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Article

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ETHNIC VOTING PATTERNS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLITICAL ACCOMMODATION IN NIGERIA: EVIDENCE FROM THE 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS

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Abstract

This paper investigates the nexus between ethnic voting patterns and political accommodation in Nigeria during the 2019 general elections. In a complex, multi-ethnic society like Nigeria much importance is attached to political power and participation in power-sharing among ethnic groups. Hence, in Nigeria, political accommodation or patronage from any government in power will reflect the ethnic groups who, through their members, supported such governments during the elections. This paper posits that political leaders in the executive and legislative arms of government must drop the concept of majority rule in Nigerian politics and govern by the precepts of grand coalition, particularly the concept of unanimity. This will achieve political accommodation within multi-ethnic Nigeria, because a broad agreement among all executive or parliamentary representatives would definitely be more democratic and positively impact a larger population much more than a simple majority rule. Finally, in order to avoid political exclusion or marginalisation, a unanimous vote in the Federal Executive Council or the National Assembly would rightly be a win for the common good of all citizens, while a majority vote would be to push one partisan or group interest as against the general good of all citizens. Irrespective of which ethnic group voted for or against the government during the elections. The paper is qualitative in nature and relied on secondary sources of data collection such as publications and articles. All data collected were subjected to textual analysis using descriptive and narrative styles.

Keywords: Ethnicity, Political Accommodation, Voting Patterns, General Elections, Political Parties, Democracy.

Introduction

Social and economic inequalities, ethnic and religious divisions, and structural weaknesses, such as corruption and weak state capacity are prevalent in the body politic of the Nigerian State. Wokocha (2018) has argued that managing the competing claims, interests and positions between ethno-political groups is crucial for building a pluralistic society where separate ethnic nationalities exist side by side with a single citizenship. Nigeria cannot succeed in building such pluralistic society without effective political leadership and strong government commitment (Wokocha, 2018). Theories of resource mobilization, ethnic rivalry, and split labour market suggest that democratization and economic modernization encourage ethnic competition and unaccommodating behaviour among ethnic groups such as, political and socioeconomic exclusion and extreme political violence in plural and complex societies such as Nigeria. The question of whether, and how, democracy can survive in divided societies has long been a source of controversy. It is common to interpret Nigeria politics in ethnic terms as ethnicity is perceived to be the central unifying concept for the analysis of socioeconomic and political life. This perspective was first popularized by colonial anthropologists (Nnoli, 1978, p. 1), in order to fast-track the material and ideological aims of colonialism.

Nnoli argued that colonialists had to justify the ethnic view of the African in the context that only conflict characterized contact among ethnic groups and thus, categorised linguistic groups as such which attribute to them differences in culture and way of life. Furthermore, the colonialists began to separate these ethnic groups from one another, particularly in residential areas. At first, southern and northern immigrants had co-habited and accommodated one another within their host communities, to the embarrassment of the colonialists. In cities like Katsina and Gwandu, where the Emirs successfully resisted policy of separation, colonial confidential reports on the Emirs contained a section which stated that those who were favourably disposed to southern migrants were reported as "not to be trusted on this question (Nnoli, 1978, p. 4). Hence, sociopolitical accommodation between ethnic groups was against official colonial policy. Scholars have argued (Mill, 1958, p. 230 as cited in Reilly, 2003, p. 3) that stable democracy is possible only in relatively homogeneous societies, they believe that democracy was incompatible with the structure of a multi-ethnic society, as free institutions are next to impossible in a country made up of different nationalities. This was a view prevalent amongst many scholars and policy-makers until at least the 1960s, with the perils of 'ethnicity' and ethnic division frequently cited as causing the failure of democracy in newly independent states of Africa and Asia in the post-war period (Low 1991, pp. 272-3).

However, when scholars did turn their attention towards intensive enquiry, many saw more reasons for the failure rather than the consolidation of democracy in divided societies (Reilly, 2003, p. 20). A classic example is the rational-actor arguments against the likelihood of stable democracy in divided societies put up by Rabushka and Shepsle (1972). They argued that would-be political leaders typically find the rewards of 'outbidding' on ethnic issues - moving towards increasingly extremist rhetoric and policies - greater than those of moderation. Since ethnic identities tend to be invested with a great deal of symbolic and emotional meaning, aspiring politicians hungry for electoral success have strong incentives to harness these identities as a political force, and to use communal demands as the base instigator of constituency mobilisation. Concepts like 'block-voting' spring-up during elections and are used by politicians and political parties as these votes actually mean that an ethnic group will be galvanized or mobilized to vote *en masse* for a political party or

politician most likely from the same ethnic group as the voters. In Nigeria it is believed that political interests arising from, manipulated and mobilized around ethnic identities differ from one another because of differences among the various ethnic groups. Political actors will mobilize social groups—regional, ethnic, interest, confessional, and so on—depending on the number of votes each group can potentially deliver.

Why has ethnicity continued to pose serious threats for Nigerian politics and society in spite of various efforts to eradicate it, or at least attenuate it (Nnoli, 2003, p. 2?). Unitarism, regionalism, the creation and proliferation of states, ethnic arithmetic, ethnic balancing, federal character, National Youth Service Corps, federal unity colleges, various formulas for revenue allocation, secession, the imposition of a two-party system, the proliferation of local government areas, government by grand coalition (power sharing), the policy of WAZOBIA, multi-party democracy, various forms of military rule, relocation of the federal capital from Lagos to Abuja, numerous constitutional conferences, and official and non-official exhortations for national unity and inter-ethnic tolerance have all failed to improve the situation. This failure to curb ethnicity influenced the intensity of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria as ethnic groups seeking political power for their favoured candidate voted along ethnic lines. Currently, Nigeria runs a multi-party presidential system of government which is indeed a zero-sum (self's gain is other's loss) situation when it comes to winning and losing elections. This played out effectively during the 2019 general elections. Since independence, democratic governments have ruled Nigeria from October 1, 1960 to January 14, 1966, from October 1, 1979, to December 30, 1983 and, from May 1999 to the present. With the periods in between filled by military regimes, who took over power citing political and economic shortcomings of the civilian governments as excuses. In keeping with an increased focus on assessing the implications of ethnic based voting in the 2019 general elections this paper will briefly look at converse academic debates on democracy. Joseph Schumpeter, defined the democratic concept as that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote (Schumpeter, 1947, p. 269 as cited in Huntington, 1989). Huntington, (1989, p. 6-7) posited, this modest meaning of democracy which has become widely accepted when he wrote that:

theorists increasingly drew distinctions between rationalistic, utopian, idealistic definitions of democracy, on the one hand, and empirical, descriptive, institutional, and procedural definitions on the other, and concluded that only the latter type of definition provided the analytical precision and empirical referents that make the concept a useful one.

The essential democratic institution is the ballot box and all that goes with it (Riker, 1986, p. 25). While Huntington himself defined a twentieth-century political system as democratic to the extent that decision-makers are selected through fair, honest and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population is able to vote (Huntington, 1991, p. 29). Similarly, democracy is defined as a system of government that meets three essential conditions: meaningful competition for political power amongst individuals and organized groups; inclusive participation in the selection of leaders and policies, at least through free and fair elections; and a level of civil and political liberties sufficient to ensure the integrity of political competition and participation (Diamond, Linz and Lipset, 1995, p. xvi).

Over several decades these scholarly contributions on democracy have argued that, democracy has to do with the selection of decision-makers and leaders by the adult

population of a modern society through a process which involves voting in a ballot-box and whose outcome is the investiture of political power on the victors, who would now run that society. Therefore, in assessing the implications for political accommodation, in 2019 general elections, it must be accepted that politically conscious adults who voted based on their ethnic group strength, would be ready for the outcome of the elections. Whatever that may be, either a win or lose situation and, whichever other ethnic group takes control of power. This paper investigates the conditions for political accommodation in ethnically heterogeneous Nigeria, with regard to ethnic voting patterns.

Methodology

Procedurally, qualitative approach was used for the purpose of this paper, both in data collection and analysis. Consequently, the data used in this paper were collected from varied sources. In this regard, the paper relied on collection of secondary sources. The data was extracted from documented sources, such as text books journals, magazines, newspapers, government reports, and the internet. However, in terms of analysis of data, the author adopted descriptive and narrative techniques. Hence, this paper is based on a systematic analysis of content documentation. It is on this basis that all data collected were subjected to textual analysis.

Brief Historical Background: Ethnicity, Political Parties and Democracy in Nigeria

During the initial decolonization period, in the 1960s and '70s, the newly independent African states in their search to contain ethnic, regional, and religious mobilization led many rulers to force their countries into *de jure* single party or military rule. A partial list of these regimes during the 1960s and '70s include; Benin (single party), Chad (single party), Comoros (single party), Republic of Congo (single party), Equatorial Guinea (single party), Gabon (de facto single party), Ghana (single party and military rule), Guinea (single party), Guinea Bissau (single party), Kenya (de facto single party), Madagascar (military rule), Malawi (single party), Mali (single party), Niger (single party and military rule), Rwanda (single party), Seychelles (single party), Sierra Leone (coups and then single party), Tanzania (single party), Togo (single party), and Zambia, single party (Piombo, 2009, p. 2). In most of the countries that did not legislate single-party systems, political parties proceeded to develop along ethnic, religious, and regional lines (which in many cases also reinforced one another, as in Nigeria, Cameroon, Sudan, and Angola). Ethnicity, therefore has had a close relationship with democracy in Africa. This obviously was a key legacy colonialism implemented in African societies. For example, before the January 1966 coup in Nigeria and the abolition of political parties that followed, political parties were structured in make and composition along ethnic lines. Thus, the Northern People's Congress was open only to people of Northern Nigeria origin. Despite the difficulty of discerning who qualified as a northerner the party had an ethnically exclusive character. Also, the National Council of Nigerian Citizens became an Igbo party. In spite of NCNCs efforts to retain pan-ethnic support across Nigeria it basically remained an ethnic party. The same ethnic philosophy guided the Action Group dominated by the Yoruba (Horowitz, 1985, p. 292 -293).

An examination of the 1979 federal elections demonstrates the significant force of ethnicity in the voting behaviour of Nigerians. In 1979 the five major political parties that contested the elections were based in their ethnic territories and had the majority of their core officers and supporters from members of their ethnic groups. It is important to note that the various parties except one, were essentially re-incarnations of the parties formed in the 1950's (Otite, 2000, p. 94). Thus, the Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP) replaced the earlier

NCNC, and was led by the same person, the Rt. Hon. Nnamdi Azikiwe, with its solid backing among the Igbo people and their allies. The Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) was primarily a Yoruba political party led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, who had led the Action Group political party. Both parties; the UPN and its predecessor the AG; had their overwhelming supporters in Ondo, Ogun and Oyo states, as well as substantial numbers in Lagos and Kwara states. In the north, the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) replaced the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC), with membership anchorage among the Hausa-Fulani and other ethnic groups in the northern parts of the country. Alhaji Aminu Kano who led the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), was also the leader of the successor party, Peoples Redemption Party (PRP), with a rock-hard support base among the members of the Kano region of Hausa-Fulani and other minority ethnic groups. In a surprising twist of events, the Kanuri and their supporting ethnic enclaves broke off from the NPC/NPN politics of patronage, and in 1979, after the creation of their Borno state in 1976, gave an overwhelming support to one of their “soil men”, Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim, a former NPC cabinet minister, to organize a new political party called the Great Nigeria People’s Party GNPP (Otite, 2000, p. 94).

Table 1: 1979 Federal Election: Votes by States for Political Parties/Leaders

State/Total	Vote cast	GNPP-Waziri	UPN-Awolowo	NPN-Shagari	PRP-Aminu	NPP-Azikiwe
Anambra	1,209,038	20,228(1.67%)	9,063(0.75%)	163,164(13.5%)	14,500(1.2%)	1,002,083(82.88%)
Bauchi	998,683	154,218(16.44%)	29,960(0.3%)	623,989(62.48%)	43,202(4.34%)	47,314(4.74%)
Bendel	669,511	8,242(1.2%)	356,381(53.2%)	242,320(36.20%)	4,939(0.70%)	57,629(8.60%)
Benue	538,879	42,993(7.97%)	13,864(2.57%)	411,648(76.38%)	7,277(1.35%)	63,097(11.77%)
Borno	710,968	384,278(54.04%)	23,885(3.35%)	246,778(34.71%)	46,385(6.52%)	9,642(1.35%)
C.River	661,103	100,105(15.14%)	77,775(11.76%)	425,815(64.40%)	6,737(1.01%)	50,671(7.66%)
Gongola	639,138	217,914(34.09%)	138,561(21.67%)	327,057(51.25%)	27,750(4.34%)	27,856(4.35%)
Imo	1,153,355	34,616(3.00%)	7,335(0.64%)	101,516(8.80%)	10,252(0.89%)	999,636(86.67%)
Kaduna	1,382,712	190,936(14.00%)	92,382(7.00%)	596,302(43.00%)	437,771(31.00%)	65,321(5.00%)
Kano	1,195,136	18,482(1.54%)	14,973(1.23%)	243,423(19.94%)	932,803(76.41%)	11,081(0.91%)
Kwara	354,605	20,251(5.71%)	140,006(39.48%)	190,142(53.62%)	2,376(0.67%)	1,830(0.52%)
Lagos	828,414	3,943(0.48%)	681,762(82.30%)	59,515(7.18%)	3,874(0.47%)	79,320(9.57%)
Niger	383,347	63,273(16.6%)	14,155(3.67%)	287,072(74.88%)	14,555(3.77%)	45,292(11.81%)
Ogun	744,668	3,974(0.53%)	689,655(92.61%)	46,358(6.23%)	2,338(0.31%)	2,343(0.32%)
Ondo	1,384,788	3,561(0.26%)	1,294,666(94.50%)	57,361(4.19%)	2,500(0.18%)	11,752(0.86%)
Oyo	1,396,547	8,029(0.57%)	1,197,982(85.78%)	177,999(12.75%)	4,804(0.32%)	7,732(0.55%)
Plateau	548,405	37,400(6.82%)	29,029(5.29%)	190,458(34.73%)	21,852(3.98%)	269,666(49.70%)
Rivers	687,951	15,025(2.18%)	71,114(10.33%)	499,846(72.65%)	3,312(0.46%)	98,754(14.35%)
Sokoto	1,348,697	359,021(26.61%)	34,102(2.52%)	898,094(66.58%)	44,977(3.33%)	12,503(0.92%)
Total	16,846,633	1,686,489	4,916,651	5,688,857	1,732,113	2,822,523

Source: Otite, 2000, p. 95.

Ethnic mobilization for political power thus, became a means to an end in modern Nigerian politics. Ethnic mobilization most likely occurs when political elites consider it a winning strategy. Where politicians and political parties seek national power, they must craft electoral support coalitions that are large enough to win significant shares of the national vote. Where they seek localized power, smaller coalitions can suffice. Therefore, the relative size and combinability of various social divisions is a critical factor in the process of democratization without ethnic mobilization. Political institutions set both the tier of political competition and the electoral formulas to win seats, while the social divisions in the country set a menu of potential support blocs.

The electoral umpire, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) published a list of 73 duly registered political parties which were to participate in the February 2019 general elections. The 2019 general elections were keenly contested between the incumbent All Progressive Congress (APC) and the opposition People's Democratic Party (PDP). This intensity followed Nigeria's first peaceful transition of power to the opposition in 2015, when incumbent president Goodluck Jonathan of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) conceded defeat to Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress (APC). Since then both PDP and APC had been hit with waves of party defectors and cross-carpeting to either the ruling APC or opposition PDP citing undemocratic internal politics. Importantly, the 2019 presidential candidate Alhaji Atiku Abubakar of the PDP was originally a founding member of the PDP until he changed party affiliations over the years and was a founding member and financier of the ruling APC. Only to decamp back to the PDP and emerged as the party's presidential flag bearer to contest against Muhammadu Buhari of the APC. Thus, some analysts argued that the 2015 presidential elections saw a Christian from southern Nigeria face a Muslim from northern Nigeria, exacerbating contests over identity, ethnicity, religion, and regionalism. In 2019, it occurred that the most competitive presidential candidates hailed exclusively from northern Nigeria. This reduced the prospect of intercommunal tensions across the country and also made it more difficult to appeal to base claims of identity as a determinant of political choice in the presidential election.

Theoretical Framework

Consociational Democracy: A Theory of Political Accommodation

This paper employed the tenets of the theory of political accommodation in relation with the theory of consociational democracy as propounded by Arend Lijphart (1981) to do an analysis of ethnic voting patterns and its implications for political accommodation in the aftermath of the 2019 general elections. This is because initially consociational democracy has a nature of making plural societies more thoroughly plural. Its approach is not to weaken or abolish ethnic groups but to recognize them explicitly and to turn the groups into constructive elements of a stable democracy. In Nigeria the fundamental framework for politics is a communal one and as such all political behaviour is strongly coloured by primordial loyalties. Consequently, some schools of thought maintain that a plural society is incapable of sustaining a democratic government (Mill, 1958; Furnivall, 1948; Geertz, 1963; Huntington, 1968). Free institutions are next to impossible in a country made up of different nationalities. Among a people without fellow-feeling, especially if they read and speak different languages, the united public opinion, necessary to the working of representative government, cannot exist (Mill, 1958, p. 230). Hence, Nigeria in its current state of ethnic rivalry is finding it difficult to sustain democracy in its ideal form, as democracy in Nigeria is characterized by ballot box snatching, electoral violence and intimidation, corruption in election tribunals and all manner of instability. These scholars (Mill, 1958; Furnivall, 1948; Geertz, 1963; Huntington, 1968) argued that for a plural society or a multi-ethnic state to successfully attain political accommodation among its segments, it must engage in democratization and nation-building. Democratization cannot advance far without segments of the multi-ethnic society acquiring a deep sense of identification or integration with the whole system, hence, the importance of nation-building. Nation-building is that which entails the eradication of primordial sub-national attachments and their replacement with national loyalty. Or as Huntington (1968), stated political modernization means nation-building which involves the replacement of a large number of traditional, religious, familial and ethnic political authorities by a single secular, national political authority.

On the contrary, Lijphart's theory of political accommodation regards the above positions as constituting serious errors, wrong perceptions and extremely dangerous to implement. The consociational alternative avoids this danger and offers a more promising method for achieving both democracy and a considerable degree of political unity (Lijphart, 1977, p. 30). Consociational democracy is defined in terms of four characteristics, of which its precepts could be implemented in part or in full to curb the issue of ethnicity and political accommodation in Nigeria. The first and most essential is government by a grand coalition comprising of political leaders of all significant segments of the multi-ethnic society. Since Nigeria practices a presidential system of government, the grand coalition would be one of a president and other top officeholders in a presidential system. The other three basic elements are; the mutual veto or what Lijphart calls concurrent majority which serves as a protection of minority interests; proportionality which is the principal standard of political representation, civil service appointments, and apportionment of public funds; and lastly, a high degree of autonomy for each segment to run its own internal affairs (Lijphart, 1977, p. 24).

Ethnic Voting Patterns in Nigeria's 2019 General Elections

The features of an ethnically divided society collaborate to obstruct the progress of the full range of societal relations among ethnic assemblages and this affects organizational structure particularly in politics. Hence, political scientists often study voting patterns to determine partisan preferences among selected voter groups. Voter groups, such as those based on income levels, education levels, gender, age, regional location, religion, race, or ethnicity, have historically changed their partisan preferences at times in a process called realignment. Therefore, societies such as Nigeria where ethnic conflict levels are high, ethnic voting during elections reflect "something" more than mere kinship and an ambiguous sense of common interest. That "something" according to Horowitz (1985) is the mutual incompatibility of ethnic claims to state power. Hence, the ethnic group aspires to control the state and, in conflict-prone polities, ethnic groups also attempt to exclude others from state power. This situation has led to the emergence of ethnic voting patterns as an integral part of political struggle in Nigeria since ethnic voting offers political leaders the promise of secure support and something they can count on.

The concept of ethnic voting has two likely connotations as argued by Horowitz (1985, p. 233) and Wolfinger (1965, p. 869-908). Firstly, members of an ethnic group may vote heavily for one political party over another regardless of the ethnic origin of the particular candidate, for example, during the 2019 general elections, ethnic groups in the predominantly Christian southern Nigeria voted overwhelmingly for the opposition People's Democratic Party (PDP) despite the fact that its presidential candidate, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar was a Fulani from the north. Likewise, the largely Muslim dominated ethnic groups in northern Nigeria voted *en masse* for the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC) in the 2019 general elections but in this case the party's flagbearer, Gen. Muhammad Buhari (rtd) was also a Fulani Muslim. Secondly, members of a given ethnic group may vote for candidates belonging to the same group, irrespective of party affiliation as was the case in Adamawa, Benue, Plateau and Taraba states of the northern region breaking out to vote for the opposition PDP in the 2019 general elections. Elsewhere, ethnic voting patterns in surveys conducted in other ethnically divided societies such as Guyana and Trinidad reflect the fact that it is contained in the overall political party support with ethnic demography (Horowitz, 1985, p. 233 and Wolfinger, 1965, p. 869-908). This fact is also clear in the 2019 general election in Nigeria where the result per state and percentage of votes polled per political

party and the percentage of votes polled were parallel to the ethnic composition of the states, it is discovered that states and the ethnic groups within them which enjoyed more support from the ruling APC or the opposition PDP voted in block for these political parties.

Statistics from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) showed that out of a total of 84,004,084 registered voters only 35.66% which amounts to 29,364,209 participated in the national election. As such 34.75% or a total of 27,324,583 votes were collated as valid votes while 0.91% or 1,289,607 were designated as void or rejected votes. President Buhari of the APC polled 55.6% or 15,191,847 votes of the total votes cast to win, leaving his rival, Alhaji Atiku of the PDP 41.22% or 11,262,978 votes, thus emerging as the closest rival to President Buhari. Both presidential candidates were from the Fulani ethnic group, with Gen Buhari of the APC from Katsina state while Alhaji Atiku representing the PDP hails from Adamawa state. A glance at the summary of the INEC 2019 presidential declaration of results show that only two candidates - Muhammadu Buhari of the APC and Atiku Abubakar of the PDP – had votes running into the millions, thus pointing to the fact that ethnic groups in Nigeria did indeed vote along ethnic lines during the national elections resulting in these block-votes. In northern Nigeria, states like Kano state, an APC controlled state, which is home territory to two ethnic groups, the Fulbe (Fulani) and the Hausa ethnic groups, had the highest number of votes cast – 1,964,751 and 1,891,134 valid votes out of which the APC polled 77.5% or 1,465,628 votes (BBC, 2019). The APC share of the vote was down from 89.6% in 2015 to 77.5% in 2019, because the 2015 presidential elections saw a Christian from southern Nigeria face a Muslim from northern Nigeria, thus aggravating contests over identity, ethnicity and religion (Veerjee, 2019, p. 20). This ethnoreligious intensity was absent in the 2019 general elections since both candidates originated from the same ethnoreligious background. In this election the support base of the opposition PDP exists largely within Christian ethnic groups in the southern and Middle belt parts of Nigeria. However, receiving its largest support from the vast majority of Muslim Fulbe (Fulani) and Hausa ethnic groups the All Progressive Congress can also be faulted to be an ethnic party though this support base does not qualify the PDP or APC as an ethnic party, after all a party must not command an exclusive hold on its members' allegiance. Rather, being an ethnic party reflects on how the party's support is channelled, focused or distributed.

As such prior to the general elections Governor Ganduje of Kano state was embroiled in a dollar-for- contract scandal. Video clips of the incident went viral on social media and legal procedures were initiated by parties involved. In a surprise move and contrary to its anti-corruption mantra, the APC-led federal government did not reprimand the embattled governor but somewhat showed support and solidarity with him. This was in contrast with corruption cases involving top-ranking government officials from the south- the sore case of the ousted Chief Justice Walter Onnoghen for example. Likewise, while PDP campaigned for the prosecution of the embattled Kano state governor, the same party saw nothing wrong in the actions of the ousted Chief Justice but, rather criticized the government's action as an attack on the independence of the Judiciary as a separate arm of government. As shown in table 2, Borno state which is the home territory to 23 ethnic groups with the Kanuri, Fulani, and Shuwa as the dominant ethnic groups, the APC Presidential candidate in the 2019 general elections, Muhammadu Buhari, got 90.94% of all votes in Borno State. His highest margin of victory in the 2019 elections, with a 41% voter turnout. This is a state that has been terrorized by Boko Haram for more than half a decade and even experienced bombings on election day, as a result the state government has received unalloyed support from the APC-led federal government. Jigawa state had the highest rate of voter turnout with 55.67%

(1,171,801) of its registered voters showing up for accreditation. Jigawa is the home territory of about 5 ethnic groups with the Fulani, Hausa and Kanuri amongst the largest groups. About 52.55% of its registered voters had valid votes. Muhammadu Buhari (APC) polled 71.84% of the total valid votes cast in Jigawa. This was followed by Katsina state, home territory to 2 ethnic groups, the Fulani and Hausa ethnic groups, with 48.45% (1,555,473) accredited voters' / voter turnout. The ruling APC secured 79.21% of those votes. Sokoto state home territory to 4 ethnic groups with the Fulani and the Sakkwatawa ethnic groups found all over the state. Sokoto state had a 46% turn out or 871,891 valid voters. Of these votes the ruling APC secured 54.24% valid votes.

Three sources were used to create table 2, first and foremost INEC, 2019 results of valid votes cast per state, second source was the British Broadcasting Corporation BBC website on % of votes polled per state between the two major political parties and the third source was Ottite (2000), whose work enabled the authors to get data on names of ethnic groups domiciled in each state of the federation.

Table. 2: The 2019 general elections and ethnic voting patterns across the states.

S/N	STATES AND ETHNIC GROUPS	TOTAL VALID VOTES	% OF VOTES POLLED BY APC	% OF VOTES POLLED BY PDP	% OF VOTES POLLED BY OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES
1.	Abia: Igbo	323,291	26.31	67.96	5.73
2.	Adamawa: Hausa, Fulani and 78 other ethnic groups	811,534	46.59	50.55	1.56
3	Anambra: Igbo	605,734	5.5	86.63	7.87
4	Akwa Ibom: Anang, Ibibio, Oron and 4 others	578,773	30.31	69.39	0.30
5	Bauchi: Fulani, Hausa and 49 other ethnic groups	1,024,307	77.95	20.43	1.62
6	Bayelsa: Izon, Isoko and 2 other	321,767	36.93	61.51	1.66
7	Benue: Tiv, Idoma, Jukun and 6 other ethnic groups	728,912	48.95	47.7	
8	Borno: Fulani, Chibok, Shuwa and 20 other ethnic groups	919,786	90.94	7.8	
9	Cross River: Efik, Etung and 28 other ethnic groups	421,901	27.8	70.1	
10	Delta: Izon, Itsekiri, Urhobo and 3 other ethnic groups	829,762	26.67	71.59	

11	Ebonyi: Igbo and Mbembe	359,131	25.26	72	
12	Enugu: Igbo	421,014	12.93	84.45	
13	Edo: Bini, Esan, Izon and 6 other ethnic groups	560,711	47.77	49.17	
14	Ekiti: Yoruba	381,132	57.52	40.41	
15	FCT – Abuja: Bassa, Gwandara, Gwari	423,951	35.91	61.33	
16	Gombe: Fulani, Jukun, Hausa and 14 other ethnic groups	554,203	72.71	24.99	
S/N	STATES AND MAJOR ETHNIC GROUPS	TOTAL VALID VOTES PER STATE	% OF VOTES POLLED BY APC	% OF VOTES POLLED BY PDP	% OF VOTES POLLED BY OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES
17	Imo: Igbo	511,586	27.46	65.47	
18	Jigawa: Kanuri, Fulani, Hausa and 3 other ethnic groups	1,106,244	71.84	26.21	
19	Kaduna: Hausa, Fulani, Bassa and 29 other ethnic groups	1,663,603	59.72	39.05	
20	Kano: Fulani and Hausa	1,891,134	77.45	20.71	
21	Katsina: Fulani and Hausa	1,555,473	79.21	19.8	
22	Kebbi: Hausa, Fulani, Bangawa and 16 other ethnic groups	756,605	76.86	20.39	
23	Kogi: Igala, Nupe, Ogori and 10 more ethnic groups	521,056	54.84	41.88	
24	Kwara: Yoruba, Bunu and 2 more ethnic groups	459,676	67.22	30.06	
25	Lagos: Awori, Yoruba and Egun	1,089,567	53.31	41.12	
26	Nasarawa: Eggon, Hausa, Fulani, Tiv and 21 more ethnic groups	580,778	49.92	48.87	
27	Niger: Bassa, Fulani, Gwari, Nupe and 18 more ethnic groups	851,937	71.88	25.59	
28	Ogun: Yoruba	564,256	49.94	34.5	
29	Ondo: Izon, Ebirra, Yoruba	555,994	43.48	49.62	
30	Osun: Yoruba	714,682	48.64	47.21	
31	Oyo: Yoruba	836,531	43.66	43.83	
32	Plateau: Birom,	1,034,853	45.28	53.02	

	Hausa, Bwall, Fulani and 48 more ethnic groups				
33	Rivers: Degema, Ikwere, Izon, Ogoni and 5 more ethnic groups	642,165	23.47	73.81	
34	Sokoto: Fulani, Gobirawa and Sakkwatawa	871,891	56.42	41.47	
S/N	STATES AND MAJOR ETHNIC GROUPS	TOTAL VALID VOTES PER STATE	% OF VOTES POLLED BY APC	% OF VOTES POLLED BY PDP	% OF VOTES POLLED BY OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES
35	Taraba: Hausa, Jukun, Kanuri, Tiv and 35 more ethnic groups	712,877	52.57	45.58	1.85
36	Yobe: Fulani, Kanuri and 8 more ethnic groups	559,365	89.01	9.08	1.91
37	Zamfara: Fulani, Maguzawa(Hausa), Zamfarawa(Hausa)	578,439	75.84	21.68	2.48

Table. 2 Sources: INEC 2019; BBC 2019 and Otite 2000.

Ethnic Voting and Implications for Political Accommodation

Globally and for Africa in particular, states are predominantly multi-national or multi-ethnic in socio-political composition. This gives rise to deeply divided societies. From these divided societies originate violent outbursts of conflicts which are rooted in the power structures of these countries. Some scholars (Rupesinghe, 1998, p. 40 and Jeong, 2000, p. 78) attribute these power-based conflicts to the legacy of colonial masters who arbitrarily drew boundaries and grouped hostile ethnic groups under the same national identity. Nomadic pastoral groups whose survival depended on seasonal migrations became stateless. In other cases, designated ethnic groups believed that the colonial masters passed on their authority to rule over to them to govern and impose customs on other ethnic nationalities within the state. This has developed into extreme forms of inter-ethnic rivalry and manifest violent conflict which in some cases turn out to be genocidal in nature. The struggle for power at the centre in these countries are so intense that strong patron-client relations are developed at the national level such that the ethnicity of the president is indicative of the ethnic allegiances of the entire government. In countries such as Nigeria, Rwanda, Burundi, Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Sri Lanka, the South Caucasus ethnicity has flourished and a greedy scramble for power at the centre and control of natural resources have blown up ethnic differences which previously had little importance but now have become the determining factor not just for a person's social standing, but for their survival (Wokocha, 2018; Jeong, 2000, p. 40).

Toward the end of last century and after the Cold War, national self-consciousness had exploded into a viral epidemic of demands for self-rule by territorial human collectives based on ethnic, religious and historical identities (Jeong, 2000, p. 40). For ethnic nationalities in Nigeria this explosion in demands for self-rule occurred with the events of non-accommodation soon after the 2019 general elections. Hence, for the survival of both

ethnic groups in southern Nigeria and the country Nigeria as a whole, the principle of self-determination looks like the way out. It is important to note that during the 2019 general elections, key states where ethnic loyalties are strong for the ruling APC or the opposition PDP, tended to organize along ethnic lines; for primordial purposes. Organizations like neighbourhood associations and social clubs tend to be ethnically exclusive. According to Horowitz (1985) these are the features of an ethnically divided society which conspire to impede the sociopolitical development of the full range of social interactions among ethnic groups, and as such this affects that society's organizational structure particularly in politics. With the 2019 victory of the ruling APC, and the bulk of support in voting patterns derived from the north, there has been little or no political accommodation in key and strategic corridors of power in the present Nigerian government for the south. As such all key political, economic, legislative and military heads of government parastatal are either of the Fulani ethnic group or core northern Muslims. This is a clear reflection of mistrust for other ethnic and religious groups, bearing in mind that Nigeria consists of over 300 ethnic groups. Even to an extreme case where government ministers rejected proposals to establish new industries in the southeast region. This hindered political accommodation has resounded politically in different ways particularly with the rise of separatist ethnic nationalist movements and non-state armed groups across Nigeria.

The ideology of self-determination which led to the 1967-70 Civil War has been around for some time on the Nigerian political landscape. There seemed to be a spiral resurgence of ethnic nationalism and emergence of ethnic nationalist movements particularly in the southern parts of Nigeria in the last seven years. This could be attributed to the phenomenon Osaghae, 1999, p. 83-98, refers to as exit. The phenomenon is a deviation from the marriage between citizens and the state which is made complete in terms of reciprocal rights and duties. As such, Osaghae further argues that exiting is a strategy of coping with a domineering yet ineffective state, but it also represents the resistance of weak and marginalised segments which in extreme cases could lead to separatist agitation or even secession (Osaghae, 1999, p. 98). Hence, the gap left open by non-accommodation of other ethnic groups by the Buhari lead administration (2019-2023) amounts to a renunciation of the Nigerian states' responsibility for citizens' welfare and security and therefore a renunciation of its claim over the citizens' loyalty which proceeds at the same time with a claim to control of the parallel sites of commonness and self-governance. This is expressed in the cultivation and adoption of counter-state identities, notably ethnic and religious (Osaghae, 1999, p. 83-98). The idea of ethnic nationalism is synonymous with the notion of the national question and both are often used interchangeably. The national question is a concentrated socio-economic /political question concerning the association or co-existence of ethnic groups or nations in a country. The national question arises when, among other things, ethnic nationalities feel deprived, browbeaten or discriminated against in the dispersal of resources, rights and power merely by virtue of their ancestry and their numerical disadvantage.

Invariably Nigerian politics has been rife with ethnic related exclusion, domination and competition rather than collaboration and co-operation. Going back in Nigeria political history the government-opposition conflicts in 1964, the ruling NPC excluded the opposition AG and supplanted it with NNDP in the West in the first republic 1960-1966, the resultant political instability ignited the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-70. Despite the fact that the AG was the political party with physical political structures on ground in the western region. Consequently, government-opposition rivalry tends to be influenced by ethnicity and

religion. It does not augur well for Nigerian politics because in a political system with deeply divided and antagonistic ethnic groups, almost all political decisions would be perceived as involving high stakes and, strict majority rule places tension on the unity and stability of the system. The right question to be asked amongst political leaders should not be who gets what from the government but, rather how best to ascertain and give effect to the common social will, hence, other alternatives to the current system of government-opposition rivalries must be implemented.

Recommendation: The Concept of Unanimity

Several measures have been advocated by social scientists and economic theorists to checkmate ethnicity in Nigeria. Importantly, this paper will recommend that political leaders in Nigeria, especially those of the executive and legislative arms of government must as a sense of urgency jettison the concept of majority rule in Nigerian politics because it's a cheap way to make laws, and govern by the precepts of grand coalition, particularly the concept of unanimity. Invariably, politics in countries like Nigeria, Rwanda, Burundi, Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Sri Lanka, the South Caucasus has been rife with ethnic related exclusion, domination, violence and competition rather than collaboration and co-operation. These countries and many more across the globe have experienced savage civil wars and instability. This measure once applied through policy would significantly reduce political and socioeconomic exclusion and marginalisation not only in Nigeria but in countries across the globe with ethnic based conflicts or active civil wars related to exclusion, marginalisation and separatism.

Conclusion

In a plural society like Nigeria, it is the nature of society that constitutes conflict. Therefore, this paper argues that political leaders must as a matter of urgency drop the concept of majority rule in Nigerian politics and adopt the precepts of grand coalition, particularly the concept of unanimity. This is importantly so for the purpose of achieving political accommodation within multi-ethnic Nigeria. A broad agreement among all citizens or their representatives would definitely be more democratic than simple majority rule. A unanimous vote in the National Assembly would rightly be a win for the common good of all citizens, while a majority vote would be to push one partisan or group interest or the other. This is one prominent way to ascertain and give effect to the common social will of Nigerians and significantly accommodate a large minority who otherwise would have been politically excluded from governance or its impact. As such, the presidential system currently in place in Nigeria is actually a government-versus-opposition norm which performs much more like a principle of exclusion prearranged by normative democratic theory. A principle which keeps a large minority out of the government.

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