

Re-emergence of One and United Northern Region in the Nigerian State and Politics: Challenges and Prospects

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ABSTRACT

The Northern Region of Nigeria is the largest of all the three in geographical size, human and material resources. It was the most prominent and influential region in Nigeria's political affairs during the pre and post independence periods. These have however, been waning overtime and *it* is so intense that the region is today despised, manipulated and politically relegated to the background of national political-economy.. The Northern region is in dilemma as regards multitudinous problems it is facing. This article used secondary sources of data and explored the emergence, nature and history, significance, past and present state of the Northern Region in relation to unity, prosperity and peaceful being of Nigeria. The North was prominent because of the purposeful internal leadership and to some degree the justice it had enjoyed and enjoined; its ability to make proper exploitation of its both human and material resources, the ability of its people to weld under one umbrella irrespective internal heterogeneities, abandoning agriculture for commercial oil has largely contributed to the present state of affairs, the North has every potentially to make of a nation or state if properly explored and harnessed as the lost glory can still be revived, the level of poverty and backwardness of the North are not natural but for the negligence, indolence and negligence of its subsequent leadership. The article recommended among others, full exploitation of both human and material resources bestowed to the region, re-establishment of true and purposeful leadership and then unity in the entire region, and building of trust, justice among all the regional people, development, strict implementation and sustenance of a comprehensive plan for development of the region and the issue of education should be given a top priority throughout the region.

Key Words: Economy, Nigeria, Leadership, North, Politics, Region, Unity.

1. Introduction

The processes of evolution, growth and development of states and societies are through a process that is dependent on socio-economic, geo-political, cultural and other factors. Whether the process is gradual or fast, cooperation, unity and dedication to the purposes and goals for overall development of a state or society are the major ingredients to be used in achieving collective goals. This evolutionary process also compels a state/society to subject itself to the forces of change which involves accepting and co-opting some others' principles, values and ideals and at the same time retaining some ones' own. This has been the experience undergone by the present geographical parts of Nigeria – the result of the British January 1, 1914 amalgamation of Northern and Southern areas of River Niger which marked the evolution of new geographic, political and socio-economic setting of people hitherto not bound under any single or united administration. But it has been clearly maintained that various peoples who were occupying the areas made to be one Nigeria by 1914 were not consulted or their respective peculiarities considered during the amalgamation by the colonial masters (Nnoli, 1978; Falola, Mahdi, Uhomoibhi & Anyanwu, 1991:113; Amuwo, Agbale, Suberu & Herault, 1998:15; Oyovbaire, 1979).

Regions and regional tendencies often affect and determine the socio-economic and political structures that make up a political system (Caramani, 2008:369). There exist two/three main regions in the Nigeria's political-geography (dependent upon the context and approach to the categorization of North and South or North, East and West). One of the regions (Northern Nigeria) occupies a strategic position in the geography, politics and unity and peaceful co-existence of Nigeria, which faced struggles in two respects of colonialism and an internal competition for development with its Southern counterpart. These and the heterogeneous composition in terms of religion, population, culture necessitated the need for and evolution of a common front with which the North could foster and assert its interest, prosperity and ensure the overall unity and development of the region within a united Nigeria.

The leaders, traditional rulers, educationists and politicians of the colonial and early independence period realised the need for unity of purpose, cooperation and the formation of a single regional, political, economic bloc for the Northerners to participate, act and react to issues in the Nigerian national affairs with their background experience. Regions and tendencies towards regionalism are not only a practical part of but a reality in politics of states, essential to understanding and practice of politics at local and national levels of states and governments but with a complicated dynamism (Caramani, 2008:369). This study examined the possibility, challenges and strategies for the re-evolution of such a single and united Northern region within the Nigerian state of the overall unity, stability and development of the Nigerian state.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Ever since the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates of the Niger River by the British colonial masters on January 1, 1914, Northern Nigeria, which currently comprises of 19 Northern states has been embroiled in numerous problems and challenges. Some of these problems and challenges are internal, while others are external in its relation and coexistence with its Southern counterpart or rival as the case may be. Internally and at the initial stage, Northern Nigeria faced the problem of western educational disadvantages, domination of the Northern Public Service, which prompted the Northern Regional Government's Northernisation Policy, the problems of resentment, despise and contempt, the issues related to Self-Government timing; and during the late pre-independence to independence and post independence era, the unfortunate coup of January 15, 1966, which hit the region worst in its history, problems of

internal unity within the North, increased resistance to the perceived and fuelled Hausa/Fulani/Islamic hegemony, the attempts by the Middle Belt to have a separate region and identity from the original North, the influence and orchestrations of some Southern Nigerian politicians and parties to see to the break-up of the North and then dismantles its political hegemony in the Nigerian state; coupled with other later emerged problems of socio-economic, political and ethno-religious strife, the Al-majiri syndrome found only in the North (Mohammed, 2018:117-118; Wada, 2012:120; Turaki, 1993:145, 153; Kukah, 1993:7-10; Ajayi, 2009:28, 1449-178; Rimi in Onu, 1981:167-173; Paden, 1986:350).

The North has as a result of these, lost its original sense, focus and resources of leadership, a united front and common interest - North irrespective of ethno-religious, socio-economic and political differences and status. What obtains today is a different occurrence in which the Northerners themselves are internally divided along ethno-religious, socio-cultural and economic lines and have ignored common and united cause to see, act and react to both intra regional and national issues.

The leadership of the North, is today, unable to give a focused and an acceptable direction for the Region; it is the region also is no longer able to fully assert interests in the Nigerian affairs due to the manifest disunity and incoherence within the region and so the North had over time nearly lost its once flourished identity, hegemony and prestige in the Nigerian national affairs. Thus Watts (2013: xiv & ixixiii), has decried that Northern Nigeria is undergoing a blizzard of political and economic turmoil, rapid and unchecked population growth, general youth protuberance and religious communities' disharmony and then asserted that Northern Nigeria is in a packed state of emergency.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this article are to trace and reflect the history, composition and life patterns of the of both Northern and Nigerian people; account for the reasons why the once dominant and hegemonic Northern Region in Nigerian affairs is now poor and economically less productive, politically unstable, ethno-religiously divided, socially despised in national affairs and then relegated to the background of Nigerian political-economy; expose those forces of unity that made Northern Nigeria what it was, especially in the 1950's and 60's; and recommend what could be done to revive the past glory and make the North regain its former and rightful position in Nigerian affairs, being the largest, the most populous, the richest and most diverse region in Nigeria.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

Studies and theories on regions are more popular and associated with the modernisation theory and development with great influences of Weber (1968), Caramani (2004) and Markusen (1987), whose theory is based on pre-industrial and industrial society's political economic relations. This study is, however, premised on two theories of Pluralism and cultural nationalism associated with Almond & Verba (1963), Lipset (1990) & Wiseman (1981). The Pluralist theory maintains that societies are plural in nature and powers in such states and societies are shared among heterogeneous groups characterised by differences of religion, tribe, geography, cultural norms and values. In such circumstances and as usual, there are needs for articulation/aggregation of many and varied interests as well as the representation of all the groups in the process of governance. However, it is not possible for all and sundry to be directly involved in decision making processes and this necessitates the emergence of the few (elites) among the many.

The elites are then saddled with the responsibility of governing the affairs of all. Theory of cultural nationalism associated with the writings Almond & Verba (1963), Lipset (1990) & Wiseman (1981) on regionalism reveals that cultural heterogeneities in a state are a major determinant of adopting regional arrangement based on differences in life and approach to national values as a result of having different historical and cultural background. Regionalism within a country is thus determined by differences in political culture and cultural provisions in the native life of the people. These differences therefore result in heterogeneous value systems, which make the regions to adopt different regional arrangements in policies and programmes. The major factors that influence regionalism and regions under this theory are communal settings, economy, political geography, social characteristics - religion, ethnicity and language as noted by Soja, (1989).

2. Background of the Nigerian State

Nigeria occupies a total area of about 923,768 sq km and was not a single and united political entity until after the British Colonial amalgamation of January 1, 1914. Prior to the British occupation and amalgamation, there were several nationalities that lived around the Niger and Benue Rivers. Nigeria is the world's single biggest black nation with the largest population in Africa (Mundt, Aborishade & Le Van 2008:661; Shehu & Buba, 2016:1-4; Mohammed, 2018:1-3). According to Kwanashie (2002) & Roskin (2016:424-27), the Europeans commenced direct activities in present Nigeria around 15th century first by the Portuguese who arrived Nigeria in 1471 via sea expeditions then followed by other European imperial powers and finally imperial conquest of most places as Lagos, Niger Coast, Sokoto Caliphate, etc, by the end of 17th Century through the colonial agencies of British trade companies and imperialism with Lagos first haunted by the British in 1851 and then occupied in 1861. Obikeze & Anthony (2003:1) additionally noted that Nigeria is constituted through the British making, because before January, 1914, the entity now known as Nigeria was not one, but many independent ethnic groups which had little in common, except in trade and commerce. Usman (1979) also maintained that unlike most other countries in Africa, the amalgamated Nigeria has within its territory, a substantial number of speakers of three out of the five families of languages found in Africa (Afro-Asiatic, Niger Congo and Nilo-Saharan). The only language families in Africa not found in Nigeria are the very small Khoisan, spoken by the Khoi, the San of the Kalahari Desert, and the Asian Indo-Malay languages of Madagascar. The post 2006 population projections reveal that Kano, Lagos and Kaduna states have the highest population in Nigeria and a puts a forecast of 3.2% annual increase, thus expecting the country's population to be around 221 million by the year 2020 (Elaigwu & Garba in Chakrabarti & Srivastava, 2015:82). Nigeria is generally split into the Muslim North and Christian South though the adherents of both (Islam and Christianity) are found in both Southern and Northern regions, while the Southern and coastline is mainly Christian, the interior North is mostly Muslim, which becomes an irony as Most West African coastal states have Muslims in their interior and Christians in the coastal region, because Islam came by land from North Africa and Sudan, while Christianity came from Europe and through the sea. This is the opposite in East Africa with a Muslim coast and Christian interior (see Roskin, 2016:424, 531).

2.1 Nigeria's Regions - East, North and West.

As observed by Keating (1997:17), region is a politically and functionally contested area, which spatially exists between national and the local as a scene of intervention by actors from all levels, national, local, regional in an environment where different and many individuals, institutions and

interests interact in a condition of competition among themselves. Hooghe, Marks & Schakel (2010:4) have defined region as a specified territory with single, continuous and non-intersecting boundary as well as peculiar economic, social and cultural identity. While Pace (2006:1) sees a region as a uniform area with characteristics distinct from those that are around or bordering it with a particular pattern of regular relations and interaction its occupants. A region is a politically autonomous entity with constitutionally guaranteed powers as well as rights to participate in national governance and politics through the legislature or an institutional cooperation between and among governments. In political geography, regions' stand and struggles are determined by regional inequality, dependence and independence, indigenous character of its people, and as well, external conditions and structures which exist outside, but around the region (Caramani, 2008:381-84). There were three (3) regions that made up Nigeria after the 1914 amalgamation and were each (especially the North and East), also composed of several nationalities themselves with the majority and minority groups co-habiting the areas as observed by Whitaker (1970:597) who also noted that each of the three regions has a dual cultural make-up, a preponderant majority of culturally related tribes speaking the same language and a heterogeneous group of culturally linguistic minorities. Although the Mid West Region was created on August 17, 1963, the first military coup of January 15, 1966 greatly helped in eroding the political history and its map. The three major cultural groups, i.e. Hausa-Fulani in the North, the Igbo people in the East and the Yoruba people in the West are the majority in these regions, and have divergent histories and traditions, including dissimilar traditions of political organizations, long and rich history of traditional and cultural heritages.

Nigeria has about 730,885 sq km of arable land and substantially located in the North, which produces various agricultural products (cash and food) - grains, fruits, vegetables and cattle (about $\frac{3}{4}$ of nations domestic agricultural production) thereby feeding itself, other populations and creating employment opportunities, particularly as majority of its population, especially at the grass roots are farmers and was once, a major exporter of groundnut and cotton, among others until the collapsed of same in 1970's due to oil discovery and boom (Watts, 2013: iv). Northern Nigeria also has one of the largest deposits of solid minerals in Africa, which include: limestone in Enugu, Sokoto, Gombe, Kogi, Ogun; nickel in Kaduna; Gold in Zamfara and Kano; tin in Plateau; coal in Nassarawa and Benue; as well as deposits of oil in Borno (Lake Chad), Bauchi and Gombe states (see also Agboola, 1979:17; Nigeria Handbook, 1982:5-7; Mohammed, 2018:27-29).

Although Nigerians have been interacting with various ethno-religious groups and peoples, weak and unpopular government laws, policies and programmes have led to competition and violence among the peoples. Similarly, because people use religion as a political tool, manipulate and then discard it, overlapping religion and politics in ethnically plural states such as Nigeria easily leads to rivalry and even breakaway tendencies (Roskin, 2007:531 & 558).

2.2 Northern Nigeria: Geography, Peoples and Culture

The geographical location of an area matters a lot in determining its survival, growth and development (vast land, strategic location, favourable atmosphere, fertile land, water bodies, etc.) of a people. Northern Nigeria has a land mass of about 300, 000 square miles and 720 miles wide in addition to larger populations and deposits natural resources (Whitaker, 1970:15). The area was also earlier being referred to as Central Sudan, Northern Protectorate of Nigeria, Northern Province and Northern Region It currently comprises of 19 out of 36 states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and also has 413 out of the 768 Local Government Areas in the

Federation of Nigeria - Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Benue, Gombe, Jigawa, Katsina, Kaduna, Kano, Kebbi, Kogi, Kwara, Nassarawa, Niger, Plateau, Sokoto, Taraba, Yobe and Zamfara (Mohammed, 2018:18-19, 25-26). However, the Northern region is, itself, heterogeneous and comprised of the far North, the controversial Middle Belt, the riverine states, the North Central, and other divisions as determined geo-political and other circumstances. In fact, one of the Northern states alone (Adamawa) has over 100 ethnic groups in it (see Paden, 1986:322).

The North has historically been dominant in Nigerian affairs as noted by Whitaker (1970:15), because of its geographical size, and largest endowment of human and material resources. Hoben & Greene (1966:3), while tracing the history and geography's of North and Northerners stated that the area belongs to the Sudan South of Sahara with features of the people and their cultures largely influenced by contact with their neighbours, especially from the North and West with large landlocked island, and while tracing the historical, biological and Trans-Sahara origin and mixture of the Northern Nigerian people, they added that people of today's Northern Nigeria carry chromosomes of the ancient Berber, Jewish and Arab immigrants from North Africa, while their civilisation and traditions from the Mediterranean and Rome, Greece and Byzantine, through the Islamic Empire of Spain, the Maghreb, Syria and Egypt. These, they maintained are mixed with the heredity stains of the Sudanese people. There is therefore a geographical and biological affinity and links between the people of today's Northern Nigeria with those of many different peoples, such as Jews, Arabs, Romans, as well as the indigenous black peoples of the Sudan, which is largely as a result of many factors - influences of Islamic religion, and Trans-Sahara contact and trade with North Africa and Middle-East, which also came with the religion of Islam around 700 A.D as the Arabs came in search of and trade in pepper, slaves, leather, ostrich feathers and ivory from the Arabia through North Africa (Theen & Wilson, 2001:476; McCormick, 2010:438; Dudley, 1968:3-5). There are profound influences of Arabs and Islam on the people of Northern Nigeria, especially the upper part of the North. Tafawa Balewa as cited in Clark (1991) who noted that the history of the people of the North dated back to 10th century and that it was around that period that records of invasions and contacts with foreign people were recorded and Islamic religion came in around the 13th Century from North Africa and Arabia.

Paden (1986:131) has observed that around the period of Nigeria's independence, Northern Region of Nigeria was the largest single political unit in Africa comprising of hundreds of languages and heterogeneous religious groups. By that submission, the Northern Region was not only the single largest political unit in the Nigerian federation, but also in the whole of Africa. However, despite the various political developments witnessed over the period of time (coups, states and local governments creations), the North still remains the largest region when compared with the Southern part of Nigeria and during the First Republic. For example, the North alone had 174, while the South (East and West) together had 138 of the then 312 members of the then Central Parliament - House of Representatives, Lagos. The membership of that House has, since its establishment to date, been based on population size (Dudley, 1968:26; Constitutions of Nigeria, 1960, 1963, 1979, 1989 and 1999).

The North has been having the largest population in all the censuses conducted throughout the history of the Nigerian state (Dudley, 1968:26). This is just as the North, prior to the coming of the colonial masters, was comprised of many groups, political settings and organisations and that there were also Igala, Jukun, large ethnic clusters of Gbaya, Igbirra, Idoma, Tiv, The Bura, Bata and some other smaller tribes and socio-political organisations at different levels of political formation and development. While some of the peoples had attained a high degree of statehood and fell such as Kwararrafa/Jukun state, others were at varying levels of political and economic

achievements before the European contact, colonisation and subsequent amalgamation Kwanashie (2005:1). One of those on forefront among the various Northern pre-colonial states and nationalities was the Sokoto Caliphate founded during the revival Jihad in 1804 and led by Shehu Usman Bn Fodio, which (the Jihad) is one of the momentous events of modern history as noted by Dudley (1968:5). The Jihad affected most Hausa land and was thus described by Roskin (2016:426) as the single most important event in the history of Hausa land and the biggest of all its associates in the 17th Century, because of the fundamental political, religious and sociological changes it brought on most parts, North of River Niger, parts of the Republics of Cameroon, Niger, Chad and Benin.

The socio-economic and political structures of the various peoples of the later Northern Nigeria, were, however, influenced and in some cases altered by the British colonial masters, who first hoisted the British flag in Northern Nigeria in January, 1900 at Lokoja (Dudley, 1968:26). By January, March and July 1903 act and encounters in Lokoja, Sokoto and Burmi (a village in Gombe State, Nigeria) respectively, between the British led forces and some of the religious leaders, Emirs and chiefs, the whole of Northern Nigeria was brought under British colonial control (Clark, 1991: xxxv). The Fall of Sokoto into the hands of British colonial forces on March 15, 1903 at Gindin Giginya in the outskirts of Sokoto town marked the total conquering and occupation of Northern Nigeria, as well as the once largest Islamic state in West Africa – the Sokoto Caliphate (Johnston, 1967).

2.3 Economy (Human and Material Resources)

Resources are according to Rodee (1975:23) important as an area itself, is in any state, for they provide security and sustenance. In terms of both human and material resources, the area is most endowed than any other part in Nigeria with larger populations, abundant solid and untapped liquid minerals, vast and fertile arable land (over 255,700 square miles), abundant sunshine and favourable climate. The Lagos Standard as cited in Kwanashie (2005:5) once reported that the potentialities of Northern Nigeria comprising of active and industrious population that is well advanced in arts, manufacturing and civilised, with its commercial capital Kano as the trade centre of the whole Soudan and the rendezvous of caravans to and from Egypt, offers the world new trade markets and commercial prospects, the boundary of which would be difficult to demarcate. It also continued that the resources of Northern Nigeria are practically unlimited, rich as the country is in agricultural and mineral products of considerable value. Such potentialities are enormous and very promising upon proper exploitation and harnessing. From untapped oil resources in Lake Chad, Bauchi, Gombe and Benue States to solid minerals in Nassarawa, Bauchi, Plateau, Gombe, Yobe states (Coal, Tin, Limestone and Kaolin, Uranium et cetera). Every single part of the Northern Region (local governments), and also the whole of Nigeria, is blessed with one natural resource or the other, but it is a matter of efficient exploitation and harnessing of such resource (Raw Materials Research and Development Council, 2011). Agriculturally, over two-third of Nigeria's total arable land is located on the Northern part, but only a little part of it is exploited for agricultural and other related purpose, and thus leaving surplus land area for the agriculture and other purposes (Agboola, 1979:17). The combined human and material resources of vast, surplus and fertile land, endowment of solid/liquid minerals, largest population far above the other Regions, make the North the most fortunate and most advantaged Region if its resource endowments are to be fully exploited and harnessed.

3. Emergence of One North: Roles of Elites/Politicians and Parties and Traditional Rulers

The evolution of one North in Nigeria was an onerous task that was undertaken by many stakeholders and amidst challenges from both within and outside the Region itself. Smith (2004:81) has cited late Alhaji Nuhu Bamalli relating that the whole idea of one and united North in Nigeria was formed during a meeting of Katsina College Old Boys Association in 1939 with the attendance of those who had prior then attended the College from virtually every Province of Northern Region. From the 1939 Old Boys meeting, there emerged two (2) different groups of the Jamiyyar Mutanen Arewa a Yau and Jam'iyyar Jama'ar Arewa in Kaduna and Zaria respectively. The two groups agreed, however, on the formation of Jam'iyyar Mutanen Arewa, which was later inaugurated on June 26, 1949. Abba (2007) in the same vein stated same date for the formation of (JMA) and went further that the Northern Teachers Association (NTA) was also part and parcel of the JMA during its formation, where delegates from different parts of the North attended the College Old Boys Meeting with the attempt at establishing a regional organisation, but there was dissatisfaction from both the British Colonial Government and Native Authorities based on possible resistance and disrespect for the colonial rule and the traditional rulers respectively, which later necessitated the formation of Discussion Circles, such as that of Bauchi at various parts of the Northern Region with the backing of the colonial administration and the Emirs (Yakubu, 1999).

Prior to the inauguration of the JMA in 1949, the Northern Elements Progressive Association (NEPA) was earlier established in 1946 and Abba (2000) maintained that NEPA was the first formed political party in Northern Nigeria and also the first formed outside the Lagos area.

Among the major aims and objectives of NEPA were mutual understandings among Northern Nigerians, working towards indivisibility of the Nigerian state, and specifically, open membership to all Northerners was made a very important objective. From the objectives if clearly seen, the NEPA was generally interested in the unity and development of Northern Nigeria, but its activities as its name implied, were likely meant to be centred in the North only, although it was later linked with NCNC Party. It was, however, observed that the party was more active in general mobilization of people as stressed by Abba. The first generation of Northern elites, teachers and politicians had remained at the forefront of one North idea as they later, mostly became the operators of governments and political machines, especially after the Native Authority Reforms. Coleman & Roseberg (1970) also made same assertion and added that the College Old Boys Association in North like their Southern counterparts were those whose events had shouldered with the leadership responsibilities of the future Nigeria, because of their acquired skills in politics, education and as movers of the process of modernization in the Northern Region. Thus, they became bestowed with leadership responsibilities of the future Northern Nigeria with the emergence and development of political parties in the region and Nigeria generally. This attempt at formation of one and united North was, however, not without problems, oppositions and resistance from both within and outside the Region e.g. the West and Ilorin-Kabba merger issue. To these effects, Turaki (1993:145) has categorised the re-colonial Northern Nigeria into two parts with distinctive socio-political values and religious influence as: Muslims and non-Muslims groups and also classified the then politics of Northern Nigeria into three as the politics of unity and reformation; politics of revolutionary substitution by the radical elements; and the politics of ethnic separatism by the minority and non-Muslims in the North.

The later Northern Regional Premier, Sir Ahmadu Bello and his Finance Minister, Alhai Aliyu (Makaman Bida) were classified as those in the fore-front as '*stronger proponents of Northern Unity*' and '*anti-southern politicians*' (Turaki (1993:153). Thereafter, the most prominent group for the promotion of the 'One North' among the many cultural organisations between 1946 and

1951 was the (JMA), which he maintained was dominated by educated classes (teachers and Native Authority officials). This development, which the Colonial masters were not comfortable with, forced them (the Colonial Administration) to urge the future Parliamentarians to, on another hand, form a political party that would serve the interest of the Northern Establishments. He further maintained that in 1947, the British colonialist through Sir Bryan Smith encouraged northerners on the need to have a common voice (political party) of Northern leaders towards the national politics, and so as to counter the Southern Nigeria propaganda against it. This should according to Smith, encompass all parts of the North irrespective of religion, tribe, etc., and that gave birth to the NPC in 1951, which comprised of Emirs, Parliamentarians and other Native Authority officials. This meant that the British directly or indirectly and intentionally aided the Northern elements in their course for the attainment of one North through the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) machinery, but of course, with their own and different interests and intentions, as asserted by Turaki that the NPC did not make or create political leaders, but that its leaders were already drawn from the Northern nobility by the colonial administration to become Parliamentarians, as they have proven their worth as reputable new emerging political leaders, who have already received the blessings of the Emirs and the Colonial Administration. In Reality, the British were more comfortable with a political party which has the influence of the Native Authorities (Emirs), and the Colonial Administration itself. Thus emerged a strong regional political party – the NPC.

Regional political parties are a means to secure support and popularity, especially in ethno-religious and culturally diverse states (Caramani, 2008:375). Although the North was the largest and most influential in the politics and governance of then Nigeria, there were later, several political parties in the North many of which were in the oppositions and based on both political and ethno-religious backgrounds. By the collapse of the first Republic in 1966, there were about 25 political parties and groups in the northern Region alone. These included: Afenmai Peoples' Congress (APC); Borno Youth Movement (BYM); Habe Peoples' Party (HPP); Ijumu Progressive Union (IPU); Ilorin Talaka Parapo; Kalabari Peoples' Congress; Kano Peoples' Party (KPP); Kano State Movement; League of Northern Yorubas; Middle Belt Congress of Nigeria; Middle Belt Peoples' Party; Moslem Peoples' Party; Muslim United Party; Northern Elements Freedom Organisation; Northern Elements Progressive Union; Northern Elements Women Association; Northern Opposition United Party; Northern Peoples' Congress; Northern Peoples' Congress Youth Association; Northern Progressive Front; Northern United Party; Northern Youth Movement; Tarka Youth Pioneers; Tiv State Party; United Middle Belt Congress (Mohammed, 2018:104-105; Abba, 2007:203-216; Paden, 1986:682 & 679).

Despite the large number of political parties and groups in the Northern Region, however, the formation of NPC in 1951 marked another period in the colonial struggle, politics, administration and unity in Northern Nigeria. It was, therefore, the NPC that got the greatest opportunity in terms of both popularity and colonial backing to foster a one and united North in Nigeria. This was largely because apart from the blessings of the colonial administration, and the Native Authorities, specifically, the NPC enjoyed the support of the common peoples, but of course with challenges, resistance, threats, and victimisation, which are an integral part of any and every developing political system. According to Paden (1986) large numbers of NPC supporters were Native Authorities (NA) officials and the Northern Regional ministers who were also traditional title holders and regarded as Northern representatives by the British, and according to Yakubu (2006), the NPC, initially as a cultural organisation and before transforming to a political party had the strength of winning the confidence of Northern Emirs.

From its inception, however, the NPC made it clear that it stood as a Northern Political Party in name, objectives and operations. The eight (8) point manifesto of the NPC among others provided for: One North, One People, irrespective of religion, tribe or rank. The '*One North*' concept was included alongside other provisions that were all focused on the Northern Region. Additionally, of the eight (8) point NPC manifesto, four directly targeted the Northern Region. Kwanashie (2005:153) maintained that the prominence which the NPC achieved in the politics in the Northern Region were attributed to the nature of its leadership, active membership, organizational structure, use of state power and the nature of interests and goals, which it articulated and sought to implement as the party in power. He also regarded the NPC's conception of the North as holistic, both territorial and socially, and of course, many of the then the Northern Emirs and other traditional rulers as well as their Native Authorities played key roles in the NPC affairs from 1952 onward, which not only indirectly aided the attainment of unity in the North, but also helped the NPC gain major victories in all the elections held in the North and the national levels (Turaki, 1993; Yakubu, 2006).

4. Northern Regional Governance and Northernisation Policy

The attempts at unity among the Northerners, especially in the 1950's awakened its leaders that there existed a wide vacuum in the Regional public service and also in the private endeavours of the North and Northerners. This was clearly seen from the domination (especially by the Igbos) of the Northern Regional Public Service, productive and commercial businesses and investments, technical and skilled jobs in the entire region, which nearly resulted in nearly disaffection to the Nigerian unity, low morale, feeling of deprivation and domination, poor participation in not only the regional, but national affairs of Nigeria, and indeed, those were as observed by Morgenthau (1973), factors that could result in lower morale, poor participation and less patriotism. One major thorn in the flesh of the Northern Nigeria people, establishments and politicians as well as the common men was the presence of millions of Southerners and dominant virtually every sphere of public and private endeavours of the North. The Igbos had not only been dominant in Northern Nigeria alone, but also in the Eastern Region where they were the Majority, and where the Port-Harcourt and other areas had already begun the decay, particularly the minorities against the Igbo domination as recalled by Taribo (2014:47) that "*they were preponderant in the league of landlords, entrepreneurs, public servants, teachers, proprietors of schools, bankers, petty traders, artisans, hawkers labourers and exporters using the Port Harcourt harbour*". It was the fear of such domination that earlier led to the crisis of the Self Government Motion in 1953, the Kano Riot, the short political war between the NPC, AG, Akintola, Awolowo, Sardauna, Ngileruma, et al. in 1953. That fear of domination internal resulted in the delay in the Northern Nigeria's Self-Government until March 15, 1959 (see Shagari, 2001:89; Paden, 1986:252-258; Clark, 1991:201; Bello, 1962:86).

The NPC and the Northern Regional Government were worried and exasperated with what Clark (1991:201) referred to as the '*boiling frustration*' in the North, but finally came the child of necessity – the Northernisation Policy. From the 1954 establishment of Regional Executive Councils, with the substantial victory the NPC enjoyed in most regional and national elections, which made it the majority party in both the regional and national levels, the NPC got the opportunity to vigorously pursue the interest of the North, which it strongly believed would ensure a sustained Nigeria. Later, at the regional level, the NPC formulated many policies and specifically vigorously pursued the popular, but ever controversial Northernisation Policy aimed at developing the Northern Region, balancing the gaps between North and South in a bid '*catch-*

up' (Paden, 1986). There were of course, both internal and external challenges, opposition and resistance to the Northernisation Policy by Northern Region opposition political parties, their Southern counterparts and individuals who are hit and affected by the policy. While the policy liberated, upheld, and fix the Northerners to take over their regional public affairs, and subsequently reduced the wide gap, stiff resistance to and politicisation of the policy resulted, even though in the other counterpart regions hardly could any Northerner be found in their regional public services and were silently implementing same policy (see Ojo, 2016; Ikwe-Ikwe in Heerten & Moses, 2014; Taribo, 2014:47-51; Achebe, 2012:75-78; Kurfi, 2004:98; Abdulkadir, 2004:12; Kirk-Greene, 1993:304-305).

5. The Challenges before the North

Northern Nigeria is currently faced with numerous challenges/problems that include: ethno-religious and indigene/settler crisis, emergent dimensions of Fulani/herdsmen/farmers conflict, political thuggery, armed robbery/kidnappings, the Boko Haram insurgency and proliferation and circulation of small arms and light weapons, and unemployment and extreme poverty, which lead to many or all the above insecurity problems as poverty and unemployment are antithetical to security and development; loss of relevance in national affairs; bitter politics and politicisation and religiousity of every matter by Northerners is also a challenge facing, it as every issue – religious, social, communal are politicized and different verdicts or interpretations result with often hostility and clashes within or among communities, religions, etc; monetisation of politics and the politicians' use of every means and avenue to win votes, divide and rule the people along ethno-religious or communal lines; injected hatred on bases of ethnicity, religion, tribe or economy which common peasants do not seem to understand as lamented by Ake (2000:60), Alubo (2006:75), Reid, 1997:237); the Almajiri and street begging syndromes, which (street begging) is a business to many and is one of the greatest social problems in Nigeria, but mostly practiced by the Northerners (Adewumi, 2007:1), which have for long been contributing to educational backwardness, increased rate of crime and indolence; the increased internal resistance, opposition, strife and resistance from the Middle Belt Region; the negligent attitude to agriculture (the predominant occupation of all Northerners) that had earlier sustained its people and the whole of Nigeria. All the above problems, however, rest on the shoulder of one giant – poor leadership.

6. Internal Oppositions, Resistance and the Middle Belt

During the First Republic politics and in the attempts to unite the North, there came oppositions from the various parts of the North – Borno (BYM), Kano (NEPU), and from the Middle UMBC, the AG-NEPU/UMBC Alliances, the UMBC/BYM, the Northern Non-Muslims League (NNML), the Middle Zone League (MZL). That political opposition continued up the the politics of the Second Republic, when NPP and UPN had influence in the Middle Belt areas, especially Plateau controlled by NPP under the Progressives Party Alliance (PPA).

The politics and history of Northern Nigeria, has been partly characterised by the struggles for a separate Middle Belt out of the Northern Region, and has aptly been described as “*an article of faith which no power on earth could stop*”. The Middle Belt, described by Ballard (as cited in Suleiman, 2012) as “*an area roughly inscribed by the Hausa-speaking area to the north, and the Yoruba, Edo, and Ibo-speaking areas to the south*”, remains controversial in the political-geography and ethno-religious relations and conflicts in the Northern Nigeria (see Mohammed, 2018:121-125; Suleiman, 2012; Suleiman, 2015; Clark, 1991:527). The geography and ethno-religious composition of the area remains with relative configurations, and manipulation,

especially by the elites. Some see and consider the greater Middle Belt, while others relate to the conservative Middle Belt with composition of all the all the ethnic groups in the North excluding the Hausa/Fulani and Kanuri in Benue, Plateau, Kwara, Kogi, Southern Kaduna, FCT, parts of Niger, Adamawa, and Taraba states; others regard nly the non-Muslim ethnic groups and their areas as the Middle Belt, and disregarding that there are non-Muslims in each and every one of the minority tribes no matter how small it may be; another configuration (the greater Middle Belt), comprises of the area comprises of also Kebbi, Kano, Jigawa, Katsina, Zamfara, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, . All the ethno-religious configuration and reconfiguration of the Middle Belt are tied to the religion of Cristianity and resistance to the Hausa/Fulani hegemony, which Bala Takaya (cited in Suleman, 2012) described as the '*British-Fulani Conspiracy*'. The geography is in reality a vague one with definite and clear cut strings of mark, but employment of religion and ethnicity to which (Alubo, 2006:61-66) concluded that is a "*vehicle for political mobilisation and a rallying point in the struggle for identity and political participation*", but There is no clear cut geographical identity for the Middle Belt, but based on adversary with the Hausa/Fulani Muslim rule and hegemony.

Indeed, the Middle Belt's '*never dying article of faith which no power on earth could stop*' struggle has remained another thorn in the flesh of Northern Nigeria's corporate and peaceful existence, for it is the same struggle that is manifesting in different dimensions of the violent indigene/settler, the recent Fulani/herdsmen/farmers conflicts in central Nigeria, etc. Man is a political animal and politics exists and occurs in every social relation and in varying degrees, dependent upon circumstances, and politics cannot be insulated from human actions. In the same vein, regions are containers and how their boundaries are drawn is determined by particular purposes on the ground, and reflects the values and interests of a people (Keating & Loughlin, 1997:17). Despite the attempts and success at uniting the North, challenges and subsequent abandoning of that cause, politics and opposition from within the North was characteristic of the past and present attempts and the recorded successes. The then major political oppositions from within the North included the Borno Youth Movement (BYM), Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) and most significantly Middle-Belt/United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC). The Middle-Belt/UMBC politics and opposition were based on manifestations of differences among the peoples from within the North – religion, culture, history, fear and resentment to possible domination and marginalisation of the minority by the Hausa Fulanis/Muslims (Suleiman, 2015; Braji, 2014:152-182; Olomjobi, 2013:151; Madighi, 2012:139-143; Nwaezeigwe, 2007:6-7; Abba, 2007:107; Aneke, 2007:99; Turaki, 1993:145; Kukah, 1993:7-12; Clark, 1991:205; Paden, 1986; Kwanashie, 2002:15, 174; Turaki, 1993:145; Clark, 1991:446-447; Ojukwu, 1989:179; Udo, 1971). This resulted in opposition through many avenues, especially through party politics, which Lane & Wagschal (2012:38) described as a veritable tool for political mobilisation in order to achieve some ends, just as the claims made by such ethnic/minority groups quickly attract attention.

Despite these differences and resentment (which during the former North mostly came from the three Middle-Belt Provinces of Kabba, Plateau and Benue), however, the then Northerners, leaders, politicians, traditional rulers and the people forged ahead and then attained success at the unity irrespective the differences, spoke with one voice and action in national affairs, in spite of alliances and political influences which sometimes led to negatively politicisation of issues and even attempts to break up the North (see also Paden, 1986:243, 352, 378). The former Northern/minority/opposition leaders (Aminu Kano, Joseph Tarka, Michael Audu Buba, Tor Tiv, Isaac Shaahu, Aku Uka of Wukari, David Lot, Tanko Yusuf, et al.) had then realised that despite

the internal differences within the North, there was the imperative need for peace and unity and as such, they did not only worked with the NPC and or the Northern Regional government at different times and in Alliances, but also directly and or indirectly resisted the attempts to mare the North through violence and other non-peaceful and non political means. It would indeed, be a great advantage for the other regions of Nigeria if the Northern region could be broken up into two or more entities, for that surely brings to an end to the Northern Nigerian hegemony in politics, population, resource dominance, etc. there had been attempt to actualize such a scheme of breaking up the North in the past, the Ilorin-Kabba West merger with the Western Region, the attempt to rock the boat of the 1983 general elections through orchestration of violence (through fund raising and procurement of arms), especially by the Unity Party of Nigeria, UPN and Nigeria People's Party, NPP in the Middle Belt using the minority tribes and their opposition parties, etc. (see (Suleiman, 2015; Shagari, 2001: 441-445; Weekly Trust, December 15-21, 2000, pp. 38; New Nigerian, March 10, 1984, pp. 5 & 11; National Concord, October 24, 1983, pp. 12;).

The Northern minorities problem and feelings as stated by Turaki (1993:145) within the North, especially non-Muslims/Middle Belt, has been of great concern and impact on both socio-political and ethno-religious terms with respect to perceived alienation of non-Muslims/minorities, perceived Muslims' domination of affairs; the elites, political, ethnic and religious entrepreneurs manipulations of the situation to fish in the troubled waters; inability of common men to understand these manipulations; and controversial role of Emirs and their conrol of the non-Muslims domains in, for example, parts of Kaduna, Plateau, Adamawa, Taraba and Bauchi States. These issues of the Hausa Fulani/Muslim hegemony, and in the recent, coupled with economic and political factors now manifesting in the violent struggles over possession of land, indigene/settler conflict, the emerging dimension of farmer/Fulani/herdsmen conflict. For this, a number of studies carried out have proved that the Middle Belt/Central Nigeria has become a theatre of violent ethno-religious and other related conflicts, as a result of both historical, social (increased migration into the area), political (elites manipulation), economic (depletion of resources, unemployment, poverty), ethno-religious factors and manipulations (Mc Doughal, Hagerty, Inks & Conroy, 2018; Alubo, 2006, Alubo, 2004, Hagher, 2002; Idama, 2017). Indeed, the Middle Belt struggle has in the trending of events been largely tied to not only the religion of Christianity, but also violence and the entire struggle's its manipulation by the area's political, ethno-religious and political entrepreneurs for their selfish gains (Suleiman, 2015; Suleiman, 2015). The same struggle largely motivated the G. G. Orkar coup of April 22, 1990, in which the plotters vividly expressed their (Middle Belt) disaffection and resentment, through the military institution.

7. Strategies for the Re-emergence of One United and North in Nigeria

There are many strategies to end a problem, but different situations require different solutions and strategies for adoption. Paden (1986:275, 313, 496-528) has outlined the then Northern Premier Ahmadu Bello's principles in formation and development of Northern Nigeria as one community, which revolved around about nine principles as: identifying the common goals and purposes for the Northern community; encouraging large-scale networks over small communities; use of family and multiple age grade system to link up the desperate communities; linking communities through gateways or intermediaries'; protecting Northern borders with outposts of loyalist; the use joking relations to ease tensions among communities; building alliances and managing opposition rivalries; equal treatment of the Northern component units;

and development of a new capital as the symbol of the whole community. He also noted the strategies adopted by the former Northern Premier Ahmadu Bello with bold style and action as: setting development goals, education and human resources, search for capital and technology, industrial programme, setting the infrastructural foundation, agricultural development and managing development. Although situations change, but the Northern Nigeria of today can still adopt many of the strategies and make changes/adjustments where appropriate. At any rate, return to and revival of agriculture, justice among all the Northern people, hard work, political re-orientation and the practice of politics for development, tolerance of one another, unity in diversity and self and situational identities, sustainable industrialization and technological development are key to Northern Nigeria's unity, development and prosperity.

8. Summary and Conclusion

There are manipulations of various religions and tribes for political gains and ends with deliberate and calculated setting of the Northern people against one another. There can never be peace, stability and development where there is no unity, sacrifices, justice, equality and selflessness to humanity. There existed one and united North in the history and political experience of Northern Nigeria. The One North idea in Nigerian politics originated prior to the independence of Nigerian State in 1960. The evolutionists of one and united North worked hard regardless of their numerous differences to take North to the Promised Land. They employed the principles of justice, equality and equity, selflessness, respect for fundamental rights, traditional institutions and rulers, and had the North and its future destiny as their lives and deaths. Over the subsequent years, however, the principles and legacies they worked with and died for have been abused and or abandoned by the succeeding generations and that explains where and how the Northern Region and Nigeria are today. The feeling and sense of belonging to One North and Nigeria by extension among the Northerners is waning over the time. The Northern politicians of the present time are not making significant efforts to improve and develop the North and its objectives in the Nigerian politics.

The current disunity in the North is not only because of the exploits of politicians, there are other several causes which partly lie in injustice, poverty, external forces and religious undertones, pressure on resources, but those could all be overcome if the will and commitment are there. Northern Nigeria and the Northerners have good prospects and can achieve their goals of regional unity and prosperity within the Nigerian context if they reflect back and employ those principles and explore those legacies, especially that of unity as once asserted by Smith in Merthyr Report, 1958 (cited in Ajayi, 2009:139) that if the Northern part of Nigeria could stand united, it has all the potentialities to take over the future Nigerian affairs. However, there is a great challenge before the peoples and the Region to resuscitate and achieve such a noble objective. Those, however, lie in the ability to do justice, unity, hard work, strong and genuine political will and commitment, minimization of the elites influence of political and ethno-religious entrepreneurs in dividing the North to perpetuate their control over power and public resources. Indeed, the heterogeneity and large population, the rich and heritages of the peoples, as well as the numerous natural resources endowed to the Northern Region should be a blessing and a means to attain optimal development, unity, co-operation and harmony among the Northerners.

9. Recommendations

The following recommendations, are, therefore, made:

- 1 - Those and long as well as the rich history and traditions of the peoples of the North should be properly exploited by the Northern Nigerians to better their lives and develop the region along the desired course.
- 2 - Politicians and elites should also put the interests of the North and Nigeria first before their individual ones, so that North can collectively move forward irrespective of the heterogeneities among the Northern politicians should avoid/eschew politics of rancor, sectionalism, religion and or ethnic tendencies.
- 3 - Northern elites and politicians should rise up to the challenge of true development of the region through embarking realistic and relevant economic and political advancement policies so that the North would be on properly designed track for development with the use of various human and material resources.
- 4 - There should be special efforts by the government through the mass-media to enlighten and sensitise the Northerners on the need to remain united, such efforts should be geared towards the elites and the common men throughout the North so that the target can be reached uniformly.
- 5 - Government should employ immediate and sustainable measures to provide adequate and functional education among Northerners and there should be a drastic reduction in the level of unemployment and poverty within the region. This can be achieved through efficient harnessing of the region's resources.
- 6 - Government and security agencies should rise up to the challenge of ever increasing rate religious, political and ethnic violence in the region, while justice must be dispensed to all and sundry, rule of law must be strictly observed.
- 7 - Religious bodies and organisations should also as a matter of importance and urgency, enlighten their followers on the necessity and importance of peaceful co-existence among the Northerners.
- 8 - Northern leaders should always be just, fair, disciplined, committed and sincere in the discharge of their obligations to the people and the nation.
- 9 - On the national scene of politics, Northerners should realise that wars are better fought and won if wisdom and genuine strategies.
- 10 - The Northern people must rise up and ensure justice among all and integration of all its people, as well as rehabilitation and re-integration of those who fall victims of the various conflicts around the region.
- 11 - There must be a comprehensive plan and sustained implementation of an alternative policy to the Al-majiri syndrome in the North.
- 12 - The much endowed resources of the North, especially solid minerals should be fully exploited and harnessed in order to fasten the processes of development, poverty reduction and employment generation.

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