

THE NORTH AND THE REST OF US: A HISTORICAL EVALUATION OF THE PARADOX OF ONE NIGERIA, 2007-2020

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Abstract

Nigeria, a country with a population of about two hundred (200) million people and about two hundred and fifty (250) ethnic groups with the Igbo, Hausa and the Yoruba as majority, is currently under the domination of the North. Under the 1960 constitution and subsequent constitutions, Nigeria was to practice a Federal System of Government, which implies that all governmental powers are to be shared between the central government and the component units. Thus, one Nigeria was born under a federal system. But from 1960 when Nigeria gained her independence till date, it is evident that one section of the country (North) is heavily dominating the rest. Thus, this paper seeks to answer the questions bordering on the following; is Nigeria really one? Is Nigeria actually practicing federalism? Is the north actually dominating the rest of the country? What are the evidences to show the dominance of the north against the rest of the country? What is to be done to ensure that equity is achieved in Nigeria? Methodologically, the paper adopts the historical investigative method. Data for this paper were from both primary and secondary sources. The paper found that Nigeria is one in theory but in practice is heavily divided, with most of the section marginalized. It, therefore, suggests true federalism as a panacea to the problem of Northern domination against the rest of Nigeria.

Keywords: Nigeria, amalgamation, federalism, domination, restructuring

Introduction

The lowering of the British Union Jack and the mounting of the Green and White flag, which symbolizes the independence of Nigeria from her colonial overlord, was greeted with such enthusiasm like that of an apprentice who served out his master with high hopes of becoming his own master. The British, through Lord Lugard, had in 1914 amalgamated the northern and southern protectorates made up of different ethnic groups and gave it the name 'Nigeria' by Flora Shaw, a British journalist who was later to become the wife of Lord Lugard. With the birth of Nigeria in 1914, Nigeria became the official property of the British until October 1, 1960 when they handed the reins of power to Nigerians in a parliamentary system of government in which the Queen of England was represented by the President, in the person of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe.

Nigeria was looking forward to feeling the great joy that India felt in 1948, or perhaps the joy that Ghana must have felt in 1957, when they eventually laid off the British apron string which tied them to their then colonial masters (Achebe, 2012). But it was unfortunate that unlike India or Ghana, Nigeria had no idea of where she was going or even how to get there because the union in which they are about to enter had no solid foundation, as was the case of India and Ghana. The British had lured the different ethnic groups into a forced union for their own selfish interest; perhaps, to use the riches of the south to develop the north and get the best of its resources for onward repatriation to their home country. The amalgamation negated the saying that two cannot work unless they agree. Thus, the north and south had nothing in common. They have different cultures, languages, religions, educational abilities as well cordial human relations with one another.

Soon after independence, the two separate-but-now-married regions began to sow seeds of discord among themselves, resulting in ethnic, tribal and religious competitions for resource control in the country.

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Prominent among the crisis was the Kano riot of 1953, census crises of 1962-1963 and the electoral crisis of 1964 (Anyaele, 2003). These crises were mainly ethnic in nature, as different ethnic groups tried to consolidate and retain the state power which is a vital tool for any region or state to survive.

According to Mbalisi and Okeke (2020), the fusion of northern and southern Nigeria in 1914, under British colonial rule, laid the foundation for ethnic-based politics in Nigeria. This is so because even before and after independence, the leaders of the different ethnic groups developed ethnic consciousness in their dealings among other ethnic groups. For instance, political parties were formed along ethnic lines. The Northern People's Congress (NPC) was formed in 1951 which metamorphosed from the Northerner's Cultural Organization known as Jam'iyyar Mutanen Arewa (Anyaele, 2003). It had absolute political control in the north and had automatic northerners' allegiance with a strong tradition of obedience to Islam and support for traditional rulers.

The Action Group was formed in March 1951 through the conversion of the Egbe Omo Oduduwa - a Yoruba Cultural Organization. The party was a Yoruba-oriented party with its leaders and executive officers from the west and also located in the west. Other minor political parties were also formed along ethnic lines which deepened ethnic consciousness and rivalry in Nigeria. Such parties include: the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC), the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) and the Niger Delta Congress (NDC) (Ojiakor, 2021).

Again, all the recorded military coups and counter-coups in Nigeria were done along ethnic lines, starting from the first to the last, with the north having the highest coup plotters and executors, all in a bid to maintain the dominance of the entity called Nigeria. This was in

furtherance of their belief that they were born to rule, not minding their lack of exposure to modern way of life and the development of human resources, as they have the least number of educated elite and with the philosophy that Western education is a taboo, as envisaged by the Boko Haram sect (Allison, 2020). This paper seeks to address the question of whether Nigeria as a country is really one, as always acclaimed by our leaders who address it as one Nigeria. It will appraise the relevant areas that show Nigeria is not one in reality, because of the tendencies of the northerners who resolved to dominate the rest of Nigeria.

Historical Evolution of the Nigerian State, 1914-1960

Nigeria officially came into being in 1914 when Lord Lugard amalgamated the northern and southern protectorates into one entity (Ojiakor, 2001). The economic motive of the amalgamation was to create a big trading empire for the purpose of sourcing raw materials and markets for the British industrialized goods. In order to achieve this, it became necessary for the British to allow separate developments of Nigeria economically, socially, culturally and religiously. Therefore, this informed the British introduction of the divide and rule approach into colonial Nigeria. The political development of Nigeria was characterized by many problems such as ethnicism, corruption, constant drifting apart of various peoples of Nigeria, hatred, of which the climax was the military takeover and the resultant civil war. It was the British Secretary of State for Colonies, James Harcourt, who presented a proposal to the British House of Commons to merge the southern and northern protectorates. According to Tamuno, quoted in Ojiakor (2001),

The protectorate of northern Nigeria proved a relatively poor neighbour without direct access to the sea, with large area and population, with costly railway construction, the protectorate of northern Nigeria experienced serious financial difficulties only slightly relieved by the annual grant in aid from her imperial treasure.'

This proposal finally gave birth to what is called Nigeria today, with the attendant consequences of using the riches of the south to develop the north. Although this proposal was rejected by Sir Ralph Moore who saw no reason why the riches of the south should be used to develop the north, it was approved on 1st January, 1914, apparently because Britain did not want any financial commitment to the development of Nigeria. Lugard was appointed its first Governor General.

Nigeria's constitutional development and movements to independence could be traced to 1922, with the introduction of elective principle by the Clifford Constitution which gave birth to the development of first political party in Nigeria in 1923, the Nigeria National Democratic Party (NNDP). The constitution was a landmark in the constitutional development of Nigeria. The elective principle, which it introduced, was the first of its kind in the whole of tropical Africa. The constitution promised more rapid progress towards self-government for Nigeria. But the constitution has one major defect. It was for the southern protectorate alone. The north continued to be administered by proclamation from the governor. Europeans and other business representatives from the north were in the Legislative and Executive councils and thus spoke for the north on matters of financial policy (Onwudufor, 2017).

The Hugh Clifford Constitution of 1922 increased political agitations in Nigeria. Several newspapers also appeared, such as the Lagos Weekly Records and the Lagos Daily News, which helped to create more consciousness in Nigerians. The formation of the National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroon in 1944 gave more impetus to the struggle. It was led by Sir Herbert Macaulay, with Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe as secretary. Its views were propagated by the West Africa Pilot. By means of these media, Nigerian nationalists agitated against British misrule and lack of constitutional progress as promised by

Clifford Constitution in the last 20 years. These agitations, therefore, gave rise to the Richards Constitution of 1946, which was another milestone to the achievement of the independence of Nigeria (Falola, 2003).

In 1948, the British colonial administration in Nigeria at the instigation of the British government took a number of measures to address several of the nationalist grievances. This included the revision of the much-hated Richards Constitution, acceleration of the Africanization/Nigerianization of the civil service, rapid and substantial democratization of the native authority system and the extension of facilities for higher education. The year 1948 was significant in two ways. First, there were political reforms, as demanded by the nationalists since 1945 (Falola, 2003). Secondly, an important segment of Nigeria's population previously inactive or opposed to the ideas and methods of the National Congress for Nigeria and the Cameroon (NCNC) became increasingly articulate and started to agitate, though along different lines, for the same self-government.

In 1951, for reasons of expediency, the NCNC also opted for regionalism which was earlier favoured by most educated elite of western and northern origin. This resulted in the establishment of Houses of Assembly in the regions and in the federal parliament in Lagos. Between 1954 and 1957, the country witnessed yet another important political development. These developments were the holding of election into the House of Representatives and the attainment of self-government by western and eastern regions of Nigeria. The Western and Eastern governments of Nigeria were to attain full self-government in 1957. At the last major constitutional conference of 1957, the North opted for self-government in 1959. At the conference, a 'national government' under the leadership of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa was established.

On January 14, 1960, Alhaji Tafawa Balewa moved the independence motion which was unanimously passed. On October 1, 1960, a united Nigeria became an independent sovereign nation within the Commonwealth. When it became independent in 1960, Nigeria comprised three autonomous regions of varying sizes. But in August 1963, the Mid-West region was carved out of Western Nigeria. Thus, Nigeria became a federation with four regions.

Nigeria and the Practice of Federalism

Federalism is a system of government in which all governmental powers are shared between the centre and the component regions i.e. the state and local governments. Federalism in Nigeria is a product of the colonial administration. The Richards Constitution of 1946 provided the groundwork for the take-off of the federal constitution. But it was the Lyttleton constitution of October 1954 that introduced real federalism in Nigeria which was made up of three regions of north, west and east. In 1963, the Mid-West region was created, making it a federation of four regions. The aim of this federation was to cater for the diverse elements that made up the Nigerian nation and to protect the interest of the minority (Anyaele, 2003).

On 29th May 1967, under the administration of General Gowon, the four (4) existing regions were subdivided into twelve (12) states, with powers and functions similar to those of the regions. This was an attempt to weaken the administrative area of Lt. Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu, the then governor of Eastern Nigeria, and to prevent him from seceding from the federation with the whole region. The four regions were restructured into twelve states, with the former Northern region having six, the Eastern region having three, the Mid-West having one, the Western region having one, and the old Lagos colony with some parts of the Western region making up a state. A military government headed each state, with the exception of the East Central State, with a civilian administrator.

The General Murtala Muhammad regime created additional seven states on 3rd February, 1976, making a total of nineteen states. In 1987, the Babangida administration created two more states, and in 1991, under the same administration, nine more states were created, bringing the number of states to thirty, with Abuja as the Federal Capital Territory. The Abacha regime finally created six additional states on 1st October, 1996, to bring the total number of states to thirty-six, which it presently enjoys.

The replacement of the regions with states hijacked the regional status of Nigerian federalism and made it a kind of federal-unitary state, with the federal government controlling almost everything in the country, as against the provision of a regional government which stipulates that different regions control its resources. To this end, the federal government controls the affairs and resources of the thirty-six states. This formally gave the federal government the right to use the resources of one region to develop other regions, while neglecting the affairs of the regions which own the resources. This implies that Nigeria is not practicing the federal system of government.

The North and the Rest of Us: An Appraisal

This section seeks to appraise the unequal relationship of the north with the rest of the regions that made up Nigeria. The north, which comprised the Hausa/Fulani extraction since independence, has been lording it over all other sections of the country, despite their educationally disadvantaged status in the polity. The north has the highest number of non-educated persons, highest number of out-of-school children, uneducated women because of their Pudah status (Chukwuokpala, 2020), as well as people with disabilities. How this low-profile status of the north improved to make them the ones controlling the affairs of Nigeria is unimaginable.

It was because of this low status of the north and the fear by the northern leaders that they may be dominated by south that delayed the

attainment of independence of Nigeria (Falola, 2003). But from 1960 when Nigeria achieved her independence, the north had devised means and strategies through which they manipulated and controlled the rest of the country, against the stipulations of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Because of their land mass, they claim the highest population in the country, even when the population is only measured in quantity without quality.

From independence till date, the north has produced the highest number of presidents, both military and civilian, as against the true nature of federalism which should have been rotational, so that all sections of the country would have a taste of the national leadership, as is found in a federation. For instance, out of the fourteen presidents of Nigeria (civilian and military), the north has ten, while the rest have four (www.google.com). Thus, the north has made the marginalization of the rest of the sections of the country an instrument to weaken them and maintain absolute supremacy over them. Let us examine the regimes and administrations of northern leaders and how they have clearly allocated everything that belongs to Nigeria to themselves, which informed our decision to title this article ‘the north and the rest of us.’

First, in Nigeria’s 60 years of existence, the north has presented ten leaders at the top, made up of six military and three civilian leaders. This is not because of their excellent leadership abilities and good performance, but because of their burning desire to be at the top and dominate the affairs of the country. In fact, from records of presidential administrations by leaders of northern (Fulani) extraction, with the exception of late Umaru Musa Yar’dua, the northern leadership in Nigeria is adjudged the worst since the independence of Nigeria, with the current administration of General Muhammadu Buhari as a template(Igwe, 2020). It is equally true that all the

Nigerian leaders so far have performed beyond expectation, but those of the north are absolutely worrisome.

Nigeria is a secular state with major religions as Christianity, Islam and the African Traditional Religion. But the north has constantly tried to make Islam the official religion of the country and this happened during the leadership of someone from the northern extraction. Aitah (2020) writes that Nigeria joined the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation in 1986 under the leadership of General Ibrahim Babangida. This was to make Nigeria an Islamic country. What a foolishness?

His action was in solidarity with his northern kinsman, General Buhari. Buhari had, in 1983, when he was the Nigerian military Head of State diplomatically wished to promote Nigeria's membership of the conference by writing to the Nigerian foreign affairs ministry under Ibrahim Gambari who ostensibly advised against the move since Nigeria is a secular state, according to the 1979 constitution (Aitah, 2020). But the intentions of the Buhari regime concerning Nigeria's full membership of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation never materialized, as he was removed from office by General Ibrahim Babangida on August 27, 1985. The above analyses show how the northern leaders were hell-bent on making Nigeria an Islamic state, despite the secular nature of the country and its constitutional provisions. Thus, the north is in the business of making Nigeria a northern property.

Second, the north favoured the introduction of Sharia law in Nigeria's legal system, which was not originally supported by the Nigerian constitution. On October 27, 1999, the then governor of the northern state of Zamfara, Ahmed Sani, introduced Sharia for criminal law in the state. The Sharia Establishment Law was introduced in Zamfara State on October 27, 1999 and came into force on January 27, 2000. The introduction of Sharia in Zamfara State attracted a huge

amount of attention, and Ahmed Sani became the self-appointed champion of Sharia in Nigeria (Human Rights Watch, 2004).

The controversies generated by this singular action raised the suspicion of what the north wanted to achieve with the Sharia law, because after the introduction of Sharia in Zamfara State, other states in the north followed suit. Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Niger, Sokoto and Yobe adopted Sharia in their states' legal system. These twelve states are so far the only states in Nigeria where Sharia courts have the jurisdiction to try criminal cases. The primary concern about the introduction of the Sharia law is because the states mentioned above comprised Muslim and Christians alike. Thus, adopting the law of the north by the north in Nigeria meant subjecting the whole section of Nigeria to northern domination. The leadership of Umaru Musa Yaradua, though acclaimed the best among his kinsmen, was no better in his political appointment and the sharing of the national cake cum commonwealth. Otherwise, how can you explain that notable ministries in the federal service, including Petroleum Resources, Justice, Agriculture, Water Resources, Finance, Works and Housing, National Planning, Federal Capital Territory, Defence, amongst others, were in the hands of the north.

During Yaradua's era, Minister of Agriculture, Alhaji Abba Ruma was from Katsina State. The Minister of Federal Capital territory (FCT), Adamu Aliero, was from Kebbi State. The Finance Minister, Dr Mansur Mukhtar, was from Kano State; Minister for National Planning, Shamsudeen Usman, also hailed from Kano; National Security Adviser, Major Gen. Abdullahi Sarki Mukhtar (rtd.), Kano; Chief of Army Staff, Gen Dambazau, was from Kano State; Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria also hailed from Kano (Alazua, 2009) The Chief Economic Adviser to the President, Alhaji Taminu Yakubu, was from Katsina.

Again, in the Ministry of Petroleum Resources, the same lopsided arrangement also played out. For the avoidance of doubt, the Petroleum Minister, Dr Rilwanu Lukman, hailed from Kaduna State; the Group Managing Director of the NNPC, Sanusi Barkindo, hailed from Adamawa State. The Director General of the National Petroleum Directorate, Alhaji Bello Gusau, hailed from Zamfara. The Executive Secretary of the Petroleum Technology Development Fund (PTDF), Mustapha Rabe Darma, hailed from Katsina. This is unfortunate, for it seems the country is a northern country.

Going by this appointment, it revealed that nobody from the south has ever been appointed Executive Secretary of PTDF; nobody from the south has ever been appointed Agriculture Minister; no southerner has equally tested the Ministry of Water Resources as a substantive minister, and nobody from the south has been appointed the FCT Minister since its creation. But that was just the beginning, as President Muhammadu Buhari is to confirm the northernization agenda of Nigeria, as is being justified by his appointments, developmental projects and security appointments/strategies and deployments.

In 2015, Major General Muhammadu Buhari was elected the president of Nigeria. His election was as a result of what people believe about him, ‘a man of integrity’, but they easily forgot that a leopard can never change its skin. The north has one agenda which every northern leader pledges to uphold, the Islamization/northernization of Nigeria. The first political appointment of the president left much to be desired. The rule of law was undermined; the federal character status of Nigeria was relegated to the background, while glorifying northern supremacy over the rest of Nigeria. Premium Times and The Guardian recorded that Buhari approved the appointment of the following as Service Chiefs of the federation: Major-General Abayomi Gabriel Olonishakin – Chief of Defence Staff - is from Ekiti State; Major-General T.Y. Buratai – Chief of Army Staff - comes from Borno

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State; Rear Admiral Ibok-Ete Ekwes Ibas – Chief of Naval Staff- from Cross River State; Air Vice Marshal Sadique Abubakar – Chief of Air Staff - hails from Bauchi State; Air Vice Marshal Monday Riku Morgan – Chief of Defence Intelligence - hails from Benue State, while Major-General Babagana Monguno (rtd.) – National Security Adviser - is from Borno State (The Guardian, July 2015).

From the above, we can clearly see that the north had the lion's share of the appointment, as out of the six appointments, only the north had four (4) slots, South West, one, the South South had one, while the South East had none. Where is the federal character in practice here? Where is the presence of one Nigeria? As if that was not enough for public outcry, below was his appointment of other security chiefs: the Inspector General of Police, Ibrahim Kpotun Idris was from the north; L. M Daura was appointed the Director General of the State Security Service, replacing Ita Ekpeyong of South South extraction. The head of immigration was David Paradang from the north; the Commandant General of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, Abdullahi Gana Mohammadu, hailed from the north; the Comptroller General of the Nigerian Customs, [Hameed Ali](#), is also from the north, the Director of Fire Service is from the north, the head of National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) is from the north. The Chairman of Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) also comes from the north. It was only the Director of National Intelligence Agency and the Corps Marshal of Federal Road Safety Corps that are from the South West (Saturday Punch, July 2016). What happens to the South South and South East? A breakdown of the following appointments revealed that out of the ten appointments, eight are from the north, while only two are from the 'Rest of Us'

It beats one's imagination that in a country with different ethnic nationalities, languages, cultures and orientations, that only one group of people dominates the National Security Council which determines

the safety, security and otherwise of the entire nation. This indeed is an aberration to democratic norms which Nigeria claims to be practising. The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides for the Federal Character Commission which guides all federal appointments in the country. Thus, all the states, tribes and regions are to be duly and equally represented in any federal appointments, recruitments and distribution of both infrastructure and social amenities in the country. It is surprising that the president who has been trumpeting constitutionality and the rule of law mantra could brazenly subvert without a sense of guilt the very constitution he implored Nigerians to abide by. Section 14(3) of the 1999 Constitution clearly affirms that appointments from the same state and ethnic group in a particular federal agency are a breach of the law of the land.

In November 2015, Buhari approved the appointment of thirty high court judges distributed as follows: north 16, South West, 4; South East, 3 and South South 7 (Premium Times, November 28, 2015). When did the north suddenly become educationally more advantaged than the rest of us? It could be recalled that just before the general election of 2019, that the president removed the Chief Justice of the Federation, Justice Walter Onnoghen, with a flimsy allegation and backed by his northern apologist and replaced him with Justice Tanko Mohammed from the north. His decision was informed by his greed to perpetuate his stay in government, despite his incompetence in the business of governance.

The North, Boko Haram, Fulani Herdsmen and the Rest of Us

The Northernization/Islamization of Nigeria was to be carried out by Boko Haram terrorists and killer herdsmen activities. In 2002, a northerner, [Mohammed Yusuf](#), conceived the Boko Haram sect, which is also known as Jamā'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da'wah wa'l-Jihād. The group has since 2009 unleashed unprecedented terror on Nigerians through massive attacks on churches, mosques, markets and

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parks and killing thousands of people and destroying properties worth billions. Abduction and kidnapping are also another strategy used by the sect to unleash mayhem on the Nigerian populace.

Meanwhile, the term “Boko Haram” is derived from a combination of the Hausa word ‘boko’ which means book and the Arabic word ‘haram’ (forbidden). Thus, Boko Haram means “Western education is forbidden”(Agbibo, 2013). However, since 2009, the Boko Haram, sect based in the north east Nigeria, has been responsible for more violence than any other armed group in Nigeria. They have bombing both military facilities and other installations and kidnapping people at will. In April 2014, a total of 276 students of Chibok in Borno State were abducted from their school (Abubakar, December 30, 2020). Some escaped from their custody, while others are still held by the sect.

On December 25, 2011, Boko Haram bombed St. Theresa’s Catholic Church, Madalla, killing at least 43 people—the highest death toll in a single church bombing (HRW, 2012). Again, the nation’s capital, Abuja, witnessed several Boko Haram bombings, including attacks on the United Nations building on August 25, 2011 and This Day newspaper office on April 26, 2012. Boko Haram jihadists, believed to be from the IS-supported faction loyal to Abu Mus’ab Al-Barnawi, attacked three military bases in northeast Nigeria, destroying one military base and killing a soldier, according to the military and vigilantes (Vanguard, 2017).

In the face of all these attacks, the federal government, led by a northerner, had never taken any decisive decision on how to end the menace of the Boko Haram sect, simply because, according to them, an attack against Boko Haram is attack on the north (All Africa news, June, 2013). The implication of the statement is that Boko Haram should be allowed to operate.

The Fulani herdsmen of the same northern extraction descended massively on farmers, destroying their farms and killing anyone who dared to challenge them. They were seen carrying arms prohibited by the government and the same government came out to say that the herders carry arms to protect themselves. This was in the words of Bauchi State Governor Bala Mohammed (**Oyeleke, 2021**). They are notorious for attacking poor farmers for trying to protect their farms. Sundry examples abound on the Fulani herdsmen attack on communities which try to stop them from destroying their farms. We shall use some communities in all the all the six geopolitical zones to buttress our examples.

On February 2016, no fewer than 7,000 persons were displaced in the wake of a crisis between Fulani herdsmen and Agatu farmers of Benue State. The displaced persons who were sacked from Okokolo, Akwu, Ocholonya, Adagbo, Ugboku and Aila by the rampaging herdsmen were camped at the Ochi Idoma square in Otukpo, Ugbokpo, Adoka, Ojantele, Ikobi and other neighbouring communities (Duru, 2016).

In a related development, a middle-aged woman, Mrs. Grace Zeku, was attacked by suspected armed herdsmen who chopped off her left arm at Gboogyo village in Guma Local Government Area of the state (Duru, 2019).

Vanguard reported in Enugu State, that on April 2016, about 40 persons were killed by some Fulani herdsmen at Nimbo in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area of the state. About seven villages in Nimbo (Nimbo Ngwoko, Ugwuijoro, Ekwuru, Ebor, Enugu Nimbo, Umuome and Ugwuachara) were among the areas attacked. Ten residential houses and a church, Christ Holy Church International, were also burnt by the herdsmen, just as vehicles and motorcycles were destroyed and domestic animals killed (Vanguard April, 2016). In Abia State, a community in Arochukwu council was invaded and

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attacked by Fulani herdsmen, and another community, Ozu Item in Bende council, was again attacked three weeks afterwards with scores of farmers sustaining life-threatening injuries.

In Benin, herdsmen raped a woman and beat her husband to a pulp, at a farm in Ubuneke-Ivbiaro, Owan East Local Government Area of Edo State. The husband of the rape victim, Umoru Agunu, confirmed that armed herdsmen, numbering six, invaded his farm at about 10.30am, beat him up and raped his wife (Vanguard, May 17, 2017).

In Ikoyi-Ile in Orire Local Government Area of Oyo State, farmers were allegedly attacked by Fulani herders. They also cut off the hand of one of the workers and destroyed their farm produce. Another farmer was attacked with machete and two minors were also raped (Ajayi, August 6, 2020).

In all these attacks, the federal government had done nothing to stop its re-occurrence, and that is why it keeps recurring every month and every year. The federal government may claim to have been doing something about it, but they were only paying lip services to douse tension from unsuspecting Nigerians. If we are one Nigeria, then the government should do something to protect the life and property of all Nigerians, instead of treating some like sacred cows.

In the recent past, the federal government declared the non-violent, armless and cause-fighting independent peoples of Biafra a terrorist group, while granting amnesty to Boko Haram sect and Fulani herdsmen whom the international community classified as the third worst terrorist group in the world. This is simply because the IPOB members are not from the north and are not Muslims. If the IPOB had come from the Fulani extraction, would the federal government treat them the same way as they are doing to the eastern agitators who are fighting a just cause? What cause are the Boko Haram and Fulani herdsmen fighting? The above assertion is supported by a statement

credited to the federal government when they insisted that Fulani herdsmen would be treated with deodorant, while the IPOBS would be treated with insecticide. According to the Vice President Yemi Osinbajo,

IPOB is a threat to Nigeria's unity and we the federal executive must crush them and their activities by fire by thunder. So we beg true Nigerians to provide our security agencies with IPOB's information/plans/activities for proper action to be taken immediately!" But when asked about Fulani herdsmen killings, he had this to say;" I plead to Nigerians, don't retaliate Fulani herdsmen killings, pray for them instead; just as we the Federal Executive are praying hard now. (www.nairaland.com)

What an injustice coming from one who is supposed to make peace and reconcile all aggrieved sections of the society as a solution to the problem plaguing the country!

Concluding Reflections

The Federal Republic of Nigeria, as enshrined in the 1963 Republican Constitution, is only in theory than in practice since the creation of twelve state by General Gowon. From then, the federal government seems to have taking the place of the regions in practical terms, while the regions operate only in theory. A federal structure entails that the regions have their own powers and maintain their own separate administrations, while maintaining close ties with the central government. In a federal system, the regions share, among other things, governmental powers with the federal government. In Nigeria, the federal government is the custodian of all powers. They control all security apparatus such as the army, the police, Department of State Services, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps and the Immigration Service.

But since the northern Fulani have been at the helm of power, the federal government has hijacked all the government apparatus with which they use to intimidate the rest of the regions in Nigeria. This is simply because of their agenda to dominate the rest of the country. The northern leaders do not believe in the leadership of any other tribe in Nigeria, that is why they do everything to remain in power. They, therefore, ensure that all strategic positions in the country are controlled by their northern kinsmen, as was recorded above. They clamour for one Nigeria because they are using the riches of the south to develop the north, knowing full well that the north offers nothing. If the country is really one, the federal government should be fair in dealing with all sectors of the country and ensure equity in the distribution of all resources and amenities. For instance, the ongoing construction of railway has not found its way into the east, while the north and some parts of the west have as many railways as possible, even ones constructed to connect the north to its Niger neighbours. The federal government that is controlled by the north is clearly dominating the rest of the country and they know it. It is the position of this paper that Nigeria is not practicing federalism of any sort.

Therefore, we recommend that for the term “one Nigeria” to reflect its meaning, the following must be considered by the federal government; otherwise, one Nigeria will remain a paradox.

First, the constitution must be altered to ensure that true federalism is practised, so that the regions that made up the federation have a sense of belonging and develop at their own pace. In this way, the whole region will control its resources and end marginalization of the federal government against the regions.

Second, the constitution must be revisited to include rotational presidency so that each region will be allowed to produce the president when it is their turn. This way, domination of one section of

the country (the north) against others will be a thing of the past, as each section should know that whatever evil meted against one section should be remembered against them when they assume the leadership of the country.

Third, the federal character principle must be strictly adhered to in terms of any appointment and recruitment in the federation, so that equity and fairness is achieved. The north will no longer take it all. What is due for one section will equally be for all other sections. It is, therefore, believed that if the following recommendations are strictly adhered to, Nigeria will come out of its present state of “Northern Republic of Nigeria”.

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