
DEMOCRATIC PARTY POLITICS AND RESURGENCE OF ETHNO NATIONALISM IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *The paper addresses the Democratic Politics and Resurgence of Ethno-nationalism in Nigeria. Clinging on the fact that Nigeria without doubt is a former British Colony that play host to numerous numbers of pre-colonial autonomous states, the paper examine the political competition among the groups after the country become independence. How competition for material goods, and hence for the control of the state which govern access to them accelerates ethno nationalism in Democratic Party Politics of the new nation. The paper adopt the hermeneutic method of study that is rooted the qualitative analysis of secondary data, such as journal articles, conference papers, news papers publications, among others and found that: (1) ethnicity is a major factor in Nigeria Politics; (2) the struggle to access state resources is the main cause of ethno nationalism in Nigeria; and (3) ethno nationalism is most rampant under Democratic dispensation. Therefore, only a reorientation of the political actors and the committed restructuring of the state in Nigeria can tackle the problem of ethnic politics.*

Keywords: *Democracy, Politics, Ethno nationalism, Resurgence*

INTRODUCTION

It is fundamentally truth that all men, whether in Africa, Asia, Europe, North/South America and Oceania, are created equal and they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, such as right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. To secure this right government, whether in form of Monarchy, Aristocracy or Democracy are instituted among deriving their just power from the consent of the governed, that when any form of government becomes destructive of this ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it (Locke...).

But the contrary to the foregoing assertion was what the fate of Africa becomes during the later part of the nineteenth century, especially in the River Niger area of west Africa, presently called Nigeria, where autonomous indigenous states, as in, the Hausa/Fulani Emirates of the north west, the Nupe Kingdom in the north central and the defunct Kanem Bornu empire in the north east; the old empire of Oyo in the south west; the defunct Benin Empire and the kingdoms of the Urhobo's, Itsekiri's, Ijaw's, Ibibio's, amongst others in the South South; and of course the notable Igbo Republican system in the

south east, geopolitical zones, were conquered by invading force of Britain and have government instituted, a form which is known as Democracy.

Such that by reason of British conquest like the situation in Europe where the rise of the Greek and Roman empires snatched sovereignty away from most European national government and places beyond, Britain through her political campaign in the area forcefully united these hitherto distinct sovereign African states, make a state out of them, called it Nigeria and have colonial administration based on democratic government instituted, to oversee the affairs of the new nation, even as the people were neither consulted in the unification project nor their consent sought. Thus Paul Unongo (2017), a former chairman of Northern Elders Forum (NEF), best described Nigeria as he said "we came as an amalgamation of different kinds of people into one state as many other countries have done including the United States, Germany." Otherwise, ab initio it was so.

The colonial Nigeria state due to how it originated and the role it was created to play assumed an imperial posture. Authority in Great Britain through the office of secretary of state for the colony make sure that the government and the economic structure were superimposed on the different ethnic peoples that now Nigerians, for the advancement of British interests (Ibodje, 2009). One, in order to ensure easy exploitation of the state resources, the colonial policy largely placed the Nigerian peoples in subjugation. Two, it became an instrument in the hands of the colonial rulers, who manipulated it at will for their advancement of interests and comfort. Three, in order to sustain the state monopoly use of power, its managers exhibit absolutism, arbitrariness and suppressive tendencies. Lastly, the ownership, control and access to national wealth and status were placed on the state and control by the government.

Meanwhile, outraged by non-inclusiveness in the colonial government, Nigerian elites championed the cause of nationalism. As the nationalist struggle gathered momentum and as they were about to realized the country political autonomy from Britain, primordial interests set in to the extent that it work at cross purpose to override the nationalist interests. Major political parties that competed for seats of power were organized along ethnic line, represented regional interest upstaged one another and undermined one another influence in their region as they sought to increase support for their parties in regions other than theirs.

So, at independence, the political elites who came from among the different ethnic groups inherited the now prevailing political super-structure, along with Democratic Party politics and power from the colonial elite, which they manipulated to their own advantage. Such that as Britain prepared to grant Nigerian a sovereign status, struggle for power to occupy and control the exalted office of the Prime Minister and other important positions, to be used to decides in the word of Harold Laswell, "Who Gets What, When and How", ensued among the ethno/regions groups which snowballed into acrimony and rancor, subsequently manifested in various forms such as peaceful protest , litigations, and took destructive dimensions like violent riots and even in some cases military intervention at different intervals, where democratic politics was banned. With the coming on stage of Democratic politics since 1998, it appears the scenario that played out under the First, Second and third Republics are still playing out in this fourth Republic. Most had expressed concern that from the hay days of colonialism, earlier post independence through the military era in national politics to the return of civil rule built on democratic principle and rule of law, the debate has been renewed, intensified and grew. Thus cross section of Nigerians including state men, the religious, academia and the media had expressed concern whether national political stability could be achieved in the kind of Democratic society we live today where accusation and counter accusation concerning structural imbalance, non - inclusiveness and perceived marginalization in the appropriation and distribution of national value among the federating levels and units in Nigeria, took centre stage in national political discuss and threw-up ethno agitation.

For some, the end of intense military rule was a major turning point in national politics, ushering in new paradigm in which the change from military dictator and unilateralism gave way to greater participation. However, it has created opportunity to promote primordial regional interest over national political agenda and the means deployed was a justification of the Machiavellian principle “the end shall justify the means”. While others argued that it presents opportunity for state men to build on the gain of cooperative spirit brought about by cooperative democratic decision, where the contribution of everyone matters.

But reality indicates, like the political atmosphere of 1950s through 1960 to 1966, where (1) the three regions contested against each other over the controls of the centre government and to determine who gets disproportionate share of the nation wealth, when and how; (2) the Northern delegation to the 1950 Constitutional Conference threatened that “unless their region was allotted 50% of the seats in the central legislature, it would ask for separation from the rest of Nigeria on the arrangement before 1914”; (3) in 1953 the Western Region threatened to secede over issue of revenue allocation and the separation of Lagos from the West as Federal Capital; and in 1964 the Eastern Region threatened to secede following the controversy that greeted the 1964 Federal election, but made good its threat in 1967 when it declared the Republic of Biafra.

The regions in Nigeria though have been increased from 3 to 4 and later to 6 Geopolitical zones, with 36 federating units and a federal capital territory, but it appeared there is continuous competition for power among the ethnic groups and various warning shot has been fired by many of them have signaled that they will secede if their aspirations are not met within the structure of the contemporary larger Nigeria state. In fact many groups have declared their republics on paper. It is in light of this that this paper focuses on Democratic Party politics and resurgence of ethno nationalism in Nigeria. So the challenge to the academia and state men is how to transcend this issue in our body polity and the threat it pose to the nation Democracy.

Conceptual Discourse

Democratic Politics

Politics as broadly viewed is about the making collective decision for a group, but most fundamentally truth is about the struggle over scarce resources. In most polities, the generally accepted principle for carrying out the contest is known as Democracy. The concept democracy ordinarily implies rule by the people. Even though its basic principles such as popular participation, consensus and accountability are found to have existed in other civilizations, it is widely claimed to have originated from ancient Greek politics, but in practice, it only enjoyed universal acceptance in recent decades. Usually when we talk about politics it implies making decision for a group or a state in the management of its affairs. The numbers of persons that participate in the decision making make one to differentiate one form of government from the other. When it take one person to make decision for a group, in this sense, it is regarded by Aristotle classification as monarchy, when it involves selected few, it is referred to as Aristocracy and when every individual in the group are involved in the decision making it is then referred to as Democracy. Therefore if everyone in a community participates in government decision making or the management of state affairs, especially in choosing priority for the state and choose men to realize it on behalf of the state, it is referred to as the practice of **Democratic politics.**

As such, Democratic Politics means deciding together. All stakeholders, including political parties play a part in the management of state affair. Thus in a democratic state around the world, including Nigeria, the people choose who governs them and how they will be

governed, which is done by electing leaders who run the government, which is most times referred to as liberal Democracy. Democratic Politics therefore in the context of this article mean active participation of the diverse ethno elements that makeup Nigeria, either direct or indirect in the affair of the country. As subject of political authority, Democracy has made the people to contribute to political debates and activities; create rules and regulations that bound all citizens of the state, especially with its entrenchment under the Clifford Constitution that created the elective principle and sustained by subsequent power arrangements.

But rather than being driven by clear cut political parties ideology, it has mostly been driven by ethnic -nationalist and regional issue based. Unlike what is obtainable in all democratic polity around the world where political contest is based on party ideology, the diverse elements (different ethnic and regional based groups) in Nigeria have since the twilight of colonialism engaged in political debate and activities on how the Nigerian state affairs should be managed, have in the process competed to undo and dominate each other, and this has persisted until the present time.

One expected that after independence, the pursuit of national ideology will prevail over primordial interest, but experience has showed that the political class even became more divided along the line of ethnic/regional interests, just as they were engaged in debates on how the affairs of the new state could be managed and the method to be used in achieving them, argument for and against, has set one against the others, especially on the issue of rotational presidency, governor and appointments to national political offices has based on ethnic consideration. Rather than political parties competing for power, instead we ethnic groups contesting for state offices. Besides, while people of the South South preferred Fiscal Federalism based on the Principle of Derivation on Resources management, the North preferred Population and Land Mass. While the Southwest preferred restructuring, state police among others and south east preferred secession which arises from their claim of non inclusion, the North preferred that the status quo ante should remain. This difference has resulted in ethno agitation, in some occasions in violent confrontation and secession threat. These differing interests and positions have come to shape the nature and character of the Nigerian Democratic Politics in this contemporary period.

Ethno-nationalism

Nigeria without doubt is a heterogeneous state, with over three hundred ethno national groups prominent among which are the Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba, Igbo, Urhobo, Ijaw, Edo, Tiv, Itsekiri, Efik, Ibibio, Nupe, Junkun, Angas and many more (Osaghae, 2002). Among these ethno national groups there is the feeling of distinctiveness that sometimes created in-group - out group problems, a dichotomy that is characterized as us and them. This is usually promoted by certain factors, which sociologists regards as the shared value within a group which is not open to outsiders as well as interests they project, that could be driven by the desire to dominate the political landscape of the country against the opposition of others.

It implies competing for government power to allocate resources of the State not as political party, but as informal interest group that mobilized to struggle for control of Government power or influence state power and the gains that comes with it to the direction of her interest. Such that whenever their aspirations are not met within the plurality framework, they resort to agitation and sometimes threat of secession is proclaimed. It is the prevailing political movement within the framework of Modern Nigeria state, prominent among which are Movement for Actualization of

Sovereign State of Biafra(MASSOB), Indigenous People of Biafra, Odua People Congress (OPC) Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta(MEND/ Avengers) and the Boko Haram.

According to Joseph(1991), it owed its continued vitality to the keen nature of struggle for power and resources in the context of scarcity, insecurity and lack of confidence in official norms and regulation, should therefore not be expected to function in the same way as formal organization or Political Party as obtained in the developed states of the world. Thus the widespread Nigerian view of the state as an entity composed of strategic offices which can be captured as the outcome of competitive electoral process, now make ethno-nationalism a strategic tool which political actors appeal to in contest of Democratic politics in Nigeria. Therefore ethno-nationalism implies ethnic group self assertion, the tendencies for different ethnic groups in Nigeria to hold claim to position of power, disguised as political party, provide justification for doing so and to advance group interest to the disadvantage of others, rather than the national interest.

In the practice of Democratic representative politics as found in the developed states of Europe and America, the people who share same vision and wished to be in position of governance are naturally attracted together, into different groups not based on ethnic or other affiliations, but for the fact that they have a shared vision on the form of idea and structure the government of the country should be based. Those who preferred the ideas of state ownership and control of means of production see themselves organized into one party that is most times called socialist party, while those who preferred private ownership that is backed up with free market economy principle are organized into one group called liberal party. These parties with different ideologies compete for positions in Government during periodic election and based on consideration and acceptance of the parties' manifestoes, the electorate decides the one to be in Government.

But in Africa, particularly Nigeria, Democratic Politics is built on and driven passionately by ethnic consideration. We have experience in Nigeria where parties' successes in elections were linked to ethnic affiliation of political parties. For example, the Pre, independence and First Republic political Parties in Nigeria were seen transformed from socio-cultural association of each of the regions that dominated the nation's politics: NPC for the Northern Region, NCNC for the Eastern Region and AG for the Western Region. Similar pattern played out in the Second Republic Democratic Politics, where there was only change of party names from NPC to NPN, AG to UPN and NCNC to NPP, but the party's compositions still remained applied, especially in terms of ethno regional dominance and support (Anugwom, 2003).

As a backup in the democratic political contest for power among the ethnic nations, whether in the First, Second, Third or the Fourth Republics, ethno-national militias have been constituted by the various groups that make-up the country are bonded in opinion in support of their ethnic political agenda, especially on the manner the country should be governed, the actual size of the population and its special distribution, desirable number of states of the federation, resources allocation and rotation of positions of governors, President and political appointments(Joseph, 1991).

Each of these issues can be shown to have link to the struggle for an ever share in state power by the groups and for access to the important resources controlled by the state MaziMbah (2007). Among these are the ethno Yoruba group known as the Afeniferi with its militant wing known as Odua People's Congress(OPC); Urhobo Progressive Union(UPU) with its militant wing known as Gbagbako; Ohaneze Ndigbo with its militant wing known as Movement for Sovereign State of Biafra(MASSOB); Ijaw National Council(INC) with its militant wing known as Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta(MEND)/the Avenger, the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) with its militant wing known as Almagirin and the deadly Boko Haram group, and many more.

Democratic Politics and rise of the Ethno-nationalism in Nigeria

Due to the effort of Nigeria elites, especially those based in Lagos and Calabar, who argued for equity and fair representation in the British led colonial Government, the 1922 Clifford Constitution introduced the Elective Principle as a result of which Political parties, particularly the Nigeria Democratic Party Headed by Herbert Marculay and the People's Union were born (Obikeze, Anthony and Chidubem, 2016). Even as they were few and played less significant role in the Government, they made frantic effort through nationalism to expand the political space for more Nigerians to occupy and contribute to affairs of the nation.

As a result of rising anti colonialism global interest, the rise of some personalities and internal pressure from the natives more political parties emerged to challenged colonial policies in Nigeria, prominent among which is the Nigeria Youth Movement formed in 1936 by J.C. Vaughan, Ernest Ikoli and Samuel Akinsayan. The party had its members drawn across Nigeria and created branches all over the country, and with that a party with nation- wide coverage was formed. The party battled for the emancipation of Nigeria from British Colonialism. According to Obikeze, et al, in spite of its effort, the party could not withstand the temptation of ethnic politics. He argued the organization faded away, because the consensus among its leaders was narrowed and their ambitions became irreconcilable and first nation -wide nationalist movement was dissolved at the altar of ethnic politics, a legacy that prevail to this moment.

With time the number of Nigerians co-opted into the system gradually increased, especially as the elites increased the tempo of their nationalist activities. Particularly, Numbers of Nigerians in the legislative Council was increased as British prepared to leave Nigeria. For example, it increased from 6 under the Clifford Constitution to about 12 under the Richard Constitution, with autonomous legislature created for the three regions and subsequently to about 136 and 320 under the Macpherson and the Lyttleton Constitutions respectively and many more the independence constitution. It is trite to note that the regionalism of politics occasioned by the Richard constitution encourage the formation of other political parties, but this time along sectional and ethnic line.

While there was made available by the Richard Constitution more space to be occupied conflict of interest among ethno-national crept up and came to determine the tone of the national politics for the next decades. Thus the high propensity for ethnic groups to complain of marginalization when their desire to occupy juicy government offices either through election or by appointment is dashed, has becomes a recurrent decimal. This has been the claim of most minority groups and in some cases among the three major ethnic groups, from prior to independence, independence, through the First to the Fourth Republics, especially when anyone among them is played out in the power game of choosing persons to fill juicy government offices. Prominent among these in the word of Anugwom (2003) is struggle for the office the President, where contestation between the three major ethnic groups has become a common place. Also some states like Delta, Edo among others, the struggle among ethnic groups in the contest to occupy the office of the governor equally breeds ethno nationalism.

This could have influenced Joseph (1991), to state that there has been underlying the political and social system in Nigeria, the continuing concern with how interests are represented and benefits distributed. He claimed that the struggle against colonial rule included demand for direct political representation and the rejection of monopolization of state power by foreign rulers. He further contend that the demand included that the economic product of the territory be directly used for the benefit of Nigerians, rather than appropriated to meet the metropolitan interest of the colonial power.

Therefore the fundamental political principle upon which the anti-colonial crusaders anchored their demand was popular participation, otherwise refers to as democracy. But as the Nationalist, including those from the North, East and West cooperate to realized the country political autonomy from Britain, primordial interests set in to the extent that it work at cross purpose to override the nationalist interests. This became prominent at that time Governor Arthur Richard regionalized the

politics and established regional Houses of Assemblies for regions, one each for east and west but decided to create to both Houses of Assembly and Chief in the North, which though open up more political spaces for interested politicians in Nigeria but created room for suspicious among ethno politicians and therefore influenced the rise of Ethno nationalism, which is the tendency for ethnic leaders to projects and defend the interests of their groups.

Within same period according to Rimmer(1981) , especially after 1945 the Nigeria Government became committed to promoting the material welfare of the people. He contends that consequent upon that “suasion of the state or its agencies was critical for all who had welfare to be promoted”. According to Joseph, it applied as much as to the distribution of social infrastructures to communities, the setting of wages and approval for private businesses, such that your ability to mobilize political influences became the pre-condition for survival. For Rimmer, “the fortunes of business community, or occupational group could depend heavily on political favour”.

Therefore, it is logically right to claim that the Biogram which house the nature and character of Nigeria politics in this contemporary time would have being formed this time by Arthur Richard, entrenched by Macpherson and codified by the Lyttleton and transferred to Nigeria Political elites at the Independence, sustained through the First through the second to the abort Third Republic and resurfaced in the Fourth Republic (Anifowose and Enemu, 2000). This prevailing situation prompted Anugwom(2003) to say that the space created by democracy in Nigeria Political Arena has given rise to the “resurgence of ethnic identities as well as the usage of these identities as crucial plank for political aspiration”. Underlying the competition among the ethno national groups is the different perception of what should be most important on the national agenda. As a result of these multi ethno agenda that is based on primordial interest, political crises have become re- occurring decimal in Nigeria, most prominently and more prevailing in the North East, South East and the South South geopolitical regions of Nigeria, where there is prevalent of Boko Haram, Indigenous people of Biafra and Niger Delta Avenger, respectively, as force is used by these ethno nationalists that self-styled freedom fighters to challenge government for control of a region, allocation of national income from Petroleum and government system to be practiced in Nigeria.

Ethno-nationalism in the First, Second and Third Republics Democratic Politics and Its Effects

As pointed earlier Nigeria is a constellation of distinct ethno nationalities. Late Chief Obafemi Awolwo a foremost leader of one of the prominent ethnic group in Nigeria was quick to point to that fact. In a book published in 1947 by him, titled Path to Nigeria Freedom, the country was described as a “mere geographical expression”, by this Yoruba ethno nationalist. This in the claim of Ekpu (2017) means that there is no Nigerians in the same sense as there are English or Welsh or French. Okpu stressed that the word Nigeria is ordinarily an appellation to differentiate people living within colonial boundary of Nigeria from those who do not, as He argued strongly that the import of Awolowo description was not only to show that Nigeria was not a Homogeneous but a conglomerate of ethno nationals groups, but as well to emphasize the country diversity so that all the constituent parts could bear that in mind and take it on board as the struggle for Nigeria Independence gathered momentum.

The Pre-Independent political parties such as the NPC, AG and NCNC, with exception of the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) whose activities was constitutionally limited to Lagos and the Nigeria Youth Movement (NYM) which appear more national, were engaged in Democratic Party Politics to occupy the government that was created by British exit. These parties were all organized along ethnic line. These Pre, independence and First Republic political Parties in Nigeria were seen transformed from socio-cultural association of each of the regions that dominated the nation’s politics: NPC for the Northern Region, NCNC for the Eastern Region and AG for the Western Region. Similar pattern played out in the Second Republic Democratic Politics, where there was only change of party

names from NPC to NPN, AG to UPN and NCNC to NPP, but the party's compositions still remained applied, especially in term of ethno regional dominance and support (Anugwom, 2003).

According to Joseph (1991) many observers were surprised at the familiar nature of political alignment which surfaced with the lifting of the twelve-year ban on political parties in Nigeria in September 1978. Of the five parties which were granted legal status, three of them, the NPN, NPP and UPN, could be shown to have clear link with the former dominant parties of the independence era. Besides, the pattern of vote demonstrated that considerable ethnic consolidation had taken place in support of the three parties, involving three sections of the population, such that the basic political units in Nigeria was ethno regional blocs.

The First Republic (1960-66) election and politics in Nigeria was dully coloured by the Macpherson Constitution of 1951 which in addition to the colonial divide-and-rule tactics entrenched division between social and ethnic groups in Nigeria. The regionalization of the legislature in that constitution, as the constitution introduced three major regions in Nigeria, each with its own autonomous legislature, provided the breeding ground for ethnic politics as it were. In fact, Coleman (1960) in a very spontaneous appraisal of the constitution saw it as accelerating the drift towards ethno-nationalism. In a bid to capture the regional legislature, political parties made primordial sentiments the primary planks of their mobilization of the electorate.

Also, the ethnic factor was aided by the initial controversy emanating from the motion for political independence for Nigeria in 1956 moved by Anthony Enahoro in the federal legislature in 1953. Predictably the Northerners reacted to this motion as a move by the Southerners then in command of crucial sectors of national life to railroad them into independence and eventual domination. The controversy generated by the Enahoro motion and the fears of the minorities then engendered a conscious bid by different groups to protect their own primary interests in the emergent Nigeria nation. The patriotic spirit that marked the nationalistic struggle of 1940s and early 1950s soon gave way to deepening ethno-nationalism and primordial politics. Against the above background, the politics and political parties of the First Republic were products of narrow ethnic groups' calculation. In fact, each political party that emerged then was the front of a particular ethnic group, whether minority or majority ethnic group. As a result, the elections were determined by ethnic factors and the victorious Nigeria Peoples Congress (NPC) was the party of the largest ethnic group-the Hausa Fulani. But while petty, ethnic and primary social factors can form formidable forces in the formative stages of a political party aspiring for national office, the sustenance of such a party can hardly be built on these factors. Therefore, the First Republic collapsed soon enough and landed Nigeria eventually into a civil war and the most trying period in its existence as a nation state.

In spite of the emergence from the brink of national collapse due largely to the ethnicization of the politics of the First Republic, the Second Republic politicians also proved adamant to the lessons of history. The Second Republic politics as Joseph (1987) has shown most vividly was played on the ethnic plank which also led to its demise. The voting patterns in the elections revealed that voters' choice was a product of the ethnic affiliation of the candidate and more crucially the known ethnic base of his party. This fact was clearly demonstrated in the 1979 presidential elections in which each ethnic group voted for the candidate it identified as its own son as it were.

Even though Alhaji Shehu Shagari was pronounced President based on the interpretation of the constitutional provision that such a candidate must have the highest number of votes cast and not less than one-quarter of votes cast in at least two-thirds of all the states of the Federation, to mean 12? of the 19 states then existing and not necessarily 13 as vigorously promoted by the supporters of the late Obafemi Awolowo who came second, it generated a great controversy that further worsened the ethnic cleavage. The end products of this situation were the escalation of ethno-religious conflicts (Elaigwu, 1993), the polarization of the political parties and a general winner-takes-all mentality of the victorious

National Party of Nigeria (NPN). These factors alongside the prebendalization of state power in Nigeria's Second republic according to Josph(1983, 1991) predictably led to the demise of the Second Republic in the form of a military coup.

In spite the military's involvement in the prolonged democracy dilemma in Nigeria, it supervised one of the freest, fairest and de-ethnicized elections in the history of Nigeria. This was the June 12, 1993 presidential elections that would have ushered in the third republic which was aborted due to intransigence of the Nigerian military under General Ibrahim Babangida. The June 12, election is significant not just because of the crisis following its annulment but in the sense that it was a clear watershed in the history of politics and elections in Nigeria. Hence, for the first time in Nigeria's socio-political history, a political contestant succeeded in bridging the ethnic gaps in the country. Moshood Abiola who won the elections garnered formidable support to defeat his opponent even in the Hausa-Fulani political bastion-Kano as well as among the other major ethnic groups and a lot of the minority ethnic groups in spite of the fact that he was a Yoruba.

However, the progress that this victory meant to Nigeria's nationhood project was truncated by apparent ethnic considerations. To this end, the eventual annulment of that elections and the campaign of power shift to the south it implied has been seen as more or less ethnically motivated (Idowu, 1999; Abubakar, 1997). The annulment generated intense ethnic, populist and regional antipathy particularly in the south west. The total rejection of the decision of the Babangida junta to over-rule the popular decision of the people by the citizens of Nigeria led to enormous crises culminating in the stepping-aside of Babangida and handed over government to Interim National Government(ING) under the leadership of Chief Ernest Shonekan.

However, about three month into the life of the administration, the military led by General Sani Abacha toppled the Government and installed himself as the Head of State in November, 1993. The military was in power, supervised the transition to democracy and handed over to democratically elected government headed by President Olusegun Obasanjo in May 29th, 1999, marked the beginning of the Fourth Republic Democratic Politics in Nigeria.

Resurgence of Ethno Nationalism in the Fourth Republic Democratic Politics

The argument of concluding paragraph in the foregoing section implies that the 1999 elections which saw Obasanjo's emergence as President profited a lot from the general indignation over June, 12 and the resolve of the political class to allow a power shift to the South. In the presidential election Olusegun Obasanjo cashing in on the sympathy factor created by the demise of Moshood Abiola in military gaol and the support of the Hausa-Fulani military establishment coasted to easy victory in an election that for the very first time in Nigeria's history was between two contestants from the southwest. The above confirms the fact that the politicians had an informal agreement which was in tune with the pulse of public opinion then that the presidency should be conceded to the south in a power shift arrangement. The victory of Obasanjo in 1999 was the product of the above factors and the need to compensate the late Abiola's kinsmen-the Yoruba rather than a clear manifestation of the popularity of Obasanjo's candidature or the acceptance of his party's programme (Anugwom, 2003). Given the above realities, ethnicity was not really de-emphasized but rather emphasized in an ironic sense and utilized in a positive way for the first time in Nigeria's political history.

But by 2003, the mood in the country had changed especially in the political and even beyond. In the first instance was a growing dissatisfaction with the government which even though came in with a lot of goodwill and public support was performing below average in terms of improving the quality of life of the people. Secondly, the ethnic conflict situation remained unabated. Even though there was a lull between late 2002 and 2003, the lull was predictably broken in February, 2003 when the Itsekiri and Urhobos in the oil rich city of Warri in South-south Nigeria clashed. The clash which lasted over 40 days

consumed the lives of an estimated 40 people. The clash was basically triggered by political factors. The two ethnic groups went to war over the number of electoral wards to be used in one of the political parties' primary elections in the state. But even before this clash just before the elections, ethnic conflicts had blossomed in the country between late 2001 and 2002 as a result of the contest over political and economic resources. In the views of Ajayi (2002:8) from one end of the country to another are ethnic conflicts and 'un-abating gory tales of needless loss of human lives and material possessions all the way. Some of the prominent ethnic conflicts in the 2001-2002 period include the Kaduna ethno-religious conflict 2001; the ethnic clashes in Jos, 2001; the Odua Peoples' Congress/Hausa-Fulani ethnic conflict in Lagos, 2002; the Tiv-Jukun conflict of 2001 in which high ranking government officials were implicated. In fact, it is estimated that in the three years between 1999 and 2002, there were over 50 ethnic conflicts in Nigeria and a loss of 25,000 lives and property worth billions(the Guardian, Oct, 22, 2001; Vanguard, Sept. 16 and October 11, 2001; the Post Express, Nov. 2, 2001). These ethnic conflagrations and the perceived role of the state in them seem to raise questions regarding the impact of democracy on the ethnicity problem in Nigeria. Apparently the space which democracy creates in the political arena has given impetus to the resurgence of ethnic identities as well as the usage of these identities as crucial planks for political aspirations.

Another factor was the upsurge in the perception of marginalization of ethnic groups in the political and government processes. Fears and feelings of marginalization have been expressed by different ethnic groups in the country (Anugwom, 2000). This is politically a worrisome development when one notes that as succinctly described by Adedeji (1999) internal marginalization is caused by the mismanagement of the economy and the pursuit of a development paradigm that polarizes the different social and economic groups in the society. In this sense, different ethnic groups have seen political power and the control of the state at the centre as the panacea for dealing with marginalization. This perception raises the electoral stakes and reinforces the tendency towards a centrifugal nationalism.

A combination of the foregoing factors in combination heated-up the political system as it were. In the charged atmosphere of the period and the quest of the parties to outdo each other, the ethnic factor resurfaced. The play of ethnicity was very prominent in the contest for the office of Presidency and amongst the big political parties. The early signal of the Hausa-Fulani's interest in the office of president meant the collapse of the power shift arrangement. Expectedly the activities of the political parties and the antics of the politicians themselves gave rise to ethnic consciousness among the people.

In this instance, the political parties saw the ethnic plank as a worthwhile route to political power. Unsurprisingly, the three big parties in the run-down to the 2003 elections acted in ways boldly suggestive of the ethnic agenda. In this case, it is now a common feeling among political observers and even politicians themselves that the failure of the AD to field a presidential candidate for the election was borne out of ethnic considerations. It stands to reason that since the incumbent president then from the PDP was a Yoruba and the AD the only party then with significant following in the Yoruba South-West, the AD in openly declaring support for the re-election of the incumbent president was only acting out an ethnic script. In other words, the AD was acutely aware of the fact that even though the PDP has a very significant national spread without any serious presence then in Yoruba land, it apparently remains the only avenue to realise the aspiration of the Yoruba ethnic group at the national level. Against this realization, the AD rallied voters in the South-West zone to vote massively for the PDP candidate, a Yoruba. The voters did not disappoint. They even went a step further to vote for the PDP in other elections. Therefore, the PDP took control of the South-West with the exception of Lagos still in control of the AD. This should represent a classical case of the boomerang of ethnic politics. Equally germane to ethnic consciousness was the antics of the ANPP. The party acted in ways suggestive of a deep-rooted religious and ethnic fundamentalism. In fact, this suspicion of fundamentalism was the strongest weapon used by the other parties to fight the election of an ANPP president. A situation not

really helped by the antecedents of the party's flag bearer Muhammadu Buhari; a former military leader and the key figure behind the coup by the military that led to the demise of the Second Republic. Incidentally, also the ANPP has its stronghold in the core Islamic Sharia states in the North. True to expectations the ANPP took control of these states (Kano, Katsina, Zamfara, Sokoto) during the elections but lost the presidential elections to Olusegun Obasanjo who was re-elected and had the massive support of his kinsmen unlike in 1999 when the Yoruba rejected his candidature and voted for Olu Falae. It is obvious that the ethnic consciousness aroused prior to the elections and the over-heated political system made the Yoruba to support Obasanjo in order to ensure that the presidency remains in that ethnic group.

CONCLUSION

It has become apparent that ethnic factor has been a prominent feature in elections in post-colonial Nigeria. Available evidences in this paper have portrays, elections are often made a contest between ethnic groups and the primary group orientation of the contestants becomes a crucial element in electoral fortunes. Even though, logic and the wisdom of hindsight would suggest that politicians in Nigeria with a notable history of mediocre performance see the ethnic factor as an attractive selling point. Therefore, ethnic factor and primordial considerations in Nigeria Politics have come into play and over-shadow the more important issues of performance, antecedents and service. The ethno nationalistic factors constitute impediments to the evolvement of a decent and sustainable democratic culture in Nigeria. As a result, until politicians and the electorate alike come to terms with the evils of primacy of primordial factors in democracy, the political culture of ethno nationalism which oils the culture of non-performance and most times instigate crisis that poses security threat will continue in Nigeria.

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