

ETHNOCENTRISM IN NIGERIA AND ITS CRYSTALLIZATION IN WARRI CRISES 1997-2003

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Abstract

The introduction of Indirect Rule by Lord Lugard in 1914 enhanced the authority of the Northern leaders, the Yoruba Oba, Edo Oba and the Olu who had feudal system before the advent of colonial masters. Indirect Rule did not work in Ibo areas because of the quasi republican nature of the people. The political system that was gradually introduced had personal interests thus Nigerian Youth Movement collapsed in 1941 when Zik's candidate, Samuel Akinsanya failed a by-election. Zik resigned and all the Ibo members followed him. Ethnic gangrene began and gave birth to regionalism in 1947. Ethnic loyalty and political gangrene caused Warri Crises, 1997-2003 which political benefits were able to placate with the formation of G.3 in Delta South Senatorial District. It ushered in a Governorship candidate of their choice.

Introduction

The concept of one Nigeria was muted by Sir Fredrick Lugard's wife in 1914. It was a subterfuge to many because the feudal structure that was in existence was not broken. The feudal structure created by the Jihad of Usman dan Fodio 1804 - 1806 was easily utilized. The plutocrats in the North were easily encouraged.

The old Eastern and Western zones were difficult or recalcitrant to the doctrine of Indirect Rule. The Yoruba had Oba in different areas -Ooni of Ife, Alaafin of Oyo, Alake of Abeokuta, Olu of Ibadan etc. The defunct Western zone had Benin Kingdom under the Oba of Benin. Almost all other ethnic groups to pay homage to him directly. Ijaw seem not to belong to the Benin version. Benike (2002) who quoted Professor

Key Williamson said that the Ijaw came to Nigeria some 5000 years ago.

The Hebrews of the era of Abraham, the protagonist of Judaism that started in about 2000 B.C (Clement 1973 and Davis 1926). The Biblical inference of II Kings 15:29 that is being alluded to showed that the Ijaws were around before the Jews left Egypt in 1446 B. C. E. it should be noted that the battle of Actium between Augustus Octavian Caesar and Mark Anthony and Cleopatra was responsible for the movement of many people from Eastern Roman Empire. The Ijaw and Iwere people could be. one. The claim of Benike (2002) who cited Williamson as saying that the Ijaws were here in Nigeria over 5000 years ago seems to justify Talbot (1926) who described the Ijaw as a people of dim past beyond the dawn of industry, who were neighbours to the Ibo but did not leave any trait of their culture on the people before they came down to the Sombre mangrove zones and occupy nine states in Nigeria today. They were quite itinerant but share linguistic relationships inspite of dialectal diversities from one clan to the other. Itsekiri and Ilaje were also fishermen but not as widely spread as the Ijaw.

The Urhobo of Delta Central Constituency has 36.10% of the population of Delta State share Agbarho as the written language. They have 22 clans, united very strongly by Urhobo Progressive Union created in Warri in 1936 under the leadership of Mukoro Mowoe (Ikime 1977). Isoko was part of Western Urhobo. The table below throws some light on the people of Delta Zone.

Table I

Senatorial Districts	population	percentage
Delta North	1,106,088	30.46%
Delta Central	1,310,290	36.10%
Delta South	1,214,437	33.44%
Total	3,636,815	100%

Source: Delta State Government Publication, 2005.

Eastern Zone were mainly Ibo with few other ethnic groups of Ijaw, Efiks and Ibibio.

Ethnocentrism in Nigeria

Ethnocentrism in its broadest context includes racism, ethnicity, regionalism, segregation, tribalism, cultural diversity and other areas that involve surreptitious deals among people. It might not be too much to regard it as being related to cultism and club affiliations. These are found in Nigeria except racism, because Nigerians are Negroes.

Nigeria that was divided into three Regions in 1947 had Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba as the basis of the division. Other ethnic groups like Ijo, Urhobo, Efik, Ibibio and Itsekiri were sub tribes under the Ibo and Yoruba. Benin Empire and the Kingdom that crumbled on January 3, 1897 did not lose its historical sources of many other ethnic groups except the Ijo who had no link with the Edo but was grouped under the Yoruba.

Nigeria has over 300 languages and dialects. Some of them are mutually unintelligible. They need other main languages for recognition. For instance, Ilaje, Ikale, Ijebu, Okpe, Uvwie etc need Yoruba and Urhobo for national recognition. They are groups that must be carried along to exercise ethnocentrism in Nigeria. This is not intended to be derogatory but a channel that may gradually bring realization to some aspects of ethnic politics in Nigeria. For example, the popular Egbe Omo Oduduwa brings the Yoruba together particularly when non Yoruba is contesting against a Yoruba. This is

common among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria,

They were quasi republican and segmented everywhere thus the Indirect Rule did not succeed in Ibo land as much as it did among Hausa, Yoruba, Edo and Iwore land. These groups had much more accepted feudal structure before the advent of colonial masters.

The exploitation caused by Indirect Rule system started ethnic consciousness of 1930s that gradually gave birth to regionalism under Sir Arthur Richards in 1947. Results of presidential election in 1979.

Table 2

States	NPN	UPN	NPP	GNPP	NRP
1. Anambra	—	—	525	—	—
2. Bauchi	60	25	-----	—	—
3. Bendel	30	53	-----	—	—
4. Benue	70	----	25	—	—
5. Borno	30	25	—	50	—
6. Cross River	60	40	—	—	—
7. Gongola	—	25	30	35	—
8. Imo	—	—	86	—	—
9. Kaduna	40	—	25	—	—
10. Kano	—	—	30	..-	70
11. Kwara	50	M5~~	—	—	—
12. Lagos	—	~83	—	..-	..-
13. Niger	70-	—	25	25	—-
14. Ogun	—	92	—	—	—
15. Ondo	—	94	—	—	—
16. Oyo	—	80	—	—	—
17. Plateau	30	—	—	45	—
18. Rivers	70	25	—	—	—-
19. Sokoto	63	—	—	—	—

Note

1. Anambra 2. Bauchi 3. Bendel 4. Benue 5. Borno 6. Cross River 7. Gongola 8. Imo 9. Kaduna 10. Kano 11. Kwara 12. Lagos 13. Niger 14. Ogun 15. Ondo 16. Oyo 17. Plateau 18. Rivers 19. Sokoto

Source: the General Elections 1979 Report by Federal Electoral Commission.

Although National Party of Nigeria (N.P.N) won the presidential election, the ethnic influence is easily stated on the table above.

Table 3

NPN	UPN	NPP	GNPP	PRP
Bauchi	Bendel	Anambra	Borno	Kano
Benue	Lagos	Imo	Gongola	
C. River	Ogun	Plateau		
Kaduna	Ondo			
Kwara	Oyo			
Niger				
Rivers				
Sokoto				

Source: FEDECO 1979 Graf

It was what the military boys wanted hence they refused to go to Electoral College to avoid the unlikely result of unity party winning the election. Late Chief Obafemi Awolowo said Abuja as a capital territory was not a priority. Secondly, he was going to probe the military boys. The 2.5 billion Naira issue during the leadership era of Obansajo was in the pipe line. It was all these that gave birth to the waver of one-third votes in two-third of the 19 States. The votes pooled by UPN in the Yoruba speaking States, Bendel and Kaduna narrowed down the possibility of NPN. One - third in two - third of the 19 states. Out of the 47, 433,752 registered voters the largest turn out of 16,840,633 were recorded during the presidential election.

The ugly and wrong inclusion of feudal leadership that was brought into democracy in 1941 had not been adjusted properly. When Kofo Abayomi resigned from Nigerian Youth Movement, his position was to be filled. Dr. Nnamdi Azikide wanted Chief Samuel Akinsanya to replace him. Akinsanya was an Ilaje man, a likely political pest to Chief Obafemi Awolowo. Awolowo recommended Sam Earnest Ikoli, an Ijaw man from the Eastern Zone. Sam Ikoli won the election. Zik resigned and all the Ibo in the Nigerian Youth movement (NYM) followed. (Ireyefoju 2000).

The trial and imprisonment of Late Chief Obafemi Awolowo in 1963 was a baby of the coalition government of NPC and NCNC which the census result of 1962 started the discontentment between Eastern and Northern Regions. The 1963 census was conducted and the results were accepted. Yoruba had no leader then thus United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) was formed under the leadership of the Ibo. The coalition Government quaked. The January 15 1966 coup d'tat was executed. The political prisoners were not released, no state was created, Federal system was replaced with Unitary System. Yoruba were perplexed because- the 1941 issue had not been set aside. The counter coup of July 29, 1966 replaced Ibo Head of State with a Northerner. The political prisoners -Awolowo, Jakande, Enaghor, Eke etc were released thus the civil war in Nigeria was effectively handled (Ojiako 1980).

Gangrene and Ethnic Politics in Nigeria

Colonial administration that was heralded by the Royal Niger Company from 1885-1900 and 1914 when Nigeria was born had trading basis in places like Burutu, Warri, Asaba, Calabar, Akassa, Brass etc that were chiefly southern protectorate. The company brought the people together gradually classes were created, Nigerian petty bourgeoisie class sprang up indoctrinated and regarded as ordained leaders of the less privileged (Nnoli 1978).

Ibo and Yoruba plutocrats moved into urban centers and their people followed to serve them. They grew up to serve them as security boys. They perpetuated ethnic groups. For instance, the Nigeria Youth Movement was formed on personal relationship to promote individuals interest. Azikiwe wanted to dominate the group; he was out to reduce the likely popularity of Obafemi Awolowo thus, he associated with the Ijebu. Earnest Sam Ikoli who was the vice president of NYM was not a favourite of Zik. His victory at the by election

led to the resignation of all the Ibo in NYM. (Nnoli 1978). Tables 2 and 3 showed the ethnic chauvinism in Nigerian political scene.

Gangrene had been the basis of our political ideology in Nigeria. The gradual rationalization gave birth to zoning which Shagari administration thwarted in 1983 and Babangida rejected in June 12 1993, which gave birth to Obasanjo's administration of 1999 ~ 2007 with a very strong desire to have a third tenure.

Warn Crises 1997-2003

Warri Crises could be likened to August 1914 revolution that caused the First World War (1914-1919). The Balkan States are Slavonic in origin but closer to Austria, the mistress of Hapsburg Empire. The people of Balkan refused to accept the leadership of Austria because Russia the mistress of Slavonic states was behind them. Austria allowed the heir apparent to drive through the city of Serejeva in one of the Balkan States. They could not brook the insult they killed Prince Ferdinand. Austria gave very stringent conditions to the Balkans, Germans did not wait for Russians reaction before she attacked Russia. Belgium Act of Neutrality was violated by Germany (Itsueli 1983).

Itsekiri were attacked in March 1997. Jaghala was burnt. Subsequently, other places were raised to the floor. July 3, 1999 Okere was attacked. The Itsekiri boys in Okere reacted. It meant they were aware of likely insurrection (Ireyefoju, 2004). The Itsekiri could say the Ijaw drove them to the land and Urhobo drove them to the sea, their only choice was to die by the sword or drowned for they had no body to save them. This was more of lamentation than reality of the situation. It is regrettable to say that the crises did not address any of the clauses at Versailles in 1919 when the League of Nations was formed at the end of the First World War. Warri crises were more of political destabilization of the Urhobo, Itsekiri and Ijaw with a view to

preventing common front against the government. This is said because the August 17, 2003 attack was not enough to quell all the decisions of Kaiama Declaration on the 11th December 1998. (Ireyefoju 2005).

The gangrene of the triumphirate of Ijaw, Isoko and Itsekiri popularly called G.3, the formation of the Urhobo political forum (UPF) and the subsequent publications to justify G.3 leave much to be desired. The acceptance of an Ijaw as the vice president, like Larconia Treaty between Germany and France that weakened the League of Nations made some scholars to pout at Warri Crises. The number of Governorship candidates from Delta Central and North Senatorial Districts showed the effectiveness of G.3 and UPF. UPF appears to have affected other ethnic historical and social groups from being able to pass acceptable order. It was clear that G.3 was going to win the PDP primary election for Delta South Senatorial Zone because they had only one candidate. The swift agreement between Ijaw and Itsekiri was very perplexing. The subsequent introduction of Delta State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission DESOPADEC with an Ijaw as an executive chairman, the Urhobo as the secretary with only 16.18 percent of the oil shows the level of gangring in the political system.

Table 4

Senatorial Districts	Amount	Percentage
Delta North	W4,604,429.167.S1	15.53%
Delta Central	N 6,261,097,748,43	21.13%
Delta South	NI 8,762,029,995.01	63.34%
Total	£J 29,625,557,907.25	100%

Source: Delta State Government
Publication Facts Behind the figures 2005

Table 5
Oil Production According to Senatorial Districts
(2005)

Senatorial Districts	No of Oil fields	Total production	Percentage
North	07	4,187,875	2.66%
Central	15	25,454,823	16.18%
South	38	127,657,713	81.16%
Total	60	157,400,411	100%

Source: Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR).

Tables 4 and 5 show clearly the unreasonability of Warri Crises that were responsible for easy agreement to produce a Governorship candidate (Delta South Senatorial District Elders Forum, 2007).

Itsekiri were using words of incitement while the Urhobo were merely encouraging the boys not raising their emotions because the crises were Warri based. The relationship between the Urhobo of Warri and Ijaw was youth oriented. They were very ephemeral when the elders came in.

The Major General Theophilus Danjuma Report showed ethnic loyalty devoid of sociopolitical principles that gangrene was able deflate immediately during the 2007 election campaign. The stand of every ethnic group was set aside when money politics, gangrene and fibrous ethnic loyalty were on.

Ethnocentrism with its attendant attributes of ethnicity, regionalism, tribalism, segregation and cultural diversity are subsiding with the philosophy of zoning and intermittent violence by youth that need material attention,

Conclusion

The plutocratic democratic system in Nigeria is going down gradually since June 12, 1993 when Social Democratic Party almost or won the elections. The old ethnic policy of Northern Oligarchy prevented Chief M.K.O Abiola from being declared the winner.

Governors of dual parentage were able to win the elections in the States. Nigerians need political ideologies rather than gangrene and political chauvinism.

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