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NIGERIA: North-South Dichotomy And The Politics of Supremacy

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Abstract

Nigeria has battled to retain unity and harmonious coexistence for her government and people since independence. Violent ethnicity, religious prejudice, pork-barreled, brutal politics of excessive favoritism, and corruption have wreaked havoc on Nigerian politics, particularly in recent years. There hardly appears to be a comprehensive or straightforward means to research Nigeria's political climate and culture. Since 1914, the Northern agenda of using politics to govern Nigeria in a dictatorial manner has been in progress and was heavily fortified by the considerable presence of Northern senior officers at various levels of the military during the over three decades of military rule in the nation. This trend continued unabated in the current democratic dispensation and has seen the North receiving a large chunk of political appointments and federal allocations for physical and human capital development projects. In contemporary times, legislations have now been employed by Northern political forces to ensure a solid control over the polity of the nation and subjugation of the South. This article considers the recent legislation of the Petroleum Industry Bill, the New Electoral Act, the Grazing bill, and some other legislation that has been politically conspired to favor the North and allow their politicians to maintain firm control over Nigeria.

Background

Following the declaration and ratification of independence from the British colonial powers in 1960, the nation Nigeria has struggled to maintain unity and enthusiasm for her government and even for the country's preservation.

Additionally, since 1960, the government's activities have undoubtedly alienated and separated the population even more than they did in previous years before that. This alienation and division, in turn, reflects what the ordinary person does in politics, exerting more and more strain on an already overcrowded system. As in most third-world countries, there appears to be no extensive and direct way to study Nigeria's political climate and culture due to its excessive variations.

The North, particularly the Hausa-Fulani ethnic group, has over the years been able to forge a cultural common ground and orientation of oneness among its vast and densely populated societies and communities, and this orientation of harmonious coexistence designed by speaking a common language has helped the Northern agenda of politically dominating Nigeria as a whole. One of the significant determinants of political control is cultural systems and beliefs; therefore, culture cannot be relegated to the background when dealing with issues of political power.

In Nigeria's post-colonial politics, tribal disposition is a major subject. Ethnic identification and sectarian conflict have played a significant role in several of Nigeria's political transitions, as well as much of the country's turbulence. Ever since the 1951 elections during colonial rule under the British, the entire socio-political structure of Nigeria has been based on the dread of

political supremacy by one ethnic group or another, mainly either the North or the South. Fear of dominance has widened the gap between the Northern part of Nigeria and the Southern part, and also between ethnic groups, and is to blame for the perpetuation of tribal favoritism in the Federal Character charter of the nation's Constitution.

Concerns over ethnic dominance produced mutual hostility and a push for independence among the various ethnic groups and political associations. The North believed that once the British colonists were gone, the affluent and better-educated southerners would swiftly come to govern the entire country, thanks to a report by the Economist (2000). “It became acknowledged that traditional northern Nigeria was academically behind, despite that they had educational institutions established in their region before certain parts of the south,” African Concord (1987) writes. Currently, the apprehension of tribal or religious dominance, or perhaps, Northern or Southern supremacy, is a result of not only the constitutional status and quota system created by the Constitution, but also other “unending grossly unfair frameworks and factors that facilitate tribal and political disparities, contributing to Nigeria's political upheaval and grand scale democratic failure” (Torwel, 2005), as well as the numerous political trade-offs whose fundamental objectives have been shrouded in mystery and diverted from the primary goal of national development through harmonious coexistence.

How It began

The Northern agenda of controlling Nigeria in a totalitarian manner using politics has been set in motion from the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates by Sir Lord Lugard in 1914. The Northerners who were controlled by the implementation of indirect rule by British colonists were believed to be easy to manage and highly gullible due to their

resentment for Western education. Thus, the creation of Nigeria in 1914 was well orchestrated by the British colonial powers to ensure that the North dominates the South with respect to political leadership. Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello, who was the first premier of Northern Nigeria in the wake of independence in 1960, and is acclaimed to be a direct descendant of the great Othman Dan Fodio, is believed to have made a remark regarding the status of Nigeria's control and who should be in charge of the political affairs of the nation Nigeria. In his words, "*This new nation called Nigeria should be an estate of our grandfather Othman Dan Fodio. We must ruthlessly prevent a change of power. We must use the minorities in the North as willing tools and South as conquered territories and never allow their future*". (*The Parrot, 1960*) The above statement was reported in a defunct newspaper, The Parrot, and was believed to have been made on October 12th, 1960, in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

The body language of the British colonists during the struggle for independence by nationalists and at the point of autonomy revealed to a greater extent the plan to commit entire Nigeria to the North in a political manner. However, the discovery of crude oil in the Niger Delta region of Southern Nigeria at the tail end of British colonial rule, as well as the level of education and socio-political exposure of Southerners, changed the whole situation and created a paradigm shift which would set in motion a series of events that would, in the long run, lead to a struggle for political supremacy between the North and the South. Even though the petroleum and natural gas abundant in Nigeria can be found in the Southern states, the North has been adjudged to be the major beneficiary of accumulated oil revenues over the years.

The Military and the North's Agenda of Dominating Nigeria

Apart from General Olusegun Obasanjo (Rtd.) and Late Major General Aguiyi Ironsi, all other heads of states that served during the long years of Nigeria's military regime had been Northerners and mostly core Muslims. This goes a long way to create a picture of how the Nigerian army architecture looks. Obviously, the nation's military is dominated by the Northerners of mostly North-West and North-Central geopolitical zones. The cultural and socio-political nature of Nigeria's major ethnic groups is such that the Igbos of Eastern Nigeria are very much interested in trade, commerce, and industry; the Yorubas of Western Nigeria show great strength in academic and administrative activities. In contrast, the Hausa-Fulani of Northern Nigeria, who are educationally backward, show great potentials and strong points in agriculture, majorly nomadic farming. This level of fragmentation made the military highly populated with Northerners as most of them with a low level of education saw the armed forces as an opportunity to be productive.

Over the years, the armed forces and paramilitary agencies had a more significant percentage of their workforce from the Northern part of the country. Even the Immigration, Customs, and Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps have not been left out. According to a former Minister of Aviation, Chief Femi Fani-Kayode, in a recent colloquium organized by Haske Satumari Foundation, the level of nepotism in the armed forces and security agencies is such that *“every single operational military and security architecture in Nigeria apart from the Navy is headed by a Northern Muslim.”* Since the military spent long years in the helm of affairs of Nigeria as a nation, this Northern structure had over the years been positioned across the nation's strategic political, administrative and economic frontiers, and so many military heads of state in the past years have been accused at various times of high level of nepotism in making political appointments. In contemporary times, this gross attitude of nepotism played out in

President Mohammadu Buhari's current administration, who coincidentally was once a military head of state and is of the Hausa-Fulani ethnic group. It is a general opinion from the public domain of Nigerians both within the nation and in the diaspora that nepotism is at its highest in the current Buhari administration as almost all primary political appointments are given to the North, particularly North-East and North-West. The level of nepotism currently being witnessed is a pointer because there is a grand alliance and a set of orchestrated plans that have been ingeniously designed to ensure that the North dominates Nigeria's political atmosphere in a totalitarian manner.

Within the Nigerian socio-political and economic frontier, several conspiracy theorists opine that there has been a strategic plan by political forces in the North to Islamize the country radically, which will inherently mean that the nation Nigeria would become an Islamic State. However, recent happenings in the polity in collaboration with trending events in the nation show that the agenda of the North to dominate Nigeria's political environment is clearly and steadily gaining momentum, rather than the Islamization of the country's socio-political system.

The siting of a crude oil refinery in the Northern part of the country during the military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida in 1988 can be seen as a political move to strengthen the domination of the oil and gas industry by Northern political forces. The refinery, which is the Kaduna Refining and Petrochemical Company (KRPC) located in Kaduna State, is managed by the NNPC. Over the years, KRPC has been recording financial losses even though the colossal investment outlay poured into the infrastructure of its refining and petrochemical facilities. Critics think that the initial idea of sitting an oil refinery in the North-Central, a location several kilometers away from the Niger Delta areas where crude oil is being explored.

The standard economic design of industries considers its proximity to a source of raw material, which was not considered when sitting at the Kaduna refinery. In a nutshell, the refinery project is seen as a political move to ensure that although petroleum is explored and produced in locations within the South-South and South-East States, the political control of crude oil revenues would still be determined by Northern elites in power.

The North and Political Control through Legislation

In the 21st century, Nigeria, which has predominantly been under democratic rule since the return of democracy in 1999, the Northern agenda for political and economic can be seen from legislation and legal frameworks. Specific laws in recent times have brought this Northern control into purview due to the way and manner the bills have been prepared to subjugate the Southern part of the nation and ensure that the North continues in its political domination over the country.

The Petroleum Industry Bill

The Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) is one of the most controversial and extensively discussed legislature documents in Nigeria's political history. Dating back to the tenure of the 6th National Assembly in 2008 when an Oil and Gas Reforms Committee first introduced it, after Former President Chief Olusegun Obasanjo set up the committee, the PIB, as fondly called, has passed through several delays and rejections till it recently crossed a crucial landmark in 2021 as both the Senate and the House of Representatives are close to giving final consent. Joint approval of the provisions of the PIB reports, which will require a form of harmonization before it is transmitted to the President for executive support and implementation.

However, there are several clauses and aspects of the PIB which arouses suspicion and heightens calls for foul play on allegations that the bill has been designed to give the North an upper hand in the control of the nation's oil and gas sector and invariably a controlling authority on Nigeria's political terrain as petroleum remains the nation's most significant source of revenue till date.

The unfavorable imbalance in the PIB is one of the significant reasons Southern federal lawmakers of the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) recently staged a walkout during plenary to show their lack of satisfaction and disapproval of several clauses in the amended version of the PIB. One of the clauses that prompted the strike was reducing the percentage share of oil revenue allocated for the host communities from a paltry 5% to a much meager 3%. On the other hand, 30% of the income of the NNPC would be dedicated to oil and gas exploration in the Benue and Chad basins located in the North of Nigeria. This provision in the PIB shows a grand political scheme mapped out to continuously use a more significant percentage of crude oil revenues for the development of the North, ahead of the Niger Delta areas where most of the country's crude oil can be found. The political perspective of this bill has made its passage to be an issue all these years. It now that it has gotten to this stage implies invariably that a whole new dimension of political drama is building momentum as Northern politicians in the National Assembly and the Executive, mainly of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), are bent on passing the PIB into law without the support of the Southern lawmakers, despite the counter-accusations and upheaval it is causing in the nation's polity at the moment. It is common logical thinking that host communities should be well compensated and proceeds should be allocated appropriately to cater for their hospitality of International Oil Companies (IOCs) all these years of crude oil exploration and production. However, a

dedication of 30% of the NNPC's proceeds to explore petroleum in the Benue and Chads basins in the North- areas that may or may not have sufficient oil reserves is an anomalous miscalculation, as opined by several Southern leaders prominent among them being the National Leader of PANDEF and elder statesman, Chief Edwin Clark.

Furthermore, the provisions in the PIB also stipulates how the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) would be made more profitable by turning it into NNPC Limited, a private limited liability company to be registered under the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA) with the sole aim of maximizing profit through commercialization of its products and services. This provision is seen as a devious maneuver to annihilate the South from critical positions in the nation's oil cooperation, as critics in the media circus wonder why the new NNPC Limited will still be exclusively controlled by the federal government, which means there is no real change from the previous structure of the NNPC. Currently, the top employees making critical decisions in the NNPC are of Northern origins, mainly Hausa Muslim, across the divisions and operating hubs of the NNPC in Abuja, Lagos, Port-Harcourt, Warri, Kaduna, Benin, Enugu, and other locations across the country where NNPC subsidiaries are being managed. This fact has been substantiated by a recent speech delivered by Chief Femi Fani-Kayode. He spoke against the gross ineptitude and nepotism in government where Hausa-Fulanis, predominantly Muslims, occupy top positions across the Buhari administration. Unbundling the NNPC concerning the provisions in the PIB will only lead to the establishment of different government agencies and commissions, which would be filled with political appointees from the North without putting federal character and true federalism into consideration. In a nutshell, the passage of the PIB is a political chess move that would ensure the North's domineering force is strengthened within the nation's oil and gas sector.

The Newly Amended Electoral Act

Nigeria is no stranger to rigged elections, one particular consequence of the astronomical levels of corruption in the country. The nation has been strange bedfellows with electoral corruption since her independence, such that her elections are considered with levity hands, many believing the 'big players have already decided the winners.' Elections in Nigeria have seen low turnouts in recent times on the part of the electorate due to the sentiment held by most in the Southern parts of the country that votes do not count in this part of the world. With such negatively biased positions held by people from one region of the country, it is up to the electoral umpire, INEC, to salvage the situation and restore trust in the system by making certain transitional decisions. Hence, there have been several amendments to the Electoral Act, the legal document that empowers INEC with independence and authority to organize and oversee the electoral exercise at all levels of government in Nigeria.

Elections in Nigeria are a tense affair akin to warfare in some parts of the country. From corrupt practices at polling units to intimidation and political thuggery, elections are likened to war in Nigeria. To improve its chances of conducting and overseeing elections successfully, INEC regularly seeks amendments to the Electoral Act. The most recent Electoral Act Amendment Bill was passed on Thursday, July 15th, 2021, by the upper chambers of the National Assembly, albeit with some rather interesting events. A particular clause was the bone of contention at the green and red chambers of the National Assembly, further revealing the deep-seated divisions that plague the country and the sentiments held by an ethnic group, who believe that power is their natural right.

Clause 52 of the Electoral Act Amendment Bill had the following provisions as submitted by INEC:

52(1): "Voting at an election under this bill shall be by open secret ballot."

52(2): "Voting at an election and transmission of result under this bill shall be in accordance with the procedure determined by the commission."

INEC, seeking to implement electronic transmission of results, hopes to eliminate the possibility of tampering with result figures en route collation centers, as the results would be sent through digital means. A lot happens between the polling units and the collation centers, which has led to such disparities between the final results counted at the polling booths to the results submitted to the collation centers. In between, money changes hands, officials are exposed to intimidation, and figures are altered in favor of the highest bidders, ultimately leaving the electorate disenfranchised and defeating the purpose of democracy.

Quite interestingly, when the section was put up for debate at the Senate Committee on INEC, it was modified thus: "The Commission may transmit results of elections by electronic means where and when practicable at its volition." Upon its consideration on the Red Chamber, a senator, Sabi Abdullahi, moved an amendment, saying, "the commission may consider electronic collation of results provided the National Network Coverage is deemed to be adequate and secured by the National Communication Commission and approved by the National Assembly." After a division was called and the motions subjected to vote, the majority voted for Sabi Abdullahi's review, which is, in any case, an attack on the independence of the electoral umpire. Even the chairman of the Senate Committee that approved the initial motion, Kabiru Gaya, voted against the move in an incredible display of partisanship and ethnic bias.

The argument was that most parts of the country do not have sufficient network coverage and internet. It is worthy to note that most senators who opposed electronic transmission of results are either Northerners or members of the ruling APC. Some Southern lawmakers also voted against electronic transmission among which includes Senator Ovie Omo-Agege and Peter Nwaoboshi representing Delta State as well as Senators Opeyemi Bamidele representing Ekiti State, Oluremi Tinubu and Adeola Solomon, both of Lagos State, Orji Uzor Kalu of Abia State and Francis Ibezim of Imo State, amongst others.

The political elite in the North believes it is their right to rule Nigeria and control the nation's vast resources. To enforce that right, people who hold this sentiment have been fixed in crucial positions, spread out throughout all levels of government like cancer, to keep power at all costs. The move by this group of people to resist the implementation of electronic transmission of election results lends credence to the existing belief that the numbers declared at election collations from the North are inconsistent with the actual votes at polling units. Also, electronic voting and transmission, say, in particular, may not favor the North, where technology appraisal is relatively low due to widespread illiteracy among the masses.

Then, there is the argument that internet reception is down in most parts of the country, and electronic-based elections will disenfranchise the electorate in these areas. The North East was cited as a typical example of a region where network services are either inadequate or unavailable. However, this argument is invalidated by the activities of bandits and terrorists in these areas. Even in thick forests where bandits in the North operate, they can still make phone calls demanding ransom and connecting with relatives of their victims. Boko Haram insurgents also maintain communication amongst one another across the region, unhindered. How a lack of network coverage has not affected the communication of bandits and terrorists and will

hinder the transmission of election results is quite puzzling. One wonders how elections would conveniently be organized in Boko Haram-ravaged territories, and results are sent to collation offices. The extent to which these individuals would go to preserve their positions in power and expand their influence, denying apparent facts, is mind-boggling.

The Northern elite intends to keep the status quo within their control to ensure they remain in power and will do anything to keep Nigeria backward, even opposing technological advancement. To the North, an election is a way to ensure that power stays in its confines, and the Northern political elites who are in charge believe that election is a game of numbers, which has been the winning point for the North right from early elections in 1952 during the colonial rule. To achieve this numeral superiority over the South, there is a grand plan to ensure that the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC) stays in power come 2023 and still have Buhari as a critical figure in the APC's quest to retain federal control. A recent statement attributed to Garba Shehu, media aide to President Buhari, has revealed a crucial aspect of the Northern plan to maintain its grip on the political control of Nigeria, using the APC as a mechanism to that effect. In his statement,

"President Buhari is very much entrenched in the politics of Nigeria and cannot be wished away using tweets. Those who seek to oppose the APC in 2023 should be ready to receive a serious obstacle from President Buhari because the president matters a lot in the politics of Nigeria and has been enjoying the support of Nigerians." (Channels Politics Today with Seun Akinbaloye, 2021)

This statement is full of an enormous form of controversy as to whether the APC intends to push a third term bid for PMB or that the candidate of the APC in the 2023 elections would be anointed by President Buhari, who is at present a crucial player in the current Hausa-Fulani

domination of the Nigerian political arena. However, stakeholders in the opposition PDP think that this statement is a political antic to be used as a buildup to a strategy that would ensure that the North holds on to power. In a political analysis TV program recently aired on Channels TV, a PDP chieftain, Mr. Segun Sowunmi, pointed out that the statement of Garba Shehu was rather unfortunate giving the current economic and security crises bedeviling the nation at this time. The monumental failure of the ruling APC had been achieved to quell the growing insecurity across Nigeria, which, according to Mr. Sowunmi, is turning Nigeria into a 'Banana Republic' where anarchy is the order of the day. The statement of Garba Shehu coupled with the recent gang-up of APC senators mainly from the North to vote against electronic transmission of election results speaks volumes of the antics of the North in being hell-bent on keeping power and maintaining control of the nation's political arena at all cost, even though there may not be a nation Nigeria by the year 2023 as a result of the worsening fragmentation in the nation's social and political structure.

A few weeks ago, Senator Shehu Sani, a Northerner, and a political activist, passed a warning to APC National Leader Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, who is believed to be gunning for the presidency. His sign was that Tinubu should be wary of the hypocritical nature of Northern politicians who could push to install him as the APC's candidate but insert specific clauses in the arrangement, which would appear as though in the long run the South was in power. In contrast, it is the Northern conspiracy that would be controlling the polity of Nigeria. According to Shehu Sani, the Northern political elites have always known that the politicians from the South, particularly those of the Yoruba ethnic group, can be easily swayed. Hence, Senator Sani admonished the Jagaban of Lagos State, Bola Tinubu, to "equip himself with a translator because the highly idiomatic Hausa politicians may use the Hausa language to

misrepresent their intentions differently from how it will be painted in English." (The Nation, 2021) Suffice to say that the submissions from various proponents and political pundits give a clear view on the stand of the North- to continue to hold power at the expense of the educationally and industrially advanced but politically disillusioned South. The talk of restructuring, which has been drummed intensively since the beginning of President Buhari's second term, has always been opposed by the Northern lawmakers. According to Senator Enyinnaya Abaribe, a southern lawmaker of the Ibo ethnic group, this statement is complex for the North to accept given the level of intellectual and resource-deficiency of the North compared to the South. In his statement,

"Whenever we talk about restructuring in the national assembly, some of my northern colleagues would say, is it for you to have your Biafra? And I tell them, yes, I want Biafra, but I want a Biafra of the mind not necessarily that of the land." (The Breaking Times, 2021)

The Northern political elites fear that restructuring the nation in line with the necessary constitutional amendment will break the Northern cabal's willpower and make it impossible for Northern politicians to control Nigeria's polity.

The Grazing Bill

The grazing bill was conceived to solve the spike of long and continuous attacks and clashes between herders and settlers of different states. It represented the response of the legislative arm of government to the violence being recorded on account of herders. This bill which has thirty-five clauses contains its intentions in the introductory part, which reads:

"an act to establish grazing reserves in each of the states of the federation Nigeria to improve the agricultural yield from livestock farming and curb incessant conflicts between cattle farmers and crop farmers in Nigeria" (placbillstrack.org)

The establishment of a grazing commission is the means through which the bill proposes to achieve its intention. This commission would oversee the management and maintenance of all the grazing reserves in the country alongside stock routes. This signifies that Northerners, who are the sole cattle rearing tribe of the country, would have access to practice livestock farming within these grazing reserves. This would therefore limit the instances of roaming on the part of the nomadic Fulani herdsmen.

From a superficial glance, the element of responsiveness is observed, especially on the concerns and basis of avoidance of conflict. More profound observation and scrutiny, however, would bring to realization the proof of the already concocted scheme of the North to dominate the country gradually being put to action. This bill grants herders the right to acquire lands in any community and state of the federation under the blanket of a grazing commission. This, in my opinion, is a well-devised strategy to extend and strengthen the reach of the North over the rest of the country as they can control and have access to places generally beyond their territorial authority.

Another disturbing fact is the empowerment, according to the grazing commission by the bill to mandate every state government to provide lands for its activities. The commission also has the authority to possess any existing reserve from the management of any state government. Therefore, such an existing reserve like the Obudu cattle ranch falls under the control of the grazing commission if this bill is implemented. Such a takeover would be solely beneficial to the North as livestock and cattle rearing are undertaken by them. This would culminate into the elevation of Northern authority in every state of the federation regardless of geographical location.

Moreover, this infrastructure provided using taxpayers' money which consists of revenue from both the North and South, would only strategically benefit the North, consolidating political and economic strength. The Northern agenda for political control of Nigeria concerning the grazing bill is being reinforced by the Federal Government's decision to establish ranching areas in all of the federation states for the roaming Fulani cattle herders and enforce open grazing across the nation. This decision has not gone well with Governors of Southern States, especially those in the South-West. They believe that the violence perpetrated by bandits and killer herders is a result of open grazing. In light of these developments, various states have begun to promulgate legislation to ban open grazing within their proximity. Ondo and Ogun States are the states to have taken precedence and included the arrest of cattle herders caught with arms and ammunition. In the same vein, a recent allegation was made by Benue State Governor Samuel Ortom in reaction to an attack on innocent civilians in a village community close to an IDP Camp in the State. In his words,

"President Buhari is supposed to be the president of Nigeria, however, his body language show that he is the president of the Fulanis alone. How can he be keeping quiet as Fulani herdsmen

kill and rape our people? This shows that he is enforcing the Fulani militia to take over Nigeria." (Channels News, 2021)

This statement goes a long way to show the extent of political calculation that has been perpetuated to ensure that the Hausa-Fulani dominance of the country continues unabated, even though Nigeria is comprised of several ethnic groups among which the Yorubas and Ibos are in substantial population and can also be seen as a significant part of the country. Political pundits have seen the enforcement of grazing bills across the nation's states as a way of ensuring Fulani presence nationwide, especially in the densely populated and compact Southern States. This assertion is further bolstered by the revelations from insider information available to a former CBN deputy governor, Obadiah Mailafia, who hails from the Middle Belt. According to Mailafia in a statement released on a radio program and published on Sahara Reporters Online News on the 12th of August 2020, he pointed out that the Boko Haram terror group is an orchestrated program designed by the Northern political elites to weaken the South and to enhance further the North's plan of Hausa-Fulani political domination of the country. In his words:

"A serving governor from the North is a commander in the Boko Haram terror network and the North was planning a civil war to start in 2022 which will be spearheaded by the Fulani militia. They will move from house to house and kill innocent people in Southern Nigeria and then accuse the government of being complicit". (Today News, 2020)

According to a top US military commander, this revelation by Mailafia correlates with a Vanguard report earlier in 2020 that stated that Islamic terror groups in the Middle East are building sleeper cells and infiltrating the Southern part of Nigeria.

It is common knowledge that some of these nomadic Fulani herdsmen serve as a form of Northern intelligence in places where they reside or venture through. With this bill, they would therefore be given legal permission and excuse to occupy any geographical area of their choice. This is the perfect plan for an invasion as human resources in the guise of herders are readily available and planted in various geopolitical zones, quite ready to carry out legitimate or illegitimate activities. Seeing all these, one does not need a prophet to know how much this grazing bill can contribute to the absolute dominance of the North over the rest of the country.

Sharia Law and Calls for its Introduction to Southern Nigeria

. At the start of this present democratic dispensation that began in 1999, several Northern States reintroduced the Sahara Law as a component of their criminal law and the penal system. Since then, most of the States in the North-East and North-West where the Hausa-Fulani ethnic groups are predominantly found have implemented and integrated Sharia Law into their local legislation and is fully enforced on both Muslims and non-Muslims. From colonial days, the Sharia law has been in effect in most parts of Northern Nigeria. The British colonists did not interfere with the legislation in any form other than the indirect rule they utilized in exerting control.

Zamfara State passed the first Sharia Penal Code in the Northern part of Nigeria on January 27th, 2000. Sharia courts had already been formed and have been operational since then, even though a conventional 1999 constitution governs the entire nation, including its 36 States and the FCT. Many saw all of this as a political ploy by the then Zamfara's governor, Ahmad Sani, to boost his popularity. In May, Niger State embraced Zamfara's perspective, with its administration, like Zamfara's, fully supporting the re-Islamization of the judicial system. As

a result of public demand, other Northern states followed suit. Before adopting a Sharia Penal Code, Sharia criminal punishments were proclaimed and carried out in Katsina and Sokoto (in a particular instance, the right hand was amputated) according to specific Islamic law stated in the Qu'ran.

However, disturbing reports recently emanating from media circus show that a group is calling for the extension of the amended Sharia law to the South-West region, which has grown a sizable population of Muslims over the years.

Any democratic government has not questioned the operational status of Sharia law in Northern Nigeria since its establishment in the current dispensation. However, a recent development brings to question why an Islamic law code practiced in strictly Islamic nations would be enforced in a part of Nigeria when the country is not an official Islamic State. Some weeks ago, a group of Islamic scholars under the name The Muslim Congress (TMC) had demanded that the Sharia Law be introduced into the Western part of the nation, a demand which is similar to a 2019 appeal made by the erstwhile Chief of Justice Ibrahim Mohammed who called for the amending of the current 1999 constitution to give room for some tenets of the Sharia Law to be inserted into the legal framework of the Constitution. The demand by the TMC group was made during the Public hearing on Constitutional Reforms conducted by the National Assembly in Lagos and has sparked criticism from several quarters, particularly Christian religious groups, with the feeling that it is a ploy by the Islamic-dominated North to strategically infuse its religious and cultural practices on the South, with focus on the South-West where there is a reasonable population of both Muslims and Christians. The critics noted that peace and harmony have always reigned within the Yoruba Christian and Muslim communities in the South-West even without Sharia Law, and hence there was no need of

wasting unnecessary energy on a mission that has no real solution to the present challenges bedeviling the country across all frontiers- which is high-level insecurity occasioned by armed banditry, herdsmen attacks as well as violent kidnappings.

Conclusion

Its common knowledge that political power is the nexus of social and economic development for states and societies, and from prehistoric times till contemporary times, there has always been a tussle for power among individuals and social groups to ensure advancement and superiority. In the Nigerian situational context, the political power factor can be seen as a highly complex one due to its multi-ethnic nature and the vast cultural differences among its diverse peoples. However, colonization has largely determined the direction of political control in the Nigerian environment, and due to their interests, the British decided to cede the management of Nigeria to the educationally backward North as the experiment of indirect rule was successful in the region. From colonial days to post-colonial times and up till time, the Northern political elites have steadily used politics for the sole purpose of social and economic control at the expense of the more exposed and academically-oriented South. This article thinks that the political arena of the Nigerian state has been decorated with legislative and executive elements which would continue to ensure that the North control Nigeria unless the conditions and geopolitical zones that make up Southern Nigeria take up the decision to unify and use their human capital resources collectively rather than allow selfish personal interests override their collective goal.

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