AIPGG Journal of Humanities and Peace Studies Vol. 4. NO 1.2023
ISSN: 2756-5831 (ONLINE)

Nigeria's Federal character system, politics of corruption and wasted years of military governance (1983 – 1993)

Effiong Ekpo
Department of History and International Studies
Ritman University, Ikot Ekpene,
Akwa Ibom State

Abstract:

The chronological patterns of challenges, designing and implementing of Nigeria Federal character system, politics of corruption and wasted years of military governance 1983 – 1993 is what this paper is set to examined. It prevailing political development existed in the country at this period would be x-rayed as well as the manifestation of ethnic politics, which had become an essential characteristic of Nigerian politics. The paper is set to evaluate the effects and nature of federal character in regards to the appointments, promotions and retrenchment, admission and scholarships, contracts award, sitting of project, agriculture, industrial academic and research institution. The paper seeks to understand the perennial nature of the cleavages that the Nigerian constitutions right from the colonial era. The equity in representation of sections of the country in the scheme of things will also be examined. The paper viewed on the application of federal character in military and civil governance, political corruption in Nigeria, its nature, volume and dimensions, it traced and considered as major challenged of implementing Nigeria Federal character system. The paper concludes that, the principles of federal character were also extended to the army up to the time of independence in 1960. The paper adopted the empirical method of contacting texts and relevant journals. The paper instead opined that, it is because of the perennial nature of the cleavages that the Nigerian Constitutions right from the colonial era came to identity the nation of equity in representation of sections of the country in the scheme of things; and so-called economic dominance of the south was not acquired on a platter of gold; but through personal and communal struggle as against northern political hegemony, which resulted from the over favouritism of the colonial administration. The enthusiasm for Federal character appears to be waning because of its extension to an aspect of the nation's life.

Keywords: Wasted years, Corruptions, Military Governance, Action group, Federal Character, Nigerianization.

Introduction

The account to understand fully the reason(s) for the adoption of the principle of Federal character in Nigerian, it is necessary to understand the politics of regionalization of the civil service in 1954 and the prevailing political development existed in the country at this period. This was the period when

ISSN: 2756-5831 (ONLINE)

ethnic politics manifested fully in Nigeria. During this period, E. Ikoli and S. A. Akinsanya were rivals, as a result of the bitter competition between them for nomination by the Nigerian youth movement to contest the seat to the legislative council, left vacant by the resignation of Dr. Kotovorola Abayomi, who was proceeding to Britain for further studies. This crisis split the Nigerian youth movement into two camps. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and all the Igbo members of the party who supported Akinsanyan resigned from the party.[1]

During this period, the existence of two important political parties, the Action Group and the Northern Peoples' Congress, were practically a manifestation of the ethnic politics, which had become an essential characteristics of Nigerian politics. For example, the Action Group confined its activities to the Old Western Nigeria to be able to achieve desired success for the survival of the party – just like what alliance for Democracy (AD) was doing in Nigeria Political Theatre. The northern peoples' congress was essentially a northern party, as expressed in its motto, "One north, One People, Irrespective of Rank, Religion or Tribe.

The membership of the party was equally limited to northerners and the reason for this parochial tendency was because the region was not exposed to the western world early enough and as a result, when western economic forces and ideas finally made their inroad into the north, there were important obstacle which made their impacts less significant than it had been in the south. One the major reasons were the "Divide and Rule" tactic of the colonial Government in Nigeria. For instance, the desire to ensure the continuation of the indirect rule system, which was a complete failure in the Eastern Region, but recorded partial success in the Western Region, led the British officials, in the North to highly restrict the inroads of western civilization into the Northern Region.[2]

Hence, the missionaries, who were the education bearing agents, were restricted in their activities in the North, and worse still, the colonial administration made little effort to provide sound education. Such education that existed was geared towards serving the needs of the Native Administration. The resultant effect of this was that the Northern Region legged behind the South both in western education and in material and political development, and this equally accounted for the lateness of the emergence of national consciousness in the Northern Region.

When it became obvious in 1951 that the British Colonial administration had begin the policy of gradual handing over power to Nigerian, it was clear then to the northerners that unless they organised themselves politically, they were going to be at a disadvantage vis-a-vis their southern counterparts when independence should have been won. It was because of the above, that they

[1]. Victor B. E. Abia, The Principle of Federal character in Nigeria, Lagos, Concept Publication, press. 2002, pp.16-21

[2]. Olusenya, G. O., the Evolution of Nigerian Civil Service (1951 – 1960), Lagos: University of Lagos. 1975, p.31

became so suspicious of the south, and its possible dominance of the country, hence it was feared that should southerners be admitted into the NPE, they might, out of sheer political sophistication, dominate it. This also explains why, while the southerners were pressing for a rapid political development, the northerners, aware of their disadvantaged position, advocated the policy of gradualism.[3]

In fact, it was very outstanding, as a result of the nature of the crisis experienced during this period that the 1951 Macpherson constitution was too tightly knit for a multi-ethnic country like Nigeria. Accordingly, the new constitution, the Littleton Constitution established a true Federal structure of government of Nigeria under which the regionalization of the civil service, which the north had been advocating, was achieved. Under the new constitution, the public service was split into four separate services; the control of the public service in the federation was vested in the governor - General and that of the region in the governors: A federal public service commission and regional public service commission were gradually established.[4]

Though a break-up of the United Service into four was as a result of the northern fear of southern domination, the regionalization of the civil service had a great impact on the Nigerianization of that service in the western and eastern Regions. It speeded up the implementation of that policy in these two regions, while it became more difficult in the north and at the centre.

The man instruments for achieving Nigerianization of the service both in the western and eastern regions were the regional scholarships introduced in 1952 aimed at producing men to fill vacancies in the public services, and the offices of the directors of recruitments. The centre and the northern region were of disadvantages position, because the centre lost some of the most competent Nigerian officers, such as chiefs, S. O. Adebo, J. O. Udoji, S. Ade, Ojo, N. U. Akpan and others to the new regional services of the west, north and east. The north was not ready to put into practice the Nigerianization policy because of its acute shortage of educated men, as the result of Lugard's policy of over-protecting the north against foreign influences and ideas.[5]

The Northern confronted with what it considered as immediate danger; the domination of its civil service by southern Nigerians, hurriedly established the institute of administration of 1957 to train northerners for administration. Accordingly, the northernization implementation committee was established in 1959. The only outstanding success recorded by this committee toward

[3] . Eleezer, D. J., Federalism is Decentralization. The draft from Authenticity, the Journal of Federalism. 1976, pp.46-58
[4] . Adamoleun, L. Politics and Administration in Nigeria, Ibadan, Spectrum Publication, 1986, 81 – 88.
[5] . Appadorai, A., The substance of Politics: New Delhi, Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1965, p.21

achieving northernization was that it treated in driving away many competent southerners, which eventually affected the efficiency of the administration.[6]

The failure of the northernization implementation committee to northernize its public service was expressed in the report of staffing and development of the public service of the northern region published in 1961. The report revealed that 25% of the established posts could not be filled and that this greatly affected the development programmes initiated. Of those filled the northerners only occupied 25% of the administrative post, 25% of the executive posts, less than 20% in the technical establishment and 5% of professional posts. In fact, the report stated that the degree of northernization that had been achieved had been accompanied by a lowering of standards and a decline in efficiency and that the chronic shortage of experienced staff, particularly in the administration was so problematic that the few experienced officers were under serious pressures. Thus, by 1960 when Nigeria achieved political independence, the northern regions public service was still a long way from northernization, and hence, could not do away with expatriate officers, and even recruited more to keep the service going. In 1957, the north which constituted 55% of Nigeria's population, supplied only 1% of the federal service manpower.[7]

In 1957, the year before the achievement of independence, a special committee was appointed to examine the progress made with Nigerianization of the public service and to make recommendations to the prime minister for accelerating the rate of Nigerianization. The committee in its report recommended that as from October 1, 1960 or very soon thereafter, certain posts in the civil service must be occupied by Nigerians with relevant qualifications and experience. In reaction the report of the committee, and aware of its acute shortage of available manpower, Northerners demanded that fixed quotas of senior posts in the Federal Public Service be reserved for northerners. Though this was rejected by the committee, because keeping many posts vacant until northerners became available to fill them would slow down the process of Nigerianization, that consistent demand later gave birth to the Formal Institutionalization of the Federal character.[8]

Nature of Federal Character in Nigeria

For decades after independence, Nigeria still battles with UN of the major fallouts of Federalism, the politics of trying to appease all actions of the policy. This has become necessary because access to national positions and resources are limited to the individual level. This is partly due to the multi-ethnic nature of most societies. In 1971, only twelve (12) out of the world's 132 independent states were ethnically homogeneous; while some states' constitutions take

[6] . Coleman, J., Nigeria: Background to Nationalism. California, Free Press. 1958, p.15
[7] . Dahl, R. A., Democracy in the United States: Promise and Performance. Chicago: Rand McNally and Co. 1970, pp.15 - 21
[8] . Victor, B. E. Abia, The Military in the Political development of new nations: an essay in comparative Analysis: Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002, pp.32 - 37

cognizance of ethnic identities and aspirations, others recognize and provide for their needs and control the consequences of their plural nature.

In Africa such countries include Kenya, Ghana, Guinea and Nigeria. In Nigeria, this is done through the Federal character principle. Operationally, Federal character connotes the policy of equity in representation of all sections of the country in Government bureaucracies. This principle is applicable in Federal appointments and promotions and retrenchment, admission and scholarships, contract award, sitting of projects, agriculture, industrial academic and research institutions, the army, sports and especially football, the most highly prized. Federalism, on the other hand, connotes existence of two levels of Government each constitutionally or judicially empowered to make rules and regulations independent of each other within the legislative sphere assigned to it. This form of Government is more suitable for societies with a complexity of diversities viz ethic; linguistic, cultural, racial, religious etc as well as other cleavages which are territorically defined.[9]

In the same vein, the nature of diversities helps in a nation's decision to adopt "aggregate or disaggregative" type of Federalism. Nigeria falls into the latter because of the wide diversities, under this type; there exists a balkanisation of formerly unitary states of near disintegration and its diversities, which progresses to state. This is necessitated if its continuance could only be guaranteed with a necessary split into its original elements. Thus, from 1914 through 1946, 1963, 1967, 1976 and 1987 the Nigerian Federation experienced a great deal of split. The demand for state creation increased during the second republic (1979 – 1983) due to lack of proper attention to all sections of such communities, and such inequality could only be corrected if states are further divided. In 1976, when the late General Murtala Mohammed was creating additional seven states, he stated that the demand for states had been on the increase because of poor leadership. And such poor leadership result from deficiency in satisfying all sections of the community. A disaggregative Federation is therefore a reconciliation mid-point between the polar perils of emporium and anarchy.[10]

With this situation, it became necessary for both the centre and the units of carry out administration that take full cognisance of the heterogeneity of its policy. Accounting for this is the fact that most section suffers or dominate the other sections combined, otherwise it will lead to a situation of perpetual denial and domination. The irony is that the political dominance they have acquired, has added unto their economic hegemony. And the so-called economic dominance of the south was not acquired on a platter of gold, but through personal and communal struggle as against northern political hegemony; they

[9] . Olusenya, G. O., 'Unitarianism, Liberty and representative governance: London: Aldiue Press, 1997. P.15

[10] . Elaigwu J. L., The military and state building: Federal – state relations in Nigeria's military federalism, 1966 – 1976: In B. Akinyemi P. D Coce and Ofonago (eds), Readings of Federalism, Lagos: MIA 1976, pp.53-58.

resulted from the over favouritism of the colonial administration. The source of this southern economic power however came from early exposure to western education but to which the northerners kicked against in favour of Islamic education. [11]

It is because of the perennial nature of the cleavages that the Nigerian constitutions right from the colonial era came to identify the nation of equity in representation of sections of the country in the scheme of things. But we are considering the entrenchment of the Federal character principle in the 1979 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It is because of the perennial nature of the cleavage as well as he tactics of dodging a solution to a complex problem that the military president Ibrahim Babangida told the constituent Assembly members on May 11, 1988, during their swearing-in at Abuja, that the Federal character principle is an escapist approach and has also shown that the principle has a lot of damaging effect on our polity. That our constitutions have recognized the principle that could be traced from Richardson period when in his 1946 constitution, he had, among his objectives, the need to cover the whole of Nigeria and the legislative council, in which all sections of Nigeria would be adequately represented. Out of the 24 members in the legislative council, 9 represented the north, the east 5, the West 4, while Lagos had 1, and under the Macpherson constitution there were 136 members comprising 68 (North) 34 East, 34 West, with 4 ministers each from the regions. The Littleton constitution of 1954, which formally established a real Federation of Nigeria with its regionalization of marketing boards and the civil service, gave the north the lion share of 92, the west and east 42, southern Cameroon and Lagos 2. At the ministerial level, there were 3 each. Thus, prior to independence, the issue of Federal character had been conventionally introduced into the Nigerian constitutional history.[12]

The principle of Federal character was also extended to the army up to the time of independence, in 1960; not very many took the army seriously as a unit of resource sharing. Moreover, people felt that enlisting in the army was a sign of failure in life as well as a last resort for survival because jobs were available in the far north, not very many of them enlisted in the army initially. This was to be corrected later by the emirs who encouraged all male children to enlist in the army. On the other hand, the middle belt and Igbos were more in number in the military and later being the result of over-population in their area and the lack of opportunities the former group, of course, became the core of what later became known as "Langtang mafia". However, during the pre-independence deliberation between 1957 and 1958, the northern political leaders began to perceive and appreciate the political efficiency of the military in Nigeria's Future politics".

---

[11] . Eleazzer, B. J. changing patterns of military Politics: New York: free press, 1976. Pp.53058.

[12] . Adamolekum, S. A., An Introduction to Nigerian Government and Politics, Lagos: Macmillan, 1986, p.5.

Eventually, they demanded 50% for the south and 25% each for the two regions. The formal implementation of this policy came in 1962 during the Nigerianization of the army. When the Midwest was created in 1963, the west had 21% and the Midwest 4%. Thus by 1966, when the first coup took place, the Igbos controlled the upper echelon of the armed forces, while the northerners were at the bottom of the ladder. It was this situation that gave the easterners the opportunity for the coup. And the counter-coup of July 1966 was revenge over the elimination of northern politicians and military officers that went with the January 15, 1966 putsch. [13]

Application of federal character in miliary and civil governance

The politics of Federal character continued vigorously under the military, against a supreme military council (SMC) decision, the late major General Aguiji Ironsi promoted 21 officers to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel with eighteen of them were Igbos. When in may 1966, Ironsi came up with unification of the public service as a follow-up to his unification decree; the north saw the move as another attempt at southern domination. Eventually, the then military Governor of the northern Region came up with something in a more subtle manner. According to him, he acceded to the practice of meritocracy, but if it were to be followed rigidly, certain parts of the country that were educationally backward would suffer.

He however assured his people that the unification of the civil service would be pursued to recognise the need of the backward areas. Thus, both the persons in power as well as policies were analyzed on the basis of area of origin. In that style, objectivity is almost removed from the analysis. However, the Hausa Fulani group planned and toppled Ironsi. The consequences were a chain of reactions from the Igbos, who had wanted to avenge the blood of their tribesmen. Although the demand shifted to an alternative as head of state (Brigadier Ogundipe) from the Yorubas, though on merit, some felt it was the same design of seeking or a southerner. Infact, it should be added that, this was the period the so-called "Kaduna-maffia" emerged, a group that tried to influence positions as well as policies to the advantage of the north.[14]

With Gowon mounting the saddle of leadership, emphasis shifted from regions to states. Thus, the east central state-man did not feel represented if only the man from the south-eastern state was appointed. With the 19-state structure of Gen. Murtala Mohammed, the Ondo State man would query why appointment was made from Oyo State alone. Also, the North-South dichotomy was to die off, but the manner the northern political leaders manipulated Federal appointments had to reawaken the old rivalry; and so, even Kwara and Benue states that claimed to be in the south were still grouped with the North. However, they preferred to be called the Middle Belt. Although Gowon hailed

[13]. Appadora, G. Z., The Nigerian military: A sociological analysis of authority and revolt, (1960 - 1967), London: Cambridge University, 1965, pp.28 – 33.
[14] . Coleman, J. Nigerian: Background to Nationalism: California, Free Press. 1958, p.34.

from the minority area of the north, there was northern preponderance both in the SMC and the Federal Executive Council in his cabinet.

Under his regime, it was recorded that a northerner complained openly why Gowon was still concentrating projects and activities in the South, especially Lagos while the complaint was briefly detained for this vociferous act, Gowon was to change gear later. And of course, one could reason why Festac '77' activities were spread between Lagos and Kaduna – dispite the distance and its implications for proper co-ordination.[15]

From 1975 to 1979, the north still maintained its dominances with the assassination of Murtala Mohammed, General Obasanjo (rtd) by virtue of his position as second-in-command, was subsequently asked to assume the leadership. To balance the stake, Shehu Yar'Adua was rapidly promoted to take up the office of the chief of staff, supreme Headquarters. Although there were other northerners qualified for the position, preference was for the Hausa-Fulani man to maintain a real balance. Eventually, Obasanjo gave him so much power; just like when a northerner was head of state Obasanjo also witnessed the supremacy of the North in the SMC and the Federal Executive Council. There were 15 northerners in the SMC as against 8 Southerners.

The enthusiasm for Federal character appears to be waning because of its extension to an aspect of the nation's life, notably admission to the university. Those who question this extension believe it is unfair to subject education to the quota policy because it remains an instrument for upward social probability in an essentially peasant society. But, to the proponents, if upward social mobility is depended on in education, then the Government must design a policy that will control any imbalance, since the Government is meant for the whole society. Thus, more universities came into existence under the Obasanjo and Shagari administration with majority of them in the north. [16]

Section 14(3) of the 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria formally institutionalised by Federal character principle it states, "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 a manner as to reflect the Federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also to command national unity, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few persons from state or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that Government or any of its agencies".

As a follow up, section 135(3) further stated that in the appointment of ministers, the president shall reflect the Federal character of Nigeria" provided that in giving effect to the provision aforesaid, the president shall appoint at

[15] . Ellah, F. J., Nigeria and State creation based on "The unfinished Motion" Port Harcourt: Chief J. W. Ellah Sons and Company Ltd. 1983, pp.18 – 21.
[16] . Obikeze S. O., Federalism and National Integration in Nigeria, Onitsha: Book point Ltd. 2004. P.9.

ISSN: 2756-5831 (ONLINE)

least one minister from each state, who shall be an indigene of such state", section 157 further provides that appointment by the president into the offices of the Civil Service of the Federation, head of the Civil Service of the Federation; ambassador, high commissioner or other principal representative abroad, permanent secretary or other chief executive in any ministry or departments of the Federal Government, and any offices in Nigeria should be the need to promote national unity. Section 197 (2) further states that appointments into key positions of the Federation, shall reflect the Federal character of Nigeria.

To many Nigerians, those who initiated the idea of Federal character as a national policy were true patriots. Many also agree that such proponents were guided by our historical experiences and the reality of the Nigerian situation, and they rightly saw the need to nurture a sense of belonging among all Nigerians. However, the practice has for good or evil, become the most contentious issue facing the nation. Many have come to see it bad and good aspects, especially when it tends to toy with merit. Thus, there is the evolution of a sinister plot by one section of the country to dominate the others. While many still see the policy in its true perspective in forging nation unity, others have become less enthusiastic about it, seeing it as a policy that has some awry. Consider for the sake of analysis the Shagari period.[17]

Under the Shagari administration (1979 – 1983), the north had a lion share of the ministerial appointments of 23 with 3 advisers; the south had 18 ministers, and 7 advisers respectively. Of these, Igbos had 5 ministers and 3 advisers while the Yorubas had 6 and 3 respectively. The ministry tribes in the south had 7 ministers and one adviser out of a total southern figure of 18 and 7. If the posts of the president and secretary to the vice-president and speaker of the House of Representatives are added to the Igbo, it will record 10 and the minority will have 9, if the post of senate president is added. Apart from the domineering status of the north, most of the sensitive posts such as: mines manpower, commerce, especially issuing of import licences, steel development, transport and aviation, were given to the northerners.

Secondly, northerners were also appointed as advisers to sensitive, ministries like petroleum and energy, while less sensitive posts were given to southerners. Despite this, it appears some northerners were further appointed as checks in their southern counterparts. Otherwise, why did Shagari appointed Alhaji S. Tokuma, the ten NPN secretaries along with Dr. Okadigbo and Professor G. O. Odenigwe as political advisers? It seems a sheer waste of resources. The same occurred with those ministers having portfolio, hence the creation of the position of minister of state. [18]

[17] . Dudley, B. J. Instability and Political Order, Politics and Crisis in Nigeria: Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1973. P.38

[18] . Huntington, S. . The Soldier and the State: The theory and politics of civil military relations, New York: Vintage Books: 1957, p.12.

ISSN: 2756-5831 (ONLINE)

From the above, Federal character seems to have taken other factors into cognisance, such as religion and population, and during the Shagari period, every aspect of the nation's life was politicalized. Even to Nigerians, it was during this period that we witnessed, for the first time, the use of Federal character in selection into the National Football Team. Although it was not made a policy, some of the whole wrangling that ensured made the public to see the whole affairs as such.

Under Buhari, there were 12 northerners in the SMC and six were from the south, out of which three represented the minorities. Babangida, on his part, increased the membership of the AFRC to include all sections, but the north still maintained its supremacy. However, its wide nature was to cater for loyalists in the coup. States like Ondo, Bauchi and Kwara, which were not represented initially, had representation in different forms when Babangida was informed. The same picture could be seen from the Federal Executive Council. Under Buhari, the north had 10 members while the south had 8 out of which two represented the ministries .[19]

The same supremacy prevails in Babangida's administration. Another thing to be noted again is that, the sensitive posts: such as defence, education, mines and power, customs, internal affairs, agriculture works and transport, petroleum etc usually went to the north, horse still, in his cabinet reshuffle, Babangida gave the petroleum ministry to the northerners as a position which most Nigerians thought should remain in the oil producing states, for they are likely to understand the problems of their areas more than others. What the president seemed to have done was to use the ministry to the advantage of the north similar to what obtained during the Obadsanjo regime when General Buhari controlled the ministry and there was brouhaha over an alleged fraud of N2.8billion. We are also aware of the happenings in the ministry of Education – the emphasis on normadic education without a complementary riverrine education.

Taking a critical look at the Governorship appointment, we notice again northern supremacy. Out of 21 military Governors, the north controlled 13 states while the south had 14. The minister for the Federal Capita Territory, Abuja had been for the most part been a northerner. And since the adoption of the practice of not sending military Governors to their states of origin, Bendel State, as a case in point, has constantly been controlled by northerners: for example, Hussani Abdullahi, Waziri, Useni and Inienger, if the above practices had been on merit. Bendelites would perhaps have preferred a southerner.[20]

[19] . Ikime, O. (ed), Groundwork of Nigerian History. Ibadan: University Press. 1980, pp.52-29

[20]. Dudley, B. J., An Introduction to Nigerian Government and Politics. London: Macmillan Press. 1982, p.34

ISSN: 2756-5831 (ONLINE)

Political corruption in Nigeria

Corruption in all societies is as old as man. It is therefore common in all countries, irrespective of their stages of development. However, its nature, volume, and dimensions differ largely from country to country and from one environment to another. Naturally, Nigeria is not free from the evil of political and bureaucratic corruption. In Nigeria, however, corruption has become a social phenomenon. It is widespread and is increasing at an alarming pace. There is hardly any area of activity that has remained wholly free from the impact of corruption. In fact, corruption seems to have been institutionalized and has virtually become a commonly accepted way of life. Bribery, and gratification are no longer frowned upon, and even subtle ways have been devised to legitimize them as a part of normal life activities. In short, societal ethos has ceased to regard these vices as a crime any longer.

Until recently, it was pragmatically difficult for a majority of people to distinguish between political and administrative corruption. However, a close study of the dimensions of political corruption, particularly in Nigeria, will show that people are quite familiar with the following events and development. The acquisition through fraudulent and illegal means of large parcels of land by senior government officials and political leaders using their position, e.g. the Osborne Land issue; the abuse and exploitation of official positions to enrich themselves directly or indirectly by using their relations as proxies; granting of favours to members of one's ethnic group by overriding the due procedure, and overlooking the claims of others by suing favoured officials as instruments; the use of one's political position to abuse the judicial process; wrong application of Governmental machinery for party purposes'; launching enterprises with government support and thereby enriching oneself; doing business with government in the name of firms owned by public servants but nominally managed by their wives; use of public funds held by statutory bodies to bolsters one's business concerns and using such ill-gotten wealth to finance social functions; misappropriation of public funds or the inability of governments to render accounts for public expenditure etc. [21]

Political corruption is of a wide range, multi-dimensional nature which distinguishes it from others. Generally observed, political corruption, money enters as a secondary factor in the anatomy of corruption. Hence, political influence is pressed into service in order to please the political bosses to earn promotion. Political corruption implies corruption in the political life of a nation at all levels. In its broader perspective, it seeks to politicise every aspect of life, and in its narrower sense, legitimises unholy political actions for benefiting vested interest, whether personalised or institutional.

Political corruption has specific norms and goals' own its structure and manifests particular patterns of behaviour which are much different from other

[21] . Macpherson, C. B., Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval. Oxford: University Press. 1973, p.19

types of corruption, such as social, economic, legal, though it may look identical with them in some of its aspects.

The study of political corruption is of utmost value in the Nigerian context, as other types of corruption have emanated from it. Politics, being the game of power, corrupt practices are observable at all levels of the power hierarchy. Political corruption becomes so rampant in Nigeria because the masses in General are illiterate and poverty-stricken. The root of political corruption in Nigeria, just like in other developing countries lies in the colonial order or native tyrannical rule from which such countries have emerged as independent democratic states. In the colonial era, the government was carried on by aliens, and the native people developed an attitude of irresponsibility and felt obliged to thwart government effort in every possible way, including cheating and engaging in other corruption practices. The cheating of aliens in government came to be seen as a patriotic attitude. Thus, political corruption has made an easy inroad in such societies which became suddenly democratic from a feudal authoritarian background without imbibing moral, social and economic values which could have formed the bulwark against political deprivation.[22]

In successive military administrations from General Mohammadu Buhari (1983) to General Abdulsalami Abubakar (1999), the government had used public resources for private gain. If anything, this picture has grown in scope. After a brief stocktaking of the magnitude of corruption at all levels in Nigeria, It is observed that this cankerworm has virtually destroyed the country's fabric in its entirety. From top to bottom, leader to messenger, cutting across sectors, gender and religion, in virtually every organisation of governments, such as central, state or local, the vast majority of public officials in this country have become corrupt.[23]

Wasted years of military governance, (1983 – 1999)

A look at the top will show that the leaders alone with their cabinet members often use brokers as fronts in almost every kind of illegal dealing, such as drug smuggling, arms dealing, contract killings etc. The damage being done to the nation's image and resources by the unscrupulous corrupt people, who have come to occupy almost every office of government, is incalculable and mind boggling. Apart from the corrupting influence that they have on society in general, even in strict economic terms, the loss being caused by the nation by the act of a few people at the top is grievous. Between 1983 and 1999 when the military became the dominant partner in public policy decision-making, more than 2.5 trillion of nation's funds had been reportedly looted into foreign

[22] . Odumosu, O. I., The Nigerian Constitution, History and Development. London: Sweet and Maxwell. 1963, pp.58-63.
[23] . Aguda, O. O., Understanding the Nigerian Constitution, 1999: Lagos: M. J. Professional Publishers, 2009, p.44.

personal account.[24] Some indices of economic development include, low inflation, optimum capacity utilization, full employment, a strong currency and expansion of the manufacturing sector. Others are, stable balance of payments, increased standard of living and sound business practices.

A critical look at Nigeria's economic performance under the military in the last 16 years of governance will instructively situate the above indices. In December 1983, according to data obtained from the federal office of statistics (FOS), inflation stood at 12 percent ten years later, in December, 1995, it rose steeply to 72.8 percent. In 1985, the amount returned on current account of Nigeria's balance of payment had a surplus of N1.109 billion. The following year 1986, it recorded a deficit of N763 million. According to the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN), industrial production has not exceeded 30 percent of capacity in few years later, except in the informal sector.[25]

According to the National Economic Intelligence Committee (NEIC), almost 10,000 projects were abandoned, with the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) viewing 4,000. A cursory look at budgetary projections through the period shows that recurrent and capital expenditure were in the proportion of 70 percent to 30 percent respectively, indicating that, over the years more money was spent on overhead cost and little on capital development. In 1984, one naira exchanged for $1.25. By May 1999 one dollar was exchanging for N103.85, of the various economic growth projections made, none was attained. During this period, Nigeria experienced an unproductive economy, a total collapse was inevitable. Budgets in Nigeria were mere statements of intension which are not strictly adhered to. Rather, specific areas of interest are selected for treatment, while the rest are allowed to totter. For instance, a sound budget must have built into it's a mechanism for implementation. The practice of preparing a budget to stop at one point and implementation to take over from another point creates a distortion and shows of lack of commitment.[26]

These highlights characterised the four military regimes that had ruled Nigeria since 1983. The Ajaokuta steel project, which the four succeeding military regimes within this period met, remained a pipedream despite being the subject of mind-boggling expenditure, especially under the late General Sani Abacha. Each regime jettisoned the policies of its predecessor and started a fresh with a new polices and personnel. Except for the Major-General Muhammad Buhari regime, though it was short, the rest were plagued by energy crisis, which found acute expression under General Abacha. The General Ibrahim Babangide regime in 1987 created the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), but this

[24] . Oyedirain, O. (ed), Nigerian Government and Politics under Military Rule 1966 – 1979. London: Macmillan Press. 1979, pp.5-9
[25] . Sklar, P. L., Nigerian Political Parties: Power in an Emergent African Nation. New York: Nok Publishers. 1963, p.18
[26] . Umezulike, I. A., Democracy beyond the third Republic. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing Co. Ltd. 1993, p.38

did not stop the four regimes from keeping millions of Nigerians in the unemployment market. With the exception of the Buhari regime the rest pledged to deregulate the economy and privatise unprofitable public enterprises, but none succeeded in achieving the latter. The summation was that, with each passing day, the economy deteriorated, with the attendant collapse of social and economic infrastructures. [27]

General Mohammadu Buhari Regime 1983 – 1985

The regime did not really enunciate an elaborate economic programme. It spent its 20 months in power trying to establish civil order, which had been grossly eroded by the rudderless" crusade led to the imprisonment of several formal public officials on charges of embezzlement of public funds and corrupt enrichment. Some officials bagged very long jail terms. Alhaji Barkin Zuwo, Chief Aper Aku, and Professor Ambrose Alli, former Governor of Kano Benue and Bendel States respectively, were believed to have died as a consequence of their imprisonment over corruption.[28]

While the regime instilled discipline at home, it also adopted a hard-line approach to external relations. It went into a face-off with Britain, one of Nigeria's creditors, and both countries expelled each other's high commissioners. Negotiation with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a two-billion-naira loan was stalled because the regime refused to devalue the naira, adopt import liberalization and reduce petroleum subsidies, as demanded by the stringent IMF conditionality's. The regime argued that the measures might worsen the political situation as Nigerians were already burdened by austerity measures imposed on them, while job losses would also be recorded. [29]

Ibrahim Babangida Regime (1985 – 1993)

Unlike the rest, General Ibrahim Babangida had a clear idea of what his economic policies would be, shortly after he supplanted General Buhari in office, he released the politicians incarcerated by the latter. That brought him some goodwill. Thereafter, he threw upon to all Nigerians a debate on whether to accept a loan from the IMF or not. Dr. Kalu Idika Kalu, finance minister, led the Government side while Dr. Ibrahim Ayagi, led the anti-loan group. The word "Conditionalities" introduced by the IMF subsequently gained notoriety in Nigeria.[30]

---

[27] . Tamuno, T. N. , "The Evolution of the Nigerian State. The Southern phase, 1900 – 1914. Lagos: Longman Press. 1972. Pp. 26-30.
[28] . David, R. The Federal Principle reconsidered: In A. Wildguski (ed), American Federalism in perspective, Boston: Little Brown, 1967, pp.13-18.
[29] . Tarlton, C. D., Symmetry and Asymmetry as Elements of Federalism: A Theoretical speculation, in the Journal of Politics. Vol.27, 1965.
[30] . Ayu, G. S., Reflection on Federalism and national Assembly politics in Nigeria: In J. I. Elaigwu, P. C. Logans and H. S. Galadima: Federalism and Nation Building in Nigeria: The Challenges of the 21st Century; Abuja,

Nonetheless, the regime adopted a structural adjustment programme (SAP) which equated the conditions demanded by the IMF, in the 1987 budget. Babangide denied that SAP was imposed on Nigeria by IMF but disclosed that the world body had endorsed the policy and therefore had begun facilitating the rescheduling of the country's external debt.

On monetary policies, the regime opened the flood gate of unprofessional banking. With a modest figure of 12 banks under the Buhari regime, the figure shot up to 61 in 1990. The nation's four refineries also became due to Turn-Around-Maintenance (TAM) in 1992, but funds were not released for this purpose. This prepared the ground for their collapse two years later. To bring the rural populace into the nation's economic web, the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI) was established in 1996. Part of its original objective was to build 90,000 kilometers roads, construct bore-holes in rural areas and assist farmers. [31]

However, due to ineffective feasibility studies and proper planning, most of the projects executive packed up shortly after commissioning. The first lady, Mrs. Maryam Babangida, also instituted the better life for Rural Women Scheme but, having no direction, it was easy for it to disappear from relevance. To the credit of the Babangida administration were such agencies as the National Directorate of Employment, Peoples bank of Nigeria and OMPADEC. However, the Fiscal Policies of regime, which bordered on imprudence, bank of Transparency and inconsistency always pitched it against public opinion. There were anti-SAP riots in 1989 and 1990, which broke out in many parts of the country over a speculation that General Babangida owned a watch factory in Switzerland. Recently, he denied through the BBC that Nigeria earned $12 billion from crude oil sales during the Gulf war. [32]

Millions of Nigerians still hold General Babangida accountable for Nigeria's subsisting economic constraints. His administration left a foreign exchange deficit and a huge debt burden. Proves a professional such as lecturers, doctors, and even footballers, left the shores of Nigeria in frustration. Many more became economic refugees. Besides, General Babangida canvassed for a restoration of SAP. The suggestion was largely ignored or denounced. The SAP, which he introduced as to last from July 1986 – June 1988, but throughout his eight-year rule, the policy remained inconclusive. [33]

National Council in Intergovernmental Relatioins, 1994, pp.19-33.

[31] . Finkle, L. Jason and Gamble, Richard, Political Development and Social Change, USA, Wiley and Sons publications. 1966, p.32

[32] . Eteng, L. A., Minority rights under Nigeria's Federal Structure, proceeding s of the Conference on constitutions and Federalism, held at the University of Lagos, Nigeria 23 – 27, April1996.

[33] . Mao Tse Tung, Six Essays on Military Affairs Foreign Languages. Press Peking. 1972, p.12

ISSN: 2756-5831 (ONLINE)

General Sani Abacha Regime (1993 – 1998)

General Abacha almost completely dismantled the economic edifice of his predecessor shortly after assuming office on November 17, 1993. From the outset, he adopted an outlook anchored on fiscal discipline and monetary control which the predecessor administration recklessly abused. Initially, his administration seemed credible as he assembled a team of tested technocrats, Chief Anthony Anis the finance minister, and Dr. Paul Agwuma, the CBN Governor, stood for complete deregulation of the economy while professor Aluko and the NUE which he headed, opposed deregulation. The resultant compromise was called "guided deregulation" and it proved effective inflation was held down while external loans were banned. The country's external reserved rose dramatically during this period.

General Abacha made his mark through monetary instrument. He established the petroleum (special) Trust Fund (PTF) in 1995 to rehabilitate the next was terrible infrastructure. The Value Added Tax (VAT) was introduced earlier in 1994 to raise the Government's revenue and curb unnecessary consumption. Port reforms were initiated in 1996 which sanitized the ports and plugged loopholes. The vision 2010 committee was set up to plot Nigeria's economic future. The banking sector was sanitised, including the liquidation of 31 distressed banks. A dual exchange rate was introduced which was however vigorously opposed, especially by manufacturers and end-users. General Abacha's wife, Mrs. Maryam Abacha, also inaugurated the family support programme (FSP) and the family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) and canvassed for a ministry of women affairs.[34]

General Adbusalami Abubakar Regime (1998 – 1999)

General Abubakar, until he became the head of state on June 9, 1998 never held any political office. He was set for retirement when fate took the life of General Abacha and made him head of State, Being unprepared, General Abubakar dithered on the economic front. Before a thorough scrutiny of the accounts and consultation with the various states, he announced a minimum wage of N5,200. When the facts became known, he reversed himself and came down to N2,500 for Federal employees and N3,000 for states workers.

In June 1998, General Abacha died. The naira exchanged for the dollar at N56. But under Abubakar, it rose to N103.38, it was claimed that General Abacha left a foreign reserve of eight billion dollars which was said to have quickly depleted to four million dollars, within nine months of General Abubakar's rule. The regime's top officials in their defence said that, just as General Abacha accumulated asserts, he also pile up an equal amount of liabilities. For instance, most of Nigeria's contribution to joint venture cash call was largely unredeemed. Monies for the TAM of Kaduna, Port Harcourt and Warri

[34] . Gable Richard, Constitutional Development in Nigeria: London: Cambridge University Press. 1981, pp.33 – 36.

refineries were also released. These were $250 million, $182 million and $55 million respectively. [35]

However, a sore point which trailed General Abubakar into retirement was the alleged recovery and handing back of funds from former public officials. Haruna Mohammed, then press secretary to Abubakar, had told an attentive nation that huge sums of money were recovered from Abacha family and two former ministers. A few weeks after Abubakar assumed the leadership of the country, about $50 million was reportedly discovered to be missing by the National Economic Intelligence Committee (NEIC), led by Professor Samuel Aluko. In the end, it was maintained that the missing amount was used to offer assistance to needy neighbouring African countries, as it is customary with every military junta. However, during his period several tribes overnight were made millionaires through inflated contracts, outright diversion of public funds, allocation of choice oil blocs and fraudulent allocations of money under the protest of officialdom.[36]

The most questionable aspect of Abubaka's regime was that, given its short life span, a lot of contracts regarded by people as spurious were approved and awarded. It was reported that the junta immediately gave approval for N60 billion to be spent by ministries in 26 days. Few days later, the first quarter deficit in the Federal budget was over N100 billion, which is 50% of the estimated deficit of N205 billion for the whole financial year.[37] Like it was the case under Abacha, Abubaka was solely responsible for giving approval for the award of major contracts in the petroleum, defence and other key sectors. As a result of this, oil blocs were shared out at Abubakar's discretion. There were high-level intrigues with regard to the award of the blocs, and it was reported that when some top brass in the military were not given any slots initially, they all protested and later acquired theirs with each oil bloc costing a non-refundable $20 million fee.[38]

In the area of contract, CBN headquarters building in Abuja was awarded for $158 million, about N15 billion, while that of the Defence Headquarters was put 24 billion. This contracts cost was criticised by defence experts who maintained that, the sum of N4 billion would have been enough. Again, another example which many people regarded as official agree and total misplacement of priority is the contract for the construction of the headquarters of the Nigeria Police Force in Abuja. This was allegedly estimated to cost between N10 and N15 billion. People wondered why such funds were being wasted on office headquarters. Another one was the construct for the renovation on the Eagle

[35] . Ezera Kalu, Constitutional Development in Nigeria. London: Cambridge University Press. 1985, p.42.
[36] . Okolie A. M, Fiscal Federalism and Conduct of Nigeria's external relations, 1960 – 2009, in Nigeria Journal of Politics and administration vol.2, No.1 January, 2009, p.8
[37] . Graham J. F., Fiscal adjustment in a Federal Country, in: R. Robertson (ed), Inter-Governmental Fiscal relationship, Toronto: Canada Tax Foundation, 1964, pp.12-15.
[38] . James, O. Ojiako, Nigeria: Yesterday, Today and Onitsha: African Educational Publishers. 1981, p.34

Square where the handover ceremony took place, which allegedly cost N2 billion. But experts who have witnessed the parade ground argued that it should not have cost more than N100 million.[39] Over the same period, a lot of money believed to have been salted away from the country was reportedly traced to the foreign private accounts of some key people under the past military regimes of General Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha. This stunning relation published by the Financial Times of London, 23 July 1999 was attributed to the World Bank. Such a publication was definitely bound to astound the generality of Nigerians at a time when the majority could not afford three square meals a day and life was getting tougher by the day.

There are many factors responsible for the high level of corruption in our public life, however, attention will be paid only to five easily identifiable ones, these include: Lack of Constitutional and Institutional accountability; Level of secrecy and confidentiality of public dealings, absence of right of recall and non-disclosure of assets and income by public officials, cost of running and election in Nigeria is very expensive to contest an election.[40]

Conclusion

The Principle of Federal character, at independence, this position became disturbing to the Northern Political leaders who were in the majority in the legislature, for they distrusted the civil service that was in the hands of the south. As would be expected, the NPC leaders, in a swift move, started to recruit northern civil servants, ranging from permanent secretaries, board chairmen to ambassadors, as career officers. Consequently, the nothernisation policy followed as regards admission into their institutions of higher learning. The principle of Federal character was also extended to the army up to the time of independence in 1960.

With this situation, it became necessary for both the Centre and the units of carry out administration that take five cognisance of the heterogeneity of its polity. Accounting for this is the fact that most sections suffer or dominate the other sections combined; otherwise it will lead to a situation of perpetual denial and domination. If, however, for the inept nature of the leadership this occurs, the unrepresented and dominated part are likely to feel alienated and this may possible cause instability.

It is pertinent to state here that, it is not within the scope of this paper to provide a full account of the dynamics of Federal Character in Nigeria. Those who question its extension to education and employment find it obnoxious that a Nigeria, who had managed to scale at the hurdles in education could still be made to contend with the vagaries of unemployment because the job that would

[39] . Weinev, M. (eds), Political Parties and Political Development. Jew Jersey: Princeton University Press. 1966, p.15
[40] . Oyedirain O. (ed), Nigerian Government and Politics under military Rule 1966 – 1979, London: Macmillan Press, pp.21-25

have been his had been reserved for another Nigerian ostensibly for redress a perceived imbalance that was not his making in the first place.

As is clearly perceived, the imbalance in manpower and composition of Federal Ministries, agencies and parastatals led to the formation of the FEC, but the manner in which the commission was being run far indicates that the attitude of the north to the problems of imbalance is at best perfunctory if not a deliberate act of sabotage. The northern oligarchy, which nominated Fika for the FEC job may have succeeded in actually preserving the status qua, the preponderance of the north at the expense of the rest of the country. Basically, the north was the first to express fear of domination in the geographical expression called Nigeria, and that was one of the major reasons why northerners opposed the motion for independence when it was first tabled and moved by Anthony Enacholo. The fear was that the south was too advanced and might easily swallow up their northern counterparts.

That was also why the Henry Williams Commission was established in 1958 to entertain issues pertaining to the minorities in the country. To allay their fears, the north has since political independence, begun to push for a far representation of all ethnic groups in Federal establishment. And it 1979, they finally succeeded in getting this enshrined in the nation's constitutions, as a directive policy in state.

This paper concluded that, since independence, Nigeria has had rulers from the north until 1999 when Olusegun Obasenjo was elected President. Until now, the principle of Federal character has been observed in breach of the law, giving one region the commanding height of Nigeria's life and resources. From the above and other instances, it is safe to conclude that Federal character is in principle and in theory, a political device, strategy and measure for correcting injustice, mistakes and wrongs of the past, as perpetuated by the divide-and-rule policy of the British colonial authority. But, in actual practice, it is seen as the best avenue by a particular region or group to avenge past wrongs, more or less as a sort of vengeance on the alleged favoured groups or regimes, which invariably end up replacing injustice with injustice. For instance, the north has, until 1999, retained the monopoly of some key ministries, strategic agencies and most significant Federal parastatals. The internal affairs ministry, Defence and minces and power are reserved for the northerners. In 38 years (1960 – 1998), Nigeria has had 19 ministers for internal affairs, 18 of them were from the north. The story is the same with other agencies under the military.