

Influence of the Federal Character Principle on National Integration in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examined the influence of the Federal Character Principle (FCP) on National Integration (NI) in Nigeria from pre-colonial, through the colonial and the post-colonial eras to the present day application of the FCP in the country. It states that, FCP was designed to fundamentally address the striking features of Nigeria politics of intense struggles for power among the different ethnic groups in the country between the elites from the North and other Southern counterparts and the various segments, but the practice of FCP in Nigeria so far raises curiosity and doubts. This paper is therefore anchored on identifying issues in the application of FCP as well as options that would promote peaceful co-existence. Given the critical appraisal, the study finds that Ethnocentrism, Elitism, Mediocrity, Mutual suspicion amongst others accounts for some inhibiting factors of the FCP in Nigeria. The conclusion is that, NI is pivotal and absolutely necessary for the stability of the country. Thus, the paper argues that the FCP and Federal Character Commission (FCC) has not been able to address the obvious imbalances in various segments of the country's affairs. Hence, the paper advocates for the urgent need for the consultation of all sections in the implementation of the FCP policy in Nigeria. Finally, the paper recommends that, the FCP clauses inscribed in the 1974 and 1999 constitutions as amended displays heinous attitude by elites and therefore should be expunged, and that efforts be made to thinker smart options for survival as a nation such as "True Federalism", Patriotism, Honesty, and Fairness.

Keyword: Federal Character Principle, National Integration, Nation Building, Elites, Patriotism, Fairness, Livelihood, Struggles for Power

1. Background of the Study

Federal Systems the world over are today increasingly seen as political arrangements that afford an opportunity for the myriad diversities within a political system to find legitimate expression. Elazar (1993) has rightly opined that the federal principle is intrinsically an expression of political diversity and accommodation without in any way undermining the basic commitment to the sovereignty of the nation. Shastri, (2001:1). The very fact that Federalism 'rests upon the love for complexity' Rougement, (1986:21); Shastri, (2001:1), is clearly and pivotally demonstrated by several studies which have focused on capacity of Federal Systems to successfully negotiate and manage political cleavages (as among others Ducachek, 1970; Morrison and Stevenson, 1972; Mehden, 1973; Hibbs, 1973; Diamond et, al. 1988; Kothari, 1988; Ekeh et, al 1989; Osaghae, 1991; Elazar, 1993; Horowitz, 1993; Watts, 1995; Yadav, 1996; Suberu, 1999; Shastri, 2001; Okolo, 2011; Adeosun, 2011; Cornelius and Esheya, 2013).

The desirability and/or attractiveness of the Federalism project is intrinsically and directly linked to the very wide range of options that it offers – Federalism is considered a 'question of degree Bother, (1998: 17); Shastri, (2001:1) – especially in the context of the demands and requirements of a particular society.

As I have noted elsewhere, “from its genesis; Federalism did not begin as a concept that has to do with social or political organization: unlike other concepts, its birth was also not associated with reflective philosophers or that expounded by pedagogic political scientists Okolo, (2011: 1).

However, as a form of political organization, Federalism permits both the compulsions of collective action – in terms of shared values, and the need to retain the “Regional Space” to be meaningfully reconciled.

In contemporary political systems, the strength and usefulness of the Federal design or experiment can be analysed and explained in terms of its capacity to meet two very crucial and vital variables and/or demands, first the need to construct an efficient / effective, dynamic and modern state and second, the desire to celebrate or enjoy diversity. As elucidated earlier, the federal project or experiment needs to be seen not merely as a formal set of institutions and processes, but could also be viewed as a strategy for political management. The implication therefore, is that, there is no ideal federal model for nations to adopt and emulate. Thus, the federal arrangement that a given nation or any political system adopts must be tailored or designed to suit its own distinct social economic, cultural and political realities, and not necessarily fit an ideal federal design. It is in this context, that this seminar paper examines the evolution of the Federal Character Principle (FCP) in Nigeria, and its influence on National Integration (NI), thereby contributing to the debate on comparative federal studies.

The rest part of this paper is structured into five parts. The first part deals with the statement of the problem. This is followed closely with the evolution of the concept of Federal Character Principle (FCP). The next section appraised the Federal Character Principle. The fourth section enumerated and discussed the issues surrounding the application of the FCP and NI. The last section concludes the paper with recommendations.

2. Statement of the Problem

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic state, like many sub-Saharan African States. The Northern part of the country is populated by the Hausa's, the Fulani's, Kanuri's, Igala's, Igbira's and many others. The Southern part of the country on the other hand is occupied by the Yoruba's, the Ibo's or Igbo, the Ijaws, the Edos, the Ibibio's, the Urhobo's and many other small ethnic groupings. Now each of these groups not only inhabits a particular territory or area but also has a distinct language indigenous to them. It was against this background that, when the colonialists came into the country, they met and saw that there was no common language, particularly between and amongst the major ethnic groups and groupings. Another truism about Nigeria is the fact that, she is also a multi – religious state with a substantial population being adherents of Islam (Muslims) Christianity (Christians) and a host of indigenous religions.

In spite of these glaring and obvious differences, the British government unified the various people under a common administration in 1914, one hundred years ago (century). This so called union has been described by a very prominent Nigerian Political Scientist as a “forced brotherhood and sisterhood” Ayoade, (1998:101) thus, the country has since been confronted with the challenges of accommodating diversities, fostering inclusiveness and promoting national unity amongst its diverse ethnic groups that make up the Nigeria's nation – state.

A fundamental and striking feature of Nigeria politics is the intense elites struggle for power among the different ethnic groups in the country. These struggles have been between the elites from the North and other Southern counterpart. Often, the reasons advanced behind the tension are the fears in the North that the more educated South would pre-dominate state institutions as well as the concerns in the southern part of the country that the contentious more populated North would have an edge in the electoral contests. The zero – sum nature of political competition amongst the elites precipitated a very bloody civil war between 1967 and 1970 Adeosun, (2011: 2); Okolo, (2010 pp. 1 – 61). For Orji (2008:125) the soul - searching that followed the civil war reflected in the quest for elite's consensus on how Nigeria should be governed to ensure political stability and fairness in the distribution of resources among the various ethnic groups that inhabit, or makes up the country. See Adeosun, 2011:2.

It is against this background that this paper examines the influence of Federal Character Principle (FCP) in Nigeria and how it has occasioned National Integration (NI) or otherwise.

3. The Evolution of the Concept of Federal Character Principle

In the Nigeria political scene one may like to understand the phrase “Federal Character Principle” (FCP) as applied to Nigerians.

It means the numbers of its constituent members, their inter – relationship, the allocation of powers and functions amongst them and such other tangible matters which are usually carefully spelt out in legal terms in a constitution and on which designated courts of the land can pronounce binding opinions.

However, a visitor requires to spend only about a week in the country, if he/she reads in the public opinion columns of our national dailies to realize that he/she has to work hard to understand the language of Nigeria politics for the phrases means no such thing as he would have thought of at first instance, he will find out that it is used to refer to something not always tangible, not always so legal and not always so constitutional but all the same dear to hearts of Nigerians and therefore very sensitive, highly charged emotionally and, indeed, as politically explosive as gun – cotton. The term FCP is one of the phrases invented by the Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) inaugurated by the late General Murtala Mohammed on 18th October 1975. We also know, however, that it was in the course of the debate on that section of the report of the sub – committee on the Executive and the Legislative, which dealt with how to promote “national loyalty in a multi – ethnic society” that the phrase was coined. In the course of that debate the CDC has split into two broad groups the ostrich postures and the brutal realists or pessimists. The realists or pessimists insisted that:

There had in the past been inter-ethnic rivalry to ensure the domination of government by one ethnic group or combination of ethnic groups to the exclusion of others. It is therefore essential to have some provisions to ensure that the pre-dominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups is avoided in the composition of government or the appointment or election of persons to high offices in the State.

The ostrich-postures accepted that inter-ethnic and sectional rivalry was one of the fatal afflictions of the first republic, but felt it would be indecorous and inadvisable to entrench the principle of “ethnic balancing” in the constitution. According to the ostrich-postures:

The creation of states as well as other provisions of the constitution is sufficient to ensure protection of the rights of the various communities (including minorities). It is therefore unnecessary to insist on the participation of all communities in the government and in any case such participation may be impracticable or unlikely. They further went on to argue that:

“The evolution of national loyalty can only be retarded by playing up the role of sectional representatives in the conduct of the affairs of the state”.

It was in the course of the heated dialogue between these two groups that the term FCP emerged as a term of compromise accepted by most members. Says the CDC Report: the phrase “Federal Character Principle of Nigeria” (FCPN) becomes widely acceptable among various speakers and it seems to embody the ideas, which had motivated the arguments of those who have expressed views on the subject. Thus it became widely acceptable to most members that important bodies like the commission should reflect FCPN.

It is evident from the report of the CDC that the acceptance of the phrase – FCP by most members lay partly in its novelty, partly in its cosmetic character, partly in its rhetorical appeal, but above all in its vagueness. In fact it was so vague in the minds of the CDC members that the committee ended up displaying almost total ignorance of what it had accepted.

Conscious of the major contribution to our national political vocabulary, which it was making through the introduction of this term, the committee, thought it necessary to give a definition of “FCP”, thus:

Refers to the distinctive desire of the people of Nigeria to promote national unity, foster national loyalty and give every citizen of Nigeria a sense of belonging to the national notwithstanding the diversities of ethnic origin, culture, language or religion which may exist and which it is their desire to nourish, harness to the enrichment of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

One cannot regard the above quotation as an apt definition of “FCP”. First, FCP cannot be a desire. If it is anything it is a description of a feature or features, which characterised the Nigeria Federation. Second, it is not quite clear what, according to the passage, the peoples of Nigeria “desire to nourish etc”. In drawing up the passage under discussion, the CDC may have been casting about for some. “Formula to quietness its own troubled waters, rather than defining FCP, in so far as it then attained a measure of consensus, which enabled it to carry on with its assignment, it would appear to have succeeded. But in digging the issue of an apt definition of its newly invented phrase, and in failing to allow the broad implication of that phrase to guide its recommendations on the constitution it merely swept the real political problem of defining the term invented by CDC, under the carpet.

It is the axiom of students of politics that federation's sub-generics have a certain characteristic in common, or rather that federations are meant, for societies, which share a certain basic feature in common. On this William Livingstone, for instance, insists that:

The essence of federalism lies not in the constitutional or institutional structures but in the society itself Federal Government is a device by which the federal qualities of the society are articulated and protected.

Beyond this each federation must have its own character or characteristics of the nature, which depends largely on how successful the founding fathers were in allowing the character of the federal society to determine the structure and character of the federal constitution. In other words the distinctive character of each federation, and by extension its stability, would appear to depend on the degree of harmony or congruence, which exists between the structure and usages of the constitution, the narrower the gap between the two, the greater the stability, while the wider the gap, the higher the incidence of instability.

In short, the phrase "Federal Character of Nigeria" must be taken to mean simply the character of the Nigerian federation. To understand, and therefore to define that character one must take many factors into consideration.

The innate or primordial characteristics of Nigeria's "federal society" going back to the days of yore, the quality and performance of the statesmanship which has sought to harness the inborn characteristics of Nigeria's "federal society" to a federal constitution.

The degree of harmony existing between the primordial features and usages of Nigerian society and the structure and usages of the constitution, the fact that the character of the Nigerian federation has been rather dynamic in response to the changing perceptions of statesmanship and other relevant forces.

It is therefore, perhaps only in the light of history that the meaning of the concept can fully be grasped. In order words, even though it came to be christened only in 1977 by the CDC, the problem now known as federal character has been with us in different forms, and with varying urgency from about 1898 when British made the administrative amalgamation of what later came to be known as Nigeria one of their distant goals. The only difference is that today it wears an uglier and more menacing visage than it had done hitherto.

The history of Nigeria's "federal character" is one of growing complexity and virulence. For reason of simplicity three main epochs will be distinguished here. These are:

- The period of informal Federalism: 1900 – 1960
- The period of Formal Federalism: 1960 – 1966
- The period of Formal Federalism: 1966 – 1979

Each of these periods had its distinctive character, and it is this characters, which today make up the dynamic cosmetic named "FCP" (see Okolo, 2011:96 – 143).

The idea of Federal Character Principle is not new. It was known by different nomenclatures such as zoning or quota system. Its informal origins date back to the pre-independence era of nationalist struggle for participation in the administration of colonial Nigeria and especially after Nigeria became a Federation in 1954.

Originally, during its informal application, it was concerned with legislative representation and equalization of inter-regional opportunities in education and appointments at the Federal level.

Now, in its present formalised and institutionalised form, as enshrined in the 1979, 1989 and 1999 Constitutions, virtually every sphere of federal, state and local governments operation is involved and consequently politicised Agbodike, (1989:182).

It is however instructive to note that the concept of federal character was first popularized under the Murtala/Obasanjo's regime (1975-1979). It became a constitutional matter in the Constitution Drafting Committee and the Constituent Assembly, the bodies which produced the 1979 Constitution. It finally found its way into the constitution as a directive principle of state policy Osaghae, (1988:4-5). It is imperative at this point to define what the principle is. As defined by the 1979 Constitution, section 14(3), it means that: The composition of the Government of the federation or any of its agencies, shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that government or any of its agencies Nnoli, (1996:234).

In the 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 Nnoli,(1996:234).

Again, Section 157 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 on 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) 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. Various other provisions were made in the constitution to ensure that the federal character principle was operative in the political process Nnoli, (1996:234). These constitutional provisions were respectively repeated in the 1989 and 1999 Constitutions. How has the operation of this principle been in practice? Put differently, has the government abided by these provisions by ensuring that no one group dominates the machinery of government? Among comity of nations, a country is distinguished not only by its geographical location but of certain peculiarities which may either be natural or have evolved over a period of time. Nigeria’s peculiarities include; ethnic diversity, religious and cultural differences particularly the feeling of superiority by an ethnic group over the other. It is remarkably relevant to note that ethno-cultural and religious superiority have contributed significantly to most of the problems in the country Kukah, (2003).

Over the years, several regimes have designed and constitutionalised some principles, provisions, policies and programmes aimed at promoting peaceful co-existence among the diverse ethnic nationalities. Specifically and currently too, section 14, subsection 3 of the 1999 constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) as amended states 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 to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also to command national loyalty thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that government or in any of its agencies.

It is widely believed by advocates of the principle that federal character would deeply promote nation building and national integration both of which are sized as the panacea for peaceful co-existence. It is rightly understandable that Nigeria’s history towards federalist status was inadvertent in nature and chequered in composition. There were notable stages and activities during colonial period and in recent time. It is argued and rightly too that Nigeria is a mere geographical expression Awolowo, (1947). This responded directly to why federal character principle was strongly proposed by the 1976 Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) and upheld in the 1999 constitution. The extent to which the provision/principle (federal character) and advocacy have achieved its aim remains imaginary.

For Afigbo, (1987:21) in Ezeibe, (2012) identified some stages in the evolution of federal character which is originally a colonial heritage. The stages include: the period of informal federation 1900-1946; the period of formal federation, first phase, 1946-1966, and the period of formal federation second phase: 1967- present. He further noted that the principle arose out of a compromise among the protagonists of the 1976 CDC. In another perspective, “Amalgamation” theories of the 1898-1914 type were not necessarily the first to hit the political horizon in the territories that later became Nigeria”. Tamuno, (2003:15). He further noted that federalism developed and grew from 1954. The political exercises by the colonialists (then) signaled a marriage of about 250 ethnic nationalities. In order to keep and sustain the marriage, 1979 and 1999 constitutions respectively introduced federal character, while nation building and national integration were propagated by its pundits as the blending cream. On the contrary, the provision and affiliate concepts paradoxically nurtured ethnic and primordial nationalists. Were as Tamuno, (2003:16) noted that the growth, development and practice of federalism, from 1954, allowed both elite and the masses to encounter severe crises, Shivji (2009) aptly states that nationalism became cultural relativism at best or fundamentalism at worst. As it were, these constitutions (1979 and 1999) are products of the military juntas, designed for democratic practice. The beauty of democracy globally lay in equity. Its applicability in Nigeria infers equitable representation of the ethnic nationalities in political appointments, career positions and such other positions of national representation or significance.

The beauty and strength in the merger is probably preferred on democratic principles, such as good moral value and ethics, patriotism and nationalism which stand to promote and sustain synergy among the ethnic nationalities. The question is, do Nigeria's elite and the masses possess the courage and will to uphold and apply those values and tenets that promote peace rather than crises, democracy rather than sentimentalism?

Accordingly, Mohiddin, (2009), posits that there is no universally acceptable model of democracy. Implicit in the idea is that a country is at will to develop democratic principles that promote good understanding, unity and development. This is likely the task which federal character is set to achieve. The principle is home grown in nature and practice. Practice of federal character principle in Nigeria so far raises curiosity and doubts. The seminar paper is therefore anchored on identifying issues in the application of federal character as well as options that would promote peaceful co-existence. The paper is contextually and methodologically opinionated as well as based on scholarly, visual and experienced observation. Now let us look at the concept of FCP, Nation Building (NB) and NI distinctly.

- *Federal Character (FC)*: Olagunju (1987) defined FC as a deliberate design to accommodate less dominant but often forcibly expressed interest. Ezeibe (2012) says that FCP involves a deliberate plan to construct means of ensuring the proper distribution of amenities and government projects in a country. Implicit in the above definitions is that FC is introduced where there are observed differences in culture, tradition and inequality either in human, natural or both. Therefore, FC is a palliative principle aimed at uniting once existed autonomous sub-nationalities through quota system for purposes of equality of opportunities and peaceful co-existence. Ezenwa (1987) and Heirmexy (2011) noted that FC was introduced for equitable sharing of posts and even distribution of natural and economic resources. Contextually, the policy evolved through three main phases: implied, expressed and applied/ practiced. From 1914-1953 the principle was saliently applied as encapsulated by the amalgamation policy. From 1953-1976, it was applied under federalism, introduced in 1954. From 1976 to date, the principle is constitutionalised and fully practiced. Throughout the phases, the principle consummated Nigeria into a catholic marriage which may no longer be enjoyed but conditions for separation is near impossible. For the period, it has only achieved co-existence devoid of peace and this is evident in most national issues and developments.
- *Nation Building (NB)*: Elaiwu in Okorie (2009) defined it as the process of creating unity and sense of belonging among heterogeneous groups in the state. In the view of Wikipedia (2013), it refers to the process of constructing a national identity using the power of the state. It further stated that it involves the process aimed at unification of the people within the state so that it remains politically stable and viable in the long run. The concept gained popularity due to the observed diversity in culture, tradition and religion in Nigeria after amalgamation and 1960 independence. It became obvious that the existence of Nigeria is marriage of divergent bed fellows and so its corporate existence hinges on advocacies and policy trust that can restore confidence, safety and sense of accommodation irrespective of the differences. Federal character/quota system is one of the principles and policies introduced to guarantee NB.
- *National Integration (NI)*: This refers to the awareness of a common identity amongst the citizens of a country. It means that though we belong to different castes, religions and regions and speak different language, we recognize the fact that we are all one Shona, (2003). Nigeria is a country with about 250 ethnic nationalities distinctively isolated in terms of religion, languages. NI implies that we should de-emphasize these differences and promote such policies that could unite Nigeria. Alapiki (2005) observed that introduction of Unity Schools, National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) state creation, quota system are some of the policies aimed at achieving NI. These and other issues are addressed in the next section of this seminar paper.

4. An Appraisal of Federal Character Principle (Fcp) in Nigeria

As laudable as the policy is, there exists a wide gap between intent and actual practices and this is making it counterproductive. The appointments made under late president Umaru Musa Yar'Adua re-ignited the debate about the applicability of the FCP because the appointments tended to tilt in favour of a particular section of the country. It is important to note that available data has revealed that the Northern part of the country has dominated the other parts. Empirically (see table 1 & 2) from independence to date which revealed that, the other parts of the country were under the sway of the Northerners.

Table 1: Heads of Government in Nigeria From 1960 – 2014

S/NO	DATE	IDENTITIES	STATE	REGION
1	Oct 1, 1960-Jan 15 1966	Tafawa Balewa	Bauchi	North
2	Jan 15 1966-July 29 1966	J.T.U Ironsi	Abia	East
3	July 29, 1966-July 29, 1975	Yakubu Gowon	Plateau	North
4	July 29, 1975-Feb 13, 1976	Murtala Mohammed	Kano	North
5	Feb 13, 1976-Oct1, 1979	Olusegun Obasanjo	Ogun	West
6	Oct 1, 1979-Dec 31, 1983	Alh. Shehu Shagari	Sokoto	North
7	Dec 31, 1983-Aug 27, 1985	Muhammed Buhari	Katsina	North
8	Aug 27, 1985-Aug 26, 1993	Ibrahim Babangida	Niger	North
9	Aug 26, 1993-Nov 17, 1993	Ernest Shonekan	Ogun	West
10	Nov. 17, 1993-June 8, 1998	Sani Abacha	Kano	North
11	June 8, 1998-May 29, 1999	Abdul Salam Abubakar	Niger	North
12	May 29, 1999-May 29, 2007	Olusegun Obasanjo	Ogun	West
13	May 29, 2007-May 5, 2010	Umaru Musa Yar' Adua	Katsina	North
14	May 5, 2010 to date	Goodluck Jonathan	Bayelsa	South

Source: Sunday Tribune, 7th August, 1994, Ibadan, pp-7-9 and updated by the Adeosun, 2011:5 and modified by the researcher, 2014.

As indicated in table 1, one could see that the ruler-ship of Nigeria is dominated by the Northern section of the country. The appearance of some southerners as heads-of state was accidental. For instance, the assassination of Murtala Muhammed on 13th February, 1976 led to the appointment of his erstwhile second-in-command, Olusegun Obasanjo. Also, Ernest Shonekan who also hails from the West was manipulated into office by the military to head a contraption called Interim National Government (ING) to placate the westerners who were annoyed over the annulment of the June 12th presidential election believed to have been won by the late business mogul, Chief M.K.O. Abiola Adeosun, (2000:101). Thus, Shonekan administration lacked legitimacy and real power. The second coming of Obasanjo 1999-2007 has been attributed to the south-west threat of possible secession if not given the shot at the presidency, which informed the two presidential candidates (Olusegun Obasanjo and Olu Falae) from the same zone-south-west during the transition programme of General Abdulsalam Abubakar Ojo, (2009:390). The death of Umaru Musa Yar'adua led to the emergence of Dr Goodluck Jonathan. Although the latter was later elected in April General Election of 2011, in what has been described as a pan – Nigerian mandate. The post-election crises that followed his announcement as the winner of the election further showed that the country was far from being united and make nonsense of the so-called Pan –Nigerian mandate. Again the Boko Haram insurgency in the North-Eastern parts of the country further typifies this trend of analysis.

Besides, the domination of number one seat, the composition of some selected ministries (see table 2) from independence to date also revealed the domination of the ministries by the Northerners. As rightly observed by Olopoenia (1998:48-49) that: the greatest manifestation of this tendency is the implicit policy of reserving the political and top bureaucratic management positions in certain key ministries at the federal for people from certain parts of the country. The key ministries where the Northerners hold sway are regarded as being important to the continued safeguard of Northern interest in the scheme of things.

The Northerners also complained of Southern domination of strategic sector of the economy most especially the bureaucracy. It should be pointed out that the southern domination of this sector was not a deliberate policy to marginalize the north.

But rather the educational gulf between the two sections accounted for the south domination of the bureaucracy. The South had early exposure to western education. The educational disparities between the North and South date back to colonial era for instance, in 1947, only 251 Northerners were in secondary schools, the figure represents just 2% of the total secondary schools enrolment in Nigeria. In 1965, secondary school enrolment in the North increased to 15,276 compared to 180,907 pupils enrolled in secondary schools in the South Coleman, (1958:134), Mustapha, (2004:12). The imbalance in terms of education between the North and South continued after independence. For example, in the 1969/70 academic session, only 19% of the students in the Nigerian universities were from the Northern States, the Western States alone accounted for 48% of the students Orji, (2008:131). In the 1974/75 academic session, the Northern states had 24% enrolment in the Nigerian Universities while the Southern states had 74 % Orji, (2008:131). In the 2000/2001 session, the North had only 20% of the candidates admitted into Nigerian universities Mustapha, (2004:12).

The Southern head start in western education had a effect on the ethno-regional formation of human capital. The South was ahead of the North in the production of skilled manpower that took over the public service after independence. For example, in the mid-1960s, the North had only 7%, 4% and 3% of the engineers, doctors and accountants in Nigeria respectively Orji, (2008:131). Similarly, in a research conducted by Adamu Mustapha, (2007:4), the Northern zones with 53% of the population had only 10% of engineers, 15% of the professors, 10 % of the architects, 25% of the lawyers, 8% of bank executives and less than 2% of insurance practitioners. This translated to Southern predominance in both public and private spheres.

Table 2: Composition of Some Selected Key Ministries from 1960 – 2014

Ministries		Defence	Interior	Federal Capital Territory	Mines & Power
S/N	Regime	Minster/Region	Minster/Region	Minster/Region	Minster/Region
1	Balewa 1960-1966	Mohammadu Ridadu/North	Usman Sani Ali/North		Mallam Maitama Sule/North
		Inua Wada/North	Shehu Shagari/Norht		
2	Gowon 1966-1975	Yakubu Gowon/North	Kam Salem/North		Dr. Russel Dikko/North
3	M. Mohammed 19975-1976	I.D. Bisalla/North	U.A. Shinkafi/North		Mr. Effionm .O. Ekong/South
4	O. Obasanjo 1976-1979	Obasanjo/South	U.A. Shinkafi/North	A.Adeogun/South	Alh. Shehu Kangiwa/North
			Mr. M.O. Yusuf/North		
5.	Shagari 1979-1983	Iya Abubakar/North	Dr. W. Dosunmu/South	Jatau. Kadiya/North	Ibrahim M. Hassan/North
		Akanbi Oniyangi/North	Iya Abubakar/North	I Danmusa/North	Ibrahim M. Hassan/North
			Maitama Sule/North		
			Baba Ali/North		
6	Buhari 1983-1985	M. Buhari/North	M. Magoro/North	M. Vasta/North	Alh. Rilwan Lukman/North
		Domkat Bali/North			
7.	Babangida 1985-1993	Domkat Bali/North	Labert Gwam/North	M. Vatsa/North	AVM Nuru Iman/North
		Sani Abacha/North	John Shagaya/North	H. Adullahi/North	
			Domkat	G.Nasko/North	

			Bali/North		
			A.B. Mamman/North		
			Dr. Tunji Olagunju/North		
			A. Okene/North		
8	Shonekan 1993-1998	S. Abacha/North	S. Yusuf/North	G. Nasko/North	Alh. Hassan Adamu/North
9	Abacha 1993-1998	S. Abacha/North	Alex Ibru/South	J.T Useni/North	Bashir Dalhatu/North
			B. Dalhatu/North		
			B. Kingigbe/North		
10	Abubakar 1998-1999	Abubakar Abdusalam/North	M, Yakubu/North	M. Kontogora/North	
11	Obasanjo 1999-2007	T.Y Danjuma/North	S.Afolabi/South	B. Sheri/North	Lesely Obiorah/South
		R. Kwankoso/North	M.Shata/North	M. Abba Gana/North	
		T. Agunyi Ironsi/South	O.Adeniji/South	N El-Rufai/North	
12	Yar' Adua 2007-2010	Y. Ahmed/North	G. Abbe/South	A. Modibbo/North	Sarafa T. Ishola/South
		S. Ibrahim/North	S. Ibrahim/North	A. Aliero/North	
		G. Abbe/South			
13	Jonathan 2010 till date	Akayode/South	E. Iheanacho/south	B. Mohammed/North	Mohammed M. Sada/North
		B.H. Mohammed/North	Abba. Moro/North		
14		Aliyu Mohammed Gusau			

Source: A. B. Adeosun, 2011 pp. 7 – 8; Adapted and modified by the researcher, 2014.

The data in table 3 shows that the Southern states have 62.2% of the officials in the federal civil service while 37.7% are from the North. The figure for the core north is even smaller – only 19.1% of the federal civil service. The two dominant ethnic groups from the South namely the Yoruba and Igbo accounted for 25.2% and 16.2 respectively. This analysis demonstrates the correlation between South's advantage in education, human capital formation and staffing of federal institutions.

Table 3: Composition of Federal Civil Service by Zones and Regions as of 2000 (Consolidated Statistics)

REGIONS	NO. OF STAFF	% OF TOTAL STAFF
North	35,977	19.1
Middle Belt	34,989	18.6
Northern Region	70,966	37.7
Yoruba	47,349	25.2
Igbo	30,490	16.2
Niger Delta	39,153	20.8
Southern Region	116,982	62.2
Total	187,958	99.9

Source: Adapted from Federal Character Commission 2000:2; See also Adeosun, 2011:9

It is imperative at this juncture to examine the pit-falls of this principle. It suffers from what Ayoade (1998:13) referred to as “a faulty philosophical premise”. It is a policy supposedly to have been designed for the benefit of less privileged in the society. But it is serving the interest of the ruling class, thus resulting in the further disempowerment of the under privileged in the society. see Adeosun, (2011:9).

Another defect of this policy is the unofficial policy of elimination by substitution, which makes it counterproductive. For fairness sake, why should somebody be retrenched or removed unnecessarily from public service in the name of federal character because its operators wanted to put a kinsman in such a position? In his insightful assessment of the policy, Ayoade (1998:116) noted that as long as the application of the principle discriminated against one group and favours another, no unity can result from such an exercise. I tend to agree in totality with this line of reasoning, unless and until some significant change in the value systems these trend would continued. Perhaps the outcomes of ongoing National Conference (NC) will address this situation and others.

The policy has also been criticized on the ground that the distributive justice which it aims to achieve is of two types; namely arithmetical and proportional equality. Simple arithmetical equality assumes the equality of all state. But states are not equal. They differ in size, population and size of the pool of eligible candidate for appointment. In the words of Ayoade (1989:116), “there is no greater inequality than the equal treatment of unequal”. Proportional equality would therefore be fairer and less discriminatory than arithmetical equality. But more appropriately, the appointment must reflect the size of eligible candidate per state so that excellence is rewarded. Competent people who are disqualified based on state of origin and such other spurious criteria cannot be a willing material on which to erect the unity of the country. They must feel wanted in order to volunteer themselves for national sacrifice Ayoade, (1998:116).

According to Afigbo (1989: 33), the principle suffers from overgeneralization. It was generalized to areas where inter ethnic group conflict and attachment did not exist. Adesoji and Alao (2009 :149) argued that the principle promotes mediocrity at the expense of merit particular with the abuse that characterize it application in civil service appointment, promotion, admission in to school and so on, then it could be seen as a solution that has become problematic. In the same vein, Oyovbaire (1983:19) argues that the principle encourages mediocrity in position of power. Gboyega (1989:183) observed that federal character principle is merely an elite ploy which would not materially improve the lot of the down- trodden in whose name it is raised.

Despite the shortcomings of this policy, its proponents have argued that it is neither immoral nor unjust. Rather it should be seen as a variant of distributive justice. Ohonbamu and Kirk – Greene Agbodike, (1998:185) contended that if the merit criterion is the only one used, most jobs would naturally go to the most educationally advanced of the Nigerian ethnic groups. Thus, to ensure that others do not feel deprived; the principle of federal character should be used to give them a sense of belonging.

Another proponent of this principle, Alhaji Bargudu Shettima, erstwhile chairman of the Federal Public Service Commission contended that the principle can enhance the efficiency of the service. Gboyega (1989:182) believes this can be realized through fair representation which would command public confidence and greater cooperation, mutual trust and mutual respect among the public servants themselves.

Table 4: Civil Defence, Fire Immigration and Prisons Services Board State by State Rank Analysis of 2013 Propose Recruitment

S/NO	STATE	ASI II	AII	IA II	NEW TOTAL
1.	ABIA	13277	2530	3779	19586
2.	ADAMAWA	3575	2550	2367	8492
3.	A/IBOM	8764	2309	4113	15186
4.	ANAMBRA	19040	2615	3445	25100
5.	BAUCHI	1594	2678	2290	6562
6.	BAYELSA	2930	519	1383	4832
7.	BENUE	14160	7687	7722	29569
8.	BORNO	2090	1585	1187	4862
9.	C/RIVER	6688	2426	3966	13080
10.	DELTA	15382	3157	3421	21960
11.	EBONYI	5312	1235	2001	8548
12.	EDO	19486	4522	4696	28704
13.	EKITI	8090	2498	2593	13181
14.	ENUGU	15770	3187	3534	22491
15.	FCT	1095	1303	1406	3804
16.	GOMBE	1838	1231	1964	5033
17.	IMO	30279	4774	6037	41090
18.	JIGAWA	1092	1600	1679	4371
19.	KADUNA	6002	4454	4350	14806
20.	KANO	2856	3046	2110	8012
21.	KATSINA	1873	2555	2302	6730
22.	KEBBI	1713	1488	1287	4488
23.	KOGI	17098	8045	6848	31991
24.	KWARA	8997	4860	3148	17005
25.	LAGOS	4486	875	1121	6482
26.	NASARAWA	4350	3708	3174	11232
27.	NIGER	3112	3590	3485	10187
28.	OGUN	12064	3541	3548	19153
29.	ONDO	10894	3005	3391	17290
30.	OSUN	12053	5288	3852	21193
31.	OYO	10531	4253	3178	17962
32.	PLATEAU	5068	4787	4669	14524
33.	RIVER	5966	1168	21220	28354
34.	SOKOTO	1282	1379	1043	3704
35.	TARABA	2149	2074	1910	6133
36.	YOBE	1064	1107	875	3046
37.	ZAMFARA	1465	1282	1162	3909
	TOTAL	283485	108911	130256	522652

Source: The News, Vol. 42, No. 13, 7th April, 2014. P. 19. Adapted by the Researcher

As indicated in table 4, Imo state had the highest personnel with the following figures: 30279 ASI II, 4774 AII and 6037 IA III with a new expected total of 41,090 personnel after the marred and rowdily criticized failed recruitment exercise; this is closely followed by Kogi state with 17,098 ASI II, 8,045 A II and 6,848 IA III with expected new total of 31991 personnel. While Bayelsa State has only 2930 ASI II, 519 A II and 1,383 IA III with an expected total of 4832 personnel. See table 4 for the figures as they are in all the states of the federation and FCT.

Issues Surrounding the Application of the Federal Character Principle and National Integration

Issues with the Application of Federal Character, Nation Building and National Integration In view of the fact that Nigeria is a country of diverse religious and ethnic nationalities, it is strongly believed that introduction and application of federal character and its affiliate concepts are faced with certain problems, some of which include:

➤ **Ethnocentrism:**

“The new nation called Nigeria should be an estate of our great grandfather Othman Danfodio. We must ruthlessly prevent a change of power. We use the minorities in the North as willing tools and South as conquered territory and never allow them to rule over us and never allow them to have control over our future” Shilgba, (2011).

This was said to be the statement of one of the famous nationalist from northern oligarchy, Alhaji Ahmadu Bello in 1960. Further prove was instructively recorded in 1986 when , a Sokoto Prince, Alhaji Shehu Malami and Alhaji Maitama Sule, one of the Nigeria’s respected bureaucrats created a storm among southerners when they respectively informed their listeners of Hausas superiority. To their bewilderment (southerners), they were informed that they (Hausas/Fulanis) acquired their dark skin from inter-marriages with the local Africans and that they were endowed with leadership qualities Kukah, (2003:98).

The evils of tribalism in Nigeria are many. Tribal appellations cause tribal idiosyncrasies, these lead ultimately to variety and superciliousness and disharmony. An Hausa man may think a Yoruba man is inferior, while the Yoruba man in turn commonizes the Igbo; and Igbo man concedes to himself that both the Hausa and Yoruba are just the people without gut Ngozi, (2012).

The above quotations capture the reason and current situation in Nigeria due to ethnocentrism. An ethnic group is distinguished by language, culture, religion or both Nnoli, (1978). Ethnocentrism is a self judgment that ones ethnic group is superior to others. Such assumption promotes antagonism evidenced in Nigeria. In response to many challenges orchestrated by ethnocentrism, Awolowo (1968) described Nigeria as divergently and almost irreconcilable entity.

Drawing from the above quotations, principles of federal character, nation building and national integration are irreconcilable with the composition and attitude of most Nigerians. Nweke (1995) described ethnocentrism as being attitudinal in form and perceptual in content. It is not easily erased particularly when the leaders do not display sufficient and convincing attitude that our strength lies in the diversity and exploration of resources for equitable benefit of every citizen irrespective of affiliation or originality.

➤ **Elitism:**

Afigbo (1987) noted that the principle of federal character arose out of a compromise among the protagonists of 1976 CDC. In the view of Agbodike (2003), federal character has been manipulated and channeled to serve the overall interest of the petty bourgeoisies ruling class. In a similar opinion, elitism represents interests of the few minorities Guaba, (2004), Agarwal, (2006) and Chaturvedi, (2006). Implicit in the above explanations is that those who champion the principle and policies are indirect benefactor hence it is another form of expanding their solid-political and economic empire.

Emergence and rise of elitism in Nigeria is traced to the unmatched amalgamation and introduction of federalism in 1914 and 1954 respectively. It is understandable that significant number of pre and post-independent nationalists do not have sound economic base. Gboyega (1989) aptly says that federal character principle is merely an elite ploy which could not materially improve the lot of the down-trodden in whose name it is raised. They constitute corrupt cabals and use ethnic sentiment to cover their ills. They strategically position their few agents in offices who act as political representatives against the set out goals of the establishment where they work.

Nigeria has had more crises since the introduction of federal character, some of which includes; the Nigeria civil war, several election violence particularly in 2011. Why and who is responsible? These concepts serve interest of elite who are eager to use their slaves to unleash terror and destabilize the country when they are schemed out.

➤ **Mediocrity:**

Federal character is introduced for purposes of ensuring ethnic balancing. In Nigeria, ethnic balancing is conceived, perfected and applied by elite for the promotion of their egocentrism through an institutionalized mediocrity. Nigeria is divided along ethnic nationalities.

The most outstanding is language and it impliedly forms the basis for consideration in federal appointments. Given the share size and nationalities of the sub groups, it is repeatedly vital to acknowledge that difficulties of nation building and national integration are deeply rooted in putting the wrong peg in the right hole. This has been identified as one of the major challenges of public enterprises in Nigeria. There are other countries with federal system but has viable public enterprises, why? Federal character is introduced in Nigeria as an acceptance of bad and non responsive governance.

Okata (2004:179) posited that public enterprises management is a progression and requires that administrative managers should possess certain kind of education, knowledge, skills and values as pre- requisite for effective performance in the job. This suggests that competence not quota system or ethnic balancing as opined by apostles of federal character is the nexus for successful, effective and efficient performance of public organizations. Abba (2003) and Sharma et al., (2011) affirmed that politicization of public enterprises breeds mediocrity which is destructive and thus contributes significantly to the inefficiency of most public organizations. Mediocres are more loyal to their godfather because they lack competence. They tend to frustrate organizational goals and go unpunished. Utume (2003) shares the view stating that there is genuine fear that officers, secured by provisions of federal character may begin to act like political representatives without paying due attention to their duties. The variation in human and material resources across ethnic nationalities is known but competence promotes good governance and in turn reduces tension of ethnic revolt. What Nigerians need most is good, responsive and responsible government that has the courage and will to do the right thing at all times and for all Nigerians.

➤ **Mutual Suspicion:**

Before 1914 amalgamation and 1954 introduction of federalism, each of the sub-nationalities lived independently. Each of them enjoyed autonomy which explains insignificant social strife when compared to experiences after the amalgamation. In expression of the volume of problems bedeviling Nigeria state, Awolowo (1947) described it as a mere geographical expression. Ahmdu (1962) and Onu (2008) affirmed that the amalgamation is the mistake of 1914.

Shortly after independence, Nigeria was faced with plethora of problems including mutual suspicion. Afigbo (1987), and Ezigbo (2007) pointed suspicion and hatred among the major problems in Nigeria. To cushion the effects, protagonists of 1976 CDC compromised for inclusion of federal character in the constitution. Nation building and national integration were some of the slogans advocated in justification of its inclusion.

Major crises ever recorded in Nigeria since the amalgamation is significantly rooted to suspicion. This cuts across ethnic and religious boundaries but more pronounced across ethnic boundaries. They include 1964 federal election, where political parties and alliances were more ethnic than ideological. Nigerian civil war 1967-1970, 2011 general election and so on. Each of these crises shook the foundation of Nigeria due to suspicion as against reasons for the introduction of federal character. There can be no successful implementation of federal character principles amidst suspicion and hatred amongst the ethnic groups.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

➤ **Conclusion**

This paper has demonstrated and significantly illustrated the need for National Integration as pivotal and necessary for the stability of the Nigerian nation-state. It argues that the Federal Character Principle (FCP) and the Federal Character Commission (FCC) has not been able to address the obvious imbalances in the various segments of the country. As Ayoade, (1998:117) noted, the FCP is the Achilles heel of Nigerian politics. Though, it was introduced to redress historical imbalances and integrate the country. The FCP has gone some measure to reduce various factors of mutual mistrusts and rivalries amongst the different ethnic groups in the geographical expression called Nigeria. But sadly, the implementation of the FCP has hurt severely some section of the country. Thus there is the urgent need for the consultation of all the various sections and/or segments in the implementation of the FCP policy in Nigeria.

➤ **Recommendations**

Options for Achieving Nation Building and National Integration in Nigeria are:

- (i) Inclusion of FC into the 1979 and 1999 constitutions is a display of heinous attitude by the elite. Since its inclusion, Nigeria has known no peace.

That Nigeria is still united is not unconnected to the elite tie that sacrifices popular agitation for personnel gains. The raising security challenges orchestrated by militia groups and insurgencies in the North-Eastern parts of the country are indications of disillusionment among different ethnic groups and sub-nationalities.

Sanusi (2012), for example criticized the constitution as a document that hinders development. The mistake has been made and is unlikely that it will soon be deleted. Efforts should be done to thinker smart options for survival as a nation such as true federalism, patriotism, honesty and fairness.

- (ii) There is the vital and urgent need to replace quasi or centripetal federation with true federation. Federation purports that everybody can be satisfied (or nobody permanently disadvantaged) by nicely combining natural and regional/territorial interests within a complex web of checks and balances between a general, or federal government on the one hand, and a multiplicity of regional government, on the other Mclean and Mcmillian, (2003:194). Thus, emanating from the above assertion, true federalism could be seen as a system of government in which the individual states within a country have control over their own affairs, but are controlled by a central government for national decisions Kobjunkie (2012). True federalism will significantly grant constitutional autonomy to states as well as local governments. This will undoubtedly reduce tension at the centre because the different tiers will have shared responsibilities. For years Nigeria has been practicing quasi federalism meaning that a shift from the status quo would either require constitutional amendment or sovereign national conference which will permit autonomous and independent status in decision making for the continuation (or not) of Nigeria state. At present, we practice centripetal federalism in nature and practice. There is need for regional/sub-national autonomy in areas of resource control, policy making and implementation, fiscal relationship and so on.
- (iii) There is need for value re-orientation. In the past Nigerians are known for hard work, high moral standard which is the epitome of each sub-nationality. In recent times, corruption and immorality is celebrated thereby promoting evil. Value orientation will help re-shape the attitude of Nigerians particularly the elite who are the major actors and benefactors of FC. Good moral value will entrench national patriotism rather than ethnic patriotism/ primordialism, fairness rather than sentimentalism/bias.
- (iv) The National Assembly should as a matter of urgency amend the constitution and remove all references to indigeneity from the constitution. Specifically, the requirement in section 147(3) of the constitution that the president appoints at least one minister from each state who is an indigene should be changed so that residency, not indigene status, is the determining factor. It is also important to emphasize the fact that merit should not be completely sacrificed on the altar of the federal character Obasanjo, cited by Gboyega, (1989:113). The appointment of persons to various positions should be made from the best available in any part of the country. Besides, recruitment to posts which require specialist training such as medical practitioners, architects, engineers and pilots should be essentially based on merit Adamolekun, (1986:185). To do otherwise would expose the people to great peril.
- (v) Furthermore, the application of the principle has been described as bourgeois oriented and does very little to relieve the plight of the down trodden of this country Agbodike, (1998:137). For example, the indigenisation and privatisation policies put the wealth of this country in the hands of a few Nigerian at the expense of majority of the people. The masses need to be given equal opportunities for employment, equitable share in the distribution of resources and benefits of the state in terms of provision of social amenities such as education, access to good roads, portable water, housing; etc, which will bring about improvement in their standard of living. To this end, the political system, should arrest the exploitation of the less privileged in the society and redress their feeling of insecurity. It is only when this welfare issue is address that the great majority of the people can “develop a sense of national identify..... transcending parochial loyalties of ... ethnicity, religion, language and region” Agbodike, (1998:137)
- (vi) Finally, the FCP should be applied with less stringency but with fairness among ethnic groups, states and local government that are homogenous, to avoid creating division where none may have existed.

End Note

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