is that they are divided into economic classes, each of which is in conflict with the others. The main conflict is between the capitalist class and the proletariat (workers) class, each of which is defined in terms of its relationship to the means of production. The nature of this relationship means that the workers are inevitably exploited by the capitalists, and this state of affairs can only be ended by the abolition of private ownership of the means of production. For the Marxist, therefore, : “Representative institutions of a liberal democratic type must be seen as part of a façade which tends to mask the real nature of class conflict and to prevent the workers from recognizing that a fundamental improvement in the condition of their living can only be brought about by a revolution [6]. In as much as the scientific status of Marxism-Leninism in respect of the nature of the relationship between the capitalists and their workers in the context of private ownership of the means of production is not in doubt, it falls short of in-depth analysis of a more complex political phenomenon in the modern state system. It is true that there is “class struggle” between the owners of capital and the proletariat but society has developed beyond such narrow classifications. The Marxist’s belief that the fundamental interest of citizens are determined by their class position, and that an understanding of this would guide their political action is not generally applicable at least in the Nigerian context where majority of the people are neither politically conscious nor politically efficacious. In this circumstance, governmental actions and policies are viewed differently by the people the representatives claim to represent. This obviously put to question the legitimacy of the outcomes of the inputs of the representatives.

In terms of the theory of natural law, governmental actions are legitimate to the extent that they accord with public philosophy.

But democratic theory argues that they derive their legitimacy from their embodiment of the will of the people. While according to the procedural concept, governmental actions are legitimate if they represent the outcome of a process of conflict and compromise in which all interested groups actively participated. Another school opines that the legitimacy of governmental actions can be sought in the extent to which they reflect the interests of governmental institutions. In contrast to the theory of representative government, governmental institutions derive their legitimacy and authority not from the extent to which they represent the interests of the diverse segments of the society but from the extent to which they have distinct interests of their own from all other groups.

If from the foregoing analysis, representation creates a turbulent wave of doubt and distrust in the minds of the represented, it therefore goes to show the reason why groups, ethnicities, clans, attach great importance to having their members, indigenes, clansmen voted for, selected or chosen to represent them in government and legislative assemblies.

Understanding Nigeria’s Diversity

Diversity speaks of pluralism and the existence of several groups, identities, belief systems, etc. Hugo F. Reading defines pluralism as composing five major forms, namely:

- i. Cultural pluralism: the presence of a plurality of ethnic groups in a society.
- ii. Ideological pluralism: the presence of a plurality of ideologies in a society.
- iii. Local pluralism: the political pluralism in a community.
- iv. Political power pluralism: the absence of a power elite.
- v. Structural pluralism: the presence of a plurality of social structures in a society [7].

This definition of pluralism largely approximates the nature of Nigeria’s plurality and indeed elastic enough to accommodate other levels of pluralities across countries of the world. In the case of Nigeria’s political plurality, there is a constellation of power elites consisting of the military, civilian, modern, urban, traditional elites, each striving for supremacy through competition, elimination, hauling, pulling and very rarely, consensus. The politicization of ethnic, linguistic, religious differences, and geographical polarization in Nigeria remains an extant narrative of how the country’s plurality is being utilized by its power elite. Using the characterization of pluralism as espoused by Hugo F. Reading, in essence, all countries of the world are pluralistic; but the degree of plurality varies from country to country. The point to note, however, is that every country has to develop its autochthonous ways of managing its unique plurality to ensure that the interest of the different groups in a country finds political expression. For Robert Dahl, the involvement of the people or the political participation of groups or units that composed the State depends

on the size of the political community [8]. I. Norman N. Nie et al. argue that the homogeneity of the population and smallness of its size would not create enough challenges and pressures needed to keep the political system going. In their words, group life is likely to be less developed in a small country with homogenous population [9]. This assertion is not agreeable because the ground for its justification is shaky. In as much as demand has to be made on the political system to give it its necessary raw materials, that keeps it going, a homogenous society will give positive support to the political system and view the resultant outputs from the political system from the standpoint of objectivity devoid of the negativities which could have emanated if the population was heterogeneous with ethnically diverse perspectives tinted by their parochial and subjective orientations.

Multi-Ethnicity Challenge

In a more sweeping analysis of poly-ethnic systems in Africa, Elliot P. Skinner suggests that ethnic groups are competitive for the strategic resources of their respective societies. With reference to precolonial, colonial and postcolonial political regimes, he emphasizes that the nature of ethnic groupings and the competitive strategies they employ are a function of the type of society from which they emanate as well as the resources over which they seek control. Skinner concludes his analysis by noting that:

.. The problem confronting poly-ethnic systems is that the very processes which gave their constituent groups competitive advantage in one techno-political environment make it difficult for such groups to adjust to changes either in their societies or in the kinds of resources for which they emanate [10].

Multi-ethnic societies generally are bound to conflict on some issues regarding the sharing of the proverbial “national cake” “The relationship amongst these diverse ethnic groups is not permanently bound to be conflictual. In actual fact, historical records abound about gainful trade, migration of peoples, and dynasties from one part of what came to be known as Nigeria to another. There is no doubt that contact among the peoples of what later became Nigeria before the incursion of British colonialism was largely peaceful. As Jide Oshuntokun observes, when the British finally decided to bring the two areas of Nigeria together, the regions had already developed different characters of their own, which were difficult to reconcile. Additionally, the double standards practiced under the policy popularly known as “indirect rule” were unevenly applied [11]. This explains why the North was not as developed as the South at the time of independence. This explains why the leaders in the North during the independence struggles of the 1940s and 1950s were skeptical of their Southern counterparts, and vice versa.

During the colonial era, there were series of constitutional and political disagreements between the North and the South over the political future of Nigeria. The politicization of primordial

identities across the country gained ascendancy as the nationalists established political parties which helped to deepen regional and ethnic rivalries. Aristide R. Zolberg observed that the reason for the politicization of residual cleavages which occurs in the course of the rapid extension of political participation prior to independence was the prevalence of two sets of value, norms and structures, the new and the syncretic (i.e the unintegrated segment of the society) [12]. Richard sklar surmises that the major nationalist parties in Nigeria “served to promote both the selfish and patriotic ends of the Nigerian bourgeoisies, each party secured its power in a region of the country by compelling the ethnic sensibilities, among other means.....tribalism has been their most trustworthy weapon against change” [13]. Post-Independence politics of Nigeria in the first, second, third and fourth republics have proven that ethnic politics occupies a significant place in Nigeria’s political arrangement. What is responsible for the efficacy of ethnicity in Nigerian politics? Ethnic politics in Nigeria cannot be clearly understood unless one first understands what an ethnic group is. Abner Cohen defines an ethnic group as:

...a collectivity of people who share certain patterns of normative behaviour or culture and who form part of a larger population, interacting within the framework of a common social system such as the state. The term ethnicity refers to the degree of conformity to the collective norms in the course of social interaction. Ethnicity is often regarded as a symptom of reaction, ignorance, and primitivism [14]. Abner Cohen’s definition, however, does not sufficiently explain the conflictual tendencies that result from blind and fanatical adherence or loyalty to one’s ethnic group. Crawford Young, writing on the Congo in what may be seen as an indictment of critics of ethnicity, argued that there is nothing inherently “backward” about cultural self-assertion. For him, ethnic loyalty is both a natural and necessary phenomenon. He describes it as a form of psychological liberation, arguing that pride in one’s antecedents is essential, since a Congolese possesses an ethnic identity in addition to Congolese and African identities [15]. However, this position is structurally defective, as Crawford himself would not justify ethnic conflict on the flimsy excuse of cultural self-assertion. For Peter Heinecke, an ethnic group is a community bound together by felt ties of kinship, history, and culture—a social formation characterized by the communal nature of its boundaries. Ethnicity, according to him, is a strained and exaggerated feeling of difference in relation to other ethnic groups [16]. This definition appropriately takes into account the rivalries and competition that often arise from exaggerated feelings of difference. What then are the bases of competition for representation grounded on ethnic chauvinism? And what explains the prevalence of ethnicity in plural societies like Nigeria?

Onigu Otite posits what appears to be a realistic philosophical explanation—the existence of structural inequalities. According to him, ethnic differences would be insignificant if they were not

connected to processes and opportunities for economic survival. He further noted that ethnicity occurs not because society and its culture are isolated from others, but because frequent interactions sustain socio-cultural diversity in a new polity [17]. Paradoxically, economic-based conflicts and boundary-breaking activities may lead to ethnic-boundary consolidation. Ethnicity is therefore both the cause and the effect of ethnic boundary formation and maintenance. Where one ethnic group controls the means of production utilized by another, a relationship of inequality and stratification emerges. In such situations of differential control over valued assets and opportunities, conflict is bound to arise, often from petty jealousies. It has also been observed that conflicts between ethnic groups tend to divide elites along ethnic lines, making it difficult for the elite to devise equitable means of distributing scarce economic resources among members of various ethnic populations, including indigenes and immigrants. If, through individual or collective effort, one group attains disproportionately greater resources than others—whose indolence or dependence renders them vulnerable to exploitation—then it becomes clear that behind any scheme of redistribution lies an implied prescription for dispossessing those who have labored for their wealth or their rightful resources [18].

Some scholars argue that the intense struggles among ethnic groups, which often erupt into violence, stem from competition over two key scarce resources: power and wealth. Abner Cohen, an adherent of this view, makes it clear that while people may ridicule the customs of other ethnic groups because of differences, they rarely fight over such differences alone. When conflict occurs across ethnic lines, it is almost always over fundamental issues concerning the distribution and exercise of power—economic, political, or both—within the social system [19]. Aristide Zolberg notes that when individuals or groups are deprived of the right and opportunity to express their demands peacefully, they may have no choice but to submit to force or use it themselves. It is apparent that the sense of difference which ethnicity breeds in the consciousness of the members of different ethnicities is latently divisive, and could be explosive if there is a perception of deprivation, exploitation or oppression. This could develop into conflict when institutional and constitutional mechanisms are perceived to be responsible for the creation of structures of inequality, or supporting conditions that inflict pains on them. Thus, ethnic conflicts do not arise merely from differences in culture, language, or geography, but from perceived inequality among ethnic groups [20]. Elaborating on institutionalized inequality, Peter Heinecke argues that capitalist relations unevenly penetrated Nigerian communities, playing them against one another and making some better off at the expense of others. In competition for scarce resources, ethnic representatives struggle to unseat rivals in order to control key governmental institutions and extract favours from those in authority. This cut-throat contest often masquerades as communal interest, though it primarily serves elite ambitions [21].

In Nigeria, the imbalance in educational and technological

development between the South and North was exacerbated by constitutional arrangements that allocated half of parliamentary seats to the Northern Region. Richard Sklar argues that the contradiction between constitutional allocation of power and its real distribution in society became a major source of agitation and violence, which ultimately led to the collapse of Nigeria's First Republic in 1966. Responsibility for that collapse was blamed on British colonial rule which helped to intensify ethnic competition. Colonial society was characterized by deprivation, insecurity, and intense competition over scarce resources such as jobs, money, and food. The divide-and-rule policy discouraged national unity and fostered ethnic competition. During colonial era, inter-regional relationships were marked by rivalry, distrust, and lack of cooperation. This strain was especially pronounced between the Northern and Southern regions of the country [22]. Sylvester Whitaker attributes Northern hostility towards the South to cultural differences, educational imbalance, and colonial administrative practices that favoured southerners in clerical and commercial roles. These factors, according to him, bred resentment and reinforced divisions [23]. Ejimofor C. O notes that the divisiveness contributed to the collapse of Nigeria's First Republic and paved the way for civil war and military rule [24]. While Nigeria's subsisting political problems can partly be traced to colonialism, independence brought the freedom to choose unity over division. But the inherited institutional and constitutional mechanisms worked to entrench inequality because the political system would appear to assign differential rights to ethnic groups thus confirming the fears expressed by some of the authors about the dangers of ethnic stratification.

One major explanation of ethnicity which is relevant to both the colonial and post-colonial eras—is the manipulation of socio-cultural and historical factors by politicians in order to generate cleavages among ethnic groups for political advantage. Here are some divisive statements made by Nigerian politicians that have pitted one ethnic group against others: Tafawa Balewa, who later became the Prime Minister of Nigeria, said in 1947 that:

“Since the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern provinces in 1914, Nigeria has existed as one country on paper ... It is still far from being united. Nigerian unity is only a British intention for the country” [25]. And in reaction to the motion raised by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe at the Nigerian Legislative Council, in which Azikiwe called for the creation of a United Nigerian outlook, Mallam Tafawa Balewa stated that:

“Many Nigerians deceive themselves by thinking that Nigeria is one, particularly some of the press people ... This is wrong. I am sorry to say that this pretence of unity is artificial, and it ends outside this chamber. They are pouring into the North in ever-increasing numbers and are more or less domiciled here but do not mix with the Northern people, and we in the North look upon them as invaders” [26] At the first Igbo State Conference in 1949, being an Igbo himself, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe made the following statements:

. “It would appear that the God of Africa has specially created the Igbo nation to lead the children of Africa from the bondage of the ages ... The martial prowess of the Igbo nation at all stages of human history has enabled them not only to conquer others but also to adapt themselves to the role of preservers ... The Igbo nation cannot shirk its responsibility” [27].

Tribal nationalism ignited hostilities not only among nationalists but also among the gullible masses who could not fathom out the real cause of the new wave of ethnic nationalism. In reaction to the rising tide of the Igbo-Yoruba tension of that era, a member of the Egbe Omo Oduduwa, stated as follows:

“We were bunched together by the British who named us Nigeria. We never knew the Igbos, but since we came to know them, we have tried to be friendly and neighbourly. Then came the arch-devil to sow the seeds of distrust and hatred ... We have tolerated enough from a class of Igbo and addle-brained Yorubas who have mortgaged their thinking caps to Azikiwe and his hirelings” [28]. In 2015, Oba Rilwan Akiolu, the Oba of Lagos, allegedly threatened to “throw Igbo into the lagoon” if they didn’t support his preferred candidate, thus deepening ethnic suspicions between Igbo and Yoruba groups [29].

The Muhammadu Buhari’s Administration (2015-2023) was accused of favoring the Fulani and northern interests, with 81 out of 100 appointees being Northerners, hence fueling feelings of marginalization among other ethnic groups. The current administration of President Bola Tinubu (2023-present) has also been accused of favoring his Yoruba ethnic group, with lopsided appointments, including four ministers from Ogun State, while only five are from the Southeast [30].

The most current lexicons of ethnic labeling and stereotypes which Nigerian politicians are using include such derogatory terms like “IPOB,” “tribalists,” and “Biafrans” to smear opponents, while others have been labeled “Jagabandits” and “Obidiots” to disparage them. All the foregoing statements and actions have contributed to ethnic tensions and divisions in Nigeria, thus undermining national unity and integration. This discussion, no doubt, has presented some of the bases of ethnic conflict, without claiming to be exhaustive. It has explored historical manifestations of ethnicity, ethnic cleavages, and their causes. However, as a concluding reflection on this subject, it is safe to agree with F. M. Bernard that:

“Tension and conflict must be accepted as the price of diversity. Incongruities and contradictions are not mere accidents; they are of the very essence of the human condition and cannot be divorced from social and political development” [31].

Religion as a political weapon

Religion is another aspect of Nigeria’s diversity. Nigeria is a religiously diverse country, with nearly equal split between Muslims and Christians. A plethora of practitioners of African traditional religion also exist across the different regions of

Nigeria. Differences in religious beliefs and practices can lead to conflicts, tensions, and violence, particularly between Muslims and Christians. Although each of these religions has interest in the country’s political power equation with varying degrees of commitment, the factors that perpetuate recurring religious violence in northern Nigeria include historically embedded social divisions that mirror religious and geographical division, political corruption and elite manipulation; and the imposition of Sharia law in secular, constitutionally governed, democratic Nigeria. These factors are not mutually exclusive but overlap in fundamental ways in the Nigerian context [32]

Of all religions, Islam in Nigeria has been the most contentious and conflict-prone, especially in the northern parts of the country where it has huge adherents. There are diverse sects within each of these religions. According to the Pew Research Center, as of 2020, Muslims made up 56.1% of the population, while Christians accounted for 43.4% The country’s religious landscape is characterized by Islam which is predominantly Sunni, with a small Shia minority (4-10 million) and Ahmadiyya and Mahdiyya minorities; Christianity which comprises Protestant (35.3%) and Catholic (10.6%), with a growing Evangelical and Pentecostal population; and- Traditional Religions being practiced by around 10% of the population, who often blend with Islam or Christianity. Nigeria’s religious diversity is also reflected in regional variations:

North: predominantly Muslim (95% in Hausa ethnic group)

South East & South South: predominantly Christian (98% in Igbo and Ijaw ethnic groups)

South West: mix of Christians, Muslims and traditional worshippers

Middle Belt: mix of Muslims, Christians, and traditional worshippers [33].

Nigeria’s religious diversity has significant implications for the country’s social, political, and economic landscape. Religion with its powerful influence on the behaviour of humans could have both positive and negative effects on the society. In the Nigerian context, religion has over the years become an instrument of political manipulation which the political elite utilize to achieve a predetermined political or electoral outcomes. The expanding outreaches of Pentecostal and Evangelical movement across the north of the country has continued to spark a wave of violence from the Islamic jihadists who sense danger in the growing influence of Christian evangelistic pursuits across northern Nigeria. The jihadists fear that the increasing rate of conversion of Muslims to Christianity was gradually reducing the influence of Islam in the region. To stem that process, conflicts are often orchestrated to intimidate prospective converts to Christianity and assert the fire-power of Islam to unleash mayhem on any ambitious Christian evangelistic group that dared to encroach on what the jihadists considered as Islam’s exclusive sphere of influence. This contest for the preservation of Islam and its protection against poaching

activities of other religions have been the obsessive pursuit of the jihadists since the military era till the current democratic dispensation. Nigeria has experienced several Islamic sectarian violent incidents during the military era, resulting in significant casualties and outcomes. Some notable incidents include:

Maitatsine Uprising (1980-1985): Led by Mohammed Marwa, also known as Maitatsine, this uprising resulted in thousands of deaths, with estimates ranging from 4,000 to 10,000 people.

Kafanchan Riots (1987): Religious violence in Kafanchan, Kaduna State, led to over 100 deaths.

Zango-Kataf Crisis (1992): Clashes between Hausa-Fulani and Kataf groups resulted in over 1,000 deaths.

Jos Riots (2001, 2008, 2010): Repeated violence in Jos, Plateau State, led to hundreds of deaths and displacement of thousands.

Boko Haram Insurgency (2009-present): Ongoing conflict has resulted in over 350,000 deaths and millions displaced [34].

The importance of religion in politics in the northern Nigerian context is evident in the fact that religious leaders operate as an integral part of the ruling elite. Clerics collaborate with politicians because of their vested interest in political power and they have continued to play influential role in determining ways of stabilizing or maintaining control of the system at both national and regional levels in consonance with their mutually exclusive interests [35]. It is ironic that the relationship between the politicians and Islamic religious leaders in the north has been complicating the security challenge in the region. The perpetuation of Boko Haram insurgency and banditry in northern Nigeria is a complex issue with multiple factors at play. Some politicians and wealthy individuals have been accused of funding and supporting Boko Haram, either directly or indirectly, often for personal or political gain [36].

Former President Jonathan Goodluck had alleged that Boko Haram members had infiltrated the government, and some northern traditional and religious rulers were suspected of aiding and abetting the group. The Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU) identified 96 financiers of terrorism in Nigeria, including individuals and companies, and noted that some politicians and businessmen had invested in the Chadian oil industry, benefiting from Boko Haram's destabilization of the region [37]. The manipulation of religion for political purposes has contributed to the spread of extremist ideologies and violence in northern Nigeria. Some politicians have exploited religious sentiments to mobilize support, while others have turned a blind eye to Boko Haram's activities or even collaborated with the group [38]. The shift from labeling Boko Haram as an insurgency to terrorism has given the group more operational flexibility, allowing them to move freely across the country and launch attacks from various locations. The group has been adopting different tactics, posing as bandits, cattle rustlers, gunmen, kidnappers, or armed herdsmen, depending on their objectives. This adaptability has made it

challenging for Nigerian security agencies to track and counter their activities.

Boko Haram uses these tactics to generate funds, augmenting their resources for major operations. Investigations indicate that the group receives clandestine support from some religious clerics and politicians in northern Nigeria, as well as covert backing from undisclosed government notables. The group's ability to blend in and adapt has made it a formidable force, with estimates suggesting it has killed tens of thousands of people and displaced millions since the insurgency began in 2009 [39].

The manipulation of religion in Southern Nigeria where Christianity is the most prominent religion is a recurring phenomenon. Southern politicians are manipulating religion for political gains by leveraging Christian sentiments and affiliations to mobilize support. For instance, some Christian leaders have publicly endorsed politicians, citing divine prophecy or God's will, in order to influence voters' decisions. This is evident in the 2018 statement by Pastor Wale Olaganju, who claimed God told him President Buhari would lose to Atiku Abubakar, and subsequently condemned Buhari [40]. Additionally, politicians often associate themselves with influential Christian figures, seeking blessings and endorsement. In periods preceding electioneering activities, politicians have often taken pleasure in utilizing politically-inspired Thanksgiving Programmes in churches to promote and popularize their candidates and programmes while seeking the approval and priestly blessing of revered clergies. The intertwining of religion and politics has led to concerns about the erosion of Nigeria's secular status and the promotion of religious intolerance. Scholars argue that religion is being manipulated to satisfy politicians' primordial interests, rather than serving its core objectives [41]. Christian groups have overtime become very politically assertive. For instance, in 2023 politicians in Nigeria, particularly those from the southern region, leveraged Christian sentiments to reject the Muslim-Muslim presidential ticket of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in the presidential election. The Congress of Northern Nigerian Christians (CNNC) and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) openly opposed the ticket, citing concerns about religious balance and national unity. The former Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Babachir Lawal, described the Muslim-Muslim ticket as a "disastrous error" and urged Christians to resist it. Similarly, former Speaker of the House of Representatives, Yakubu Dogara, advised Christians not to waste their votes on the APC ticket, citing biblical references [42]. Other Christian leaders, such as Bishop Daniel Okoh, expressed concerns that the ticket would marginalize Christians and make them second-class citizens. The Northern States Christian Elders Forum (NOSCEF) also rejected the ticket, warning that Christians would be rendered irrelevant in Nigerian politics if they supported it [43]. The opposition to the Muslim-Muslim ticket was not limited to Christian leaders. Some Muslim politicians and clerics also spoke against it, arguing that it would undermine national unity and stability [44].

In conclusion, the manipulation of religion for political gain in Nigeria highlights the complexities of managing the country's diversity, particularly when religion becomes a factor in politics. Competing interest groups often raise questions about Nigeria's secular status, especially regarding resource allocation, appointments, development projects, and funding for religion-related programs. This raises concerns about whether government policies truly cater to all religions equally or favor one over others.

Equity in resource allocation

A critical issue that stems from the management of Nigeria's diversity is the question of equity in the sharing of resources that accrue to the country among its constituent parts. Nigeria's revenue allocation and fiscal federalism have been contentious issues, with the distribution of federal funds among federating units often sparking tensions. The revenue allocation formula prioritizes political stability, social justice, and fiscal efficiency over equitable distribution, while the federal government's centralization of power and resources has continued to instigate persistent calls for greater autonomy and resource control from federating units. There are issues around the nature and character of federalism being practiced in the country. Political theorists, public intellectuals, opinion moulders, and politicians across political divides are united in their belief that the revenue allocation principles should be amended to enable the state and the local governments some latitude for autonomous development. The deafening calls for restructuring of the country's federal system are anchored on the understanding that the exclusive legislative list on which only the Federal Government has power to act ought to be reviewed. In plain language, the unbundling of federal government responsibilities is to cede powers to the state and the local governments. These agitations for the empowerment of the other two tiers of government at the expense of the federal government have been creating some tensions.

Some key issues contributing to these tensions include over-reliance on oil revenue, lack of transparency in revenue allocation, inadequate representation of federating units in decision-making processes, and Conflicting interests among regions. Oil rich States from where Nigeria generates huge revenue from oil production are united in their agitation for a more favourable revenue allocation formula which would take cognizance of their contributions to the Federation Account. According to the current revenue allocation formula 52.68% of federal funds is awarded to the Federal Government; State Governments (26.72%); Local Governments (20.60%); Federal Capital Territory (1%); Ecological Fund (1%); Natural Resources (1.68%), and Stabilization Fund (0.5%). It is important to note that this allocation formula is anchored on some essential criteria which assign weightage of 30- 40% to population (the demographic distribution across states); 40% to Equality of States (equal rights of states); 10% to Landmass/Terrain (geographical challenges); 10% to Internal Revenue Effort (incentivizing states to boost revenue generation); and 10-15% to Social Development (focusing on education, health,

and water resources) [45].

Justifications for the formula revolve around promoting fiscal federalism, national cohesion, and equitable resource distribution which are being challenged and criticized for being unfair and inefficient. The federal government has too much control over revenue, leaving states and local governments with limited financial autonomy. The current formula does not adequately address the needs of states and local governments, leading to disparities in development. Some stakeholders advocate for empowering states and local councils with more resources and responsibilities to better serve their populations. The extant revenue allocation process is often opaque, with little accountability. On what should be done, there is no shortage of ideas on how the revenue sharing arrangement can be improved. Proposals for a more equitable revenue allocation formula include the following practical steps:

- i. Review the vertical allocation formula: Adjust the percentage shares to give more autonomy to states and local governments.
- ii. Increase derivation principle: Increase the derivation principle to at least 25% to ensure oil-producing states receive fair compensation.
- iii. Improve transparency and accountability: Establish clear guidelines and reporting mechanisms to ensure allocated funds are used effectively.
- iv. Devolve revenue sources: Grant states control over certain revenue streams, like agriculture or natural resources.
- v. Establish a permanent fiscal commission: Ensure regular reviews and adjustments to the revenue allocation formula [46].

These proposed changes would require amendments to the Federal Constitution and collaboration among stakeholders, especially the three arms of government at the federal level.

It is interesting that the Revenue Mobilisation Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC) is reviewing the formula to reflect current socio-economic realities and ensure fair allocation of funds to the three tiers of government. The proposed changes to Nigeria's revenue allocation formula aim to address the country's evolving economic and demographic realities. The RMAFC has proposed a reduction of the federal government's share from 52.68% to 45.17%, and an increase in state governments' share to 29.79% and local governments' share to 21.04% [47]. The RMAFC argues that the review has become necessary due to significant demographic, economic, and constitutional changes since the last adjustment of the revenue allocation formula in 1992. The proposed formula aims to promote fiscal federalism, equity, and national cohesion [48]. The RMAFC also proposes a five-year periodic review of the revenue allocation formula to reflect changing economic realities [49]. It is important to note that the RMAFC is sufficiently empowered to play such some crucial roles in Nigeria's fiscal federalism. Its key responsibilities include:

- i. Revenue Allocation: Recommending revenue allocation formulae for the federal, state, and local governments
- ii. Revenue Mobilization: Monitoring and ensuring timely payment of revenues into the Federation Account
- iii. Fiscal Policy Advice: Advising the government on fiscal policies, taxation, and revenue matters
- iv. Inter-Governmental Relations: Facilitating collaboration and coordination among tiers of government on revenue and fiscal issues [50].

In carrying out the functions highlighted above, the RMAFC helps in promoting fiscal federalism by balancing power and resources among federal, state, and local governments, and ensures transparency through accountable management of revenue and its allocation. Through its advocacy for fair resource distribution across regions and governments, the RMAFC can be said to be interested in equity in resource allocation.

But equity in revenue allocation requires practical action beyond advocacy, and this may entail the following policy actions:

- i. Transparent and formula-based allocation: Implementing a clear, needs-based formula to distribute revenue among federating units.
- ii. Devolution of revenue sources: Granting states control over certain revenue streams, like agriculture or natural resources.
- iii. Equalization payments: Transferring funds from wealthier to poorer regions to address disparities.
- iv. Multi-stakeholder dialogue: Encouraging dialogue among regions to address concerns and build consensus.

Nigeria can gain from the experiences of other countries where fiscal federalism has been successfully practiced. Germany's *Finanzausgleich* emplaces a system of equalization payments between states, which facilitates comparable living standards. This system bridges the gaps in pricing system to ensure balanced growth and development across the country. Canada's Equalization Programme is even more courageous as it allows the transfer of funds from richer provinces to poorer ones, thereby promoting economic balance. Australia's GST distribution allocates Goods and Services Tax revenue based on population and needs. Switzerland's cantonal system decentralizes governance, with cantons having significant autonomy and revenue control. Obviously, Nigeria has a variant of these examples to some degree in its revenue allocation formula. What is however missing in Nigeria's arrangement is the decentralization of governance. For instance despite the full autonomy granted to the local government as the third tier of government by the Supreme Court, the 36 state governments are still holding back the funds of the 774 local governments, thus denying them financial autonomy. This situation of the LGs in Nigeria contrasts what obtains in Switzerland. In addition, while in the other federations (Germany, Canada, Australia) the principles of needs and population are

essential criteria for distributing revenue across the federating units, the affluent states in Nigeria are kicking against such criteria, insisting instead that more priority should be placed on the principle of derivation.

As it stands, the rich and the poor states in Nigeria want a new revenue allocation formula which would be fairer, just and equitable. Whatever that formula is, the federal government should ensure that the third tier of government, the local governments receive their allocations directly, not through a third party, state governments.

Inclusive Leadership

Nigeria's plurality demands that it be managed by a governance model that gives the representation to diverse identities and tendencies. Nigeria's adoption of federal system of government as prescribed by the 1999 Constitution is a logical consequence of the ill-fated and short-lived practice of unitary system under the military administration of General Aguiyi Ironsi in 1966-67. The resentment that Aguiyi Irons' unitary Constitution bred eventually consumed the administration. The political elites of different ethnicities expressed fears that the imposition of unitary Constitution could facilitate the domination of other ethnicities by General Ironsi's ethnic group (Ibo). Thus the antagonists of unitarism believed that federalism would serve Nigeria's diversity better than unitarism. Little wonder that since its rejection in 1967, unitary system of government became an anathema or a betenoire in political discourses following the truncation of General Ironsi's military dictatorship. By default therefore, federalism became the preferred governance option for managing the country's diversity.

Inclusive leadership conforms to the governance dictates of federalism which a highly pluralistic and diverse country like Nigeria requires. Inclusive leadership involves creating an environment where everyone feels valued, respected, and empowered to contribute [51]. Diverse leadership teams are better equipped to make informed decisions, drive innovation, and address complex challenges [52]. Nigeria has been plagued by leadership challenges, including corruption, nepotism, and lack of transparency [53]. The country's leadership has often been criticized for being exclusive, with power concentrated in the hands of a few individuals [54]. This has led to a lack of accountability, transparency, and inclusivity in governance [55]. Equity is critical for ensuring that everyone has access to opportunities and resources [56]. Leadership accountability is enhanced when leaders are committed to equity and transparency [57]. Transparency is a critical component of good governance, as it enables citizens to hold leaders accountable [58]. Inclusive leadership promotes accountability by creating a culture of transparency and participation [59]. Diverse leadership teams are more likely to prioritize transparency and accountability [60]. To achieve good governance, Nigeria needs leaders who prioritize inclusivity, equity, and transparency. True, Nigeria has been experimenting with different strategies and approaches that it believes would enhance the management of its diversity and

promote inclusivity, in order to ensure equitable access to the country's resources. A brief discussion of each of the following inclusivity-enhancing strategies is necessary:

i. **Federal Character Principle**

Federal character principle was introduced by the Nigerian government to ensure equitable representation and as well prevent the dominance of persons from a few states, religion or a particular ethnic group in the governance of the country and other spheres of the public sector. The principle was first enshrined in the 1979 constitution. The principle is retained in the extant 1999 Constitution, specifically in Section 14, Subsection 3 of the Constitution (as amended). This principle aims to promote national unity, ensure equitable representation, and prevent the dominance of any particular ethnic group or region in government appointments and public sector positions.

The Constitution states that "the composition of the Government of the Federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also to command national loyalty [61].

To a large extent, the Federal Character Principle has been instrumental in promoting balanced representation and national integration in Nigeria. In the fourth republic, President Obasanjo's first major task was to ensure that the federal bureaucracy was representative of Nigeria's diversity. To his disappointment, he found out that the top echelon of the federal civil service was populated by two states from the northern region (Kano and Bauchi) which produced most of the Permanent Secretary while few others came any of the 34 remaining states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The imbalance was immediately redressed by a prompt sack of almost all the Permanent Secretaries, and subsequent appointment of new Permanent Secretaries, each from the 36 States of the Federation and the FCT. The appointment of Ministers followed the same approach with each minister representing a state of the federation. Headship of government agencies and other significant political appointments were spread out to reflect the country's diversity. The administration ensured that the principle was applied to all federal institutions by enabling the hitherto docile Federal Character Commission (FCC) which had been in existence since 1996. The mandate of FCC remains the following:

- i. Ensuring the composition of government and its agencies reflects Nigeria's federal character, promoting national unity and loyalty.
- ii. Working out an equitable formula for distributing posts in the public service, armed forces, police, and other security agencies.
- iii. Overseeing compliance with the Federal Character

Principle and enforcing it through the courts if necessary.

iv. Addressing inequalities in social services and infrastructure development [62]. It is unfortunate that since the Obasanjo administration left office in May, 2007, successive administrations had not been as effective as the Obasanjo administration in the application of the federal Character principle [63].

There had been complaints about lopsidedness in appointments into federal agencies, educational institutions, and federal bureaucracy among others. Each administration had a way of bending the federal character principle to favour a preferred region, in most cases, the region of the President in appointments and other opportunities.

Undue preference given to the states as the units of political representation in the application of federal character principle has continued to create unintended challenges. Each state in Nigeria, is composed of different ethnic identities that are stratified into majority or minority ethnic groups on the basis of the size of their demography. Thus, a situation in which federal appointments are given to individuals from the majority ethnic identities in the states, then, the federal government could unknowingly be empowering the majority ethnic groups in the states, to the displeasure of the ethnic minorities in the states. This calls for a mechanism to balance federal appointments in such a way that the ethnic equations and configurations of the states are carefully reflected in federal appointments, so that the opportunities at the federal level would not be cornered or captured by only the representatives of the majority ethnic groups in the states. In other words, statism as a basis of political representation using federal character principle ought to be carefully moderated to ensure social justice, equity and fairness in all federal appointments from the states, so that the majority ethnic groups in the states will not emasculate the minorities [64]. Some past administrations were observed in some quarters to have disregarded merit in the application of Federal Character Principle (FCP) to appointments into positions in the federal bureaucracy and agencies, solely focusing instead on the State of origin requirement. There are instances where people are given appointments far above the levels of their competences, with far-reaching implications for governance. This omission contradicts the essential reason for the FCP. Obasanjo, one of the initiators of the FCP, having observed the wrong application of FCP overtime, warned that merit should not be sacrificed on the altar of FCP. According to him:

Indisputably, for a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria in the early stages of nation-building, geographical representation or federal character must be ensured in our national representative appointments. But then merit based on track record of performance must not be sacrificed on the altar of federal character. Quotas will kill incentive, competition and competence [65].

However, the wrong application of FCP does not in any way invalidate its essence. What has to be done to make the principle more effective is to put some checks and balances in place to limit the freedom of action of the appointing authorities by subjecting their nominations to some rig-proof screening process, as the country's National Assembly currently does for recommended candidates for Ministerial and Ambassadorial appointments. Thorough screening of other levels of appointees at the federal level needs to be carried out to ensure that FCP was not just being used to empower incompetent people drawn from across the States of the federation.

Despite the errors in the application of the FCP, for being a constitutional requirement, operatives of government at federal level are aware of the objectives of the FCP, and have at different times sought ways of giving effect to it. By ensuring representation from various regions and ethnic groups, the principle has helped foster a sense of belonging and unity among Nigerians. The principle has led to a more diverse representation in federal institutions, including the civil service, military, and educational institutions. The application of FCP has largely helped in reducing tensions and conflicts among different regions. The principle has promoted inclusive governance through the involvement of various groups in decision-making. The principle, to a reasonable degree, has increased representation of marginalized groups, including women and people from disadvantaged regions. And by ensuring that federal institutions reflect Nigeria's diversity, the principle would appear to have improved service delivery and responsiveness to citizens' needs. Finally, to some extent, the principle has contributed to national integration by promoting cross-cultural understanding and cooperation [66].

No doubt, the FCP can be made to be more impactful and effective in its drive to forge a more integrated federation in Nigeria. This can be actualized through the development and enforcement of standardized guidelines for its implementation. Also, steps should be taken to balance representation with merit-based appointments. And in order to ensure social justice and equity in appointments at other levels of government, the operational scope of the FCP should be expanded to include state and local governments. Finally, the Federal Character Commission should be empowered to sanction violators of the FCP. All these steps require the amendment of the constitutional provision on the FCP to accommodate the aforementioned changes.

Zoning of National Offices within Political Parties

There are six geopolitical zones in Nigeria, namely North-West, North-East, North-Central, South-West, South-East, and South-South zones. A power sharing policy which is operational within political parties was enunciated through established conventions for ensuring that the six zones are well-represented in the leadership structures of political parties. Zoning of political offices in Nigeria is a policy aimed at managing the country's

diversity and ensuring all segments of society feel represented. Although not enshrined in the Constitution, it is widely practiced by political parties to promote inclusivity and fairness. Zoning involves dividing the country into six geopolitical zones and rotating key political positions among them. This system is meant to ensure equitable representation, reduce ethnic and regional tensions, and promote national unity. By ensuring that all regions have a stake in governance and feel represented, zoning system promotes inclusivity, and consequently helps mitigate conflicts that could arise from perceived marginalization. It encourages cooperation and understanding among diverse groups, thereby fostering national integration and unity [67].

The weaknesses of this power sharing arrangement include concerns for meritocracy because it is believed that zoning prioritizes representation over competence. This would require an organ of the party to oversight the selection process to ensure that only those with requisite qualifications are chosen to fill the leadership slots of their zones. Zoning has been found to be inconsistent and prone to manipulation. The most powerful interest in the party at any given point in time determines which zone gets what, when and how. One of the reasons why the People's Democratic Party (PDP) lost the 2023 Presidential election in Nigeria was the party's unpopular decision to renege on its earlier agreement to zone the Presidency to the South because the outgoing President, Muhammadu Buhari was from the northern part of the country. The reactions that greeted that decision snowballed into the emergence of a powerful splinter group within the PDP which worked against the northern Presidential candidate of the party, Atiku Abubakar. The popular sentiment in the country was that power should shift to the south because the north had held power for eight years under President Buhari. Furthermore, zoning may perpetuate ethnic and regional divisions even though it creates artificial mechanism for managing ethnic and regional competition which could have been explosive without it. Zoning system works on elite consensus, without which it is doomed to fail since it does not have the force of law to support its operation.

Rotational Presidency

Rotational Presidency is a power-sharing mechanism where the presidency rotates between Nigeria's northern and southern regions. This system was introduced to address regional imbalance and promote national unity, but it is not enshrined in the Constitution. The idea emerged during the 1994/95 National Constitutional Conference, and the first implementation was in 1999 when Olusegun Obasanjo, a southerner, became president. Since then, the rotation has continued, with Umaru Yar'Adua (north) followed by Goodluck Jonathan (south), and then Muhammadu Buhari (north), and succeeded by Bola Ahmed Tinubu (south). This arrangement has not always worked out

without some reactions from some political actors who believe that it is an undemocratic design which constrict the democratic space in pursuit of a predetermined electoral outcome. While there are Presidential aspirants of political parties from a region which produced the immediate past President insisting that because rotational Presidency arrangement was extra-constitutional, they would contest for Presidency in the primaries of their political parties against aspirants from the other region in the rotation scheme. This shows that even though rotational presidency would appear to be working by default in the final analysis, the fact that it is not constitutionally mandated, makes it an uncertain agreement with no binding effect.

Rotational Presidency may be ineffective because of the absence of requisite legislation to properly anchor its practice, but its acceptance by majority of the power elites across the regions cannot be contested. That explains why the country's presidency has been rotating between the north and the south of the country since the emergence of the fourth republic in 1999. There are obviously lessons to learn from countries that have also evolved similar strategies for managing diversity and sharing power among their constituents.

Power-sharing models in other countries:

Lebanon's Consociationalism: Lebanon's power-sharing system is based on consociationalism, where government positions are allocated among religious groups. This arrangement is enshrined in the Constitution (Taif Agreement, 1989) and electoral laws.

South Africa's Coalition Government: South Africa's transition to democracy involved power-sharing, with a coalition government formed to ensure representation and reconciliation. This power-sharing model is mandated by the Constitution (1996) and the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act (1995).

Switzerland's Federal Council: Switzerland's collegiate government represents different regions and parties, thus promoting consensus and stability. This is an old power-sharing arrangement anchored on the Federal Constitution of 1848, which was revised in 199.

Belgium's Coalition Government: Belgium's power-sharing model addresses regional tensions through linguistic group representation. This Coalition Government is based on some provisions in the 1970 Constitution, which was revised in 1993 and linguistic group representation laws.

India's Coalition Politics: India's coalition governments ensure representation and stability in diverse societies even though this power-sharing arrangement is not based on any known provisions of Indian Constitution; it is, however, facilitated by parliamentary conventions and coalition agreements [68].

The aforementioned models demonstrate varying levels of

institutionalization of pragmatic power-sharing strategies in which some are anchored on Constitutions and others are relying on conventions, or agreements. These models are examples of various approaches to power-sharing, which are being utilized for promoting inclusivity and stability in those diverse societies.

How the Nigerian rotational Presidency arrangement within political parties would be institutionalized should be the paramount concern of the country's power elites across the regions. One important way to achieve this is to legalize its adoption by all political parties. Its observance should be mandatory and refusal to comply with its dictates should attract grave sanctions.

Regulation of Political Parties by the Country's Electoral body:

Another step through which the Nigerian government has continued to regulate the political climate is through the enforcement of well-conceived electoral laws that forbid tribal, ethnic and religious politicking in the country. This is to prevent the formation of tribal or religious political parties. It does this through the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) which is constitutionally empowered to regulate and register political parties to ensure among others that:

- i. The name of a political party, its emblem or motto which shall not contain any ethnic or religious connotations or give the impression that the activities of the political party are confined to a part or section of Nigeria.
- ii. The membership of the executive committee or other governing bodies of the political parties should reflect the Federal Character of Nigeria and cultural differences at states and local government levels.
- iii. The political party's ideology, programme and methods of zoning and rotating principal offices among the different zones of the federation are in place.
- iv. The principles of equitable power-sharing among the three tiers of government of the federation are observed.
- v. Membership of a political party is open to every citizen of Nigeria irrespective of his place of origin, circumstance of birth, sex, religion or ethnic grouping [69]

Although these and other regulations have worked to prevent the emergence of a tribal or religious political party, ethnicity is still a driving mobilization force of most political parties in Nigeria. The major support base of a party candidate remains its ethnic zone. Until ideological parties evolve, party politics will continue to revolve around idiosyncratic and particularistic values and other primordial identities.

Conclusion

Nigeria's diversity, with over 250 ethnic groups and 500 languages, presents both opportunities and challenges for governance. Managing this diversity is crucial for national

unity, stability, and development. The challenge of successive governments in Nigeria has remained how to weld the country's disparate entities together and make the country a more organically cohesive enclave than a mere geographical expression. In other words, challenge of governance in Nigeria has remained the objective of addressing the concern raised several years ago by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, a prominent political figure of Nigeria's pre- independence era, when he wrote:

"Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression. There are no Nigerians in the same sense as there are English, Welsh, or French. The word Nigeria is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not" [70].

As it has been shown, the country's federal system and institutions like the Federal Character Commission have continued to promote inclusivity and representation. This has not totally eliminated ethnic and regional tensions resulting from competition for resources and power, thereby undermining national cohesion. Inequitable representation still persists despite policies aimed at promoting equity in resource allocation, hence some regions feel marginalized and this often instigates conflicts. Nigerian politicians often exploit diversity for personal gain, and such actions have continued to weaken institutions. The examples of other diverse countries have been revealed that Nigeria needs to ensure effective implementation of policies like the Federal Character Principle, and encourage participation and representation from all regions and groups in its federation, to reduce tensions and conflicts. But, the promotion of national identity by emphasizing shared citizenship and national values should be pursued with all the seriousness it requires. Nigeria's National Orientation Agency (NOA) should be empowered and enabled to deliver on its mandate. It is the promotion of national identity by agencies like NOA that would sentimentally weld together Nigerians from different primordial identities and backgrounds; whereas those pragmatic mechanisms of federal character, Zoning system, and rotational Presidency will keep the divisions alive. In any case, the management of Nigeria's diversity requires a commitment to inclusivity, equity, and national unity. It is by doing this that Nigeria can harness its diversity to drive development and prosperity.

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