

# Northern Nigeria's Northernisation Policy: A Review of its Politics, Controversy and the Reality

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## ABSTRACT

The Northern Nigerian regional government's Northernisation Policy embarked upon in the 1950's to 1960's has remained one of the most popular, heated, controversial, and historic policies in the history of Nigeria. While its architect and executors aimed at liberating their people and region from the shackles of external domination and preservation of the future of the North and its people, and in order to guarantee the unity and sustainability of the Nigerian entity and state, its opponents regarded the policy as not a good omen to the Nigerian federalism, unity and sustenance. This article explored the historical, circumstantial and other realities which prompted the formulation and execution of the policy in relation to Nigeria's pre-colonial, colonial, and post colonial making, heterogeneous and the end results of the policy and the controversy, which trailed the policy. Historical method of data collection and analysis was used for the secondary data obtained and used in the study. The major objectives of the formulators and the executors of the Northernisation Policy was to ensure that the North determined its own domestic, regional affairs and endeavours, that Northerners fully participated in Nigeria's national affairs, contributed their best quota, get their fair share of everything, and achieve a united and sustainable Nigeria within the ambits of unity in diversity – taking cognizance of the heterogeneities, but working together for a common purpose.

**Keywords:** East, Nigeria, North, Northernisation Policy, Regions and West.

## 1. Introduction

It is an undeniable fact that every state, society and people have the absolute right to protect their values, identity, heritages and above all, appropriately act and react towards prevailing circumstances in relation to its survival, growth, development and dynamism with respect to the outside world apart from ultimately determining its internal affairs, especially in a federal system which allocates powers and set limits of every component unit. This is especially significant for a people, state or society that is characterised by unique patterns of socio-economic, political, and geo-ethnic patterns of life and endeavours, but then forced/unwillingly merged with others to

form one political entity not in the interest of the merged, but solely in the interest of an external and superior force.

This was exactly the situation that Northern Nigeria found itself in relation to the British colonial conquest, occupation and subsequent rule. The North was found with its complete, contented and unique way of life that was distinct from those of the others (East and West), but were amalgamated to become one single entity for interest, of some others, not of those amalgamated. Therefore, the North, having been forced into the union could not at the detriment of its survival, abandon its peoples, socio-economic, geo-political, ethno-religious and other good and ancient values, heritages and civilisation in the name of new unity, in which every part came with its own identity, values and seeking to not only protect, but also promote same. Northerners had to protect their regional interests with respect to politics, economy, morality with both self and situational identity, as well as its various geo-political and ethno-religious interests, even though that may not be popular with the others who also had and protected their interest first, before giving any regard to the other components of the new union. Similarly, it is, it from the other respective parts/regions of Nigeria, protect their interest with respect to the preservations of their values. This was exactly the situation in which the Northern region of Nigeria found itself in the amalgamated Nigeria, and especially in relation to its Northernisation Policy of the 1950's and 1960's.

The Igbos, who were worst hit by the Northern Nigerian Northernisation Policy under the leadership of its Premier, Alhaji, Sir Ahmadu Bello (Sardaunan Sokoto), and others had their fundamental rights to work, movement, social justice and ownership of properties, whether movable or immovable in any part of Nigeria. That, however, had to be considered from many angles (legal, situational, real, moral, etc.), and above all the realities obtainable in the other component regions regarding the same issues, which was undeniably clear that those targeted by the Northernisation Policy had not only dominated the Northern regional public and private affairs, but also did not allow anyone (outsiders) into their own regional affairs, particularly their public services. Further to that, there was already an outcry by some against the others in their region against domination (Taribo, 2014:49-50; Ojo, 2016). Owing to that, the Northerners had to act and react in such a way that their past would not be completely destroyed, their future would not be deterred and their people forsaken in the name of making one Nigeria and its unity, for the future and destiny of the North and the Northerners lies in their hands. Those issues actually determined the geo-regional, political and other relations of the regions making up the Nigerian entity and later the state – each trying to protect, preserve and promote its interest, for that is the only guarantee to a sustained Nigeria – unity in diversity with the protection of both regional and national interests. Indeed, no part would sit and watch while its interests were either threatened or overridden by others. It is only such are observed, especially in heterogeneous states like Nigeria, that a true and sustained nation could evolve, grow and develop as noted by Morgenthau (1973) that: *“Any segment of the population, which feels itself permanently deprived of its right and full participation in the life of the nation will tend to have lower morale, to be less ‘patriotic’ than those who do not suffer from such disabilities”*.

Many Nigerians, especially the Igbos, out of fear, uncertainty, anxiety and hatred, saw the Northernisation policy of the former Northern Nigerian Regional Government as a deliberate policy not only targeted at the Non-Northerners, particularly the Igbos, but also the Caliphate's continuation of Jihad and March to the Sea; others hated its chief Architect, Sir Ahmadu Bello (Sardauna of Sokoto), Premier, Northern Region from October, 1954-January, 1966; others, particularly the Northerners who had over the years before and after independence witnessed the

dominance of Europeans and non-Northerners in the various fields of endeavours in the Northern Region, such as the Public Service, trade, skilled and technical jobs, etc., liked and praised the policy, for it liberated them from the shackles of external dominance from both Europeans and non-Northerners in a federal/constitutional set up where each region had greater powers to determine its own affairs. True to its objectives, Northerners, had greatly benefitted from the Northernisation Policy as it helped them, determine their domestic regional affairs, many attained not only higher levels, but the peak of their respective careers and professions in the public service of both the Northern Region and Nigeria, and in the strive, as obtainable with the other regions to have its fair share of what Nigerians call 'cake', whether regional or national.

## **2. The Making of Nigerian Entity/State**

Nigeria, which was formed as a single entity on January 1, 1914, was in actual sense a colonial making and an imposition of the various peoples that made it up, neither were the consent of the various peoples and areas sought, nor were they involved in the formation/amalgamating process, and thus the descriptions as historical accident, etc., although the various peoples were perhaps not then in the true picture of what the British meant and intended, they did not resist the union (Mohammed, 2018:1-4). With the political, constitutional and geographical developments, adjustments and the enactment of constitutions, no genuine effort or policy was formally made to ensure the true unity of the regions into one until the enactment of the Richards Constitution in 1946 (Elaigwu & Garba, in Chakrabarti & Srivastava, 2015:83), and then the federal constitution in 1954, which Auwal and Ndaliman (2014) described as '*a child of necessity*', and not just a colonial imposition, because it was the only means of sustaining the union. With that, Nigeria became the largest federation in Africa (Dickovick, 2014), and began another phase of struggle and rivalry among the regions, in addition to their bids for respective regional developments. That was complimented by the nature of the constitutional distribution of powers, which allocated more and strategic powers under residual list to the regions, including resource control and relative autonomy on several items. The search for a feasible system of government to Nigeria has from then on continued, but more emphasis on the federal system - regions and provinces, states and local governments, weak centre and strong regions, and strong centre and weak states (Anderson, 2016; Eze, 2016).

## **3. The Challenges of Amalgamation, and Imposition/Practice of Federalism in Nigeria**

Varying ethno-religious, regional identities and competition have generally characterised the Nigerian state from the onset of its inception, and therefore with the three regions in the amalgamated Nigeria, there has been the challenge of sustaining its unity amidst preservation and promotion of these identities as well as the rivalry to surpass the others. More so, these ethno-religious, regional identities have become the determining factors in the political-economy of the Nigerian state (Okereke 2013 in Mojúbàolú Olúfúnké Okome; Falola & Heaton, 2008; United Nations Common Country Analysis Report, UN/CCA, 2016).

From the make-up of the Nigerian entity in January, 1914, the amalgamation reflected a tripod arrangement – three regions and three dominant ethnic groups, which hitherto, had little or none in common, but for the Islamic religious affinity and trade between the North and Yorubas in the West Nigeria (see also Oyadiran & Toyin, 2015). With regards to the East, there hardly existed any relation, especially with the North. Since the involuntary amalgamation of 1914, the three main areas (North and South), which were further broken into three in 1939 to become Northern, Eastern and Western Protectorates of Nigeria, each of the three dominant ethnic groups/regions were suspicious and fearful of one another for so many reasons – historical and religious

differences, uncertainty of the union, relative socio-political organisations and settings, educational and economic imbalances, cultural differences and barriers, differential administrations by the colonial masters for the North and South, and the various political, but conflicting trends up to the constitutional enactment of federal system in October, 1954 (Oyadiran and Toyin, 2015; Anyanwu, 2010; Albert in Amuwo, Suberu, Agbaje & Herault, 1998:50).

There are challenges of fairness and or balance in terms of appointments, recruitments and distribution of social amenities and national resources despite the replacement of the quota system with the current federal character principle (Adamolekun, Erero & Oshionebo, 1991; Oyadiran & Toyin, 2015). These problems revolve around, nepotism, inability to fill up the due and or allocated vacancies, corruption, educational gaps, non-compliance to the federal character principle, etc.

With the institutionalisation of the federal system of government since October, 1954, the regions began a gradual competition among themselves, especially that it was a federation with weak centre and strong regional governments with strategic and residual powers over internal revenue, resource control and public service. Although there were different levels of development, especially with the North a little behind the two others, there was competition between the regions to ensure non marginalisation and preponderance in government (Oyadiran & Toyin, 2015; Anthony, 2010). The competition was also much taken to the centre. Since the 1959 Federal elections, the central government began to have a significant importance to the regions, especially that Chief Awolowo and Zik moved from their respective regions to the centre, but could not win the elections to warrant their parties control the majority and establish a government. The NPC, a Northern Nigerian dominant political party, however, got the majority seats, which enabled it to form a government, but of course, a in coalition with the NCNC of Zik. Despite the invitation extended by Tafawa Balewa to Awolowo to join and form a coalition government, Awolowo declined and rather, remained the federal opposition leader and invariably had to wait for the next general election (1965). Awolowo's decline to join the coalition government gave the North and East a relatively upper hand in the central government, and partly fueled the Awolowo/Akintola feud, for the latter realised the negative effects of not joining the coalition government, while his political mentor insisted on non-cooperation with the Northern dominant party, the NPC on political control of the centre. That increased the tendency for competition for while the Western region lost many things, the North and the East established and consolidated their relative powers at the centre. However, by 1964, Chief Akintola had already broken with Awolowo and established a new political party, which entered into alliance with the Northern NPC and established government at the centre after the 1964 federal elections. Chief Akintola was motivated by many factors to part way with Chief Awolowo, establish his new party and enter into alliance with the North. One of such was his realisation that in such a rivalled situation among the three regions, the West would eventually lose if it remained conservative and insisted on non-cooperation with other parties, particularly the NPC, being the majority party (see also Ojo, 2016; Mohammed, 2018:110-114; Dudley, 1968:219-222).

Even when the self rule was granted to the regions in 1957 and 1959, inability to make definite arrangements for the country's continued existence as one with heterogeneities, were not properly articulated and drawn, thus, the continued crisis, and reconciliation in the federalism. The major issue, however, in the Nigerian federalism revolves around accommodation and management of the diverse interest, areas, resources, hopes and aspirations of the Nigerian people (Kalu, 2016).

#### 4. Nigeria's Three Major Ethnic Groups/Regions

The geo-political and ethnic composition of Nigeria from the onset reflects a tripod arrangement characterised and dominated by the three major ethnic groups in the three respective regions (Oyadiran & Toyin, 2015).

##### 4.1 The North

The North covers more than half of Nigeria's land area. It has since the 1914 amalgamation remained the largest single political region/unit in not only Nigeria, but the whole of Africa, until its break-up to 6 states in July, 1967 by the regime of General Yakubu Gowon. The former Northern Region of Nigeria had its own regional Constitution, Coat of Arms which consisted: quartered shield with a goat, a bull, maize and corn leaves on it; its centre had an upright/vertical bar which symbolised effective communication; and a shield held by a camel and a horse; a sword and a book which rested on a cushion of cotton and groundnut leaves (widely produced in the North); with the Motto of *Work and Worship*. The North is now composed of 19 out of the 36 states of the Nigerian federation as: Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara, Niger, Bauchi, Taraba, Benue, Plateau, Borno, Kaduna, Yobe, Jigawa, Kano, Kogi, Katsina, Kwara, Gombe, Nassarawa and Adamawa. The North is the most heterogeneous among all the three regions, for apart from the Hausa/Fulani majority, there hundreds of ethnic minority groups, with Islam, Christianity and traditional religions. Islam came through the Sahara first, and then, Christianity from the Sea together with colonialism, but the people originally had their traditional religions.

##### 4.2 The East and Western Regions

The East and Western regions of Nigeria, which were together known as the Protectorate of the South of the Niger and its merger with the Lagos colony in 1906 remained one, until in 1939 when the British colonial government separated them into the Eastern and Western Protectorates of Nigeria. The East was large number the Igbos as the majority ethnic group, but with dozens of minority ethnic groups. The Igbo/East was a stateless and an acephalous society before the advent of colonialism. The European missionaries, alongside colonial domination brought Christianity to the East. With the 1967 states creation, the region was restructured into states, and currently, the former region contained eleven states put altogether (including the former Mid West created in 1963). The East is ethnic and linguistically multitudinous and heterogeneous, and had no significant historical contact with the North before the colonial conquest and the subsequent amalgamation of the areas to form the Nigerian entity. They had two regional Premiers (Dr Azikwe [1954-1959] and Sir Michael Okpara [1959-1966]).

The former Western region has a predominant population of the Yoruba ethnic group. The Yorubas are mainly homogeneous, but for the minor differences among them as they speak the same language. The West had some historical notes of contacts in trade and religious aspects with the North even before the Dan Fodio Jihad of 1804 (Fafunwa, 1991; Adekoya, 2016; Elugbaju, 2016). The Jihad further linked and strengthened the ties with the parts of Yoruba land, such as Ilorin, etc. It was, however, not the Jihad that relayed Islam to the Yoruba land, for there was the Islamic religion in the West prior to the Jihad in even far places as Lagos, while Islam itself, was preceded by the ancient traditional religion of the people. It was colonialism that brought the religion of Christianity in the West. They had two regional premiers (Chief Awolowo [1954-1959] and Chief Samuel Akintola [1959-1966]). The Region now has six states, all of which are predominantly Yorubas, being a homogeneous region.

It is without any doubt that the Igbos have been industrious and mainly successful, especially in commercial and industrial endeavours as noted by Ekew-Ekwe (cited in Heerten & Moses, 2014) that:

The Igbo were one of the very few constituent nations in what was Nigeria, again prior to 29 May 1966, who understood, fully, the immense liberatory possibilities... and the interlocking challenges of the vast reconstructionary work required for state and societal transformation in the aftermath of foreign occupation. The Igbo had the most robust economy in the country in their east regional homeland. Not only did they supply the country with its leading writers, artists and scholars, they also supplied the country's top universities with vice-chancellors and leading professors and scientists. They supplied the country with its first indigenous university (the prestigious university at Nsukka), with its leading and most spirited pan-Africanists and its top diplomats. They supplied the country's high leading schools with head teachers and administrators, supplied the country with leading business people and supplied the country with an educated, top-rated professional officers-corps for its military and police forces. In addition, they supplied the country with its leading sportspersons, essentially and effectively worked the country's rail, postal, telegraphic, power, shipping and aviation services to quality standards not seen since in Nigeria... And they were surely aware of the vicissitudes engendered by this historic age, precisely because the Igbo nation played the vanguard role in the freeing of Nigeria from Britain, beginning from the mid-1930s.

Taribo (2014:49-50) also observed the same concern against the Igbo in the then Eastern Region particularly Port-Harcourt and added that:

The Igbo settler community constituted the largest population in the municipality. 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. They monopolised the municipal council as well as the organs of sports and recreational activities... when therefore Ironsi substituted a unitary system for federalism, the jubilant Ibos rightly conjectured that the development had effectively buried the issue of state creation and thereby automatically ensured the permanency of lordship over Port-Harcourt and the larger minority heritage in Eastern Nigeria. This

conviction was reinforced by consciousness of relative advantage in demographic homogeneity, population superiority, educational advancement and economic ascendancy all of which they boastfully flaunted with irritating impudence. The minorities in the region fathomed the baneful implications of Ironsi's blunder and prayerfully hoped for the moment of solution... It came through Gowon's master stroke in brinkmanship involving him and Ojukwu.

### **5. Unity in the Nigerian State**

Taribo (2014:37-38) has vividly described the relative conception of what Nigerian unity means to the three tripod ethno-regional groups as:

To the Hausa/Fulani-Moslem northerners in particular, who demurred all along to throw in their lot with the southerners, it meant "Unity in Diversity" by which the union of the existing regions, operating under a confederal canopy, would be preserved and protected so that each component could develop at its own phase, with cooperative assistance where necessary from the rich to the less rich, while safeguarding its primordial values and preferences.

To the Yorubas who loved their culture, language and homeland with xenophobic passion, unity meant peaceful co-habitation and meritorious development of each ethnic group or section through the operation of fiscal, political and administrative federalism.

To the minorities who endured oppression, neglect and marginalisation in the scheme of governance, unity symbolised collaboration and cut-throat rivalry among the three majors into which they were conscripted as pawns to play the second fiddle in boosting the national population and image.

The Ibo comprehension and interpretation of unity was as more practical and nationalistic as it proved self-serving and utopian. Being habitually industrious, resourceful, gregarious and thrifty, but squeezed by accident into an over populated enclave, the Ibo regarded Nigeria as one market without ethnic, sectional and commercial barriers. They made a home of anywhere they settled, getting assimilated, especially language-wise, into the local society, while also preserving their cultural values and participating zealously in the activities of their tribal unions. They established businesses, practiced their professions and invested the proceeds in the building of shelters and estates that could outclass the ones they might have had in their ancestral towns and villages... To

such a people, “unity” meant a unified (unitary) administration of the nation devoid of regional or sectional boundaries so that every Nigerian would live, work, prosper and perform civic responsibilities in any location of settlement as a bona fide citizen.

### **6. The Chief Architect, Sir Ahmadu Bello, Premier, Northern Nigeria 1954-1966**

At the centre of the controversy about the Northernisation Policy is Sir Ahmadu Bello. He was the Northern Regional Premier (1954-1966), and as noted by Peel (1988), Ahmadu Bello was the most powerful politician of Nigeria’s first republic, and indeed, he remains the most singly powerful Nigerian politician ever in its history. Unlike his Eastern and the Western region counterparts (Zik and Awolowo), throughout his political career, Sardauna neither ever wished to nor made any attempt to move to the centre (federal government), but wished to and remained in the North, which he defended with everything, including his soul to fix it on a united front and sustainable foundation, and to him go all the credits in respect of whatever Northern Nigeria and Northerners may have achieved and or attained. His commitment to the North’s self and situational identities in relation to its background before the advent of colonialism, the challenges of colonial amalgamation and united Nigeria, and fully conscious of the multi religious heritages, civilisations, political economic development of his home region, made him passionate to strategically fix the region so as to ensure united and sustained Nigeria in a balanced federal/regional arrangement.

He was variously described, eulogised and praised by many - “*the embodiment of the soul of the North and all that it stood for*” (Mainasara, 1982:9); (Ojukwu, 1989:160) noted that he was:

... a man who roused the sleeping giant of the north from its centuries-old slumber and within the short span of six years placed it in a dominant position in Nigeria. He laid the foundations of the northern pre-eminence in Nigeria that has lasted until today and which threatens to into a future without limit... As a leader, he was superb and very successful. As a Nigerian leader we all wished he led us all, directed us all and inspired us all. His legacy was, however, a legacy of competition, a legacy of dialogue into which the north entered from a position of strength. Sir Ahmadu Bello was in every sense a giant. He perceived northern Nigeria as his domain and proceeded by sheer force of character to pull up that section of Nigeria from its bootstraps. He took over the leadership of the region when it was weak and disadvantaged. When he left the scene after a short spell of time, the north had become the bully which everyone feared. He was a great leader to his people.

“*The Sardauna was most concerned that the “North was lagging behind in education, commerce and many other areas of human endeavour. He took it as a personal challenge that must be tackled with utmost fervency*” (Madighi (2012:184).

On the other hand, many see him as too parochial to the North, feudalist, arrogant and blunt, vain, dictator, magnanimous impulse, a magnet for sycophants, and to others, he was Jihadist who wanted to continue the earlier March to the sea disrupted by the British, etc. (Muffet, 1982:2-4; Peel, 1988; ).

### **7. The Northern Region Dilemma before the Northernisation Policy**

It is no doubt that the state of affairs regarding the public service at both regional and central level was poor in the North. Dudley (1968:219) has lamented that by 1958, shortly before the independence, there were only 311 Northerners in higher levels of the public service (237 Executive and Higher Technical officers, 5 at the top of the service, and only 69 in the administrative and professional cadre).

By 1964, at the Nigeria Ports Authority (NPA) where there were 21 key offices, all of them were held by the Igbos, in addition another 73 of the 104 total senior positions; the Igbos were similarly, the predominant tribe in the Federal Public Service, including the key posts, beside their domination of the private sectors of the economy; in the foreign service, the Igbos alone held 9 ambassadorial posts, and then, the other three regions combined, shared the other 9 posts; at the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC), Igbo was the Chairman, with a total staff of 431 out of which 270 were all Igbos (see also Oyadiran & Toyin, 2015).

It was similarly noted by Oyadiran and Toyin (2015) that while the Northern Nigerian politicians were striving to ensure representation of the North in the Federal Civil Service at the centre, the Igbos/East and the Yorubas/West were already in competition to for the consolidation in such and at the same time, accusations were levelled against the Igbos of incursion into the Western regional economic affairs with suspicion and fears of preponderance (see also Dudley, 1966).

Suffice to say that Achebe (2012:75-78), who faulted the Northernisation Policy acknowledged the Igbo dominance everywhere, providing his figures that less than 3,000 Igbos were found in the Northern region by 1921, but this geometrically rose to 12,000 and 130, 000 by the years 1931 and 1952 (see also Samuel, 2007:257-262; Kurfi, 2004:98).

With the later arrival of Western education, the consequent wide gap between the North and South, there was not a single Secondary School in the whole of the Northern Protectorate of the Niger up to the year of amalgamation (1914), but Secondary Schools were established even prior to the amalgamation and their number in the South had reached by that year (1914). Similarly, between 1949 and 1953, the Central Scholarship Award Programme distributed 909 scholarships, but the entire Northern region over the six year period got only 55 slots, while the East and West got 333 and 521 slots, respectively (Mohammed, 2018:108-110; Fafunwa, 1991:110; Paden, 1986:253).

The situation had become so pathetic, embarrassing, disturbing in the North and required immediate action as recollected by Clark (1991:201) that:

District Officers were torn: they looked at the post offices, railway stations and workshops, the clerical service, public works yards and commercial stores, hospitals and professional men's offices, buying stations and garages, the increasingly important Kano airport and subsidiary airfields, all full of southern workers and many of them using no northern employees at all; they understood the boiling frustration of their northern charges who blamed discrimination and corruption for the humiliation so many

had experienced in all these places; yet they also knew and had affection for so many southerners, particularly the old ones, who were irreplaceably keystones in the north's administrative and economic fabric. What would a theoretical central agency do to restore the balances, fairly, that they and their government superiors and predecessors had for half a century lacked the tools to recover? The agony was greater because so few factions in the north believed that anyone in the south, in Lagos, or London, understood the extent of their feelings.

Similarly, the Report of the House of Representatives Laws of Federation of Nigeria (FN, 1957:728) laments that:

There are Europeans, but, undoubtedly, it is the Southerners who have the power in the North. They have control over the railway stations; of the post offices; of Government Hospitals; of canteens; the minority employed in the Kaduna Secretariat and in the Public Works Department are all Southerners; in all different departments of the Government it is the Southerners who have the power.

Although Northerners had lesser Western educational qualifications, their experience in the pre-colonial northern system of rule and the colonial/NA administration had greatly helped them in holding offices at the regional and central levels of government during the pre and Northernisation era (Akinwale, 2014). As the situation reached its climax in the North it became evidently clear as noted by Clark (1991:201) that:

The one thing upon which all northern ministers were now inflexibly determined was that there should be no new employment of southerners in the northern provinces, whether by regional government or by native authorities; clearly it will take time for 'northernisation' policy to be formulated and for a northern public service commission to implement it, giving priority for permanent employment to northerners, and then expatriates, or other West Africans (none of whom would settle in and pose a colonist's threat to the country), and only in the last and inescapable resort to southern Nigerians, who must be on terminable contract.

The Premier, Sir Ahmadu Bello (cited in Paden, 1986:255) gave the summary of the policy as:

To Northernise the Northern Region Public Service as soon as possible; to ensure for the Northerners a reasonable proportion of posts in the Federal Public Service; to secure for the Northerners a reasonable proportion of posts in all Statutory Corporations; to

increase the number of Northerners in commercial, industrial, banking and trading concerns in the region; to expand as necessary the educational, training and scholarship schemes of the Region in order to provide the qualified personnel required for the Northernisation Policy. This policy is carried out by all the available machinery of the Regional Government, e.g. Ministers, Civil Servants, Native Authorities and so on. The Northernisation Implementation Committee has been set up specifically to implement the Government Policy of Northernisation.

As the objectives of the policy began to manifest practically in the Northern Regional Public Service, the Premier informed the region that:

... When I and my colleagues in 1952 first assumed ministerial responsibilities, there were 1,633 Northerners in the junior posts of the Public Service and 25 Northerners in the senior posts. What is the position today? 2, 356 Northerners in the senior posts. This is an increase of 48 percent Northerners in the junior posts; and 148 percent Northerners in the senior posts.

#### *7.1 Internal and External Opposition and Resistance to the Northernisation Policy*

The enactment of the Northernisation Policy by the Northern Regional Government in the 1950's and 60's had earned it resentment, opposition, criticism and dislike from both within (opposition political parties, individuals) and outside, especially by the Eastern Regional Government with the Igbo tribesmen, who were worst hit by the policy, because of their prominence and domination of every sector in the North – Public Service, commercial and productive investment, technical and skilled jobs, and petty tradings (Akpala, 1971; Anikpo, 1979; Ojukwu & Onifade, 2010; Michael, 2013; Shagari, 2001:89). Lenshie & Akipu (2014) termed it the Northernisation Policy as planned and to ensure that “*nothing was good for the north which is not Muslim dominated*”. This was despite the fact the Sardauna and the Northern Regional Government did not isolate, segregate or favour any single religion, section or tribe within the North in the programme as admitted by (Okoya, 2013:27 & 28). The matter was worsened by the reluctance of many of those Igbo tribesmen to adequately train the Northerners in the jobs, but only left most of them as mere shop boys on loose apprenticeships. In such dislike and unpopularity of the policy among the Igbos, Achebe (2012:77) alleged that the Policy was schemed to:

Get the achievers out and replace them with less qualified individuals from the desired ethnic background so as to gain access to the resources of the state. This bizarre government strategy transformed the federal civil service, corporations, and universities into centres of ethnic bigotry and petty squabbles.

Additionally, he dismissed the policy as the Northern and Western Regional Governments and politicians 'ploy' to liberate their people, which "... resulted in government supervised persecutions, terminations, and dismissals of Nigerian citizens based on their ethnicity" against the Igbo's dynamism, industry and hard work. Towards the end of the first republic, northernisation was accelerated and many Igbos returned or lost their jobs and returned to the east under duress and had lost substantial portion of their hegemony in the public service because of both the Northernisation Policy, which replaced them with Northerners and the Sardauna/Akintola Nigerian National Alliance (NNA) in 1964, which also checked the Igbo dominance at the Central Government, because of more inclusion of the Westerners and Northerners in the Centre Government (Kirk-Greene, 1993:304-305; Diamond, 1966; Albert in Amuwo, Suberu, Agbaje & Herault, 1998:50-63). The Premier, Ahmadu Bello pursued the Northernisation Policy, and when once cautioned about it, he insisted it would be over his grave, and it was, indeed, over his grave as the post January, 1966 coup literatures and circumstances have shown (Mohammed, 2018:105-118; Paden, 1986:397; Ademoyega, 1981:43, 82-83).

While the Southerners were decrying and faulting the Northernisation Policy, there was hardly any single employee (Northerner) in the western and Eastern regional public services, despite the fact that they had dominated every sector in the North (Lenshie & Akipu, 2014). This was further complicated by the fact the not all, but many of the Southerners, especially in those days not only viewed, but also treated Northerners with resentment, contempt and or despise (see Ajayi, 2009:149-178; Braji, 2014:152-182; Madighi, 2012:139-143; Olomjobi, 2013:151; Ojukwu, 1989:179; Clark, 1991:203; Muffet, 1982: 10-12; Richard, 1987:133-136). It is also a general notion among the Igbos, and typical of how the major ethnic groups despise, resent or see one another, that the Hausa/Fulani have a "wary religion" and the Yoruba held back by their "traditional hierarchies" (Achebe, 2012:74).

Despite, however, the fact that decades have gone since the assassination of its Chief Architect, Sir Ahmadu Bello and the institutionalisation of strong federal and weak states federalism in Nigeria, there are still loopholes in the balance appointments, distribution of resources and dominance of one tribe, section, region or state in the public service and other spheres of the Nigerian state. For example, by 2003, Northern Nigeria, which had more states, local governments and larger population has only about 10 percent of the total number of engineers in Nigeria, 8 percent of the Nigerian banks executives; 15 percent of the total number of Professors; less than 2 percent of insurance practitioners; about 25 percent of the total lawyers (Adamu as cited in Oyadiran & Toyin, 2015). Despite the improvements witnessed after, with the inception federal character, there are still imbalances which are more tilted towards one region against the others (see Oyadiran & Toyin, 2015; Adamolekun, Erero & Oshionebo, 1991; New Nigerian, January 12, 1999, pp. 13; Weekly Trust, January 19, 1999, pp. 12).

It was not only the Northern Region that was carrying out such a policy to flush out others in order to achieve full inclusion and participation of its people in their affairs, but all the other regions were each doing same at the respective levels (Ojo, 2016; Thisday, November 13, 1999, pp. 18-19; Kirk-Greene, 1993:261-262). For example, the Western Regional Government had in 1964 lamented the Igbo dominance in the national and the other regions' affairs, and was prompted to release a white paper (1964:4 as cited in Ojo, 2016) which read:

The Federal Republic is, in a sense, a Commonwealth. Its resources must be accessible to all its citizens, regardless of creed, clan or tribe. It is a matter for regret that there are among leaders of a certain part of the federation...who do

not share this view, and who appear to regard the Federal Government as a limited liability company of which only their kith and kin should be sole shareholders.

The Igbos are mainly forced out of the South East by several factors, including a shortage of land, which often results in conflicts among communities, families, villages and clans. This factor (shortage of land) has fuelled their dispersal to every part of Nigeria and beyond, and also the search for material well being (Nwaezeigwe, 2007:7; Ajayi, 2009:93; Iwuagwu & Njoku, 2008:1; Falola, 2001:9; Achebe, 2012:75). Likewise, the Igbos have their own internal (intra-ethnic, language, regional) conflicts, discords, competition and or rival with the Eastern minority tribes and areas, for example, with the Port-Hacourt, etc. (Okwaraji, Aguwa, Shywobi, Nwopoku, & Nduanya, 2017; Emeh, Njoku, & Ukenna, 2017; Ebeide, 2017; Ikezue, 2017; Aghedo, 2017; Taribo, 2014:49-51; Onuoha, 2014).

## 8. Summary and Conclusion

Northern Nigerian regional government's Northernisation Policy of the 1950's and 1960's remains one of the most popular on one hand, resented, and controversial and hated policies ever formulated and implemented in the history of Nigeria. With the formulation and enactment of that policy, many Northerners got a sense of belonging to their home region and mostly contributed optimally to ensure growth and development of their home region. However, from the historical and practical situations, relations and circumstances which the various parts of the Nigeria found themselves before and after the amalgamation, coupled with the politics of identity, regionalism, federalism with weak centre and strong regions, intense competition and rivalry among the regions, the struggle for power at the centre, varying levels of development especially with regards to Western education, and many other related factors, nothing short of the Northernisation Policy in the Northern Nigeria would have sustained and guaranteed Nigerian unity, fairness and accommodation of the inherent heterogeneities. Northerners then, looked up to their leaders to rescue them from the various challenges which not only threatened their development and prosperity, but had bearing on the future socio-economic, political and cultural security of their region. Therefore, the first thing was to ensure that the house (North) was put in order, which could safely and best be done by its own people, not the others. Later generations and the history would not have forgiven those leaders, if they had sat and watched other peoples dominating their own regional affairs in the name of Nigeria and unity, which such was not obtainable in the other regions. Indeed, that would have partly resulted and made matters worse in what is currently trailed as indigene/settler issue, which is primarily undertone by the economic interest of who controls what, where, when and how? The Northernisation Policy, despite its resentment and controversy had stabilised the Northern region for the Northerners and prevented continued domination of the regional affairs by people from other regions in a federal setting where each region had substantial powers in determining its own domestic regional affairs relatively independent of the centre and the other regions.

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