BUHARI'S ADMINISTRATION AND FEDERAL CHARACTER

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Abstract
This paper highlighted Federal Character principle as a desired integrative principle needed to cast away fear of dominance and ensure equity and fairness in the distribution of national resources, opportunities, appointments, positions and amenities in a federation. President Buhari was sworn into office as president to uphold the constitution of Nigeria which the Act establishing the Federal Character principle is a part. However, the paper has examined the appointments made by the regime and has found that it is lopsided and against the principle of federal character. Appointments made within the first hundred days in office have been used as a yardstick to buttress the basis of this paper. Enshrining rotational presidency in the constitution and granting autonomy to the Federal Character Commission are among the recommendations made.

Introduction

Nigeria adopted the federal system of government after gaining independence in 1960 to ease the feelings of over 350 ethnic minorities. To further provide a sense of belonging, the federal character principle was inserted into the 1979 constitution. Since its introduction, has the principle promoted peace, stability, sharing of power and resources amongst the regions and/or states as expected? Has it become a tool of pressure and agitation in the hands of those who feel oppressed and marginalized?

A brief history of Nigerian federation

Nigerian federation was first muted by the Lyttleton constitution of 1954 (Thompson & Umoh 2011) and officially adapted in 1960 when she gained independence. Nigeria has a population of over 170 million and regarded as the most populous country in Africa. It is made up of 36 states and 774 Local Government Areas and more than 350 ethnic groups, all the minorities agitated for an arrangement that will give them some sense of belonging.The former Regions (West-Yoruba, East- Igbo, North Fulani) were structured along the major ethnic tribes (Yoruba, Igbo- Hausa-Fulani). Allegations of discrimination, oppression and marginalization contributed to the civil war from 1967 to 1970 and constant inter- ethnic squabbles that hinder development. During and after the civil war successive governments have created states to protect the minority interest.

The Federal Character Principle

In Nigeria the federal character was the brain child of the constitutional drafting committee of 1975/76 (Abubakar; in Amuwok. 2004) the committee aimed at coming up with a constitution that will bring about national integration and unity which over the years

was elusive.It is the work of this committee that eventually produced the 1979 constitution. The 1979 constitution, section 147(3) and section 171(5) of 1999 constitution define the federal character from an operational and objective point of view. Thus "the composition of the federal government or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also to command national loyalty thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or national or other sectional groups in that government or in any of its agencies". The 1979 constitution was framed with a strong desire to promote equity and unity. This was intended to be achieved by ensuring that every region and state has access to political and administrative position in the sector. It was intended to discourage the dominance of one ethnic group or tribe from dominating government or its agencies. Ahmed (2014) opined that "Federal character is a mechanism for ethnic balancing; it is an instrument for ensuring unity in diversity by balancing official appointments between groups", upholding his view. Adeyemi (2010) perceived federal character as "a principle of federation with instrument for ensuring unity in diversity by balancing official appointments, admissions and citing of government projects between groups, states and local government in the public service". This act was intended to give every ethnic group some sense of belonging and also promote nation building and peaceful co-existence. As noted by Dalhatu (2014) in Abdulkarim (2014), that the aim or objective of federal character is to reduce the level of marginalization of some states, minority ethnic groups among others in the appointment into public service. Arm forces, Police, Parastatals and admission into public institutions and allocation of government projects in different parts of the country.

To this end, government is not oblivious of the fact that every ethnic and religious group needs to have a sense of belonging and involvement. This, is actualized by the ministerial appointments, recruitments in the civil services, Armed forces, parastatals, admissions into tertiary institutions and colleges. This is not peculiar to Nigeria alone, in the United States, it is called affirmative action. The federation of India calls it the quota system (Adeyari, 2010). As such, it is a common practice by countries characterized with diversity and heterogeneity to solve the puzzle by a principle that can ensure unity in diversity. Act 34 of 1996 is the act establishing the federal commission, the body empowered by law to "promote, monitor and enforce compliance with the principles of proportional sharing of all bureaucratic, economic, media and political post at all level of government". This is why the same Act, section 4.1a, stipulates that the commission is expected to work-out an equitable formula for the distribution of all cadres of posts in the civil and public services of the federation, states are not left out. The germane question is to what extent has the federal character principle promoted the ideals for which it was established, hence a cursory glance of its activities under the President Buhari administration from 2015.

Theoretical Framework

This paper relies on the structural functional approach to analyze the issues considered. The structural functional approach provides a significant mechanism for the analysis of various social processes. As such, a social structure is perceived on the basis of the function it performs (Eminue, 2001). Recognized scholars in this area include, Gabriel

Almond, David Apter, Talcott Parsons and Riggs. This theory does not exist in a vacuum, but rather exist to perform certain specific functions. Social structure can be either "concrete or "analytic". The "Concrete" structures are those who have identifiable form (Ekhato, 2002), e.g., the Federal Character Commission, National Youth Service Corps etc. all have departments and offices: while the "analytic" is only identified as power and authority.

This theory is relevant to the study; the federal character principle has a clear objective, which is to enhance peaceful co-existence. The heterogeneous, multicultural and diverse nature of the Nigerian State has naturally compelled the framers of the constitution to come up with this principle.

Evaluation of federal character principle under Buhari's administration

President Buhari was sworn in May 2015. The outcry is that, all the appointments of his administration are lopsided in favour of North (the tribe of the president). The above must had led to the recent call for the senate to reject the nomination of the candidates from Northern states of Kwaraand Taraba as chairman and secretary respectively of the federal character commission, (FCC). A Northerner had been the sole Administration since 2015.Therefore the president's action is not only seen an unnationalistic and divisive in approach but negates the principle for which the commission was established.

Table 1: ***President Muhammadu Buhari's appointment before the end of hundred days in office***

S/N	Appointment	Name	Geo-political zone
1	Aide-de-camp to President	Lt. Col Abubakar Lawal	North -West
2	Special adviser, media and publicity to the president	Femi Adeshina	South -West
3	State chief of protocol/special assistant (presidential matters)	Lawal Abdullahi Kazaure	North -West
4	Senior special assistant, media and publicity	Garba Shehu	North -West
5	Accountant General of the federation	Ahmed Idris	North -West
6	National security adviser	Babagana Mungono	North -East
7	Chief of Defense Staff	Abayomi Olonishakin	South -West
8	Chief of Army Staff	Tukur Buratai	North -West
9	Chief of Naval Staff	Ibok-Ete Ekwe Ibas	South -South
10	Chief Air Staff	Sadique Abubakar	North -East

11	Chief of Defense Intelligence	Monday Riku Morgan	North Central
12	Director General, State Security Service	Lawal Daura	North -East
13	Chairman, Independent National Electoral Commission	Prof Mahmood Yakubu	North -East
14	Managing Director, Nigeria Ports Authority	Habibu Abdullahi	North -West
15	Special Adviser Niger Delta Amnesty Office	Paul Boroh	South-South
16	Acting Director General Nigeria Maritime Administration Safely and Security Agency NIMASA	Baba Haruna Hauro	North -East
17	Executive Vice Chairman/chief Executive officer, Nigeria Communications Commission	Umaru Danbatta	North -West
18	Executive Chairman federal Inland Revenue service	Babatunde Fowler	South -West
19	Director General Budget of the Federation	Aliyu Gusau	North -West
20	Secretary to the government of the federation	Eng. Babachir David Lawal	North -East
21	Chief of Staff to the President	Alhaji Abba Kyari	North -East
22	Controller General Nigerian Customs Service	Col. Hameed Ibrahim Ali	North -Central
23	Controller General, Immigration Service	Mr.kureMartin Abeshi	North -central
24	Senior Special Adviser to the President on National Assembly Matters	Senator Ita S.J.Enang	South -South
25	Group Managing Director Niger ian National Petroleum Corporation	Emmanuel Kachukwu	South -South

Summary of the above Table

S/N	Geo-political Zone	Frequency	Frequency%
1	North -West	9	36%
2	North -East	6	24%
3	North -central	3	12%
4	South -South	4	16%
5	South -West	3	12%
6	South -East	0	0%

Source: Compiled by Author

The appointments are as seen, with the president from the North West, the vice President from South West, Senate President – North Central, speaker from North East, Chief Justice of the Federal from the North.

The South-South region of the country also known as the Niger-Delta and the South - East felt marginalized out of the political economy of the country, hence renewed agitation from different groups like: Niger Delta- Red Squad, Movement for the Niger Delta Avengers, Adaka Boro Avengers, Asawana Deadly force of Niger Delta, Niger Delta Revolutionary crusaders etc. those militants blew up pipelines and other critical economic infrastructure which led to serious shortfall in the Nation economy.

NNPC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

S/N	NAME (S)	DESIGNATE	STATE/REGION
1.	Mele Kolo Kyari	Group Managing Director	North East
2.	Mrs. Hadiza Homassie	Secretary – Legal Adviser	North
3.	Dr. Stephen Dike	Member	South -East
4.	Chief Pius O. Akinyelure	Member	South -West
5.	Sen. Magus Abe	Member	South- South

6.	Dr. Tajudden Umar	Member	North -East
7.	Mallam Mohammed Lawal	Member	North – West
8.	Mrs. Lamionayi Ahmed	Member	North
9.	Dr. Mahmoud Isa Dutse	Member	North central

Source: compiled by Author

The above table shows Buhari suspected innate ethnocentric and nepotistic tendencies. The NNPC Board Act stipulates six Board members but he appoints nine, six Northerners and three Southerners. The Chairman, Secretary and other important positions are given to the North. Oil is greatly found in the South-South but Northerners occupy good positions and dictate issues since Buhari is from that zone.

Table 4: Appointment of ambassadors by Buhari

S/N	Geo-political Zone	Frequency	Frequency%
1.	North- west	21	23%
2	North- East	17	19%
3	North Central	16	18%
4	South -South	15	18%
5	South- West	13	13%
6	South- East	9	10%

Source: Compiled by Author

Ambassadors from North Western Zone where the president is from are more in number than others. Out of Ninety-one Ambassadors, the North has Fifty -four (54) while the South has Thirty -Seven (37). The South East zone is the most affected. North has 60% while the South has 40%.

Table 5: Buhari's Service Chiefs

S/N	Name (s)	Designate	State/Region
1	Maj. Gen. Attahim Ibrahim	Chief of Army State	North West
2	Rear Adm. Anwal Gambo	Chief of Naval Staff	North West
3	Maj. Gen. Lucky Irabor	Chief of Defence Staff	South-South
IGP4	Air Vice Marshal Isiaka Amino	Chief of Air Staff	South -West
5	Mohammed Adamu	Inspector General of Police	North Central

Source: Compiled by Author

The appointments of services chiefs show no difference as two service chiefs are appointed from the president's zone, to the detriment of other regions. The Inspector General of Police who is supposed to retire has had his appointment extended. People suspect that this was done because he is from the North to avoid another officer who is his next in command and from another zone from emerging. This action of disrespecting the Act establishing the federal character principle by the president is worrisome as each day passes he brings in a Northerner to fill the gap previously occupied by anybody from another zone.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that, the federal character principle is a desired integrative principle taking into consideration the fear of domination of the minorities and the domination that has characterized the public service especially the distribution of national opportunities and appointments. The federal character commission as an agency of government, saddled with the responsibility of ensuring that the principle is adhered to have not been able to perform its role effectively and efficiently as may be desired. The failure can be attributed to many factors, here it is clearly seen that, President Bushari is working against the act establishing the federal character commission by appoint Northerners as Chairmen and secretaries of agencies and commissions, including the federal character commission. Not only that, he is abusing the federation by not respecting the constitution of the land. If truly he is a Nigeria, he should abide by the constitution.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- In order to provide for peaceful co-existence in Nigeria through the federal character commission, I hereby recommend the following:

The presidency should be rotated among the six geo-political zone of Nigeria including the Vice President.

The constitution should be amended to recommend that whoever violate the federal character principle will be impeached. Thus, will reduced the president's veto power, nepotism, favoritism, and ethnicity which political office holders exhibit.

Federal character commission should be made independent to perform its function. It should not be under the control of the presidency.

All public officers who violate the provision of the principle of quota system should be prosecuted and those found guilty should be made to face the wrath of the law.

The appointment of the chairman of commission should be the sole responsibility of federal executive council subject to senate approval to avoid it being a toothless dog which cannot perform its constitutional functions in the hands of the existing president. The process of the removal of the president should be through two third majority of the senate.

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