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## DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE, FEDERAL CHARACTER PRINCIPLES AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

*Overtime Democracy has continued to be seen as the most acceptable way of governance all over the World. The notion is that democracy allows and as well enhances popular as well as citizens' participation in governance, ensures rule of law and allows for effective accountability in governance. Federal character principles, on the other hand, emphasises the sharing of political appointments into public office, among others. The essence is to ensure equality and enhance a sense of belonging among the diverse ethnic and religion groups in Nigeria. But as lofty as the federal character principles seems to be, its implementation has always been marred with corruption coupled with its attendant controversies and conflicts. It seems that the principle has done more harm to the system than good. Base on this premise, the paper examines the interplay between Democracy and Federal Character Principles and its implications for National Development. The paper is purely a documentary research. It relies solely on secondary data collected from books, journals, newspaper and magazines both print and online, and official documents of the government and other NGO's. The data were analyzed descriptively using the content analysis. The paper argued that since the country's adoption of Democratic principles of government in 1999, the implementation of Federal Character Principles that would have ensured equitable citizens participation and accommodation of various ethnic and religion groups has continued to generate serious controversy and conflicts especially in appointment and election into political positions. The paper found out that conflict arising from the misapplication or over- reliance on the application of federal character principle have negative consequences on national development.. The paper therefore concludes that balance of merit with federal character principles has the ability to douse the tension that often arises from misapplication or over reliance of federal character principles and engender national development. To engender national development, the paper recommends merit over federal character principles, which more often than not, promotes mediocrity over meritocracy.*

**Keywords-:** Accountability, Conflict, Democracy, Equity, Participation

## **Introduction**

One major obstacle to achieving National Developmental objectives in many African and other developing nations is lack of good governance. Other challenges like poverty, unemployment insecurity, corruption, nepotism, lack of national integration, economic problems among others are functions of lack of good governance. No wonder, for decades, poverty, farming, war and authoritarian leadership have held back an era of African prosperity and stability. As such, there is a deep hunger for governments that are legitimate, honest and effective Kerry (2015). The experiences in countries like Somalia, Bukina- Faso, Cote,d' Ivorie, Congo, Libya, Egypt, Algeria, among others were as a result of absence of good governance. The major form of government that guarantees good governance is democracy.

Globally, Democracy has been accepted as the best strategy for achieving good governance. The ideal principles of Democracy i.e. popular participation, equal representation, rule of law, separation of powers, fundamental human right, emphasis on equality and justice, effective accountability and transparency, periodic and regular election makes it the most widely acceptable system of government. In the second half of the 20th century, democracies had taken root in the most difficult circumstances in many countries of the world. These include Germany, which had been traumatized by Nazism, India, which had the world's largest population of poor people, and, in the 1990s, in South Africa, which had been disfigured by apartheid. Decolonialisation created a host of new democracies in Africa and Asia, and autocratic regimes gave way to democracy in Greece (1974), Spain (1975), Argentina (1983), Brazil (1985) and Chile (1989). The collapse of the Soviet Union created many fledgling democracies in central Europe. By 2000 Freedom House, an American think-tank, classified 120 countries, or 63% of the world total, as democracies (Wikipedia, encyclopedia, n.d)

Nigeria's experience in democratic governance until 1999 has been that of a failure. This was because of the long years of military incursion into Nigeria politics. From 1960 to 1999, the civilian ruled for only 10 years, while the military ruled for 29 years. The advent of democratic governance in 1999 was a turning point for democratic governance in Nigeria. However, despite the 16 years of consistent democratic rule in Nigeria and with the existence of Federal character principles, it seems the basic ideals of democracy have not been achieved, especially in the area of popular participation and equal representation in governance. Therefore, can it be said that regular election does not culminate into representative democracy? Adio (2015:21) emphasises the importance of popular election in which the people vote count. To him,

*“it is also obvious that representative democracy without elections will be a contradiction in terms, that a democracy where votes do not count is nothing but a farce, and that democracy's promise of good governance will always be delivered in the breach until governments know they stand a good chance of being voted out by the electorate (Adio, 2015:21).*

Agbo (2008) further asserts that the future of Nigeria's democracy clearly depend on the development of a competent electoral system that would power it. To him, such a system should be rugged and dynamic enough to withstand the complexities of the federation and fair enough to withstand the complexities of the Federation and fair enough to address the peculiarities of Nigeria's many people. In a similar vein, Iwu (2008:6) states that, “at the heart of a successful

democracy is the template of representation that should reflect the composition of the country as much as possible in number and heterogeneity of the population”. The above analogy implies that popular participation through a free and fair election and equal representation is sine-qua-non to achieving a virile democracy.

The fundamental strategy to ensure equal representation in Nigeria is through the Federal character principles. The main objective of this principle is to ensure a fair representation that will take care of the heterogeneous nature of Nigeria populace politically, socially and economically. The federal character principles are also aimed at achieving distributive justice, and a state of equality (Osifeso, 2013). However, it seems the implementation of these principles has been mired by conflicts and controversies, which most times threaten the unity and corporate existence of Nigeria as a federating nation. For instance, the outcry of marginalization by the southern part of Nigeria, especially the south east, over the recent appointments made by the federal government is a case in point (Akinboye, 2015, Eke, 2015, Akinlotan, Zebulon, 2015). The recent consistent call for a state of Biafra by the MOSSOB could result to another civil war if it is not properly manage (Onyekwere, 2015). All these have great consequences on National Development. So the question is, how can federal character principles be made to strengthen democracy in Nigeria?

Therefore, the major objective of this paper is to examine the interplay between Democracy and Federal Character Principles as it affects national development in Nigeria. Specifically, the paper examines the dimensions of the interplay between federal character principles in Nigeria. The consequences of the interplay on national development were also examined.

In other to achieve the above objectives, the paper is divided into five sections. section one is the introduction, while the second dwells on the review of literatures, the third section focuses on the theoretical basis of the paper, section four is the analysis of data and discussions of findings, while conclusions made based on findings and recommendations constitute the fifth section. The paper is a documentary research, and it therefore relies solely on secondary data, derived from books, journals, newspapers and magazines, and official document of government institutions and others NGOs both print and online. The data collected was analyzed qualitatively using the content analysis.

## **Conceptual Issues**

### **The Concept of Democracy**

Democracy is one of the nebulous concepts in the social and political sciences that defy single and most acceptable definition from an individual or a particular group. For example, Dahl (1976:5) views democracy as a “political system in which the opportunity to participate in decision making is widely shared among adult citizens”. To Joseph Schumpeter, democracy is a system “for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote” (Kaur, 2002:12). Dahl talks of the conception of ‘Poliarchy’ which has two overt dimensions; on one hand is **competition** which involves organized contestation through regular free and fair elections, and on the other hand is **participation**, which implies the right of virtually all adults to vote and contest for elective offices. In addition, civil liberty is another important and perhaps, the third dimension of poliarchy (Samuel, 2011, Kaur, 2002).

Etymologically, the word democracy was derived from two Greek words: *Demos* (people) and *Kratos* (to rule), meaning ‘*people to rule*’ (Wikipedia). Democracy is people-centered governance, and no wonder, the 16th President of the United State of America Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), defined democracy as the “government of the people by the people and for the people” (Procter, 1978, in Ololobou, 2004:37). Chaji (n.d.:1) defines democracy as “rule by the people”. Hence, democracy can be simply defined as government by popular participation and that is by the people. The people centered notion of democracy pose the greatest challenge to democracy. Any kind of government is rule by the people, but the big question here is, what do we mean by ‘*the people*’? On this note, Kaur (2002:23) argues that “there is not and there has never been a State or City where ‘the people’ means every individual in the state or City. “Even in the Athenian City, direct democracy did not mean that every person in the City had the right to participate in decision-making”.

Because of the complexities in identifying who ‘*the people*’ are as the case may be, they are categorized into two. That is, the ‘rulers and the ruled’ or the ‘leaders and the led’. The level of participation of ‘*the people*’ depends on the divide one belongs. This could also be determined by other factors such as the social and economic status of the individuals. Although, it could be adduced that democracy is a form of government in which power is derived from the people (the led), this is dependent on other factors i.e virile electoral system, political parties, political structures and independent and uncorrupt judiciary among others.

Kari (2013) opines that democracy as a set of principles and practices that evolved and are operated by a group of people. These principles underscore the fundamental premises upon which democracies rest. These principles are essentially the same or substantially similar everywhere. The commonest of these principles include freedom, equality, mass participation, choice among others. This denotes a process of governance which allows a broad mass of people to choose their leaders and in turn guarantees them a broad range of civil rights and dividends. As enumerated by Agbo (2008:6), “the future of Nigeria’s democracy clearly depend on the development of a competent electoral system that would power it, as in advanced democracies like Britain and United State of America”. To him, such a system should be rugged and dynamic enough to withstand the complexities of the federation and fair enough to address the peculiarities of Nigeria’s many people. Such a system would give hope to the minorities and offer assurance to the majority that Nigeria is a commonwealth of all stakeholders. In the emerging system, the majority of eligible voters would be eager to vote because they would have confidence in the electoral system and know their votes are important. All these rest upon good governance.

The World Bank, cited in Edegbo (2004:42) defines governance as “the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development”. True democracy rest on good governance and the major determinant of whether governance is a good or bad is not dependant on effective policy formulation alone, but also on how the policy brought about growth, stability and more importantly, the extent at which it enhances the overall well-being of the citizens. The United Nations (1971) underscores the basic characteristics of good governance particularly under a democratic dispensation, which include but not limited to

participation, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity and justice, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability and strategic vision (Wadak and Jatau, 2009).

Democratic governance started taking shape in Nigeria since 1999, when the military was disengaged from the polity to institutionalize democracy. Ostensibly, democracy was apparently institutionalized and Nigerians expressed a sigh of relief and freedom from the totalitarian and dictatorial military rule for decades, but sustaining this hard-earned democracy has since been bedeviled by a hydra-headed political culture of graft and corruption in its multidimensional complexities. Corruption is essentially the major obstacle to social, political and economic progress of any society and it is apparent that the culture of graft has further accentuated the socio – economic and political down turn of the Nigerian society.

The resultant effect of corruption is that majority of the citizen have been denied the dividend of democracy. Despite its abundant resources, Nigeria is among the 20 poorest countries in the world, with the poverty incidence of over 70 percent. Infant maternity rate is still very high as report indicates that 59,000 women die during or after child birth annually, the second highest after India (Chaji, 2008). Economic wise, the country in the past fifteen years has experience growth especially in its GDP, but there is a discontent between this growth and development. The 2014 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development report index indicates that Nigeria is ranked 153 out of 210 countries in the world.(Chaji, 2008)

There is no doubt from the above, that since 1999, only very few Nigerians have actually enjoy the dividend of democratic rule in terms of direct positive impact on their lives.

### **Federal Character**

The Constitutional Drafting Committee (CDC) inaugurated by the late General Murtala Mohammed on the 18<sup>th</sup> October, 1975, clearly define Federal Character as:

*the distinct desires of the people of Nigeria to promote unity, foster national loyalty and give every citizen of Nigeria a sense of belonging to the nation notwithstanding the divestitures of ethnic origin, culture, language or religions which may exist and which it is their desire to nourish, harness to the entrenchment of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Ammani, 2014:32).*

*Section 14(3) of the 1999 Constitution provides that: “the composition of the Government of the Federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also to command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few State or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in Government or in any of its agencies”.*

Pursuant of the above provision, Section 135(3) states that “in the appointment of Ministers, the president shall reflect the federal character of Nigeria, provided that in giving effects to the provision aforesaid, the president shall appoint at least one Minister from each state who shall be an indigene of such state.” Section 157 also provides that “appointment by the President into the offices of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Head of Service of the Federation, Ambassadors, or the principal representatives abroad, Permanent Secretary or other Chief

Executive in any Ministry or Department of the Federal Government, or any office of the personal staff of the president shall have regard to the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity.” Section 197(2) further provides that “the composition of the officer corps and other ranks of the Armed Forces of the Federation shall reflect the federal character of Nigeria. Other provisions were also made in the constitution to ensure that the federal character principle was operative in the political process”.

Furthermore, Section 153 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution established the Federal Character Commission, as a federal executive body, empowered in Section 8(1) of the Third Schedule of the Constitution to oversee and monitor the implementation of the federal character clauses, as follows:

- i. work out an equitable formula subject to the approval of the National Assembly for the distribution of all cadres of posts in the public service of the Federation and of the States, the armed forces of the Federation, the Nigerian Police Force and other security agencies, government-owned companies and parastatals of the States;
- ii. Promote, monitor and enforce compliance with the principle of proportional sharing of all bureaucratic, economic, media and political posts at all levels of government;
- iii. take such legal measures, including prosecution of the head or staff of any ministry or government body or agency which fails to comply with any federal character principle or formula prescribed by the Commission, and as provided for in Section 8(3) of the Schedule;
- iv. Notwithstanding any provisions in any other law or enactment, the Commission shall ensure that every public company or corporation reflects the federal character in the appointment of its directors and senior management staff.

But in reality and actual practice, the principle has rather become a problem when it is supposed to be a solution. It has failed to redress the imbalance in structure and ethnic domination in government and other public institutions, thus, impeding national integration. So far, the application of the principle shows that it is not capable of resolving the problem of national suspicion among the ethnic groups. It has so far failed to prevent inter-ethnic conflicts and centripetal agitations in Nigeria, For instance, beside the terrorist Boko Haram group who want to establish a Caliphate in the North-East, there is *Arewa Consultative Forum* for the Hausa/Fulani and others in the North. In the South-South are the Niger-Delta militias, the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) among others. In the West, the *Afenifere/OPC* speaks for the Yorubas. In the south-east, the MASSOB recently went on air through “Radio Biafra, requesting for the state of Biafra. Also, the long list of requests for the creation of more states and local government areas during the last national conference is another case in point. The federal character principle has not actually curbed its abuse on the part of the executives in the allocation of resources in an attempt to satisfy the various segments of the society. In operation, the majority ethnic groups are sometimes put at a disadvantage since a less qualified person may have an unfair advantage over a more qualified one.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework of this study is the group theory of policy making as propounded by Bentley (1980). The main premise of the theory is that every society has a large number of groups which engaged in a perpetual struggle for power and domination over each other. The theory emphasises on the group as the basic unit in the study of politics. The theorist views

power as diffused among many interest groups who are competing against each other for power; and that group is a mass of activity directed by interest and the social system. It is the interest which leads to the organization of groups. Bentley (1980) views the activity particularly in a group as more important than its structural composition since the same individual can belong to various groups. Most demands and support for policy are manifested through organized group. The most influential group, according to Bentley (1980), will be decided by the amount of competition and the quality of the competing groups.

Here, the paper examines the interplay of democracy and federal character in Nigeria. The two concepts derive their premise and substances from the ideas of representation, equality and justice. The group theory's emphasis on group as the basic unit of politics is apt with the objective of this study which examine the efficacy of group struggle to acquire power and not only to be a participant, but beneficiaries of the scarce available resources of the nation. Nigeria is a heterogeneous nation and a pluralistic society, an understanding of the interplay and struggle among these diverse ethnic groups in the democratic process to benefit from the dividends of democracy through the federal character principle informed the bases of this study. An understanding of the divers' values, interests and powers play of the various ethno-religious and social-political groups in the country will help to reveal the strength and weaknesses as well as challenges of the federal character principles.

### **Discussion of Findings**

#### **The Interplay between Democracy and Federal Character and consequences for national development**

Democracy is the foundation for effective representation in governance. It is the best strategy for good governance and National integration and development. Democracy constitutes an effective bridge between the elite and the commoners. It is a voice of the commoners as it constitutes an effective channel for their participation in decision making and an avenue to ask for accountability from their representatives. Democracy empowers the populace to decide on those issues that affect their lives and be a benefactor of the resources of the State. It emphasises justice and fairness and equity in the distribution of the resources of the state.

Thus, at the heart of a successful democracy, is the template of representation and this should reflect the composition of the country in order to cater for the heterogeneous preponderance of the population (Agbo, 2008). This must reflect in every ramification of the political, economic, social and administrative realms of the country. For instance, the National Electoral Commission, INEC in 2007 realized the inequality in the existing electoral atlas of Nigeria which makes a fair re-arrangement inevitable and very important. This electoral atlas was later amended to allow for fair representation or participation in political, social and economic activities (Agbo, 2008). This adjustment was made in the spirit of the Federal Character Principle. The problem has been the fear of marginalization and great suspicion expressed by many Nigerians due to lack of good governance and leadership deficit. Hence, governments all levels suffer serious legitimacy crises. The citizens seem not to trust the leaders. This suspicion also extends to the religious and traditional institutions. As asserted by Arowolo and Aluko (2012), Democracy in Nigeria since independence is being practiced with regards to subjective factors and primordial loyalty to one's place of birth, social connection and group affinity. This further collaborate earlier conclusion reached by Ajayi (1995), that Politics and political parties

in Nigeria were ethno-centrally based. The unfolding doubts according to Arowolo and Aluko (2012) is a departure from the guides of democratic ethos and ethics and consequently, the practice of sectional politics where denials of rights takes priority in the distribution of and access to national resources.

The issue of effective and real democratic institutions to achieve popular participation and equal representation has been a mirage. Chief among these institutions include, INEC, the Legislature, the Executive, Judiciary and Political Parties. One of the major problems adduced for the failure of democratic institutions is the lack of capacity on the part of the structure, system and operators of these institutions to achieve set goals (Gberevbua, 2014). The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has been perceived by the electorate as being partisan and a sympathizer of the then ruling party (PDP) at the Federal level. The various States Electoral Commissions were also perceived as such. The then ruling political party tend to manipulate the electoral process to win elections at all cost. This manipulation was effected in collaboration with INEC or SEC and security officials. The resulting political violence after the 2011 presidential election is a reflection of this manipulation. Ironically, the ruling party PDP in Akwa Ibom recently accused the APC government at the center of the harassment of its members and the manner the Department of State Security (DSS) is allegedly aiding and abetting the opposition at the venue of the electoral tribunal currently sitting in Abuja. To them, "Nigerian democracy will not deepen or its traditions entrenched and internalized when the ruling party flagrantly engages in acts that are the very anti-thesis of democratic principles and known conventions" (Udom, 2015). It is unfortunate, it seems that the table has now turned against them, albeit such interference or impunity has been and will remain a clog on Nigerian democratic wheel. The electorates until recently (2015) totally lost confidence in INEC in conducting a free and fair election in the Country.

The 2015 general election was globally celebrated and adjudged to be a great landmark on Nigeria democratic journey. But, can it be said that democracy in Nigeria has mature? Echoing this, Adio (2015: 34) warns against "mistaking a landmark for destination" when he opined that

*Given the historic nature and outcome of the 2015 general election, it is very tempting to crow that Nigeria has arrived democratically or that it has fully consolidated its democracy. It has not. The country is yet to arrive at that point where its democracy has fully mature, where important countervailing institutions have grown robust enough to serve as arenas for resolving conflicts and checkmating possible excesses, where rights and freedoms can be taken for granted, where democratic norms and principles have become second nature, and where democracy has become the only game in town that democratic breakdown and reversal are totally impossible. That point is still some distance off. It is very important not to confuse age with quality or mistake a landmark, no matter how important, for the destination*

The Judiciary in Nigeria is also perceived as partisan especially in cases that relates to election. The Justice Akanbi saga and others mal-administrative judgments, judicial delays are cases in point. The implication is that the populace has lost hope in the Judiciary as an unbiased umpire and the last hope for the common man.

The major reason for the failure of these democratic institutions according to Gberevbia, (2014) was the appointment of leaders into these main democratic institutions based on tribalism or ethnic sentiments. The implication is that those appointed base on sentiment lacked the capacity to adequately manage these institutions to achieve set objectives. Their appointment is in detriment of merit and they are also seen to be loyal to their tribes rather than the nation as a whole in the implementation of policies and programmes that could achieve democratic sustainability (Gberevbia, 2014).

It is incontrovertible that representative democracy has replaced direct democracy and since modern democracy is capitalistic, the political state represents nothing but the rule of a propertied oligarchy. As rightly asserted by Suberu (1996) a fundamental feature of contemporary Nigerian democracy, is the deep and profound distrust of Nigerians for their elected representatives. This is not surprising given the endless abortion and frustration of the aspirations and hopes of the people by successive Nigerian governments. According to Ajayi &Ojo, (2014), if the principle of representative democracy is worthwhile and workable in other countries, its practice in Nigeria is faulty and fraudulent. To them, no one represents or protects the interests of others. Individuals, whether in the cabinet or parliament, can hardly be described as the representatives of the people.

The goal of federal character principles is to ensure and strengthen adequate representation among the diverse groups in Nigeria. However, Ajayi &Ojo (2014), frown at the workability of adequate representation of the citizens. To them, a man can adequately represent another, which constitute a fraction – for example, an agriculturist may represent other agriculturists, lawyers may represent lawyers, a teacher may represent other teachers, etc. The dimensions or levels of representation in Nigeria are so dynamic that, ensuring adequate representation becomes very difficult or almost impossible. The idea of adequate representation in Nigeria goes beyond state, local, zoning and ethnic representations. The new dimensions include gender, professional groups, religious, units of the religious bodies, social groups' representation, among others. These diverse groups exert pressure on the government for representation. Therefore, the question is, is the federal character principle adequate to address the quests of these diverse groups?

In a federal state like Nigeria, the equitable distribution of political offices and appointment and resources of the state are determined by Federal Character Principles. The Federal Character Principle is aimed at solving some of the problems of representativeness and equity in Nigeria. Ezenwa (1987) opines that Federal Character Principles arose out of the need to correct the anomalies that emanated from the random and uneven distribution of natural and economic resources. Although democracy emphasises representativeness or popular participation in governance, the Federal Character Principle defined the modality for achieving fair representation among geo-political groups and ethno-religious and social groups existing in the country. To Ojo (1999), Federal Character principle serves as an integrative mechanism and can be define as fair and effective representation of the various components of the federation in the country's position of power, status and influences. It touches on arrays of problems in the political process which includes discrimination base on ethnicity, religion, gender, the national question, minority problem, discrimination based on indigenization, resources allocation, power sharing, employment and placement in institution among others.

But unfortunately, the success of the Federal Character Principle has been mired by implementation problems. The high rate of, and consistent agitations for more equal representation and distribution of resources by various ethnic groupings point to the fact that Federal Character Principles have not achieved her objectives. The continuous struggle for power and resources, cry of marginalization among the various ethno-religion groupings and high rate of ethno-religious crisis are indications that the Federal Character Principles have failed (Oderemi, 2012, Olukun, 2014, International Society for Civil Liberties on the Rule of Law, 2013).

According to Suberu (1996), the zoning arrangements in political parties are sometimes operated merely to legitimize or reproduce the hegemony of the majority groups. This was particularly so in the Second Republic, when the ruling National Party of Nigeria zoned the three leading positions of presidential candidate, vice-presidential candidate and party chairman to the Hausa-Fulani, Ibo and Yoruba respectively. However, in the fourth republic 1999, the zoning arrangement radically changed as the ruling party, zoned the president, vice-president and party chairmanship seats to south west, North West and middle belt respectively. This was the first time a Yoruba assumes the position of a democratically elected president of Nigeria. Also for the first time a minority tribe from the south-south zone was elected as the president of Nigeria from 2011 to 2015. The zoning arrangement instead of solving the problem of fear of marginalization further aggravates it. The rejection of the then ruling party (Peoples' Democratic Party, PDP) in the south west and the entire northern part of the country could as well be attributed to the lack of internal democracy in PDP. Those who felt marginalized by the party structure quickly aligned with the opposition party (All Progressive People's Congress, APC) who eventually defeated the ruling party in 2015 general election. The party won the presidential election, majority seats in the federal legislative chambers, and states governorship and houses of assembly seats.

In a similar vein, the abuse of the federal character principle for federal character is reflected in broad inter-ethnic representation in the conduct and composition of public agencies. Governing elites at all levels of public authority in Nigeria have tended to bias the distribution of resources and opportunities in favour of their communal and/or political clientele. For example, the appointments so far made by the Buhari administration is been criticize for favoring the North. Out of the thirteen appointments made, only three were from the south, while the remaining ten were from the north (Eke, 2015, Akinboye, 2015, Akinlotan, 2015.).

Examining the impact of the "federal character" principle on the fortunes of minority communities in the Middle-Belt, Tyoden (1993) describes the situation in the Middle-Belt as such:

*.... those who control the apparatus of national power have either not taken the interests of the Middle Belt into consideration in the composition and conduct of the affairs of the government and its S, or have not given these interests enough consideration. This...means that the constitutional provisions (on 'federal character') have not ameliorated... feelings of alienation and deprivation (in the Middle-Belt) because of the refusal or the reluctance of those that have*

*controlled the reins of power in the country over the years to live true to the demands of these provisions (Tyoden, 1993:7).*

The ethno-political obstacle to the effective implementation of proportionally accommodative or power-sharing principles has been compounded by the constitutional and structural contradictions that are built into the operation of the Nigerian federal system. Writing on the Second Republic, for instance, Donald Williams (1992:206) argues that:

*The implementation of proportionality principles was surrounded by controversy from the very beginning. This resulted from the fact that no specific ethnic allocation formula was spelled out in the Constitution, nor was any settled in subsequent negotiations. Rather, allocation was to be apportioned solely on the basis of the nineteen states, a system that was flawed from the start because none of Nigeria's states possesses a perfect demarcation between ethnic groups and boundaries... More importantly, there was no clarification drawn between minority or majority ethnic groups, or North - South cleavages - both important in rectifying inequalities of the past.*

The resultant consequence is that the democratic governance in Nigeria has been characterized by all kinds of anomalies ranging from absence of social justice, alteration of popular public opinion, political killings and assassinations, poverty, unemployment, high rate of corruption, electoral frauds, ethno-religious conflicts and distrust, maternal deaths, insecurity, underpayment, lack of electricity, inadequate good drinking water and roads etc. Despite its abundant resources, Nigeria is among the 20 poorest countries in the world, with poverty incidence of over 70 percent (Chaji, 2008). Also, the World Bank report indicates that Nigeria was ranked third in the global poverty index for 2014. Nigeria also constitutes 7 percent of globally extreme poor (Okocha, 2015). The National Bureau of Statistics put the number of abject poor at 110 million. Also, out of the 72.93 million strong labour forces, 55, 206 million are unemployed, 1.05 million are under employed and 3.14 million are unemployed. Nigeria tops the list of food importing nations with an annual bill of n1.3t growing at a rate of 11 percent (Gani, 2015). This is ironical considering the country's vast arable land and abundant labour force.

Infant mortality rate is still very high as report indicates that 59,000 women die during or after child birth annually, the second highest after India (Chaji, 2008). Similarly, UNICEF report indicates that 1.7 million under five acute malnourished children are in Nigeria, accounting for a tenth of the global total. Also, nearly a thousand Nigerian children die of malnutrition-related causes every day - a total of 361,00 each year (Muanya, 2015). Economic wise, the country in the past fifteen years has experienced growth especially in its GDP, the country was declared as the largest growing economy in Africa in 2013. But, unfortunately, there is a discontent between this growth and development. The 2014 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development report index indicates that Nigeria is ranked 153 out of 210 countries in the world (Newswatch, 2015). All these, among other vices seem to be their portion of dividends of democracy. This implies that the basic ideal of democracy which is good governance has eluded the country over the years and this has far reaching consequences for national development.

In the words of Chaji (2008), only very few Nigerians could testify that democratic rule from 1999 to date has direct positive impact on their lives. Among the very few are the politicians themselves, their families and cronies, business moguls and, consultants who have connections with politicians, professionals and academics given appointments to hold public offices and those who get tokens as defenders and promoters of politicians and public office holders.

The Nigerian people who do not have connections with politicians continue to live in hardship and uncertain future. Dividends of democracy are visible on politicians, public office holders and families and cronies of politicians. Flashy cars, exotic (empty) mansions and shopping malls, frequent trips to foreign countries, expensive dresses and ornaments, fat bank accounts, established businesses ,etc. are some of the dividends of democracy that all can testify that those in the shade of governance do enjoy(Chaji,2008).

Masses are not envying politicians and their cronies for the life of comfort they are enjoying, rather they are demanding for what is supposed to be done for them to at least make life easier for them. They are also still confused as to which type of economic system we are operating as we are underpaid and at the same time the government keeps removing all subsidies that could have cushion the life of poor Nigerians against harder and brutish way of life (Chaji, 2008). The above scenarios have far reaching implications for national development.

Another consequence of the lack of adequate representation is the high rate of insecurity brought about by ethno- religious crisis and militia violence in the country. The result is the colossal loss of lives and properties. For instance, Apart from the Niger Delter militias, the Boko Haram insurgence is been attributed to lack of good representation or marginalization of the masses by the government. The activities of this group have no doubt done a great damage to the socio-economic development of Nigeria. More than 100,000 Nigerians including security personnel had been killed by this group, many have been rendered homeless, and their means of livelihood destroyed. Billions of properties have been destroyed as Trillions of naira has been expended on the war against the group by the Nigerian government, yet the war is not over (Daily Trust, 2015). Many believed government perception and lack of political-will to address the problem right from the start has led to the present situation. In a recent lecture titled “Democracy and Security in Northeast: The Borno Story”, Governor Shetima laments the level of destruction perpetuated by Boko Haram on their victims. He succinctly describes it this way:

*As we are gather here, more than three millions innocent Nigerians from Borno, Yobe, Adamawa and some parts of Nigeria, live in deep agony having lost sons, daughters, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, relations and neighbours after they were brutally attacked by members of the Boko haram insurgents on different days and at various times, sacking these innocent citizens from their communities, making many of them not only orphans, widows, widowers and childless parents but also turning them into refugees in neighboring countries or internally displaced persons living in government established camps or with relations in their respective states and in other parts of Nigeria. In Maiduguri alone, we have about 1.5 million citizens, amongst them infants delivered in camps, nursing mothers, weak old men and women, all of them internally displaced. We have more than five hundred thousand citizens scattered in neighboring countries and*

*other parts of Nigeria, despite our frantic efforts in relocating majority back to government controlled camps. (Daily Trust, July 26, 2015:5-8)*

It seems the war is not over as more lives and properties are been lost almost on a daily basis as a result of the activities of these militias.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Democracy, no doubt, improves human development by encouraging responsive leadership. This can only be made possible when justice, equity, and fairness constitute the watch word. As Skinner rightly asserts, “African countries will continue to be racked by conflicts unless leaders agree about how to govern their multi-faceted nation-states and how to distribute their economic resources equitably without compromise that would ensure ‘ethnic justice’, neither so-called ‘liberal democracy’ nor any other species of government will succeed in Africa” (Nation, 2015:6).

The federal character principle is meant to address the problems of imbalance and inadequate representation among the nations constituting Nigeria. But its application has been faulty and abused by those in the majority. Despite its “faulty philosophical premise” or congenital and operational flaws, the federal character principle has become a cornerstone of ethnic justice and fair government in Nigeria (Diamond 1987:212). The challenge is to enhance its effectiveness, and reduce its susceptibility to manipulation and misapplication by the majority segments. In particular, the federal character principle can be made justifiable in order to enable politically excluded or inadequately represented minority communities to seek appropriate judicial redress. Another additional solution would be to specify the relevant parameters for inter-group representation — for example, by linking such representation to relative ethnic group population, in the true spirit of proportionality. If these are not done, the consequences on national development could be great and devastating as it could lead to lack of congruity and national integration, and cohesion. It could also enhance ethno-religious conflict and as well reduce commitment to national goal. Finally, socio- economic objectives cannot be achieved in an atmosphere of chaos, insecurity and conflict.

The paper therefore recommends a redefinition of the countries philosophies and values that will be suitable and be in consonance with the peculiarity of Nigeria environment. There is the need for re-alignments of the divergent interest into a common political values and culture that would be generally accepted by all Nigerians. That is, the people of Nigeria must develop a code of conduct or governance for both private and public office holders at all levels of government. This should be in form of democratic values and ethos that will be in line with the accepted political values and cultures in Nigeria.

The establishment of an independent and incorruptible and virile political institutions that would be responsible for formulating and implementing and monitoring the re-definition and re-alignment of Nigeria’s divergent political values into a common unit acceptable by all. Government must stop meddling into the affairs and running of these institutions while the umpires must apply global best practices in running the affairs of these institutions. In addition, the right structures and people must be put in place.

Furthermore, the established institutions should be drawn from all the local government areas in Nigeria, professional bodies, religious and traditional institutions. Insistence on quota will kill competence, incentive, and competition and will ultimately undermine productivity. However, there must be political and socio-economic structures that will allow adequate participation by the people from different strata of Nigeria's multi-ethnic society as stakeholders. Attention must be shifted from mediocrity to meritocracy.

Accountability and transparency on the part of public office holders is imperative. The people who are the major stakeholders must hold those they have elected or appointed to represent them to adequately account for their stewardship. Nothing short of this should be accepted by the people.

The current administration's resolve and determination to fight corruption must be supported by all, and it must go beyond government rhetoric, beyond recovery of stolen funds to investing the money in the critical sectors of the economy as against the usual practice of looting the loots. Corruption is not only about money, it is multidimensional and multifaceted ranging from economic to moral and administrative.

In addition, there must be proactive punitive action against corrupt individuals. Just like election tribunal, there must be special court manned by incorruptible judges to prosecute corruption cases. Above all, an attitudinal change is required from the Leaders and the led.

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