

Citizenship, Alienation and Conflict in Nigeria

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Résumé: Le présent article se propose d'examiner le lien complexe entre les problèmes de citoyenneté, d'aliénation et de conflit au Nigeria. Il commence par une analyse du concept de conflit et de certains termes connexes de violence et de crise. A partir de cette analyse, le document procède à l'identification et à l'examen critique de certains points de vue avancés par les chercheurs sur les causes profondes des conflits au Nigeria, comme l'existence d'enjeux politiques et de conflits de classe, le problème de l'Etat et du paradigme résistant de l'ethnicité. L'article affirme que les hypothèses et présuppositions centrales de ces points de vue ne suffisent pas à expliquer le problème des conflits au Nigeria. L'article conclut que le problème de conflits au Nigeria est intimement lié à l'absence de citoyenneté authentique et véritable dans les interactions et attitudes politiques. Il décrit la vie politique au Nigeria qu'il assimile à l'état conjoncturel de la nature où il n'existe aucune idée de citoyenneté véritable. Etant donné la manière particulière dont est construit le modèle de citoyenneté nigérienne, c'est-à-dire, un modèle d'exclusion et non d'inclusion, il décrit l'existence d'une relation inter groupes dans laquelle la citoyenneté se définit au niveau sous-étatique. Les enjeux politiques, dans ces conditions, deviennent des enjeux d'antagonisme et de guerre, car ils participent de l'aliénation et de l'exclusion de certains groupes du pouvoir et de ses fruits, et de la domination par des groupes ethniques qui ont réussi à reléguer d'autres groupes à un status marginal.

Introduction

This paper is concerned with interrogating the complex linkage in Nigeria between the problems of citizenship and alienation on the one hand, and that of conflict on the other. I propose to argue that where different attitudes are expressed by individuals and groups in a particular geo-polity on the idea of citizenship, this seems in a sense bound to lead to the generation of conflict.

It is worth asking some questions at this stage, to illuminate the subject matter. In the first instance, how do we define citizenship? What

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peculiar strands of thought are there about the idea of citizenship in Nigeria and in the larger African setting? What is it about the nature of citizenship in Nigeria that makes it conducive to conflictuality? What is conflict? In the light of these questions, there seem to be two possible approaches to the subject matter. The first is properly to examine the nature of citizenship in Nigeria, with a view to establishing the conflictuality inherent in it; the second is to examine the various ways in which an intellectual analysis of conflict can be made, and based on that analysis, to show that the idea of citizenship and the related component of alienation are central to understanding conflict in Nigeria. In this paper, I choose the latter approach. Once again, the thesis I wish to uphold is that conflict in Nigeria is interwoven with the absence of democratic, good governance, and that its focus is the problem of citizenship and the related problem of alienation.

At this point, clarity of terms and directions is needed. In the first place, it is not suggested that there can be no conflict in democratic governance. Far from it. What this paper is suggesting is that the nature of conflict in the Nigerian political scene is fundamentally opposed to the ideals of democracy. There are conflicts which are necessary to consolidate the tenets and principles of democracy; and concerned citizens in such a geo-polity engage in them in order to address the problems of injustice and the absence of fair play. The endless picture of conflict in Nigeria, however, is one of irreconcilable differences and struggles between individuals and groups over access to power and the opportunities and privileges that go with it. Secondly, the idea of citizenship within which conflict in Nigeria is to be considered is one that takes on a second-order level of analysis. The first-order level of analysis of the idea of citizenship is one that establishes the legal or constitutional conception of citizenship. This order of analysis is not the issue at stake when considering conflict in Nigeria. In fact, it might be a mark of intellectual bravery to contend that the legal or constitutional conception of citizenship is either in abeyance or simply non-existent in

Nigeria. Femi Taiwo (1996:15) contended that 'beyond phrase-mongering, there are no citizens in Nigeria, only citizens of Nigeria'. People flood Nigeria, but in actual fact, there are either no Nigerians or there are only a very few of them.

The second-order level of analysis of the concept of citizenship is, I believe, central to an understanding of conflict in Nigeria. This takes us away from the 'relevant irrelevancies' and cruel mockery of mere constitutional provisions to the social conditions in which the nature of citizenship can be best defined. John Scott (1994:145) has argued that the second-order level of the concept of citizenship, herein referred to as the social or sociological concept, is important because of its role in our understanding of the social conditions in societies where the legal status, and by inference the first order analysis, is not recognised. But the problem may not really be in the fact that the legal or constitutional concept is not recognised, it may be that the idea of citizenship in people's mental awareness is one that comprises a whole complex of institutions, practices and conventions. These may be embodied, in often contradictory ways, in the cultural and sub-cultural perspectives of a society and will inform its political and ideological struggles (Scott 1994:46). It is this idea of citizenship in the social sense where I wish to explore the irreconcilable struggles over power, i.e., conflict in Nigeria. But then, what is conflict?

The Nature, Description and Anatomy of Conflict

The fundamental philosophical problems in discussing conflicts, I believe, are the problems of situating conflict, of describing and analysing its structure, of articulating its modes and themes, and of showing how various kinds of conflict may be related. Apart from the above, there is no consensus amongst scholars about the philosophical criteria to be applied for defining and describing conflicts. It is no wonder then that the lack of consensus on the definition and description of conflicts has often resulted in the misuse of related terms. For

example, the words *crisis*, *conflict*, and *violence* are related though distinct terms. Scholars tend to regard them as synonymous, but this is not so.

Violence is often the manifestation of an extreme, consistent and intense level of conflict. To this end, violence is always conflictual, while conflict may not necessarily be violent. In an elementary fashion, without much loaded philosophical jargon, violence is harm perpetrated on persons or property. In the case of persons, it ranges from restraining their freedom of movement to torture and death, and in the case of property, from simple fine or damage to complete expropriation or total destruction (Girvetz 1974:185). On the same level of analysis, conflict is said to occur where there is interaction between at least two individuals or groups whose ultimate objectives differ (Nicholson 1971). These simple definitions show the difference between violence and conflict: conflict may not be necessarily destructive, but violence, in most cases, is. That is why we often hear of violent conflict in political parlance, which implies that not all conflicts are violent. What of crisis?

In most cases, crisis is taken to be synonymous with conflict. Some scholars have often identified crisis with conflict just as some others confuse the term conflict with violence. For example, on a pre critical level of analysis, Mike Oquaye (1995:10) associates, almost rigidly, crisis with conflict. According to Oquaye,

Conflict is a sequence of interactions between groups in society, between groups and governments, and between individuals. The causes of such interactions, the methods employed and their consequences may lead to conflict.. Connoting crisis, conflict evokes feeling of tension, fear, and insecurity within the state. Its inherent corollaries include disputations, disagreements, struggles, bad relations, and identification of others as 'enemies' or 'potential enemies'.

Crises are structurally differentiated from conflicts. It may be said that both conflict and crisis are events, but a little application of the rigorous

tool of logic expresses clearly the differences between them. Structurally, crisis goes beyond the occurrence or the manifestation of conflicts. It is true, no doubt, that a crisis cannot be said to be in existence without a prior manifestation or existence of conflict or even violence, but the fact remains that a state of crisis is what comes after a persistent manifestation of moments and states of conflicts. In other words, crises are states of events after a consistent level of conflict and violence have occurred. They denote a turning point, either for good or bad, after conflict or violence. A single occurrence of conflict or violence does not signify a state of crisis. It requires more manifestations of conflicts and violence to establish a state of crisis. At such a level of consistent incidence of violence and conflict, what describes the state of events is called crisis.

We need to explore further the state, nature and description of conflict. Lewis Coser (1956:8) describes conflict as a 'struggle over values, claims to status, power and scarce resources in which the aims of the 'opposing' parties are not only to gain the desired values but also to neutralise, injure or eliminate rivals'. But does the logic of elimination always apply to every single act or incidence of conflict? What sort of elimination could Coser be referring to? A critical look at the above may quickly suggest that the definition of Coser properly fits into an anatomy of the definition of violence where the aim of elimination, especially in the destructive sense, properly applies. Conflict may suggest to us an idea or picture of struggle, but opponents are not literally eliminated in every case of conflict. For example, someone may lose a position of dominance but may not be totally denied any status, power or resources, nor be eliminated. Miall suggested four criteria as useful to distinguish a conflict situation from other situations. A closer look, however, will show the insufficiency of his criteria. According to Miall:

- a conflict can only exist where the participants perceive it as such;

- a clear difference of opinion regarding values, interests, aims, or relations must lie at the root of a conflict;
- the parties in a conflict may be either states or a significant element of the population 'within' the state;
- the outcome of the conflict must be considered extremely important by the parties (Miall 1992).

The application of the rigorous tool of logical exhaustiveness indicates some problems with these criteria. Specifically, I have problems with the second criteria: Miall seems to have omitted the most fundamental factor in describing a conflictual situation. Mere difference of opinion, values, interests, aims or relations does not establish the conflictuality of that situation. Some other action will have to follow that difference of opinion, interests, etc. This is the action that resolves to achieve those aims at the expense of the other party. If two or more individuals or groups have a difference of opinion, and are mute about it, then there is no conflict, although one may say that a conflict situation is in process of being formed. It is the resolve to achieve different aims that denotes the conflictuality. Miall's suggested criteria suffer from the problem of sequential incoherence.

The insufficiency of these criteria becomes rather obvious in another way. If the outcome of the conflict is considered extremely important by the parties, one may then ask what the outcome is supposed to be. Is it an outcome that consists in having achieved an aim at the expense of someone else, or could it be an outcome in terms of the resolution of the conflict? Moreover, if a difference of opinion is at the root of the conflict, then it follows that that difference of opinion is not synonymous with the conflict. An extra, extremely important, factor is needed to establish the conflictuality of that situation, namely the resolve or actions to pursue the aim, which is at variance with the aim of the opposing party.

To this end, therefore, in a descriptive or functional sense, a conflict can be seen as a situation of interaction involving two or more parties in

which actions in pursuit of incompatible objectives, or interests, result in varying degrees of discord. (Deng 1996:220). In most respects, the situationality of conflict and its twin sister, violence, makes all the difference in the world, for questions of conflict and violence are fundamentally questions of order and disorder. It is in fact an argument of intellectual and empirical importance in some scholarly works that conflict is the normal state of human interaction (Zartman 1991:229). In the larger realm of politics, the opinion is loudly expressed that politics is intrinsically related to or, better still, generates conflict. This is due to the fact that the quintessence of politics is power, and where there is talk of power, there is bound to be conflict and compulsion (Oquaye 1995:10).

From this descriptive definition, certain gems of truth can be gleaned in respect of the nature of conflict. First, conflict is a state, a situation, an event or a process which involves a distinct category of social behaviour. Secondly, this distinct category of social behaviour is evident in the clash of two incompatible, yet valued objectives. In other words, it is a process of interaction or striving. It involves a contradiction, a pushing and pulling.

According to Rummel (1976:238-42), conflict embodies the levels of potentiality, dispositions, or manifestations. Conflict as 'potentiality is then the space of possible conflicts; the realm of potential opposing vectors of power' (*Ibid.*238). Dispositions are 'potentialities transformed into tendencies toward specificity and their strength to be so manifest' (*Ibid.*239). Such dispositions have two facets: a conflict-structure and a conflict-situation. The former consists of indicators of the existence of dispositions which have a tendency to conflict, such as slaves and masters, proletariat and bourgeoisie, etc. In other words, a conflict-structure consists of those dispositions opposing each other within the conflict space. The conflict-situation consists of opposing powers, the activation of the opposing tendencies,

such as when the slaves become aware of the equality of all men and the evils of slavery and of their own exploitation at the hands of their masters, while the masters themselves become aware of the need to protect their own interests. Dispositions have become actual opposing powers: a conflict situation exists (*ibid.*). Manifestations of conflict consist of either of two realities: a balancing of powers or a balance of power. This balancing process occurs at the level of both dispositions and powers, and of manifestations; the process may involve both the conflict situation and manifest conflict. The balance of powers indicate the final stage of momentary equilibrium established between the opposing powers (*Ibid.* pp.240-42).

The concept of conflict is multidimensional; it embraces a family of forms. We select one depending on our analytical purposes and practical problems. Conflicts that exert an effect, directly or indirectly, on the direction and content of public policy are political conflict. In essence, political conflict is ultimately about publicly determined access to public goods and services. It is about the distribution of the rights and privileges available in the public domain. The key to understanding political violence and conflict, argues Neiburg (1969), '...must be found in the dynamics of bargaining relationships rather than in the chance issues of the conflict'. Political conflict therefore arises in the structure of power and the various attitudes or differences of social behaviour that control access to it. It therefore entails a relationship. Politics is nothing more than the exercise of power, which entails a relationship between groups and individuals. Such a relationship has the potential for conflict, especially where the desire to exercise power involves an irreconcilable struggle. In short, therefore, according to Charles Tilly (1969:4-45), political conflict 'seem to grow most directly from the struggle for established places in the structure of power'.

But this is not the whole truth. The idea of power is significant but it must go along with a crucial social category. Political conflict in Africa, for example, is about identity. To use the term loosely, the root cause of political conflict in Africa, particularly Nigeria, is your identity, which side of the country you are identified with and what you are ready to do to protect that identity. The idea of 'struggle for established places in the structure of power', which Tilly hinted at above, is only a physical manifestation of a more fundamental cause of national conflict. The idea is that the identity of who controls power is the most crucial issue at stake. This explains the root cause of conflicts in Nigeria. What I am suggesting therefore, is that the most plausible explanation for the era of national conflict in Nigeria is that of the problem of citizenship. What then is peculiar about the notion of citizenship in Nigeria in relation to political conflict?

Conflict in Nigeria: Plethora of Views

At the present time, there is a plethora of views on the nature and cause of conflict, particularly political conflict in Nigeria. I think it necessary to have a critical look at the presuppositions on which such views are based, in order to establish where they falter.

There are at least three sets of factors which are generally adduced in any meaningful, scholarly work, as having contributed to the problem of conflict in Nigerian political society. The first derives from the endless and irreconcilable struggle for power and for the resources of the state by a defined dominant class, with its highly consumerist behaviour pattern. The second stems from the nature of the Nigerian state as a 'specific modality of class domination', immersed in the struggle among contending social forces. As a result of a lack of autonomy, therefore, the state is unable to mediate and resolve the conflict between these contending social forces who use venal means to dominate and perpetuate themselves in power. The third has to do with

the resilient paradigm problem of ethnicity and tribalism, I examine each of these in turn.

Central to the incidence and occurrence of conflict in Nigeria's political system is power. In explaining conflict in Nigeria, therefore, scholars such as Ake and Onimode have found the notion of class politics and struggles and the consistent consumerist pattern of the dominant class as a causal factor in the conflictual and unstable nature of political interaction and attitude in Nigeria. Ake (1989:43-65), for instance, argues that there is an irreconcilable struggle between an existent dominant class and subordinate classes over who should hold power. This irreconcilable struggle for power triggers off conflict and violence, hence the state of consistent crisis. According to Ake, class politics is central to conflict in Nigeria. In his words 'the dominant social forces struggle to maintain their domination and the subordinate social forces struggle against their subordination and its related disabilities' (1989:44). The end result is antagonism and warfare: 'Politics, essentially the struggle for control and use of state power becomes warfare and antagonistic. Power is over valued and security lies only in getting more and more power'.

The above analysis is also found in the works of Onimode. According to Bade Onimode (1988:97-125), the idea of class politics is central to explaining not only conflict in Nigeria's politics and the formation of political attitudes and interactions, but also gives us a better understanding of the whole process and foundation of economic, social and political inequality. According to Onimode, the classes most prominently involved in the struggle are the petit or bureaucratic bourgeoisie, the political class and the class of working people. A central feature of political interaction among these groups, according to Onimode, is that of a 'terrain of struggle between bourgeois ideology proper and working class ideology' a struggle he describes as 'inter-class' and 'intra-class'. Sam Nolutshungu (1990:89-115) also

conceives of conflict in Nigerian political society as resident in the political class. To him, 'the Nigerian political class right from inception, had always presented an image of a class in perpetual conflict'.

Central to Ake and Onimode's idea of class politics and its place in conflict in Nigeria is the role of the state. To these scholars, class differences do not by themselves explain conflict in Nigeria. They emphasise the role of the Nigerian state, which is said to be an actor in the production, mediation and control of conflict. For example, Eme Ekekwe conceives of the state as the major source of struggle amongst social classes, because of the political power invested in it which can be used to achieve the aim of accumulation and economic prominence (Ekekwe 1985:53) To him, the state is the focal point of conflict expressed in class struggle. In the same vein, Ake conceives of the state as 'a specific modality of class domination' one that lacks autonomy, an inherent inability to differentiate itself from the other social forces and classes, especially the dominant, hegemonic class (1985:1) Larry Diamond attributes crises and conflict in post colonial politics in Nigeria to the emergence of a modern state with vast economic resources. 'The legacy that colonial rule left was the development of a modern state that dwarfed all other organised elements of the economy and society' (Diamond 1988:28-30). In this line of thought, Ekekwe and Diamond agree that the state in the post-colonial era was of a capitalist type because the dominant few usually controlled it and translated political power into the means of accumulating for themselves the wealth and resources of the state. (Ekekwe 1985:12-13, Diamond 1988:28-32).

It is no doubt true that the basic assumptions of these scholars are given prominence in Marxist analysis of the political economy of developing countries. Their conclusions and judgements on the nature and cause of conflicts in Nigeria's political system can reasonably be said to be influenced by Marxist thought. One way of stretching the

argument further could be to argue that the predisposition of these scholars to conceive of the state and its dominance in capitalist terms is essentially, though not necessarily, Marxist. Classical and modern Marxist thought has heightened, to the point of intellectual significance, the idea of politics as necessarily one of class struggle and antagonism. Marx thought that the 'history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles', with the capitalist stage of history being the most advanced one in antagonism and conflict. One can say that the presuppositions and assumption of these scholars on conflict in Nigeria are essentially linked to the central features of that school of thought.

One way of examining these viewpoints is to contend outright that the Marxist postulations are irrelevant to interpreting and understanding the politics of West African countries, particularly Nigeria, and that therefore the assumption of these scholars that the nature and cause of conflict in Nigeria is class conflict and struggle is a false one. But such a line of reasoning would be fallacious. Another shade of argument may be the view that since politics in Nigeria is not defined in a Marxist line of thought, and since class politics is central to Marxist thought, therefore, politics in Nigeria is not that of classes, or that there is no class politics, and talk of conflict in terms of classes is false. The proponents of such a viewpoint (see for example, Arthur Lewis 1965:18-36) base their view on the following: first, there are very few capitalists in the strong sense conceived by Marx; secondly, the classes in question are those that control the instruments of production, for in strong terms, economic power also determines political power; thirdly, since there is no such control of economic power to determine political power, then politics is not that of class politics.

The direction of thought I have identified in attacking the view that conflict in Nigeria's political society is one of class struggle and conflict is one that is linked to the nature of the state. The role of the state in class struggles and conflict is given prominence. But it can be

said that the missing point in these analyses is the heterogeneous environment in which the classes have found themselves. Class politics is not the exclusive preserve of Nigerian political society. Such a way of politics is universally practised. To identify conflict with class politics also means associating conflict elsewhere with class politics. In practical terms, this may not be true. But the environment in which politics is practised is a telling argument on the nature of conflict in that society. Class politics may entail a modicum of conflict, but it does not tell the whole truth, especially where the social conditions in such a society manifest to the observing eye a crisis or conflict of identity stronger than the identity of classes.

The state has been designated as a principal actor in the sources of conflict in Nigeria. But those who hold that view have failed to consider the failed state phenomenon in the Third World, which revives or sustains the spirit of ethnic nationalism (Snyder 1993). According to Snyder, ethnic nationalism predominates when institutions collapse, when existing institutions are not fulfilling people's basic needs and when satisfactory alternative structures are not readily available — in other words when there is a lack of effective statehood. (Snyder 1993:12) Two options emerge from a failed state phenomenon : political society revels in anarchy and there follows the process of carving out mini-states around dominant ethnic groups. It can be argued that the process of state-making was constructed along the line of alienation and exclusion of ethnic societies from political participation and exercise of power. This keeps on generating a conflictual process which eventually turns into the state failure experience. In most cases, the failure to admit the democratic experiment in state-making can be found deeply rooted in the problem of national identity which, rightly interpreted, is an identity crisis. An identity crisis in any state-making process can be interpreted along the line of the absence of democratic behaviour.

Ethnicity is a resilient paradigm used in explaining the nature of conflict in Nigeria. It is held that Nigeria as a political society comprises many ethnic groups, which rub shoulder with each other, so there is bound to be conflict. The central assumption of this viewpoint is that ethnicity has the potential to transcend other loyalties and obligations and become the sole basis of identity. This may lead to conflict when peoples' multiple identities are narrowed down to a single focus, and social divisions become deeper and more rigid. Ethnicity is a deeply emotional basis of mobilization that not merely distinguishes one group from the other but can also dehumanize and demonize the other group (UNIRISD Report 1995:95). The hallmark of ethnicity in Nigeria is group opposition and competition for political power and the resources it controls. Ethnicity, therefore, explains conflict in the Nigerian political society because ethnicity 'is the relations between ethnic groups within the same political system' a relation not of mere ethnic contact but ethnic competition (Nnoli 1989:10). Smith (1981:15) offers an exaggerated version of the conflictual nature of ethnicity: 'In modern times, even the smallest ethnic communities have adopted an aggressive, if not always expansionist, posture.' What all these postulations portray is that ethnicity is inherently conflictual, and that in plural societies such as Nigeria, ethnic political conflict is therefore inevitable. In one word, therefore, political conflict in Nigeria is ethnic.

Deeper reflection shows, however, that although ethnicity is powerful, it is neither absolute nor immutable, nor is it inherently destructive. Ethnic identities are not pre-ordained: they are deliberately constructed and constantly modified. People choose to be ethnically inclined when this meets their needs and expectations. Ethnicity is what remains after all else is lost — that is a deprivation of the determinants that make an individual, socially, economically and politically. Ethnicity is an individual falling back onto an identity which provides him with a psychological safety net. It is a weapon of manipulation by the state, particularly where what obtains is not the national state but the

nation state. To quote Omari Kokole, ethnic consciousness and loyalties 'lend themselves to easy manipulation particularly because other identities are either weak or altogether absent' (1996:126). As Femi Taiwo has argued (1996:19) 'the absence of genuine citizenship is not unconnected with the dominance of ethnic politics driven by the requirements of rootedness in physical space'. The problem of citizenship and the inflation of the idea of ethnic consciousness out of all proportion in political analysis and interpretation revolve around the problem of identity: what I am suggesting therefore is that although ethnicity as a social phenomenon is not unimportant in any analysis of political interaction and attitude in Nigeria, conflict in Nigeria, in its purest form, is more connected to the absence of democratic governance and behaviour, exacerbated by a heightened sense of identity problem - i.e a citizenship that is full of holes. In one word, we must look to the idea of a problematic citizenship as a potent factor in explaining conflict in Nigeria's political attitudes and interactions.

Citizenship, Alienation and Conflict in Nigeria: A View Point

Studies of the concept of citizenship in relation to the problem of conflict have generally taken on the first order level of analysis. In most of these studies, the idea of the conflictual nature of citizenship has been drawn in a way that neglects the social conditions which establish the contradictory conventions and practices that define the boundaries of citizenship.

Peter Ekeh (1978:3-5, 9) has preserved a wealth of unbroken analysis and interpretation of the salient characteristics of the notion of citizenship in Africa. Ekeh had earlier postulated in concrete terms the relationship between crisis and conflict in Nigerian political society and the problem of citizenship. According to Ekeh (1972:77), 'the Nigerian crisis is a crisis of citizenship... Differing attitudes to citizenship have given rise to political conflicts... the type of ethnic group to which one

belongs is central to one's definition of and relations to, political conflicts in Nigeria'. It is time to unpack the central distinction in the above analysis.

Studies of the problem of citizenship and conflict often take on the first order level of analysis. Such studies are based on the natural conflict-generating property inherent in the denying of rights and privileges of citizenship as defined and set out in written constitutional documents. Such denial is attributed, by various scholars who hold those viewpoints, to several problems in the existing political order, from which such conflicts of citizenship emerge. For example, Goran Hyden (1992:14) argued that conflicts in Africa are brought about when 'citizens' perceive the existing regime to be lacking in legitimacy. As a result of the exercise of naked force, therefore, citizens are likely to go underground in violent opposition to the regime. In a related sense, Ninsin conceived of conflicts, in terms of citizenship, as the removal of obstacles to the entitlements that complete the citizen's status as a free and equal person (1995:68) In furtherance of this claim, Ninsin theorised on the fact that the nature of demands by citizens determines the intensity of the conflict. According to him, conflict is the attempt by aggrieved or alienated and deprived people to redress the failure to meet their demands. But what are demands? According to Ninsin, demands are either negotiable or non-negotiable. Negotiable demands are not fundamental to the claims of the protagonists to equality. These demands do not generate intense conflicts, for they are non-zero sum conflicts. Non-negotiable demands belong to the category of being fundamental and potentially explosive. They are zero sum : the victory of one is the loss of the other (1995:55). According to this analysis, the idea of alienation is crucial in establishing the link between conflicts and citizenship. It follows from the identification of alienation and deprivation with the conflictual tendencies inherent in citizenship that if citizenship is structurally defined as consisting of rights and duties, one can expect a denial of rights to occasion the outbreak of conflicts.

It must be admitted that this interpretation of conflict and citizenship is one that relates more closely to the political-cum-legal concept of citizenship. The nature of citizenship I refer to is social or sociological. The above analysis cannot adequately describe the concept of citizenship which obtains in the Nigerian political order. For one thing, in a Nigerian setting, the structural definition of citizenship in terms of rights and duties is not really compatible with the conventional idea of citizenship which obtains in the Western world. Marshall, for example, concluded that 'citizenship is a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community', with all those 'who possess the status equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is bestowed (1949:87). The meaning one gets from this is that in a given political community, duties are owed to that same political community from whom every citizen expects his rights to be accorded. But a quick reflection on the Nigerian political scene suggests how unreal this is. For example, according to Ekeh, three principal contradictory notions of citizenship, in terms of rights and duties, are manifest in Africa generally, and in Nigeria in particular. These are:

- identification of citizenship with rights, and not with duties;
- dissociation of rights and duties in the concept of citizenship;
- the development of two publics, in respect of the concept of citizenship in political life: an amoral civic public from whom rights are expected, duties are not owed; a moral primordial public defined in terms of one's ethnic group, to which one's duties are paid, but from which we never expect any rights. (1978:317-319).

Pursuing this analysis, one can state that citizenship in the Nigerian setting is defined at the sub-state level. Citizenship is now conceived as an exclusion not an inclusion. This precipitates conflict. Viewed in this sense, it becomes easier to climb to a higher level of analysis of why political interaction and attitude turns into antagonism and warfare. In other words, political interaction entails a level of awareness and consciousness defined in one's identity. Citizenship entails an identity

and such an identity can be defined as being a member of a nation-state, a member of an ethnic group, or as a member of a communal group within an ethnic group. In Nigeria's political history, a level of identity (citizenship) awareness and consciousness, explains a good deal about the prevailing nature of political interactions and attitudes. The existence of the problem of national identity in turn means the existence of the politics of alienation. It is the absence of a sense of genuine citizenship which explains the predominance of ethnic politics, with endless outbidding and alienation in the tribal domination of politics. At the root of political conflict in Nigeria is not just ethnicity, but the prevalence of an identity problem defined in terms of where each individual locates his citizenship. At the individual level, there is a dual loyalty to civil ties and to primordial ties. According to Ekeh, 'the distinction between civil and primordial ties are not mere labels that characterise social relationship in different societies at different times. On the contrary, they are the centrifugal forces pulling the same persons in different directions at the same time. It is the sharp relationship between these two ties, especially as they concern the political elites of society, that renders this distinction a useful one in an analysis of the Nigerian crisis' (1972:78).

At the collective level, the existence of a multiple sense of citizenship, defined in terms of one's identity with a sub-state status, cripples the establishment of democratic structures. In fact, the absence of genuine citizenship lies at the root of the absence of democratic governance. This explains the certainty that conflict in Nigeria is interwoven with the absence of democratic governance, because of the absence of democratic behaviour. Where identities are defined in multiple terms, politics, being essentially concerned with the exercise of power, becomes one of increased hostility. Each sub-state, where the consciousness of citizenship and identity is realized, seeks to gain access to power in order to dominate others. In this arena talk of increased marginalization of other groups and their exclusion from

power and its fruits becomes alarming and conflictual. One ethnic group become the national group. It relegates the other groups to marginal status. An individual from an area designated as belonging to a marginal group is no longer seen as a Nigerian. 'Right now,' reflects Joe Igbokwe,

the East, the West, the Minorities and the Middle belt share a common problem — which is marginalization and oppression by the Hausa Fulani clique sustained by the Army. The only option left for these people to free themselves is to present a common front. Once there is unity among these oppressed people of Nigeria, our new colonial master will be forced to negotiate political power. The structure of Nigerian federalism is so defective that it must not be allowed to continue.

One of the fundamentals of citizenship in the modern world is the freedom to enjoy the rights and privileges of a citizen in any location of the relevant geopolity, and in the political context, the freedom to hold any post in any location of that geopolity. And Taiwo (1996:16) maintains that 'part of what typifies citizenship, especially in the modern state, is the de-emphasizing of geography and other natural facts in its composition'. The revealing feature of Nigeria's political history, in relation to the structure of the control of power, is the emphasis on which geographical part of the country each party comes from, and whether the candidates aspiring for power come from the North or the South, with heavy emphasis on the primordial order or the sub-state level from which every political aspirant comes. The end result of such political attitudes is increased marginalization, alienation and deprivation. Such tendencies have succeeded in exploding into national political conflicts. This is because the absence of genuine citizenship brings about irreconcilable struggles for power among members of each sub-state level where citizenship and identity are defined.

These social and political conditions highlight some of the peculiarities of Nigerian citizenship and the conflicts which they

generate. The image of citizenship described above is one that is necessarily conflictual. It seems clear to me that Nigeria is still in a state of nature where no true idea of citizenship exists. One way of validating this argument would be to typologize on the nature of the state. If Nigeria is politically in a state of nature, then we should examine and try to establish what is the nature of the state. There is always a correlation between the nature of the state and the state of nature. The nature of the state is one of a lack of effective statehood. An experience of such magnitude simply expresses an entrance into the failed state phenomenon. So the nature of the state in Nigeria is one that is a state of nature.

In the state of nature, the theoretical underpinning of the amoral, sleazy and conflictual state of affairs cannot sustain a true sense of citizenship. This is because the formation of the state, with all its institutional apparatus and structures, explains much about the acts of true citizenship. For example, individuals who are rational, prudent and with a sense of fair play surrender their rights to a civil state for obvious reasons: to protect their rights in common and to reverse the order of the state of nature with its conflictual and violent tendencies. In other words, an agreed social compact represents their true feelings of commitment and being identified with the state, in which every citizen and group has a say without the option of exclusion. This is not the situation in Nigeria.

If Nigeria, as a political expression, is presumed to have emerged out of the state of nature, then the idea of citizenship as a product of the identity of those who formed it would show a true sense of commitment and virtue. This, I strongly believe, is what underlies the theoretical foundations of the social compact theory. But the Nigerian case deviates alarmingly from this. From all indications, political life in Nigeria is still largely influenced by the perversions prevalent in the theoretical construct of the state of nature, where no idea of true

citizenship exists. Political life in Nigeria has given practical existence, it seems, to what was thought to be a philosophical abstraction.

Missing in the Nigerian polity is a sense of belongingness which characterises the identity of every participant in the social compact theory, who by virtue of that contract, performs his duties for the state and defends his own rights in a balanced equation. The absence of pride in true citizenship accounts for the various conflicts and crises in the accidental collocation of atoms called Nigeria. The citizenship problem is the problem of the absence of democratic governance and behaviour. Conflict in Nigeria, as pictured in this irreconcilable struggle for power, with the adoption of every model of exclusion and alienation, means there is a lack of democratic behaviour. There are no two ways about it.

These conflicts have threatened the country with infinite loss. There are conflicts that are essential to the full development of democratic ideals and structures. The conflicts in Nigeria's political society, however, have been cataclysmic in nature, with few willing to salvage it and give it a redeeming hope of stability. Many are either idle, like sauntering troubadours, in the rescue campaign, or they resist the salvaging and redeeming endeavours of the few. At both ends, conflict prevails. The identity problem, with citizenship conceived at the sub-state level, constitutes one of the reasons why there are so few heroines and heroes with a sense of commitment and civic-mindedness, who could lead the country away from the brink of total and irreparable collapse.

Conclusion

Raphael (1970) once said that in democracy, we count heads, not break them. The counting of heads signifies political maturity and the existence of democratic behaviour. It is the expression of a behaviour that shows the importance of each head to the stability and sustenance of the political community. Democracy, therefore, emphasises

inclusion, not exclusion. It values all opinions, no matter how absurd they may appear to be. The breaking of heads is another word for conflict. It connotes the absence of democratic behaviour.

The Nigerian political situation has witnessed more breaking of heads, than counting them. In fact, even when it has been politically convenient for heads to be counted, the outcome has always been the breaking of such heads instead. Conflict in Nigeria is so intense because of the lack of democratic behaviour. The head of an individual in the democratic context signifies his citizenship. So when heads are broken in the Nigerian political community, the issue in respect of the broken heads is citizenship.

If conflict in Nigeria means the absence of democratic behaviour, and the absence of democratic behaviour spells the absence of democratic governance, it follows therefore, that conflict in Nigeria is interwoven with the absence of democratic governance. Moreover, if democratic governance values heads, and does not reject them, and the metaphor of the head signifies citizenship in that democratic context, then it also follows that democratic governance regards and upholds the rights of citizenship.

Democratic governance defines citizenship as an inclusion, not as an exclusion. Where citizenship is defined as an exclusion, for example in Nigeria, there is no democratic governance. It is to this fragmented concept of citizenship in Nigeria that the problem of democratization is linked

at the root of the problem of democratization, therefore, is not ethnic plurality but inequity... Existing within the Nigerian state is a system of inter-group relations that has not only determined the character of the state but the international expression of that statehood... The ethnic group being mobilized and politically structured, have sub-state status. This status is cumulatively strengthened by every passing national conflict. The outcome is not just the existence of dual loyalty, but of a progressively shifting loyalty in favour of the sub-state, where every Nigerian experiences

a fulfilling sense of belonging. From the local state to the federal government, Nigeria is an ethnocratic complex (Ifidon 1996:101).

No attempt by successive military and civilian governments to call for a fully fledged transfer of sentiments of citizenship from the local or sub-state level to the central state has met with success. This is because of the defective nature of Nigerian federalism, which still allows a group to 'appear' as a dominant group that makes every effort to reduce other groups to marginal status. It is in anticipation of this classic error in the structuring of a federation that scholars have hinted that in a true federation, no state desiring to form part of the union must be bigger either in geographical size or population than the other states. When this obviously important point is thrown overboard, the result is the domination of other groups and their alienation and exclusion from power and its fruits and, consequently, the absence of any sentiments of a true, national citizenship. According to Mill J. S.

If one state is so powerful as to be able to vie in strength with many of them combined, it will insist on being the master of the joint deliberations. If they are two, they will be irresistible when they agree, but whenever they disagree, everything shall be decided on a struggle for ascendancy between the two rivals'. In present-day Nigeria, the 'Northern elites' refusal to share power is the single most important reason why tribes have been resurgent and ethno national consciousness has come to override overall Nigerian Nationalism. (Obadare 1996:10)

Owing to the absence of genuine citizenship, Nigeria has witnessed a series of baffling contradictions: a state of political conflict and instability, an irreconcilable struggle for power, reflected in antagonism and warfare, the politics of alienation, exclusion, and domination, accompanied by an incredible variety of micro-nationalisms and pseudo nationalisms; and regrettably, a forlorn search for the existence, establishment and sustenance of a well-rounded, vibrant system of democratic governance where 'heads' are not broken, but counted regardless of how 'big' or 'small' those 'heads' are.

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