

Ethnic Militia Movements and the Crisis of Political Order in Post-Military Nigeria

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ABSTRACT Since the birth of the Fourth Republic on May 29 1999, Nigeria is experiencing increasing waves of ethnic conflicts, while its leaders engage in a series of ‘dialogue of the deaf’. For now, a great deal of literature has explored the causes of ethnic crisis and unsuitable solutions are being proposed for a wrongly diagnosed structural social malaise. Thus, this article examines the fundamental causes of ethnic violence, being championed by the various ethnic militia movements in post-military Nigeria, by emphasizing the impacts of institutional failure. Hence, it contends that the extreme dissatisfactions of some ethnic nationalities with the Nigerian post-colonial state are clear manifestations of the government failure to provide the necessary infrastructure and enabling environment required to ease the inordinate human degradation, disillusionment, anger, rural decay and high crime wave prevailing in the country. Thus, ethnic violence is created and maintained by militia movements in a vicious circle of frustration and repression as the Nigerian leadership tries to consolidate itself in power while the marginalised categories (ethnic minorities) of the population claim for their fair share in national resources. Finally, the study suggests that for the interest of peace and stability, there is the urgent need for immediate redress to the inherent lapses in Nigeria’s inherited federal structure, through a programmed professional participation that would be reflective of its peculiar socio-historical experiences.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, Africa’s most populous country, entered a new era of democracy with the swearing in of, as elected President, Chief Olusegun Aremu Okikiola Obasanjo on May 29 1999. The frenzied joy at that time was really understandable taking into consideration the fact that the country was coming out of 16 years of uninterrupted military dictatorship. During the period under review (December 31, 1983 to May 28, 1999), Nigeria as a nation-state and as society witnessed untold repression and gross violation of their basic human rights (Onyegbula, 2000). Yet, it is important to note that the immediate pre-1999 period saw the country in a situation of complete breakdown and disintegration, especially, during the zenith of General Sanni Abacha’s autocratic rule.¹ Sadly enough, the agean stable of corruption, mismanagement in higher circles of government, and acute impoverishment of the generality of the citizenry became the order of the day (Adekanye, 1999). The expanding democratic space given by the country’s most recent transition to civil rule has unleashed a host of hitherto repressed and dormant political force (Agbu, 2002). In Nigeria, one of the most worrisome and critical of these new brands of

unleashed political forces, which suggest that each of the groups must struggle for what rightly belongs to it, underlies the emergence of ethnic nationality/identity movements, otherwise known as the ethnic militia movements. Noteworthy among these ethnic militia movements include the Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA), the Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF), the prominent pan Yoruba political enclave, the Oodua People’s Congress (OPC), the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), and the Arewa People’s Congress (APC). As already adumbrated, these movements seeking to protect and advance different ethnic interests are now, according to Agbu, “contesting not just the political space and the democratic dividends, but also resource control as part of the liberalisation of the political environment” (Agbu, Ibid). Since the activities of the ethnic oriented groups began to attract public and scholarly attentions, several questions have come to mind. Among these questions are: to what extent does the existence of these ethnic militia movements threaten the country’s corporate existence? Is the existence of militia movements compatible with democracy or a negation of the democratic political order? These and other related questions constitute the plenitude of the concerns expressed in this article.

It is against the above background of extreme dissatisfaction of some ethnic nationalities with the Nigerian project, and resurgence of ethnic identity politics that we seek to comprehend the nature of growing challenges by ethnic militias to the corporate existence of the Nigerian state. How resurgence of ethnic militancy in the post-military period can be explained and how these challenges can be managed are vital to this study. The basic tenet of this paper is that the agitations by these groups are a clear manifestation of the failure of the government to provide the necessary infrastructural and enabling environment required to ease the inordinate human degradation, disillusionment, anger, rural decay and high crime wave prevailing in the country. In this paper, I attempt to delineate briefly some perspectives on the notion of ethnicity, ethnic militia movements as well as democracy and the context within which they are applicable to the Nigerian polity and more fundamentally attempts to evolve plausible strategies for confronting the bane of ethnicity/ethnic militia movements in Nigeria.

CONCEPTUALISING THE NOTIONS OF ETHNICITY, ETHNIC MILITIAS AND DEMOCRACY

Ethnicity and Ethnic Militias: What Do They Mean?: It is germane from the outset to situate ethnicity as a concept and social condition in a particular context. The concept of ethnicity refers to a social formation that rest upon culturally specific practice and unique set of symbols and cosmology (Ake, 2000: 93; Osaghae, 1995: 11). A belief in common historical evolution provides an inheritance of symbols, heroes, events, values, and hierarchies and confirms the social identities for separating both insiders and outsiders. Ethnic culture is one of the important ways people conceive of themselves and culture and identity are closely intertwined. Thus, ethnicity, a social construct (Nnoli, 1978; Cohen, 1974: 4; IDEA International, 2000: 91), can also be regarded as the employment of ethnic identity and differences to gain advantage in situations of competition, conflict and cooperation (Osaghae, 1995: 11). It has also been understood within its historical context how individuals are called on to adopt ethnic identity as explanation of who they are, what exists, what the world is, etc. In this way, the subject integrates his or her consciousness into conceptions of self-identity

or worldview. Ethnicity constitutes a way in which people think of themselves and others, and makes sense of the world around them. Simultaneously, it also connotes set of social relations within which social grouping such as men, women etc relate to each other. It also refers to specific power relations at the same time as it refers to cultural relations.

Embracing an ethnic identity, and indeed accepting its process of socialization, does not have to conflict with that of other neighbouring identities, nor does it have to be at the cost of excluding the other. The manner in which a particular ethnicity is given an organisation form, whether ethnic identity advances specific political or economic interest is at the heart of this article. Indeed, it is the issue that exercises the mind of Nigerians today. From the foregoing analysis, it is logical to deduce from Nnoli's argument that the Nigerian politics have presented an image of struggle among various ethnic groups for the sharing of national resources. Thus, as observed by Crawford (1993) social competition in the country first for placement and preferment, political competition in the Nigerian arena subsequently, placed ethnicity in the center of political cognition of political struggle.

Ethnic militia movement on the other hand is the extreme form of ethnic agitation for self-determination as various ethnic groups assume militant posture and gradually metamorphosed into militia groups each of which bear an ethnic identity and purport to act as the machinery through which the desires of its people are sought to be realised. The common features of these ethnically inspired movements are, the "resort to violence, preponderance of youth membership, ethnic identity affiliations, and that they are mainly popular movements demanding change over the status quo" (Agbu, 2002). One would agree that the activities of the militia groups as well as ethnic sectarianism are real threats, to the territorial integrity of the country. And to lend credence to the above, I quote the editorial of Tell Magazine of November, 2000:

There are many flash points that have the potentials to trigger big trouble for the country and test the government resilience and resolve to maintaining law and order.....Top among them is the Niger Delta where armed bandits have turned legitimate struggle of the people for reparation for their decimated land and stolen wealth into a war of attrition against

innocent people. They kill and main with absolute impunity and demand huge ransom for many of their victims who are lucky to be only kidnapped.....The Ijaws appear determined to prosecute their war on many fronts.....in Bayelsa, Delta, Edo, Ondo, and now Lagos; a strategy that is diminishing the sympathy for their legitimate claims of neglect and unjust treatment by successive governments since independence..... And compounding the situation was the belligerent and uncompromising stance of the Oodua People's Congress, OPC,, that readily resorts to violence at slightest provocation. The OPC led by Dr. Frederick Fasehun and Dr. Beko Ransome-Kuti, two human rights activists with impeccable credentials as fighters against tyranny is fast acquiring notoriety for operating beyond the fringes of the law.

The above quotation aptly captures the violent nature of these movements and this is responsible for the wanton destruction of lives and properties, inter-ethnic clashes and hostilities where innocent people suffer.

Democracy: In contemporary world, democracy has become a popular concept in everyday discourse. Walter Lanqueur argued that the term democracy originally referred to the right of the citizens of the Greek City States to participate directly in the act of governance, while Webster is of the view that democracy is an institution of governance which envisages a popular government as practiced in ancient Greece. Democracy or polycentric regime is a system of governance that underscores the plural nature of politics and hence gives recognition to the diversity of social forces in any political community. A democratic regime accommodates the forces by providing for a polycentric political order which not only recognized these forces formally but enables them to interact with one another in a diverse ways, in competition, collaboration or cooperation (Olowu, 1995: 16). The essence of a democratic regime is that it serves the citizens rather than the other way round. In the words of Sartori (1987: 34) democracy exists when "relations between the governed and government abides by the principle that the state is at the services of the citizens and not the citizens at the service of the state, that the government exists for the people not vice-versa".

This paper adopts definitions that take empirical account of Nigeria's peculiar socio-

economic, cultural and political identity. On this analytical plane, the enduring definition of democracy by Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), the former American president, as government of the people by the people and for the people suffices. Since then, scholars have been giving procedural interpretation to this abiding definition of democracy. On this note, one Nigerian scholar contends that democracy is a system of governance which allows people to freely elect their leaders and hold them accountable, and which provides opportunities for the greater number of people to use their human potentials to survive in dignity (Idowu, 1996), and according to Joseph Schumpeter, democracy is the "institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote" (Schumpeter, 1994: 26). Political order is the existence of an enabling environment for citizens of a country to pursue the normal business of life that is consistent with their fundamental human rights and privileges that are enshrined in the constitution. This concept will have relevance to democracy if it is able to reinforce the process of political power acquisition and appropriation of the dividend of democracy.

ETHNIC MILITIA MOVEMENTS: THE GENESIS AND ACTIVITIES

The Oodua People's Congress (OPC) deserves adequate commentaries for several reasons. First, it was the OPC that prompted the formation of Arewa Peoples Congress (APC). Second, the OPC agenda, the extreme marginalisation of the Yoruba, also formed the core reason for the formation of other ethnic congresses in Nigeria. Third, in nature, the OPC activities harbour agreements and disagreements. Also, there is the constitutional issue of jurisdictional powers between the Federal and Lagos state government as a result of the activities of the OPC. Emerging from the consequences of the June 12, 1993² annulment of Chief MKO Abiola's electoral mandate, the OPC captured the resentment of the Yorubas ethnic nationality to their perceived marginalisation. Hence, its formation had the endorsement of some prominent Yoruba indigenes as an organised reaction to the injustice as well as inequity being visited on the Yorubas by the Nigerian federation,

being driven by the Hausa-Fulani oligarchy. Little wonder why its founder, Dr. Frederick Fasehun stated that OPC is for the specific purposes of Yoruba problem identification, agitating the marginalisation of the “Yorubas, to defend, to protect and to promote their socio-cultural aspect, and also fight for justice for all”. (Africa Today, February 2000). Central to the OPC agenda is Yoruba autonomy, either by negotiation or resort to the use of force (Akintunde cited in Africa Today, February 2000). This agenda, however, underlined the split that saw the emergence of the more violence inclined Ganiyu Adams’ faction, which completely opposed the Yoruba participation in General Abubakar Transition programme. The only mission of the latter group was the realisation of the June 12, 1993 electoral mandate of Chief Abiola. Subsequently, prerequisite of law and order maintenance, within the Yoruba region also crept into its mandates; and has constituted a sore point in their relationship with the Nigeria Police, dangerous weapons and charms are known to have been employed by members of the OPC. On their own part, the police force has been accusing the Congress of colluding with armed robbers and administering a reign of terror on perceived enemies, which is completely at variance with the tenets of democracy (The Guardian, 23 July, 2000). However, with a Yoruba man as president of Nigeria, since May 29, 1999, the OPC has toned down its political role and now operates mainly as vigilante group.

Conversely, though primarily established to monitor the activities of the OPC, the Arewa Peoples Congress also had defence of northern interest as part of its mandates. Its leader, a retired Chief of Military Intelligence, Sair Mohammed started clearly that the APC is a “response to the irredentism of the OPC”. Stressing further, “we want to check Yoruba expansionism which the OPC is championing” (Akintunde cited in Africa Today, February, 2000). The various ethnic groups defence mandates of the OPC and the APC manifested in the eruption of violence experienced in Ibadan (December, 1999) during the official launching of the APC. In the same sense, it is argued that the Hausa-Yoruba ethnic agitation, open neglect, deprivation and environmental degradation of their area led to the formation of the militia movement named Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA). Since its formation, they have been engaging the federal government and

multinational oil companies in violent exchanges. This was the situation before the federal government deployed troops to erase Odi from the face of the earth in 1999—when Egbesu Boys were alleged to have killed twelve policemen there. However, based on their resolve, the Egbesu Boys have continued to fight to attain regional autonomy from the unjust and inequitable Nigerian federation. Thus, “persistent efforts by the government to suppress them have proved abortive as they operate within the difficult terrain of multi-channeled creeks and swamps along the Niger Delta” (Akinboye, 2001). Led by Ralph Uwazuruike, the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) was formed to resuscitate the realisation of the secessionist ambitions of the Ibos. The desire of this movement can be deciphered in the words of its leader, Uwazuruike, as quoted by the influential magazine, Africa Today, “Biafra failed because of our violent approach, but this time around, we do not want any casualty, yet we are more determined than ever to have our independent Biafra” (Akintunde, 2000). Attempt by this militia movement to launch the Biafra state in Aba, a town in Southeast Nigeria, resulted into a bloody clash/conflict between the police force and the MASSOB leading to the arrest of the militia leaders. Frequent clashes between the group and the law enforcement agencies always resulted into the death of MASSOB members and destruction of properties. In spite of the arrest and death of its member, the Congress has continued with its separatist struggle undeterred.

1999-2003

Before the advent of Nigeria’s Fourth Republic, ethnic crises and the activities of the ethnic militias were not pronounced with the exception of the situation in the volatile Niger Delta (ND) where, “the Ijaws and Itsekiris were locked in a protracted and grueling war over the location of the Headquarters of Warri South Local Government Council”. There was also the struggle by the Ogoni people of the ND for the control of their God-given oil resource. It is important to note that one of the attributes of the groups is the use of violence and periodic social unrest to settle primordial scores as witnessed during the Ife-Modakeke crisis in Southwest and Zango-Kataf crisis in the Northcentral geo-political zone of Nigeria (Akinboye, 2001). It is disheartening that

the situation is quite different especially with the revival of the democratic process in May 1999 as the activities of the ethnic oriented militia movements have assumed alarming proportions and these activities have revived ethnic awareness in many people. The increasing spate of the ethnic inspired crises in Nigeria impact negatively on the political order and has become the most serious challenge of our time.

Since the inauguration of the Fourth Republic (May 29th, 1999—), there has been series of ethnic crises resulting in the destruction of lives and properties. The plethora of these instances includes the inter-ethnic conflicts especially between the Hausas and the Yorubas as witnessed in Shagamu (in Ogun State) in July 1999, Lagos and Kano, and between Hausas and Ibos in Aba, and Kano. Some of these conflicts (intra-ethnic) between the Yoruba indigenes of Ile-Ife and Modakeke and that between ethnic Ibo communities of Aguleri and Umuleri aptly illustrate. The full import of the Congress militant nature as well as the impact(s) of their activities on political order is vividly captured in the case below.

Shagamu/Kano Episode

One of the most deadly inter-ethnic conflicts and indeed increased activities of the ethnic militia movements under the nascent democratic dispensation in the country is the Hausa/Yoruba fracas in Shagamu, Ogun state. This ethnic riot between the two groups erupted after a Hausa prostitute saw the “Oro” deity. The lady was alleged to have been subsequently murder. Throttling, burgeoning, chopping, and shooting became the norm while these inter-ethnic crises prevailed. The police officers deployed to quell the gruesome massacre turned out to be Hausa-Fulani who, instead of arresting the situation, employed their tribal ego to assist their minority Hausa ally to overpower the Yoruba side. Would a satisfactory persecution (if there is any at all) of this sort of fatal institutional tribalism in the nation’s force forestall a future reoccurrence. The whole of Shagamu became a gory sight while human remains littered the streets with so many dead bodies hidden in the burnt houses. More than forty people lost their lives in the mayhem; while thousands of people were rendered homeless by the large scale arson that actually took place. The Shagamu mayhem provoked a

retaliatory attack in Kano by the Hausas to avenge the killings of their kith and kin. This unfortunate incident resulted in another ethnic bloodbath between the two dominant ethnic groups in the country where more than 160 Yoruba were either burnt or hacked to death. The survival of democracy became momentarily doubtful as these crises stretched Nigeria’s nascent democracy beyond tolerable limits. It is important to point out that these two feuds were aggravated as a result of the involvement of the militias. The wider implication of this is that the ethnic militia movements have not serve the interest of the corporate existence of Nigeria.

ETHNIC MILITIA MOVEMENTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR POLITICAL ORDER IN NIGERIA

My basic thrust in this paper has been an attempt to show that inter-ethnic relations in Nigeria have been one of conflict largely caused by ethnic chauvinism which manifests in the form of ethnic nationalism. The question that readily comes to mind is: how have the various ethnic militia movements impacted on the political order across Nigeria. The anatomy of the country’s political development since 1960 shows the extent to which ethnic politics have deeply have deeply affected the nation’s quest for stable polity. I argue that the significant factor in the emergence of youth-based ethnic militias has been the failure of the political elites to deliver the anticipated socio-economic emancipation to the common Nigerian coupled with government’s brazen relative deprivation in the administration of political and fiscal federalism in post independent Nigeria. In the face of these differential perceptions, ethnic militancy has thus become as fashionable as a form of ethnic nationalism that have in almost cases constituted a disintegrating rather than a coagulating factor to the Nigerian polity. The examples are very glaring indeed. Consistent with its establishment purpose, the OPC has been engaging other various ethnic nationalities wherever it has perceive any form of threat to its ethnic group and in the process threatening the political order of the country. In response to their perceived marginalisation, they have been championing the campaign for decisive political arrangements like state police, and advocacy for the constitutional conference to determine a new political order or

basis for peaceful coexistence in the country.

Similarly, the Egbesu, the APC, and the Bakassi Boys also operate under strict ethnic impetus. As for the APC, apart from its constitution to checkmate the OPC 'expansionist' agenda. It also have a political motive of obstructing the bifurcation of Nigeria, since realisation of such a move would amount to estrangement from the main source of economic sustenance-oil revenue. That apart, the APC also encourages the tenacious hold on to power of the northern political class, whether or not the political order of Nigeria might be jeopardised in the process. The way and manner in which the Bakassi Boys operate has not in any way been different. They have a primary agenda of realising the Biafran dream-which is in all, and intent and purpose decisive. Along with the Egbesu Boys of Africa, these ethnic militia groups are also known to support the OPC for national conference with the exception of the APC. For the Egbesu Boys, the perception of relative political, economic and social deprivation has produced another dimension to the agitation of ethnic militias in Nigeria- that of resource control. Taken together, the activities of the ethnic militia movements have openly been at variance with the interest of Nigeria's corporate political existence in all ramifications of the word. Consequently, political vendetta, smear campaigns, ethnic politics have become the idiosyncrasy of Nigeria's political culture and recipes for the destruction of its political structure, thereabout. This situation is well captured by Williams:

The dramatic upsurge of ethnic militias represents the most critical threat to the Nigerian state to date. State power flows from the ability to impose the national will on all segments of the society. When this monopoly is challenged by force or by sustained disobedience or armed non-compliance, the state becomes a caricature or pathetic parody of its classic incarnation.

Indeed, the contemporary ethnic and religious feud, and conflicts as well as the activities of the militia movements in Nigeria can only be meaningfully understood within the context of the linkage to ethnic politics.

During Nigeria's First Republic (1960-1966), political parties were formed along ethno-linguistic lines and were made to champion ethnic interests. Sooner or later, these parties—the Action Group (Yoruba political party), the Northern Peoples Congress- (the Hausa/Fulani dominated political party) and the NCNC (The

Ibo dominated political party) were pit together in a serious competition (Badmus, 2003). During the period under review, ethnically loaded political arrangement had threatened the continual existence of the country and its negative consequences of political riots, arson, killings, etc. Owioye and Amusan's (1999: 26) remark clarifies this situation and according to them:

The political process in Nigeria followed ethnic and geographic division for a very long time. This affected the type and quality of constitution put in place by different government since independence.....For the North to have effective control of the state and to break the perceived hegemonic power of the West, the mid-West state was created from the economically and politically powerful Western region in 1964. The 1964 general election result created political instability in Nigeria. The Western region was the most affected because of activities of the Northern Peoples Congress sponsored alter-native political party in the region, the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) led by the deputy president of the Action Group, Chief S.L. Akintola. Political unrest in the West led to the military intervention in politics on 15 January, 1966.

The 1966 coup d'état was believed to be ethnically inspired and cost the North almost all its seasoned political leaderships as the death of the Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, and others would prove. This coup was followed by a counter coup by young Hausa/Fulani officers in July 1966 which ultimately led to the death of the head of state, General, Aguiyi Ironsi.

This scenario repeated itself during the Second Republic (1979-1983) as the inability of the ruling party, the National Party of Nigeria, to effectively handle the ethnic rivalries and problem abruptly terminated the Republic by December 31, 1983 coup d'état led by Generals Muhammadu Buhari and Tunde Idiagbon. On this, Owioye and Amusan (1999: 27) aver that the reappearance of the military on the Nigeria's political scene was attributed to the lack of competence, mismanagement, and ethnicity in the Alhaji Shehu Shagari administration. Apart, the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential elections which was widely believed to have been won by the late business magnate, Chief MKO Abiola, a Yoruba from the Southwest reinforced ethnic division, mistrust and posed a very big challenge to the corporate existence Nigeria. These developments, no doubt,

provided the historical precedents that informed the establishment of the various ethnic militia movements as we hitherto stated. The exit of the military (repressive) regimes and entrance of the civilian dispensation released the pent-up feelings of deprivation and flared up ethnic agitation for their own share of the “national cake”.

THE WAY OUT: SOLUTIONS TO THE MENACE OF ETHNIC MILITIA MOVEMENTS

This paper has analysed the dynamics of ethnicity and ethnic militia movements and their implications for Nigeria’s nascent as well as fragile democracy. All efforts that should have been directed to establish a sound economic order for economic self reliance had been unintelligently expended in political power struggle, political anarchy and political thurgery of which are compounded by factor of ethnicity (Salawu, 2001: 112). On this note, therefore, for the attainment of stable political order in Nigeria, the following useful suggestions commend themselves.

First, there is the need for the emergence of a class of visionary leadership that will be able to situate the Nigerian citizens at the center stage of social, economic and political projects. Anyway, one can not see Nigeria engaging in a pragmatic democracy until the component units conscientiously agree to live in a federation where the relationship among the tiers of government is built on authoritative allocation of values and resources of who get what, when and how.

Second, democracy and national integration can only be achieved when the political leadership adopt policy of compromise and ensure that justice and fair-play supersede their parochial interests. Third, since the youths are tomorrow’s future, special efforts should be made to encourage and promote activities that are of interest to the young people in a way that promotes tolerance, trust and cosmopolitanism among them. This calls for the strengthening cross-ethnic institutions for youth development programmes such as the National Youth Service, Federal Government Unity schools, promotion of federal tertiary institutions as well as sporting competitions. This apart, since the youth constitute the bulk of these militia movements’ recruitment in to their ranks have been facilitated by the “inability of the government to articulate coherent policy and programmes that are

imperative for the development and maximum utilization of the youths in the society” (Akinboye, 2001: 176). This has led to widespread disillusionment and frustration which has culminated in the suitability of the incidence of ethnic militias in the country. This situation calls for the creation of employment opportunities for the youth if the government is truly interested in finding a lasting solution whereby youth have become ready resources for ethnic militia movements and communal conflicts.

Furthermore, remarkable efforts should be made by the Nigerian authorities to see that there are physical developments of the specific problem areas such as the volatile Niger Delta. These call for the introduction of a reconciliatory agenda aimed at redressing the historically structural neglect especially the Niger Delta area with a view to resuscitating their environment to enable its indigenes enjoy a productive ecosystem.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Essentially, this study attempts to furnish sufficient insights into the subject of enquiry and especially represents a watershed for informed action-policy formulation. Interestingly, virtually all political actors and commentators share a strong thematic consensus, regardless of socio-cultural/religious persuasion, of the compelling attention that the national question ought to attract in Nigeria. One common position being canvassed by social scientists in Nigeria is that practically all forms of recurrent crisis, be it ethnic, religious, and even the civil war of Nigeria’s recent national history, are arguably traceable to the colonial contraption which Nigeria’s overlords foisted on the country. As a consequence, this paper hereby strongly proffers an immediate redress to the inherent lapses in Nigeria’s inherited federal structure, through a programmed professional participation that would be reflective of our peculiar socio—historical experiences. Through this medium, meaningful socio-political progress can be achieved with multiplier effect for a new breed effective leadership.

Conclusively, our expectations are that redress, harmony, peace as well as an orderly and progressive transformation that will accommodate all dissenting ethnic, religious, socio-cultural as well as regional dissension would inevitable precipitate from the application of our homegrown

sociopolitical system and redirect the leadership of our nascent democracy towards the achievement of the long expected humanistic development that has been the expectation of the Nigerian citizenry.

NOTES

1. General Sanni Abacha ruled Nigeria with iron hand between November 17, 1993 and June 8, 1998 when he actually died while in office. During this period, General Abacha was an embodiment of "personalised power" ruled with coercive power and sanction. Consequent on this high-handedness, many pro-democracy and human rights activists lost their lives, while some fled the country to escape persecution. For more on this see Isaac Olawale Albert, Mainstreaming Positive Leadership in Conflict Transformation in Nigeria, Centre for Social Science Research and Development (CSSR&D) Positive Leadership Monograph Series No. 7, 2003, CSSR&D, Lagos, Nigeria.
2. The June 12, 1993 presidential elections was believed to have been won by Chief Moshood Kasimano Olawale Abiola, a Yoruba businessman from the South Western part of the Country, but unfortunately annulled by the Military under leadership of Ibrahim Babangida, a General from the North.

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