

DO NOT COPY

DO NOT QUOTE

**ETHNIC VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA:
A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

BY

OKWUDIBA NNOLI

© 2003 Okwudiba Nnoli

INTRODUCTION

Why has ethnicity continued to pose serious problems for Nigerian politics and society in spite of various efforts to eradicate it, or at least attenuate it? Unitarism, regionalism, the creation and proliferation of states, ethnic “arithmetic”, ethnic balancing, federal character, National Youth Service Corps, federal unity colleges, various formulas for revenue allocation, secession, the imposition of a two-party system, the proliferation of local government areas, government by grand coalition (power sharing), the policy of WAZOBIA, multi-party democracy, various forms of military rule, relocation of the federal capital, numerous constitutional conferences, and official and non-official exhortations for national unity and interethnic tolerance have all failed to improve the situation. Obviously, the ethnic phenomenon has not been properly understood. Consequently, it cannot be adequately tackled. Therefore, a different perspective on ethnicity needs to be formulated as a basis for further action in this issue area.

Existing explanations assume that the state is neutral in inter-ethnic relations and, therefore, can successfully mediate them. They diagnose ethnic conflict as the product of a struggle for power and wealth among members of constituent ethnic groups. Unless this struggle is properly managed, it tends to explode into violence. It is the responsibility of the (neutral) state to properly manage the struggle. It is further believed that interests arising from, manipulated and mobilized around, ethnic identities differ from one another because of differences among the various ethnic groups. This belief is often supported by evidence that most national policies usually have differential impact on the various ethnic groups, eliciting different reactions from them, which sometimes generate conflict among them. Hardly any thought is given to the origin of ethnic group interests, the similarity of interests across some ethnic groups, and the tendency of state policies to also produce conflict along class, urban and gender lines.

The new perspective on ethnicity moves away from this manner of thinking. Instead, it focuses attention on the relationship between the state and ethnic groups. The state in Nigeria has historically been engaged in a phenomenally aggressive accumulation and projection of political power. During this process established and independent communities are deprived of their autonomy, and status and power hierarchies in these communities are destabilized. Furthermore, state policies have sometimes led to the loss of traditional means of production such as the loss of land and water resources to dams or pollution from petroleum and other manufacturing companies. Structural changes in the economy have also exposed large numbers of Nigerians to external shocks as for instance those caused by periodic changes in the terms of trade against primary crop producers. All these changes are brought about essentially by coercion and by a power structure, during colonial and times of military rule, that was perceived to have no legitimacy.

This coercion by the state (state violence) was often not provoked by the Nigerian people. It often occurred in the routine business of projecting power, through policy

formulation and implementation, to realize vested interests and sustain political domination. In other words, this state violence does not usually arise from articulated and perceived differences between the people and the state. The differences emerge ex post facto from the coercive unilateralism of the state. Eventually a competitive opposition arises from the blatant abuse of state power in a process in which the reckless projection of that power accumulates a critical mass of desperate enemies: labour unions, ethnic groups, counter elites, students, women and businessmen.

During the colonial times Nigerians sought to resist this oppressive state by embracing new identities. Overwhelmingly, they embraced primary identities such as ethnic identity. This is because of the generalized and cultural nature of the threat posed by state violence. Such threats demand the crystallization of the self holistically, a function most adequately performed by primary identities. However, although this recourse to primary identity is a logical response to the threat in question, it is by no means a relevant one. Since the threat is an oppressive power, it cannot be met without power, without engineering through political power, fundamental changes in economy, society and cultural experiences. But ethnic identity, which the threat elicits, is a static identity that is not conducive to framing a serious political project or mounting a political movement of the spread and depth required by the threat. Unfortunately, when the struggle against the threat (state violence) is waged, it is against other ethnic groups (wrong enemies) rather than the rampaging undemocratic state.

Once ethnic conflict thus emerges, it sooner or later reveals its unique and ugly character, namely its all-consuming, violent intensity. Ethnic identity, like all primary identities, crystallizes the self holistically. Its claims are totalistic; ethnicity presumes to articulate all signifying interests and to encapsulate the members' whole way of life. Thus ethnic conflict is necessarily intense because those involved in it are inclined to believe that they are defending their whole way of life. Mobilization into such conflict is easy because ethnicity has the symbolic capacity of defining the totality of an individual's existence, including embodying her fears, hopes and sense of the future. Actions that undermine the group strike at the heart of the (symbolic) existence of its members even though the action may not be directed at them personally. The aggressive and murderous ethnic militiaman may believe that his very existence is threatened by the perceived injury to his ethnic group. In other words, ethnic conflicts are really about human dignity, a signaling that group members are alive and wish to remain so. Thus ethnicity is quite easy to mobilize and manipulate.

Ethnicity and the Tactic of Divide and Rule

The first type of ethnic conflict in Nigeria is the product of the political or administrative policy of divide-and-rule that mobilized and manipulated ethnic consciousness. The first to do so were the colonialists. They manipulated the ethnic

consciousness that emerged from the violence of the colonial state. As a political line, the colonial policy of divide and rule first used ethnic and regional sectionalism to curb Nigerian nationalism and to maintain colonial power. For example, in 1920 Sir Hugh Clifford effectively dampened the emergent West African nationalism by preying on the ethnic sentiment of the Nigerian members of the National Congress of West Africa when they called for the reform of the colonial order. The impact of this colonial machination was disastrous for the nationalist movement. A local Nigerian faction emerged that repudiated the Congress Movement in Nigeria and organized a pro-government reform club. As a result, by 1934 the movement in Nigeria was dead. Nigerians channeled their political attention and sentiments toward their own ethnic groups and organizations.

In fact, the colonial state seized every available opportunity to spread the propaganda that Nigerians did not have a common destiny with respect to political independence because they were separated by differences of history and tradition. Its policy was to secure the right of each ethnic group to maintain its identity, individuality, nationality and chosen form of government, and the peculiar political and social institutions that were presumed to have evolved from the wisdom and accumulated experiences of its previous generations (Nnoli, 1978: 120-122). In the words of the colonial Governor in 1920, Sir Hugh Clifford: "I am entirely convinced of the right, for example, of the people of Egbaland ... of any of the great Emirates of the North ... to maintain that each of them is, in a very real sense, a nation, ...It is the task of the Government of Nigeria to build and fortify these national institutions (Coleman, 1958: 194).

In 1910 the colonial state promulgated the Land and Native Rights Ordinance. This Act formally proclaimed all land in the North (with certain exceptions) as native land to be controlled and administered by the colonial governor. He manipulated this law to limit the number of Southern Nigerians migrating to the North. The colonialist believed that the southerners were capable of undermining the alliance between them and the Fulani ruling class that they deemed crucial for colonial enterprise in Nigeria. Those southerners who crossed this legal barrier faced the policy of "sabon garri". This was a policy of segregating southerners from northerners. In Zaira, for example, this policy led to several different settlements: (a) the walled city, housing the indigenous population (b) Tudun Wada, housing non-indigenous northerners, and (c) Sabon gari for southerners whom the colonialist referred to as "native foreigners". This ethnic polarization of northern towns facilitated ethnic mobilization and manipulation (Nnoli, 1978: 115-116).

For example, in 1932 an ethnic riot nearly erupted in Jos. The exodus of European miners following the Depression occasioned it. The exodus sparked off two pervasive rumours based on a general interpretation of the departures as portending the end of colonial rule: (a) that the unemployed Hausa, constituting mainly Hausa who had migrated to the city following their retrenchment elsewhere as a result of the Depression, were planning to take the property of all departing Europeans and drive all non-

northerners out of the town. (b) The other rumour alleged, instead, that the indigenes of Jos area were preparing to drive out the Hausa and revert to their pre-colonial forms of political administration. (Plotnicov: 1971).

In 1945 violence actually erupted in Jos. By then Igbo traders had arrived to the town in significant numbers. They lived in a section of town called Sarkin Arabs Ward or "Igbo Quarter". More importantly socioeconomic hardship was pervasive; and the nationalists and labour unions, to protest the hardship in particular and colonial rule in general, called a general strike. The strike adversely affected food supplies to the town by rail, causing a general feeling of anxiety and a severe shortage of food. Every morning the District Officer rationed out food to people on a long queue outside the market. Since the strike was a nationalistic outburst against colonial rule, the British colonial officials seized on the resultant hardship in the North to incite northerners against the strike, Azikiwe and the Igbo. Azikiwe was the preeminent nationalist leader at the time. They also manipulated Igbo-Hausa animosity over competition in trading and occupation of residential area to incite the Hausa against the Igbo. In the ensuing conflict the Hausa and Igbo fought for two days. Two people were killed, many others injured and considerable property was destroyed or damaged. It took the combined operations of the police and army sent from Kaduna to restore public order (Plotnicov, 1971).

Similarly, in 1949 the colonialists fomented ethnic hostility by the way they responded to the strike of Enugu coal miners. This was by far the bloodiest of the strikes of the colonial era. It occurred at the Enugu Colliery on 18 November 1949 as the climax of a period of unrest and dissatisfaction among miners. Colonial repression of the strike found expression in the killing of 21 miners by the mobile police and their wounding of 51 other miners. Significantly for inter-ethnic relations, the armed police who did the shooting were predominantly Tiv from the Middle Belt Region of the North. Consequently, relations between the East and the North worsened (Ananaba, 1969: 98-119).

The colonialists even resorted to the manipulation of elections in favour of some section of the country and against another. It is open secret that the British colonial officials were sympathetic to the Native Administration in the North. They were determined to protect it from radical nationalist influences from southerners and their northern allies. For example, in the 1951 elections the colonial administration of Kano tried very hard to frustrate the northern allies of Southerners opposed to the candidates of the emirs. These allies were not allowed to hold public meetings, and acts of intimidation and victimization against them were not investigated. In spite of the harassment, however, the candidates opposed to the traditional rulers swept the polls during the primary elections in the Kano metropolitan area. That no single candidate of the emirs was successful shocked the colonial authorities in Kano and in the regional capital Kaduna. As a result, the office of the Chief Commissioner for the region in Kaduna

instructed the Residents who headed the Provinces to aid the efforts of the Native Administration in the remaining rounds of the election (Nnoli, 1978: 122).

This colonial manipulation of elections poisoned relations between the North and the South. When Nnamdi Azikiwe, a member of the Legislative Council complained of official electoral malpractices, northerners regarded it as a slur on the colonial regime and its Native Administration in the North. And when Azikiwe sent a cablegram to the British Secretary of State for the colonies to intervene and ensure a free and fair election in the region northern politicians resented his action.

The same desire to manipulate ethnic and sectional sentiments underlies some of the provisions of the 1951 Constitution. Under it, the indirect system of elections prevailed throughout the country. But while in the East and West there were three stages the primary, intermediate and final electoral colleges, in the North there were four stages, the town or village, district, emirate and provincial levels. In order to ensure the election of persons sympathetic to the views of the traditional rulers, the emirs and the Native Administration were permitted to nominate a number of contestants equal to 10 per cent of the final (provincial) electoral college. Among these the vast majority were the choices of the emirs. Various pressures operated on the college to elect the emirs' favourites. Thus, in the Kano Emirate in 1951, none of the twenty successful candidates for the Northern House of Assembly had been elected at a lower stage. In fact, ten of the elected members had been defeated in earlier ballots (Sklar, 1963: 30). For the federal elections of 1954, the regulations were altered to permit any ten members of the final Electoral College to nominate non-members as candidates. In Kano Emirate, sixteen of the eighteen nominated in this manner were elected (Sklar, 1963: 30).

Apart from ethnic conflicts arising from direct manipulations of events, as described above, there have been ethnic conflicts arising from indirect manipulation of ethnicity. They are the logical outcomes of the colonial policy of indirect rule. The British colonial administration encouraged communal sentiments among Nigerians. It seized every available opportunity to spread the myth and propaganda that they were "separated from one another by great distance, and by ethnographical, racial, tribal political, social and religious barriers" (Coleman, 1958: 193). This encouragement was reflected structurally by the administrative system of indirect rule and regionalization. Indirect rule started out as an instrument for overcoming the pervasive financial personnel and communications problems of colonial administration in northern Nigeria but ended up as a means for reinforcing communal identity among Nigerians, creating a new sense of communal identity where non existed, and providing a new symbolic and ethnocentric focus for the urban population.

Part and parcel of indirect rule and regionalization were the policy of “Sabon Gari”, and a differential in the introduction of Western education in the country leading to differential in the levels of educational attainment. At the political level, the various parts of the country did not share a common experience for a long time. In fact, from the time of the amalgamation of the North and South in 1914 to 1946 the two parts of the country maintained only a tenuous linkage in law through the person of the Governor. They retained their distinct political identities and maintained separate administrations. Although the Richard’s Constitution that came into operation in 1946 provided for one Legislative Council for the whole country it provided for a House of Chiefs and House of Assembly in the North but just a House of Assembly each in the East and West. As indicated earlier, elections took various forms in different parts of the country.

Direct universal suffrage was first introduced in the Lagos Town Council election in 1950. Outside the capital it was first used in 1951 in the Eastern Region to elect members to the Federal House of Representatives. It was again used for the 1957 election to the Eastern House of Assembly. Direct and quasi-universal and quasi-tax payer suffrage was first used in the West for the 1954 federal elections. Universal franchise emerged in that region in 1956. In the North, on the other hand, direct elections based on taxpayer suffrage were only introduced in 1956 for the election to the regional House of Assembly. Even then it was limited to nineteen specified urban electoral districts.

The federal election of 1959 was concluded on the basis of universal adult suffrage in the East, West and Lagos. In the North, on the other hand, only male persons were eligible to vote or to be voted for. Similarly, by 1958 local government elections in the East, West and Lagos were carried out, as during the parliamentary elections, on the bases of direct election and universal suffrage. But in the North, taxpayer suffrage prevailed in subordinate local councils, including district, village and town councils. In all parliamentary contests, local government elections in the East, West and Lagos and in town councils in the North voting was by secret ballot. But in the rival areas of the North open voting prevailed, with voters grouping behind the candidates of their choice.

One of the consequences (intended or unintended) of this colonially induced socio-economic polarization of the country was the political crisis of 1953 and the violence that erupted between the Hausa and Igbo in Kano that year. The genesis of this crisis was essentially political, the self-government crisis in the House of Representatives. Inter-party rivalry between the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) and the Action Group (AG) for supremacy in the drive to independence led them to fix 1956 as the date for Nigeria. On 31 March 1953, Anthony Enahoro (AG member) moved a motion in the House of Representatives to implement this policy. However, the Northern People’s Congress (NPC) opposed the motion. The party had not officially adopted a policy on the issue and did not wish to be rushed into a binding decision without a mandate. Hence the northern leader, Ahmadu Bello, sought through an amendment to replace the 1956 date with the phrase “as soon as practicable”. The argument about a

mandate notwithstanding, the NPC was unwilling to support the motion because it felt that the North was so far behind the south socio-economically (as a result of colonial policy of indirect rule and regionalization) that it would be a junior partner in an independent Nigeria.

The AG and NCNC had by this time negotiated an alliance to press the issue of self-government in 1956. They, therefore, rejected the northern amendment and, faced with a defeat on the issue, they violently attacked the northern leaders, accusing them of colluding with the British to perpetuate colonial rule. In response the northerners were equally bitter and tempestuous. They accused the southerners of being motivated merely by a partisan desire to outdo each other rather than by any genuine intention for the good of the country. The bitterness and acrimony continued outside the House. The supporters of the NCNC and AG in Lagos hauled insults and abuses at the northern delegates. The Lagos newspapers subjected them to vitriolic criticism and ridicule. The northerners were so angered by these attacks that they adopted an eight-point programme that, in effect, came close to northern secession.

This action, in turn, led to harsher criticism by the NCNC, AG and their newspapers. They vilified the NPC leaders as imperialist stooges who had no mind of their own and who were unrepresentative of their people. In order to prove this unrepresentative character they embarked on campaign tours of the North to mobilize the people behind an early independence date. In the course of the AG tour led by S.L Akintola rioting commenced, involving attacks by the Hausa on the Igbo. Among the southern groups the Igbo, who supported the NCNC, were more numerous than the Yoruba who supported the AG. However, over the years the Igbo had become the traditional victims of Hausa hostility because they were the major socioeconomic competitors of the Hausa. The rioting, which lasted for four days, 16-19 May 1953, claimed 36 dead, 15 northerners and 21 southerners. Some 241 persons were wounded (Northern Region of Nigeria: 1953).

A fallout from this Kano riot and its political antecedents was the northernization policy of the northern regional government. It was designed to punish the southern politicians for their insulting remarks about northern leaders and for their “daring raid” into the northern political space in 1953. The Kano riot led to a greater mutual distrust between northerners and southerners. Shortly after it both the House of Chiefs and House of Assembly in the North passed a motion for strong regional governments linked only by a non-political central agency with mandate only to deal with whatever matters the regional governments passed on to it from time to time (Bello, 143-4). The result was the Lyttleton Constitution of 1954 that provided for the regionalization of the Civil Service, judiciary and law-making bodies, so that each region became freer than before to run its government as it deemed fit.

Sequel to this constitution the northern regional government announced its northernization policy. The Regional Public Service Commission of the North defined it

as a system wherein “if a qualified Northerner is available, he is given priority in recruitment, if no Northerner is available, an expatriate may be recruited or a non-Northerner on contract terms” (Dudley, 1968: 220). In 1958, Ahmadu Bello, the head of government and ruling party in the North, referred to the policy as one that aimed to have “Northerners gain control of everything in the country”(Dudley, 1968: 220). In practice the policy emphasized the exclusion of southerners rather than expatriates. Implementation began at the level where there were most southerners, notably the junior ranks of the northern public service. It proceeded from there upward right to the top. By August 1958, a total of 2,148 southerners had been dismissed from the northern public service since January 1954. By October 1959 only one southern senior civil servant was left in the public service compared to 24 in August 1958 (Sklar, 1963: 327). Furthermore, northernization led to the reassessment of the procedure for the award of contracts by the Provincial Tenders Boards to the disadvantage of southerners; and most retail trade companies found it convenient not to have southerners in their employment (Dudley, 1958: 220).

Ethnic Conflict and the Struggles for Minorities

A new phase of ethnic conflict emerged with the control of some governmental powers by Nigerian political leaders. The latter followed in the footsteps of the colonialists. In their political tutelage under colonial rule Nigerian politicians not only imbibed the policy of repression but also the art of political manipulation, as well as the technique of divide-and rule. As far back as 1948 well before their assumption of governmental powers such political manipulation of ethnicity nearly led to a violent eruption in the capital city of Lagos. At this time Nnamdi Azikiwe’s political opponents were frightened by his power to ruin them not only politically but also financially through branding them as political stooges of imperialism. The resultant resentment against him spilled over to his Igbo co-ethnics whom Azikiwe had also been cultivating politically.

Azikiwe’s critics accused him of ethnic chauvinism and the glorification of the Igbo and their achievement to the neglect of the progress of other groups. In fact, some Yoruba leaders accused him of assassinating the character of prominent Yoruba and began mobilizing the Yoruba community against him at the same time as his Igbo supporters mobilized the Igbo community behind him. Consequently, Igbo-Yoruba tension mounted leading to the formation of the Egbe Omo Oduduwa and, therefore, the inauguration of a period of cold war in Lagos between the two groups. During the course of this war virulent and intemperate ethnic slurs and retaliatory remarks were freely and frequently made (Coleman, 1958: 341-343).

A press war of unprecedented violence was carried on between the *West African Pilot* representing Azikiwe and the *Daily Service* representing his Yoruba rivals. Between July and September of 1948, Igbo-Yoruba hostility assumed such high proportions that

extremists on both sides bought up all available matchets in the Lagos markets in anticipation of ethnic violence. Although violence did not materialize, growth in ethnic prejudice, identification and sentiments had increased beyond tolerable threshold. Ever since, it has become very difficult to reach an agreement on crucial national matters, with the exception of the date for independence, between the Igbo and Yoruba political leaders. The consequent spiraling of tension at the time was reinforced by the introduction of ethnic machinations into the labour movement. When on 29 November 1947, the General Council of the Trade Union Congress (TUC) voted to maintain its affiliation with the NCNC contrary to the wishes of the Yoruba-dominated Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM); the *Daily Service* blamed the decision on the Igbo in the TUC (Coleman, 1958: 346; Ananaba, 1958: 92).

When from 1951 Nigerian politicians began to exercise governmental power, first in the regions and later at the center, the tempo of ethnic conflict quickened. Governmental repression, the harbinger of ethnic identity, became more pervasive and sometimes even more intense than under colonial rule. Although forced labour and colonial-type expeditionary force actions were no longer part of the repertory of repression, nevertheless, the Nigerian politicians continued the inherited process of government by dictation. The produce marketing boards continued to set commodity prices for farmers without their knowledge and consent; and the government invested the huge surpluses of these boards without reference to the interests and views of the farmers. The peasant creators of the wealth suffered in silence. At the political level popular choice was often frustrated by intimidation, thuggery, financial inducement, bribery and corruption, and outright rigging of elections. There was very little, if any, attempt to reach consensus with the people on either the recruitment of political office holders or the choice of policies. And no political opposition was tolerated within the same ethno-regional homeland.

However, this repression found very concrete expression in the struggle by and for the minorities that characterized the second phase of ethnic conflict in Nigeria. With respect to the ethnic question the strategies of the various Nigerian nationalist political parties for winning political power in the country was similar. It included first and foremost the intense mobilization of the ethnic homeland to ensure its monolithic support at times of election, the widening of the political base from the ethnic homeland to include the whole region. Then for parties supported by the three major ethnic groups, Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba, the next objective was to encourage agitation by minority ethnic groups in regions under the control of rival political parties in their struggle for political autonomy. This strategy was designed to weaken rival political parties during elections to the federal political institutions, as well as to obtain the support of the respective minorities during such elections. On the other hand, however, it generated a great deal of conflict in the political system.

The major political parties encouraged political agitation by minorities as a means of generating and increasing their national following. In fact, the Action Group successfully projected a national image, contrary to its Yoruba origin and secessionist sentiments of 1954, by fighting the cause of ethnic minorities in the Eastern and Northern regions. In 1955 the AG-controlled Western House of Assembly passed a resolution supporting the creation of the Mid-West State. Simultaneously, it made similar demands for the creation of the Middle Belt State in the North and the Calabar-Ogoja Rivers (COR) State in the East.

Indeed, for the AG and NPC the only support outside their regions of dominance came from the minority areas of regions controlled by their rivals. In the East, for example, the AG only won votes of sections of Ibibio, Efik and the people of Enyong division, all minorities in the region. In the North it was supported by the following minorities: Bornu division, Chamba of Adamawa, all the peoples of Numan division except the Kanakuru, Birom of Jos, Tiv, Arago of Lafia division, Jarawa and Sayawa of Bauchi division, and Ekiti, Igolo and Igbomina Yoruba of Ilorin division. The only support for the NPC in the South came from the Ijaw of Brass division in 1959. Only the NCNC managed to win parliamentary seats in the areas of the major ethnic groups that supported its rivals. In the West it was supported by Illa, Ibadan, Ilesha districts Yoruba and Oyo Yoruba of the Modakeke ward. In alliance with the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) it won some seats in Hausa land. But it always won majority votes in the Midwest, particularly among the Igbo, Edo and Urhobo people of the area (Nnoli, 1978).

The unprincipled and manipulative character of the support of the major political parties for the cause of the ethnic minorities as of all political issues was evident on the issue of the separation of Lagos from the Western region and the creation of states. On the question of the separation of Lagos from the West the overriding influence of party political advantage was quite clear. The AG's major interest was the desire to deny Azikiwe his strong national base by bringing the largely NCNC-controlled municipality under the dominance of an AG-controlled regional government. For a contrary reason, the NCNC opposed the merger of Lagos and the West and supported their separation. The AG threatened secession of the West from Nigeria and refused to accept the separation in 1954, remaining defiant until the 1957 Constitutional Conference. Yet in his autobiography Obafemi Awolowo conceded that Lagos was a financial liability to the West and that its merger with that region was not in the regional interest. (Awolowo, 1960: 246).

Similarly, on the creation of states the search for political advantage dominated. For example, while the NCNC supported the creation of the Midwest state out of the western region and actively worked for its fruition, it fiercely opposed the creation of the COR state out of the Eastern region. On its part the AG championed the idea of state creation. In fact, in 1955 it engineered the unanimous adoption of a resolution to create

the Midwest state out of the western region. However, the decision was meant for public consumption. In the elections held in the South in 1954, 1956 and 1957 the NCNC and AG competed for the support of the minorities by identifying with their aspirations for statehood and promising to fight for their cause at the 1957 Constitutional Conference. At that conference both parties committed themselves to the creation of additional states. Only the NPC rejected the creation of new states in the North. Instead, it began to redress the grievances of the minorities in the region. Although the NPC refrained from supporting the agitation of minorities in the East and West, it joined the NCNC to carve out the Midwest state from the West in 1963/64 to spite the AG, and during the 1959 elections it allied with the Niger Delta Congress in the East, which favoured the creation of a separate Rivers State, winning a seat in Brass Division as a result (Nnoli, 1978).

However, each party insisted that no new state would be created in its region of control unless such states were created simultaneously in other regions. Hence, the NCNC, while accepting the creation of new states in principle and the creation of the Midwest state in practice, consistently opposed the creation of the COR state, rationalizing its objection by an argument that the new state was solely motivated by an anti-Igbo sentiment, and suggesting separate statehood for Calabar, Ogoja and Rivers peoples. The AG tied the creation of the Midwest state, to which the Western House was committed, to the simultaneous creation of states in the North and East. In the event, however, the NCNC and NPC took advantage of the weakening of the AG as a result of its factionalization, the consequent political crisis and state of emergency in 1962 to create the Midwest state, essentially to further weaken the AG.

Thus during political campaigns for elections to the regional and federal legislatures, at political rallies, on the pages of newspapers, in petitions, at constitutional conferences, during elections, and even in private conversations the regional leaders spread minority sentiments, chauvinism and exclusiveness in an effort to mobilize mass political support for their cause in the various regions. Intolerant policies of the parties in power in the regions exacerbated inter-ethnic hostility, fanning the embers of ethnic emotions, sentiments and feelings. Often the ruling party employed strong-arm tactics such as arbitrary arrests by the native authority police and similar agencies of the law, police harassment, threats of withdrawal of social services, threats of arrest and the muzzling of opinions in order to intimidate recalcitrant minority groups and their leaders into supporting the regional government. When these failed, policies of victimization were implemented. Equipment already purchased and deployed for projects were withdrawn after elections. Areas voting for the regional opposition were deliberately starved of social amenities as a punishment. The net effect of all this was the increased spread and intensity of ethnic conflict that sometimes exploded into violence.

By the 1959 federal elections, two major political parties vied for Tiv support, the NPC and the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) led by Joseph Tarka and linked in an alliance with the AG. Tarka's support was based essentially on appeals to Tiv ethnic

chauvinism and hostility against the Hausa-Fulani. His major campaign promise was a Middle Belt State in which the Tiv would be free of Hausa-Fulani control. He pointed to the lower status of the chief of the Tiv, the Tor Tiv, relative to the Hausa-Fulani emirs, and blamed the northern rulers for the comparative absence of the Tiv in the public service of the region. He denounced those Tiv who supported the NPC as not being truly Tiv but Hausa, vowing to drive all Hausa out of Tivland. The NPC retaliated by referring to the UMBC supporters not as Tiv but Yoruba, a reference to the alliance between that party and the Action Group, a Yoruba party. In addition the ruling party, acting through the Tor Tiv and local native authority system, mounted a campaign of harassment, intimidation and victimization of its opponents. Tension mounted in the area.

The situation worsened after the election in 1959 that was decisively won by the UMBC. Tarka obtained the largest majority in the whole country. A similar landslide victory took place in all of the seven Tiv constituencies where the UMBC candidates won over 85% of the Tiv votes. The NPC won just under 10 per cent of the votes, of which perhaps a half were from the Hausa living in Tivland, and a half were salaried native authority (NA) chiefs and tax collectors. This result sharply contradicted the pattern elsewhere in the North where the emirs easily persuaded the voters to cast their ballots for the NPC. In Tiv land the utmost efforts of the Tor Tiv and the NA had failed even to save the NPC candidates from losing their deposits.

The NPC reacted by seeking scapegoats. A number of NA staff were dismissed or declared redundant, including the personal secretary to the Tor Tiv who was accused of UMBC sympathy. Also the prison clerk who was suspected of advising the District Officer about some unfair sentences passed on UMBC supported was dismissed. The bicycle hirers who, like the lorry touts, were UMBC supporters were penalized by being ejected from their central location in Gboko and forced into a less favourable one in the market. The local chiefs, including the Tor Tiv, were given more powers much of which they used oppressively against the opposition party supporters.

The latter reacted by attacking NA policemen, disobeying court summonses, abusing chiefs from political platforms, and refusing to pay taxes. The state of political tension increased steadily, causing the number of prisoners in Gboko to double its normal level of 400. Tarka's supporters who made up 85 per cent of the population perceived themselves as destined for a long period of ever increasing pressure and harassment from the NA with hardly any hope that the regional government would intervene on their behalf. Under these circumstances serious riots broke out in 1960 that required the intervention of the Army.

The most serious incidents of the rioting occurred between August and November 1960. Initially, it consisted of attacks and ambushes against the police, court officials, NA personnel, and tax collectors by large numbers of armed men who collected in various villages frequently shouting "Tarka". Later they began to burn the houses of NPC supporters, Hausa-Fulani settlers, the chiefs and the officials of the native administration.

During the course of the riots some 50,000 people were involved in the burning and over 30,000 houses were burnt. Some 20 arsonists were killed by house owners defending their property and by police fire. The scale of the burning was so great that the police force was rendered impotent to maintain law and order, in spite of the large numbers of prisoners it had taken and the participation of over 500 policemen. About 5,000 people were arrested, and property worth over N1million was damaged.

These riots were followed by a three-year period of peace among the contending political parties. However, in 1964 new riots broke out. Although they were not as extensive as those of 1960 and did not involve arson on a large scale, they were characterized by deliberate murder and a great loss of life before the Army was able to bring the situation under some control. Even then, this control remained tenuous until the military coup of January 1966. On the whole, during the 1964 riots, about 2,000 people died, much property was destroyed and thousands of people were imprisoned. Again, as in the 1960 riots, the 1964 uprising was preceded by a general election that was won by the UMBC, and the consequent unleashing of oppressive rule through the NA system.

This manipulation of the struggle of the minorities by political parties of the major ethnic groups, together with the militarization of ethnicity as part of their manipulation of ethnicity set the stage for the military coups that precipitated the Nigerian civil war. Steeped in ethnic politics, the politicians were also quite conscious of the army's critical role in the political process as the final instrument of coercion. They encouraged members of their respective ethnic groups to join the army, and maintained communications with those already in that institution. W.F. Gutteridge reports a case in which an emir encouraged all his male subjects in the appropriate age group to join the army irrespective of their physical condition (Gutteridge, 1969: 64-65). He also notes that Igbo politicians maintained close links with Aguiyi Ironsi and Emeka Ojukwu of the army. At the 1963 treason trial of Obafemi Awolowo, the AG was not only accused of seeking to infiltrate the army with some of its party agents, it was also shown to have attempted to suborn army personnel. (Gutteridge, 1969: 64-65). A result of this ethno-political interest in the army was the introduction of a quota system for recruitment in the army.

Inevitably the army was not only politicized, it was ethnocized. Its participation in the attempts to quell the Tiv uprising further ethnocized it. Further efforts to involve it in a crisis arising from political manipulation in Western region in 1965 compelled some elements within it to rebel. Following the divide-and rule tactics of the NPC the AG broke up into two factions, the Akintola and Awolowo factions. The result was another political crisis. This time it degenerated into widespread violence. The military coup of January 1966 preempted the use of the army to put down the violence. This would have meant supporting the NPC-Akintola alliance against the NCNC-Awolowo alliance. However, as soon as the army entered the government ethnic conflict escalated. This is because much more than the politicians the military are oriented toward the use of force

and repression. They do not understand the fine points of political negotiation or are too impatient to enter the search for political consensus. Organizationally they are more attuned to command than dialogue. The inevitable end point of their intervention in politics at the time was the civil war in which Nigeria and Biafra confronted themselves violently for thirty months (Luckham, 1971).

Indigeniety, Exclusionism and Ethnic Conflict

The third phase of ethnic conflict in Nigeria is characterized by conflicts arising from the contradiction between indigeniety and citizenship in the 1979 and subsequent constitutions. This phase followed from the dynamics of the second phase, the struggle by and for the minorities. New States were created in 1967 and 1976. Yet the problem of minorities persisted because the problem was not the desire for autonomy but for privilege. An attempt to address the latter led to the formulation and implementation of the principle of federal character in the 1979 and subsequent constitutions. The principle no longer addressed the genuine grievances of the minorities per se but the aspirations of all ethnic groups for material advantage. It did not distinguish between majority and minority ethnic groups as in Malaysia and India (Jinadu, 2001). And unlike these other countries its affirmative action clauses were not intended as ad interim measures, to operate for a number of years, after which they would be reviewed and then renewed, modified or dropped (Jinadu, 2001: 24-25).

For understanding ethnic conflict during this phase the critical provision of the federal character principle is section 135 (3) of the 1979 constitution. It stipulates that in the appointment of Ministers, the President shall reflect the federal character of Nigeria “provided that, in giving effect to the provisions aforesaid, the President shall appoint at least one Minister from each State, who shall be an indigene of such a State” (Nigeria Constitution, 1979). Article 210 of the Draft Constitution defines who is an indigene of a state: “belong to” when used with reference to a state refers to a person either of whose parents was a member of a community indigenous to that state” (Nigeria, 1976). In practice the difficulty has been to decide what constitutes a “community indigenous to a state”.

In any case, the federal character provisions in sections 14 (3) and (4), section 135 (3), section 203 (1) (b) inadvertently created three types of Nigerian citizens. The most privileged are those citizens who belong to the indigenous communities of the state in which they reside. Others who are indigenes of other states are less favoured. The least privileged are those citizens who are unable to prove that they belong to a community that is indigenous to any state in Nigeria. Associated with these provisions is the right of each state not only to organize its own affairs in its own way and develop at its own pace, but also the right if necessary to do so by excluding indigenes of other states from full participation in its activities, and discriminating against them in jobs, land purchase,

housing, admission to educational institutions, marriage, business transactions and the distribution of welfare services.

One of the consequences of this exclusionist and divisive system of citizenship has been a number of violent ethnic conflicts. The violent conflict in Zango-Kataf is illustrative. Claims by the indigenous Kataf against the immigrant Hausa community exploded into violence in February 1992. The government set up a commission of inquiry into the disturbance. But in May before the commission's report was released, a new outbreak of violence led to the sacking and burning of the town and some neighbouring villages. In sympathy with their Hausa kith and kin the Hausa majority in Kaduna and Zaria rioted. At the end of the violence over two hundred people had been killed in Zango-Kataf while over one thousand others died in Kaduna, Zaria and elsewhere in the North (Egwu, 1993: 20-24).

A similar violent conflict erupted in 1990, 1991 and 1992 between the indigenous Jukun and the immigrant Tiv communities in Wukari and its environs. This violent conflict is still going on, albeit, with occasional peaceful interludes. Any time it erupts, thousands are killed and wounded and hundreds of houses are burnt or otherwise destroyed (Egwu, 1992 28-29; Best, 1999). The violent conflict that erupted in Toto, Nassarawa state between the (Bassa) and Igbira ethnic communities has a similar character. Dispute over who should pay allegiance to whom in relation to who was indigenous precipitated the violence. The violence that erupted in 1983 and continued intermittently in 1986 and 1995 and culminated in the unprecedented violence of 1997. In this last uprising alone thousands were killed while the whole Bassa ethnic community were displaced. As of today they are still to return permanently to their homes (Alli, 2002). Similarly, the Tiv immigrant community in Nassarawa state has been displaced in large numbers as a result of the violence that attended the death of a chief of an indigenous community in the state in 2001. The death was blamed on the Tiv.

Another illustrative example is the inter-ethnic conflict between the Bachama (Western Bwatiye) and the Hausa immigrants that raged with intensity in 1988. Although the conflict had its immediate origin in land, it was part of ethnic minority politics, the struggle between the northern ethnic minorities and the majority Hausa-Fulani ethnic group. About sixty years ago, Hausa settlers came to Tingo-Wadugu in Bachamaland as farmers and fishermen. Bachama chiefs and village heads gave them land. The land grant was in accordance with customs and tradition. Therefore, it was not sold out as private property but to be held in trust for the community. The two communities lived in peace and cooperation until the early 1980s. However, when demobilized soldiers began to return to the villages in the course of the late 1970s and some others responded to the governments 'return to the land' policy, the Bachama need for land became acute. Around the same time, there was evidence of the commercialization of land and land speculation with respect to the land allocated to the Hausa according to custom. Bachama-Hausa skirmishes over farmland began in 1980 (Egwu, n.d).

The conflict reached a threshold of irreversibility in 1987 when Hausa settlers following a disagreement over farmland allegedly killed the Bachama village head of Wadugu in an ambush. To ward off inter-ethnic violence, the government of Gongola State set up an inquiry into the killing. But nothing was done to bring the investigation to a speedy conclusion. The result was a bitter inter-ethnic clash between the two groups. For three days mass killing and destruction of property took place. It took strong measures by the 15th Battalion of the Nigerian Army from the state capital, Yola, to restore peace. Many Bachama were detained and twenty were imprisoned. This incarceration continued to anger the Bachama who accused the authorities of unfair treatment (Egwu, n.d, vanguard, 30 August 1990).

Enter Globalization and the Multinational Corporations.

The fourth phase of ethnic conflict in Nigeria is characterized by the impact of globalization and the multinational corporations on ethnicity. This impact is tripartite: hostility of an ethnic group toward the government, hostility toward the multinational corporation, and hostility toward neighbouring ethnic groups. Underpinning these conflicts is the requirement by globalization that governments in Nigeria and elsewhere facilitate the profit-making and transnational activities of the multinational corporations. In Nigeria this has meant providing abundant land, ignoring pollution requirements and in general permitting these companies to neglect their social responsibilities to the communities where they operate. All this is often done without consulting the local communities or reaching a concensus with them. This state unilateralism generates opposition among ethnic groups towards the government and the companies. It may also generate conflict among ethnic groups, especially over how to share the benefits or burdens of the activities of these foreign companies.

The situation on the Mambilla Plateau in the 1980s is illustrative. This Plateau is considered to be one of the most fertile areas among the designated agricultural belt of Nigeria. Minority ethnic groups, notably the Mambilla, Bansa, Kamba and Kaka are the indigenous inhabitants of the area. However, Hausa-Fulani migrants had also settled there as farmers and cattle rearers. The land question in the area changed dramatically in the 1980s because foreign and local companies, including Lever Brothers, the Savannah Sugar Company and the Nigerian Beverages Company had moved there. Each of the company mentioned above acquired about 2,000 hectares of the best land (African Concord, 14 June 1988). As this commercialization and attendant land speculation intensified, land scarcity became a significant problem for the farmers who hardly ever received the compensation for loss of their farmland. Their anger exploded into violence against the immigrant Hausa farmers and Fulani cattle grazers who were asked by the

indigenes to surrender the land they had been given at the time of their settlement in the area (Nnoli, 1995: 224).

However, the most typical and explosive of conflicts revolving around the multinational corporations are to be found in the Niger delta area. One of the negative impacts of globalization is its whittling away of the power of the state. It has shifted the balance of power in world economy from territory-based governments to transnational corporations. Hence in Nigeria the state is clearly subordinated to transnational corporations who mine, produce and market oil internationally. Thus, Human Rights Watch found that the people of the oil-producing areas were brutalized by agents of the state for attempting to raise grievances with the oil companies. In some cases, the state security forces threatened, beat and jailed members of community delegations even before they presented their cases. Many local people were repressed simply for putting forth an interpretation of a compensation agreement, or for seeking effective compensation for land ruined, or livelihood lost as a result of the operations of the companies (Human Rights Watch, 1999: 2).

Under these conditions of severe state and company repression coupled with the havoc done to the environment and means of livelihood of the people, ethnic identity was inevitably crystallized. It became only a matter of time for conflict to emerge between this ethnic nationalism on the one hand and the state and companies on the other. The case of the Ogoni is illustrative. The Ogoni ethnic group is one of the smaller ethnic groups that inhabit southeastern Nigeria in the Niger delta region of Rivers State. Over the last decade they have become a symbol for minority ethnic groups in their struggle for a fair and just share of national resources. In the spirit of federal character, the Ogonis have staked a clear, direct and unequivocal claim over the resources produced in Ogoniland. For them it is the only way to justice and equity for themselves and other minorities like them. The problem posed by this demand is serious because Ogoniland is one of the major sources of petroleum, the most important revenue earner for the country. The struggle of the Ogonis is symbolic because most of the nation's petroleum is mined in the homelands of small minority groups. It just happens that the Ogonis have articulated these demands most clearly and created the best organization for pursuing them.

The Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) is well known nationally and internationally. It has been in the vanguard of the struggle for Ogoni rights. There are two aspects to this struggle: (a) autonomy and self-determination for the Ogonis, expressed as ownership and control of the natural resources, including petroleum and natural gas, mined or otherwise produced in Ogoni land, (b) an end to environmental damages of Ogoni land and waters by oil companies exploring for and exploiting crude oil resources in the area, and compensation for the environmental damage already done. MOSOP argues that the Ogoni are so small numerically that the federal character policy cannot benefit them. They do not have the necessary numbers to influence federal

government decision on policy. Consequently, they have suffered a severe disadvantage in resource allocation. For example, by 1993 although Ogoniland is an oil producing area the major town of the area, Bori, did not have electricity, water or tarmac roads. Rivers State that administers Ogoniland may receive additional funds because of oil production in Ogoniland but hardly any of this money reaches the Ogonis. Many other small ethnic groups are in similar positions.

To remedy the situation, the Ogoni movement came up with an arrangement by which each ethnic group would have complete control over its natural resources and would only make contributions to the federation for its upkeep. This was such a novel and radical idea of revenue allocation that the federal government, under the Babangida dictatorship, classified MOSOP as a secessionist organization and did everything possible to crush it. It is within the context of this government hostility and that of Shell Development, the multinational oil corporation that exploits crude oil in Ogoniland, that inter-ethnic conflict and violence ensued between the Ogonis and their neighbours.

Although discontent had simmered in Ogoniland over the years, it assumed visibility and its present militancy in 1990 when the Ogoni people presented the federal government with the Ogoni Bill of Rights which demanded self-determination and compensation for the pollution of their fishing waters and the contamination of their farmlands. The resulting confrontation with the Babangida dictatorship reached a head in January 1993 when an Ogoni demonstration was met by violence, brutality and arrest by the law enforcement agencies. In reaction, the Ogonis resisted the laying of an oil pipeline in Ogoniland by Shell Development and Willbros, a pipe laying company. The Nigerian army intervened, killing one person and wounding twelve others. Leaders of MOSOP were arrested. The Ogonis decided to boycott the presidential elections of 12 June 1993.

The Abacha regime continued and intensified this repression of Ogoni people. A Rivers State Internal Security Task Force, a military unit, was created in January 1994 specifically to deal with the Ogoni question. Its brutal repressions in the area, and the trial of Ken Saro-Wiwa, leader of the MOSOP for the death in May, by a mob, of four of his prominent Ogoni opponents testify to the violence of the conflict between a resurgent Ogoni ethnicity and the Nigerian State. Sixteen members of the MOSOP leadership were put on trial for the May 1994 murders. Nine, including Ken Saro-Wiwa, were eventually convicted and sentenced to death by a special tribunal established for the case, whose procedures blatantly violated international standards of due process (Human Rights Watch/Africa, 1996).

Such repression and the one at Umuechem in 1990 did not deter similar protests against the state and the oil companies in the Niger Delta. At Umuechem east of Portharcourt on October 30 and 31, 1990 a protest took place in support of the demand of the community for the provision of electricity, water, roads and other compensations for oil pollution of crops and water supplies. In response on October 31 the Mobile Police

attacked the peaceful demonstrators with teargas and gunfire. They returned at 5am the next day, shooting indiscriminately in a purported attempt to locate three of their members who had not returned the previous evening. Some eighty persons were killed and 495 houses destroyed or badly damaged. Although a judicial commission of inquiry into the repression indicted the Mobile Police for “a reckless disregard for lives and property” no compensation has been paid to the victims of the massacre (Rivers State Government, 1991; Nsirimovu, 1994).

In October 1992 the Movement for the Survival of the Izon (Ijaw) Ethnic Nationality in the Niger Delta (MOSIEND) emerged to articulate grievances and to take actions similar to those of MOSOP. Other similar organizations include the Movement for Reparation to Ogbia (Oloibiri) (MORETO) formed on November 1, 1992, and the Chikoko Movement, formed in August 1997. In December 1998 a gathering of Ijaw youths from different communities adopted the “Kiama Declaration” that declared all the natural resources within Ijawland as Ijaw property. It further demanded the withdrawal of all state armed forces from Ijawland. And it threatened action against oil companies that relied on such armed forces for protection. On January 1, 1999 the Ijaw Youths Council, formed at Kiama, launched “Operation Climate Change” a programme of direct action against the pollution of the Niger Delta (Human Rights Watch, 1999: 130-131).

The activities of the multinational companies also generate conflicts among the various ethnic groups in the Niger Delta. Some of these conflicts are the results of divide-and-rule tactics by the state and oil companies. For example, Human Rights Watch documented the involvement of Nigerian soldiers in attacks on the Ogoni by a neighbouring ethnic group, the Andoni, during the height of the Ogoni crisis. In fact, at that time the Ogoni seemed to be at war with all their neighbours. The attacks were apparently designed to punish the Ogoni for their resistance to the state and oil companies, and to justify a security crackdown against the people (Human Rights Watch/Africa, 1995).

However, conflict also emerges over competing ethnic claims over the area from which oil is produced. For example, in September 1998 in the Ilaje-Esa-Edo local government area of Ondo State, at least fifty persons died and thousands were displaced in armed clashes between Ijaw and Ilaje communities laying competing claims to Apata, an oilrig area located between them. Similarly, starting from March 1997 violence has continually flashed up in Warri between the Ijaw and Itsekiri over ownership of oil-producing land. The 1997 crisis was precipitated by the relocation of a local government headquarters from Ogbe-Ijaw, an Ijaw town, to Ogidigben, an Itsekiri town. Similar local government relocations carried out under Sani Abacha caused violent clashes in other parts of Nigeria, notably the Ife-Modakeke area.

As part of their struggle against the oil companies the youth of the Niger Delta have disrupted the activities of the oil companies in various ways. They take oil workers hostage. For example in March 1997 youths captured a barge delivering goods to a

Chevron installation. They held the crew of seventy Nigerians and twenty expatriates hostage for three days demanding jobs on the vessel. They block access to company employees on their way to work; close flow stations for days, even weeks; halt production; occupy oil platforms thereby disrupting oil production; interfere with oil export; and force companies to employ them or to award contracts to them (Human Rights Watch, 1999: 135-136).

These violent conflicts between the oil minorities on the one hand and the state and oil companies on the other have persisted. They attained notoriety with the Odi massacre of year 2000 when the state carried out a scorched earth action against a village near where some policemen had been killed. A more peaceful variety of such conflicts are the politics of resource control that pits these minorities against some other parts of the country over ownership and control of the oil wealth of the Niger delta. Unlike the struggle of the youths at least this political conflict is playing itself out peacefully. But emerging out of this politics and other politics is the tendency to draw attention to political interest and viewpoint by recourse to popular community violence.

Conclusion: Participatory Democracy and Concesus Building in Ethnic Conflict Resolution

Thus the latest stage of ethnic conflict is informed by the relative success of violence in drawing attention to the injustice and environmental destruction that characterized the lot of the minorities of the oil-rich Niger delta. MOSOP not only succeeded in focusing national attention on the Ogoni and their problems it also focused world attention on Ogoni in particular and the Niger delta in general. This would not have happened without the violence, repression and resistance associated with that struggle. Such success motivated the emergence of similar organizations in the area and the violent and coercive means they sometimes employ. Nevertheless, as a result of this development the interests of the minorities in the area are now more than ever before receiving national attention. Hence the concept of resource control has become legitimized. It can now be discussed publicly, up to the Supreme Court of the land. This has given rise to the fifth and latest phase of ethnic conflict, the phase of provoking ethnic violence as a means of attracting attention to political issues and interests, and of proving political relevance.

This phase hearkens to the period of anti-colonial nationalism when the nationalist political leaders in Lagos and major urban centres were challenged by the colonialists to prove that they represented other than themselves and their selfish interests. In response, the Nigerian leaders fanned out to the rural areas of their ethnic homeland to mobilize the population behind their nationalist demands. This mobilized support together with the

prevailing support of the urban population was instrumental in generating respect of the nationalist movement by the colonialists. Today mobilization of the ethnic community is hackneyed. It is no longer the vogue, everyone does it, and it is no longer regarded as a strong evidence of popular support since it can easily be manipulated. Something more drastic than mere demonstration of popular ethnic support is needed to get national attention. Ethnic violence now fills the gap.

In this sense the introduction of sharia in Zamfara State is illustrative of a similar strategy. Politicians who had languished in virtual national obscurity were suddenly catapulted to the centre stage of national politics. Within the context of the history of Nigerian politics, that policy was so radical that it has a status akin to severe violence. In fact, it may not really be an attempt to pursue a political path dictated by religious belief but a violent protest against the prevailing political dispensation at the federal level. This is probably why it has been characterized in some quarters as “political sharia”.

More violent expressions of this phase may be gleaned from the very intense and destructive violence in Kaduna and Jos since the reintroduction of civilian rule in July 1999. All indications point to the influence of politicians who were worried about their political standing in the national scheme of things. A similar interpretation may be validly made of the most recent incidents in Tiv-Jukun conflict and the various other forms of ethnic violence since 1999. More importantly, this seems to be the trend followed by ethnic politics today and, therefore, more likely to be the genesis of ethnic violence in the future. It is the latest phase of ethnic politics.

Thus in the search for solutions to ethnic conflict in Nigeria it is necessary to take into account these five phases in the history of ethnicity in Nigeria. What is common among the causative factors across the five phases? Obviously, it is not the cultural differences among the various ethnic groups; it is not their geographical interests, or their social and economic interests. In the final analysis it is the degree of repression by successive Nigerian regimes from the colonial to the present times. Such repression during the colonial times prepared the ground for ethnic identity. The difference among African countries on the ethnic question arises from the degree to which this emergent identity has been manipulated by the colonialists, the African anti-colonial leaders and the regimes that ruled following the attainment of independence; the impact of globalization on this identity; and the degree to which the repressions of the colonial times have been nourished by the repressions of successive African regimes.

Therefore, ethnic conflict resolution must, more than anything else, find ways and means of eliminating these repressions. It must also provide a framework that ensures that the manipulation of ethnicity through divide-and-rule policies, other forms of manipulations, as well as domination of ethnic minorities by ethnic majorities is drastically reduced if not totally eliminated. Above all, the politicians should encourage no political framework that panders to the search for personal privileges and advantages.

This search has clearly been the motive for ethnic manipulations and the use of divide-and-rule strategies as well as violence in relations among ethnic groups.

Only a truly democratic political system in which policy formulation and implementation are governed by an unwavering concern and search for dialogue, consensus building and commitment to the interests of the people in their individuality and collectivity is capable of resolving the ethnic question. This is the system usually identified with good governance. It is based on a strong belief in the people, views widespread participation as crucial for responsible and responsive government, citizen involvement is characterized by a sense of shared responsibility in public policy, ordinary people have strong voices in the political process, and there are opportunities to hear diverse views and take them into account in policy formulation and implementation.

The orientation of this type of governance is to empower the people to use the political system to improve their lives. It involves a structured interaction in which the rulers influence the people and the people in turn influence the rulers. The rulers work with and through the organizations of the people. The rulers respect and trust the people, listen to them, have faith in their ability to understand the political process, relate with them on the basis of justice, equality and mutual benefit, and collaborate with them in their daily struggle to improve their lives. In this relationship with the people the rulers go beyond individualism to co-operation, beyond having consent taken to having people actually give it, and beyond voting without choosing to the people actually exercising electoral influence.

In this type of governance the rulers must show concern for the removal of the constraints on the poor. This is because good governance is not advanced by giving the vote to the people while remaining indifferent to the crippling constraints of poverty. Poverty enables the leaders to exploit the dependence of the people on the 'big men' in their communities, manipulate parochial identities, and get away with bribery and intimidation. In such a condition voting becomes merely a metaphor for powerlessness and exploitation, and elections become bondage. Similarly, rulers must devote efforts to fighting against defeatism, docility and opportunism among the people. The need to relate to one another on the basis of mutual respect borne out of a sense of equality and justice is crucial to good governance. Those who do not take human dignity seriously cannot promote or benefit from good governance, nor can they take the democratic claims of others seriously, for these claims are ultimately about human dignity.

Under good governance, rulers exercise power in accordance with widely accepted rules and principles. Among these are the principles of transparency and accountability. Transparency expresses the equality of the ruler and the citizen, while accountability expresses the principles of justice and collaboration in their relations. Furthermore, justice and equality demand that the ruler should respect the rule of law. With good governance, no one is subjected to the whims and caprices of another, to repression or to any form of inhuman treatment. The politician does not intimidate or bribe the people in

order to obtain their political support. Instead, the two constantly consult with each other in order to give and receive advice.

Finally, the linkage between the rulers and the ruled suggests an end to ethnic and religious strife, and other forms of sectional politics in a system where good governance prevails. Respect for the people anywhere is respect for the people everywhere. This is contrary to inciting one people against another for any reason whatever. It is also contrary to lack of civility in relations among politicians in the political process. All politicians serve one people or another, each of them deserves respect. This is not to suggest that political differences and criticism are out of place in good governance. This is far from it. In fact, political differences and criticism are essential ingredients in the search for the best means of improving the lives of the people. Without genuine democracy ethnic violence will persist and even intensify.

Bibliography

African Concord, Lagos, Nigeria June 14, 1988

- Alli, W “Communal Conflict and Population Displacement in Toto LGA, Nassarawa State”, Research report for the PACREP-OXFAM project on Communal Conflicts and Population Displacement in Nigeria, June 2002
- Awolowo, O. Awo: The Autobiography of Chief Obafemi Awolowo (Cambridge University Press, 1960)
- Ananaba, W The Trade Union Movement in Nigeria (Benin: Ethiope 1969)
- Bello, A My Life (London: Macmillan, 1962)
- Best, S “The Tiv-Jukun Conflicts in Wukari, Taraba State” Paper Presented at the methodology conference for the PACREP-OXFAM research project on Communal Conflict and Population Displacement in Nigeria held in Enugu, 1999.
- Coleman, J Nigeria: Background to Nationalism (Berkeley and Los Angeles California: University of California Press, 1958)
- Dent, M “A Minority Party, the United Middle Belt Congress” in A. Mackintosh, ed. Nigerian Government and Politics (London: Allen and Unwin, 1996)

- Dent, M “The Military and the Politicians” in S.K Panter-Brick, ed. Nigerian Politics and Military Rule: Prelude to Civil War (London: Athlone Press, 1970)
- Dudley, B Parties and Politics in Northern Nigeria (London: Frank Cass, 1968)
- Egwu, S. “Agrarian Question and Rural Ethnic Conflicts in Nigeria” Paper presented at the CODESRIA Conference on Ethnic Conflicts in Africa, Nairobi, Kenya, November 1992
- Egwu, S. “Ethnicity, Economic Crisis and National Development in Nigeria” in Okwudiba Nnoli, ed. Deadend to Nigerian Development (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1993)
- Egwu, S. “The Political Economy of Agrarian Transformation in Nigeria”, mimeo, Jos, Nigeria, n.d.
- Egwu, S. The Agrarian Question, Politics and Ethnicity in Rural Nigeria. CASS Monograph No.10
- Gutteridge, W. The Military in African Politics (London: Methuem, 1969)
- Human Rights Watch/Africa, “The Ogoni Crisis: A Case Study of Military Repression in Southeastern Nigeria”, A Human Right Watch Short Report, vol.7 No. 5, July (NY: Human Rights Watch, 1995)
- Human Rights Watch/Africa, “Permanent Transition: Current Violations of Human Rights in Nigeria”, A Human Rights Watch Short Report, vol.8 No. 3(A), September 1996. (NY: Human Rights Watch, 1996)
- Human Rights Watch, The Price of Oil: Corporate Responsibility and Human rights Violations in Nigeria’s Oil producing Communities (NY: Human Rights Watch, 1999)
- Jinadu, A. “Ethnic Conflict and Federalism in Nigeria”, mimeo, Lagos, Nigeria, 2001.
- Luckham, R. The Nigerian Military (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 19971)

- Nigeria, Government of, Report of the Constitution Drafting Committee Containing the Draft Constitution (Lagos: Federal Ministry of Information, 1976)
- Nigeria, Government of Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1979 (Lagos: Government Printer, 1979)
- Nnoli, O. Ethnic politics in Nigeria (Enugu: Fourth Dimension, 1978)
- Nnoli, O Ethnicity and Development in Nigeria (Aldershot: Avebury, 1995)
- Northern Region of Nigeria, Report on the Kano Disturbances, 16th, 17th 18th and 19th May 1953 (Kaduna: Government Printer, 1953)
- Nsirimovu, A. The Massacre of an oil Producing Community: The Umuechem Tragedy Revisited (Portharcourt: Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, November 1994)
- Plotnicov, L. “An Early Nigeria Civil Disturbance: the Hausa-Ibo Riot in Jos”, Journal of Modern African Studies, vol.9 August 1971, No. 295-312.
- Rivers State Government, Report of the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the Umuechem Disturbances (Portharcourt: Rivers State Government, January 1991).
- Sklar, R. Nigeria Political Parties (Princeton: Princeton University press, 1963)
- Tseayo, J. Conflict and Incorporation in Nigeria (Zaria: Gaskiya, 1975)
Vanguard, Lagos Nigeria 30 August 1990.