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Inter-Governmental Conflict Relation in The Nigerian Fourth Republic

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Abstract

This paper seeks to examine the conflictual relationship between/among the apparatus of government during the fourth Nigerian republic. Data were gathered from secondary sources. It adopts the instrumentalists' view of federalism by interrogating the impact of ethnicity on the allocation of federal finance and establishing the argument on the constitutional basis for revenue distribution with careful examination of the 'imperfect' federation bequeathed to Nigeria at Independence in 1960. This paper, therefore, underscores the conflict emanating from quarters of ethnicity and lopsided nation-state arrangement in Nigeria with the reference point to her fourth republic.

Keywords: Conflict, Ethnicity, Fourth Republic, Inter-Government Relation

INTRODUCTION

Inter-governmental relation is one of the inherent forms of government operations in any given federation. It showcases the relationship between/among the state apparatus in any political system. The success of Nigeria's federal system for effective governance depends on an appropriate division of responsibilities and resources within authorities supported by a sufficient institutional capacity at each of the levels so as to carry out its assigned functions (Tom, 2003). The purpose of this paper is to examine the extent of such capacity by reviewing the ethnic politics, the constitutional basis for revenue generation and statutory allocation so as to understand the governance operation among the state apparatus and institutions during the fourth republic; and as widely noted that conflict is inevitable within and outside the organizational structure. The task of this paper is therefore to examine the conflictual relationship of the apparatus of government during the fourth Nigerian republic.

Conflict is not simply inevitable; rather, it is complex organizations. Conflict is not a breakdown of a cooperative and purposeful system. Rather conflict is central to what an organization is (Ngou, 1989). In 1960, Britain bequeathed to Nigeria an imperfect Federation, consisting of three uneven regions. This lopsided arrangement paved the way for the domination of the federation by the biggest region - (Northern region). This paper adopts the instrumentalist view of federalism. It interrogates the impact of ethnicity on the allocation of federal finance

which was/is still one of the major sources of conflict during the preceding republics up till the current dispensation, thereby establishing the argument on the constitutional basis for revenue distribution and the process of subversion by the ruling party. It examines the various mechanisms employed by the North to appropriate federal patronage for its region at the expense of other regions in the period.

This, therefore, becomes significant to the content of study in the field of intergovernmental relation in an attempt to understand the intricacies involved, structure and patterns of operation among the apparatus of the state on a horizontal basis, as against the vertical relationship that is mostly obtainable in intergovernmental relation. Therefore, this paper underscores the conflict emanating in inter-governmental relation taking the fourth republic as a case study.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

This section clarifies the concept of inter-governmental relation and provides an explanatory scheme for broad two categories, namely: vertical and horizontal inter-governmental relation. On the other hand, it explains the conflict in an organizational context due to its inevitability, as well as the term 'fourth republic.'

Inter-governmental Relations

The prefix 'inter' seems to identify the official relations between governmental institutions. In this regard, a constitution will provide the general guidelines for the creation of the internal structures. Individuals and institutions within any government institution cannot function independently and without considering the functions and activities of others within the same institution. Because of this, all government institutions are characterised by an extensive external network of interdependent vertical and horizontal relations (Dare, 1989).

Vertical Inter-governmental Relations

Government institutions and individuals within these institutions are grouped according to a vertical structure of authority, and at the central government level, the hierarchic structure is that of the president, the legislature, Cabinet or the ministers and the departments. A vertical structure of authority is essential for establishing lines of authority and determining accountability and responsibility. It also further facilitates control to ensure that the policy and decisions of higher authority will be implemented (Ikime, 1985).

Horizontal Inter-governmental Relations

The formal seat of (macro) horizontal inter-governmental relations between apparatus of government either at local, state or federal levels. However, this does not exclude horizontal relations between government departments (on a particular level) since regular discussions are held between departments on matters of mutual interests, such as committees of investigation (Dare, 1989 and Akinboye & Anifowoshe, 1999).

Conflict

A conflict is a form of competitive behaviour involving actual or perceived differences in interests or limited resources. Managers and employees have divergent interests. The same holds true between workers themselves, between departments, and between organizations. In today's business world, as organizations attempt to grow their businesses, the potential for conflict is heightened by increased global competition, a more rapid business pace, and company mergers and restructurings which increase employee competition and job insecurity (Ngou, 1989).

Fourth Republic

Since the inauguration of the Fourth Republic in 1999, what seems observable is a pattern which points to the fact that political elites have not learnt much from the mistakes of the past. The various crises plaguing the major parties and emerging ones and the various inter-party crisis of the defections in the National Assembly, cross carpeting of governors among others are vivid instances of this tendency. Lack of party discipline continues to feature prominently in all the major parties. One of the fallouts of lack of party discipline among party men is factionalization within the parties. The registration of new parties in the preparation of 2007 has raised the

phenomenon of carpet crossing and decamping. This tendency has further oiled "the zero-sumness" of the Nigerian political landscape. This action ended up heating up the polity; a situation that portends dangers to democratic consolidation.

FEDERALISM AND GOVERNANCE OPERATION IN THE FOURTH REPUBLIC

If party proliferation is an indication of how healthy a nation's democracy is, then Nigeria has not done badly at all. To date, the number of political parties in the country has risen to forty-one (41), up from the thirty (30) that existed in 2003. They range from the serious to the not so serious and the downright comical. Even so, it ought to be a good omen for our young democracy. The more alternative the voters have, the better for the nation (Ifionu, 2006:14). Harmel and Janda (1982) explained: "the democratic political party is a creature of its environment. The most important aspect of the environment is those that shape the expectations and ambitions of the most important people in parties, their office seekers" (Schlesinger, 1985:1152-1153).

Schlesinger, (1966 and 1985) went on to assert that "to understand changes taking place within political parties we must work for a realistic theory; one that accepts these parties as office-seeking conditions. On that premise, I lay out three interacting sets of variables (1). The structure of political opportunities, or the rules for office seeking and the ways they are treated, (2) the party system; or the competitive relations among parties, define the expectations of politicians and thus lead them to create and (3) party organizations, or the collective effort to gain and retain office" (Schlesinger, 1985:1152). Propositions derived from the linkages among these variables allow us to examine changes in Nigerian parties since the fourth republic- (especially after the aborted third term saga).

Lapalombara and Weiner (1966), lapalombara (1974) and Omoruyi (2001) have tried to apply the theories of political development to the emergence of political parties as creatures of systematic political crises. Of all the crises identified in the literature on political development, three of them are critical to the understanding of political parties in the post-military regime. They are the crisis of legitimacy, the crisis of participation and crisis of integration. Omoruyi (2001) goes to state that in the former, scholars of Nigerian political parties (such as Coleman (1960); Sklar (1963); Whitaker (1970) Dudley (1968) and Post and Vickers (1973) among others) would want to know to what extent are the political parties that evolved in 1999 capable of providing alternative order to the military in the minds of Nigerians. This is the legitimacy question, and second is the crisis of integration. Scholars could want to know to what extent political parties that evolved in 1999 have approximated the federal union. This is the political integration question and third, is the crisis of participation. Scholars would also want to know to what extent have the political parties that evolved since 1999 meet the need of those who want to participate in the political process (Omoruyi 2001:2). Omoruyi goes on to posit that only those who are living on this confused state of affairs would tell one what we have in Nigeria since 1999 are political parties. They would have to meet the test set by Lapalombara (1974); that a political party so called, if there is an inter-generational transfer of political affiliation.

There are many studies that link the stability of any democracy to the inter-generation transfer of political affiliation. What would these parties be like in 2007 and 2015? Do Nigerians believe that these political parties would still be there in 2007 or 2015? (Omoruyi, 2001:2). He concludes by positing that "what we have since 1999 in Nigeria as political parties have nothing in common with the political parties of the First, Second and Third Republics. Their composition is fluid and unstable; they can be viewed as an instrument of transition from military to civilian rule and for the future and with the prospect of more parties. They raise more questions than answers to the lingering political problems of Nigeria.

ETHNIC POLITICS IN POST COLONIAL NIGERIA

The resource control/deviation imbroglio has thrown the country's fiscal federalism into political and economic crises fueling in the process inter and intra-ethnic conflicts and occasioned the sudden uprising of different insurgent groups within the Niger/Delta region of the country.

The most contentious issue at the genesis of the present political era in 1999 was the demand for resource control particularly by oil-producing states that constitute the Niger-Delta region. The demand for resource control became unattainable as the federal government resisted the agitation by "all means." However, the agitations have taken several violent dimensions bordering according to Adefulu (2001:80) "on willful sabotage, kidnapping of foreigners working in the oil exploration sector, assassination of security agents and vandalisation of oil pipelines all of which have meant a substantial loss of revenue to the Nigerian state which depends on oil export earnings to finance its varied development projects and alleviate circle of poverty afflicting its teeming population". The agitations for resource control were founded on the obvious long years of neglect of the region despite the nation tapping almost 95% of its revenue earnings from the region.

Socio-economic activities of the people of the zone have suffered abruptly while environmental degradation and health hazards have attended oil exploration activities of multinational companies without adequate infrastructure, qualitative education and human capital development, accessible health care system and environmental renewal as compensations for the immeasurable losses suffered over the years. It was within this context that the Yar' Adua Administration granted the Niger-Delta militants who took to violent protest Amnesty as a panacea for restoring peace within the region and apparently for the federal government to continue to reap from the largesse of oil revenue from the region.

However, how much of peace the Amnesty Programme has brought to the Niger-Delta is another topical issue for a stimulating debate, but that is outside the purview of this paper. The derivation principle which grew out of the agitation for resource control does not go without controversies. For instance, the contestation for the distinction between offshore and onshore oil in the implementation of the 13% derivation allocation to oil producing state generated a lot of heat until the omnibus judgment of the supreme court on 5 April 2002 which declared that the littoral states could not seek control of natural resources located beyond their seaward boundary legally.

The onshore/offshore dichotomy has implication for revenue accruable from derivation on oil hence the fierce and partisan politics it generated at the beginning of the fourth republic. It is in this sense that the oil-producing States are demanding for the restructuring of the Nigerian federation to allow for the practice of true federalism which guarantees states control of resources located within their boundaries. The structural imbalance in wealth distribution coupled with the damage to the ecosystem in the areas makes the demand more compelling.

It is therefore not out of place to demand restructuring of the fiscal arrangements in favour of the region that lays the "Golden egg" considering the unsalutary effect oil exploration activities have had on the economic life of the people in the Niger Delta region and the danger of oil pollution and spillage, environmental degradation etc to which they are exposed (Bello-Imam, 1990:29).

Lastly, and relating to the resource control/derivation palaver is the issue of resource allocation which has generated a lot of heat in the polity from the commencement of the present operational, political dispensation in 1999 till the present moment.

CONSTITUTIONAL BASIS FOR REVENUE ALLOCATION IN THE FOURTH REPUBLIC

A balance sheet of intergovernmental fiscal relations under successive governments in Nigeria summarizes the fact that the whole processes and arrangements have been and are still marred with problems and conflicts which are structural and operational in nature.

Of course, the problems are generic as they are traceable to the formative years of the country when it was still under full-blown colonialism. Unfortunately, the political elites who inherited the postcolonial Nigerian political structures have surprisingly found it difficult to surmount these challenges and have failed to evolve a truly adaptable pragmatic fiscal arrangement devoid of mundane primordial sentiments that have bedeviled the practice of federalism in Nigeria. While the belief was and is still shared today that in order to maintain law and order,

ensure good governance and provide social amenities, a revenue base must be found, the dynamics experienced in the past. Having explored the historiography of fiscal federalism in Nigeria, it is compelling to delve into the issues of mobilizing and allocating the revenue have always been problematic in Nigeria's federal practice. This is because the jurisdictional powers of raising revenue and the criteria for allocating federally collected revenue have been severally contested by all governmental structures. Previous attempts at finding a suitable revenue allocation formula acceptable to all governmental units have been faulted even right from the colonial era.

STATUTORY ALLOCATION OF REVENUE FROM THE DISTRIBUTABLE POOL ACCOUNT 1999 TILL DATE

Resource allocation which ordinarily is an economic issue has turned into a political agenda because of the high political content contained in its discourse. Arriving at an acceptable formula for sharing federally collected revenue has been problematic and thorny between the three tiers of government. This is because each governmental structure raises the argument of mismatch between responsibilities and revenue. The experimented formula and the sharing principles have witnessed high content of intrigues, power play, sectional interest, and partisan politics. For instance, sharing revenue on the basis of land-mass does not only depict sectional interest but also erroneously shifts development away from the people, thereby making development land-focused instead of being people oriented.

The adopted formula in use presently is allocated in the ratio of 52% to the federal government, 26.7% to states and 20.60% to local governments. This again depicts the ubiquity and dominance of the federal government in the allocation of responsibilities and revenue, subjecting in the process other sub-national governments to the whim and caprices of the over the bloated federal government. The domino tendencies of the federal government became apparent when it unilaterally created the excess crude account from which it draws revenue without appropriate legal frameworks and the approval of other federating units (States) in a system that should ordinarily be independent and co-ordinate.

The development has reinforced the superordinate/subordinate relation in Nigeria's fiscal federalism, and this has had a unsalutary effect on effective inter-governmental relations especially at the vertical level. The evolution of the Nigeria Governor's forum, another instrument of conducting intergovernmental relations in the fourth republic, has only been to challenge the ubiquity and the overbearing powers of the federal government particularly on matters affecting both levels of government. The forum is strongly advocating a significant cut in federal government's powers of the purse in favour of states and local governments who arguably are more visible in state-citizen relation, suggesting therefore that federal revenue should be allocated in the ratio of 35% to the federal, 42% to states and 23% to local governments on the basis of geographical configuration, demographic spread, social development and regional revenue drive (www.transformation.com).

The different contortions Nigeria has witnessed in revenue allocation debate, resource control agitations and jurisdictional allocation of responsibilities and power between the different levels of government have been responsible for static fiscal federalism and the underdevelopment syndrome the naturally endowed but artificially incoherent country and the managerially deficient country has experienced in the fourth republic. This has unprecedentedly increased the demand for political restructuring that can guarantee a true Nigerian federation.

CONCLUDING REMARK

For much of its existence as a subject of economic enquiry, scholarly analysis of economic development did not include an examination of a non-quantifiable variable such as ethnicity. However, it is clear from the foregoing analysis that there is a link between ethnicity and the viability of economic development which is powerfully influential on a region's prospect for development. In the Nigerian federation, ethnicity impacted a great deal on resource allocation in the fourth republic.

The challenge of ethnicity and resource allocation in the Nigerian state had its root in the colonial socio-political and economic structures. The imbalance geographically was apparent, and this was carried over wholly into the post-colonial period which eventually created serious problems of inter-ethnic relations in the first republic. This inter-ethnic hostility was exacerbated by political competition for scarce economic resources. As political parties became custodians of ethnic interests, the inter-ethnic competition for federal revenues became politicized. With the ascendance of PDP to the central government, political power got into her custody, and she used federal power to mobilize and divert federal revenues, infra-structures, industries, public work projects and federal patronage to her ethnic homeland. This politicization was reflected partly in the implementation of the recommendations of Raisman Fiscal Commission as modified in the Republican Constitution's fiscal structure. It was also reflected in the formulation and implementation of the second national development plan which Professor O. Aboyade noted was heavily influenced by political considerations.

In addition, the political statement by the N.C.N.C in reaction to N.P.C.'s monopolization of federal projects and resources in the development plan also gave credence to this. Thus between 1960 and 1966, the unequal access to and competition for resources at the federal level ensured that politics became a dangerous enterprise in which official rules regulating competition for state power and the allocation of state resources were manipulated and used against perceived opponents. Crisis after crisis, the Federal government ruthlessly suppressed the opposition and also used Federal might to ensure that the result of the controversial 1963 census which favoured her region (North) was consented to by relative majority (knowing fully well that it is a potent tool for resource distribution and delimitation of constituencies for elections). Thus, the political muscle of the North, gained through the Central government to dominate its competitors engendered serious governmental crisis in the Nigerian federation from the first to the current fourth republic.

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