

Power-sharing and Conflict Management in Africa: Nigeria, Sudan and Rwanda

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Résumé: La nature des conflits en Afrique continue d'attirer l'attention des universitaires. La principale raison est le fait que la plupart des violents conflits de nos jours ont lieu sur le continent. Cet article attribue le caractère ethnique de la majorité des conflits à la capacité de l'ethnicité de modifier ou de nourrir d'autres formes de conflits. En prenant le Nigeria, le Soudan et le Rwanda comme études de cas, l'article propose l'adoption de la notion de Présidence tournante et celle de la répartition en zones des bureaux les plus importants de l'Etat comme solution à la peur d'une domination sectorielle, qui est au centre de beaucoup de conflits.

Il faut raccourcir les géants
Et rendre les petits plus grands,
Tout à la vraie hauteur
Voilà le vrai bonheur (French Revolutionary Song 1793)

The nature of conflicts in Africa has continued to attract the attention of scholars. This is hardly surprising since 45 percent of all the violent conflicts currently witnessed in the world are taking place on the continent, thus making Africa the most war-torn continent in contemporary times (Scherrer 1997:17). Prominent on the list of literature on the subject are works on problems of ethnic identities and nation-building in Africa (Rotberg and Mazrui 1970; Kirk-Green 1971; Olorunisola 1972; Bates 1973; Dunstan M. Wai 1973; Nnoli 1989; Rupensinghe 1989 and Okafor 1997). While the study of Bozman (1976) blazed a trail in attempting to discover whether the reality of African conflicts fits into the conceptual framework of Western Europe, many of the recent studies tend to examine the conflicts from the point of view of International Relations and Political Economy (Zartman 1992; Young 1996; Kok 1996; Tekle 1996; McNulty 1997).

Ali Mazrui (1980:92) traced the cleavages that produced the conflicts to the fragmentation of the continent in his illustration of the inverted pyramid involving one continent: Africa, with two permanent racio-cultural complexes, three religious systems, four dominant languages, five external hegemonic systems competing for influence of profit in an Africa comprising over 50 countries and some 850 ethnic and linguistic groups. In many of the countries, including Nigeria and Sudan, the issues generating conflicts constitute what is commonly described as the 'National Question'. M.V. Manguwat (1987) defined the concept as 'a technical term' coined to describe the problem that arose in the continuous process of vertical and horizontal integration and development of the various nationalities and classes which make up the new nation-state. The different contexts in which the concept has been used point to Ade-Ajayi's assertion (1992:1) that the National Question has become a code name for all the controversies, doubts and experimentation that surround Nigeria's search for stability, legitimacy and development. His analysis shows that the concept is concerned with the fundamental basis of Nigeria's political existence, power-sharing and management of resources in terms of access, control and distribution.

Although Inikori and Thomas Emeagwali (1986) and Claude Ake (1986) have shown that the National Question in Nigeria is multidimensional, involving class and ideological conflicts, fear of Northern domination and the hegemonic contest among the Yoruba, Hausa-Fulani and the Igbo, the issue of power-sharing is nevertheless central to the ethno-political crisis in Nigeria. It is beyond debate that the North has monopolised the leadership of the country since independence. Osaghae (1989 (a):128-136) has shown that Northerners controlled sensitive government posts between 1958 and 1984. The widespread protests that accompanied the cabinet reshuffle of 29th December 1989 apparently suggest that the situation had become unbearable. Although one of the Service Chiefs described the administrative re-organisation as a 'routine military exercise' which did not call for 'senseless outcry from intruding members of the public', the protesters called for 'a sense of balance' in appointments to 'key political and military positions' in the country (Akinyele 1992 (a): 156-157). As part of the reaction to the sectional domination of the country, Major Gideon Orka staged the abortive coup

of 22 April 1990. Orka redefined the scope of the Northern domination by announcing the suspension of the five States controlled by the Hausa-Fulani from the federal union until their indigenes accepted to live on equal terms with the other ethnic groups (Omotoso 1991:17). It is therefore not accidental that when the opportunity dawned for Nigerians to recommend a political framework that would ensure a salutary balance in the power structure, the preference was for a system of power-sharing that gave every Nigerian a chance to aspire to the leadership of the country in such a way that the continuous domination of the country by a section would be abolished. The principles of Zoning and Rotational Presidency, which emerged from the recommendations, constitute the subject of analysis in this article (Fed. Republic of Nigeria 1995:68, 143-145).

Eskor Toyo (1986) acknowledged the dominant ethnic pattern of the Nigerian crisis when he argued that the National Question is about inter-group relations and 'arises when a culturally integrated and self-conscious group of people seeks advantage over other peoples in the nation' (*The Guardian* 23 June 1993:17). Similarly, the problem of Southern Sudan which is widely acknowledged as the National Question in Sudan (Garang 1980:83), has various components. Kok (1996:553) identified these as: (a) a generalised confrontation between the centre and periphery in a State marked by gross inequalities in access to power and resources; (b) a conflict over the legitimacy of the current fundamentalist regime in Khartoum; a parallel conflict over the legitimacy of the leadership of the Southern Liberation Movement; and (d) an intensifying struggle over diminishing resources among ethnic groups in various parts of the country.

The conflict in Sudan has also taken an ethnic form. Ali Mazrui (1980:96) noted that attempts have been made to present the civil war in Sudan in various lights. He concluded that in the final analysis, it is a war between the Arabs and Arabised Northern Sudanese on the one side and the non-Arabised black Sudanese to the South on the other. Arnold Toynbee (cited in Dunstan M. Wai 1980:168) gave the ethnic argument a further push when he argued that the problem of Sudan is the problem of the two Africas on a 'miniature scale'. He added that if the conflict in Sudan becomes acute and chronic, it will heighten the tension between

Arab and Negro Africa everywhere and that, sooner or later, Southern Sudan will become a focus of Negro Africa's latent resentment against Northern Africa.

While commenting on the Abuja Peace talks on Sudan, a correspondent wrote that what began 6 years ago as a search by the minority South for a greater share of political power and economic development at the time of independence has now developed into deep religious and ethnic division (*New Nigeria* 4 May 1993:12). The report from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London shows that 'the promotion of Northerners to positions of influence within the administration of the Southern Provinces' was partly responsible for the turn of events (*Daily Sketch* 24 Nov. 1992:5). The recent pronouncements by leaders of the Sudan People's Liberation Army indicate that the people of Southern Sudan opted for secession because they have been excluded from the corridors of power and are being exploited for the benefit of the North.

The problem in Rwanda is not structurally different from those already described. Lemarchand (1970:83) traced the genesis of the crisis in Rwanda to the paradox whereby the Tutsi, who constitute only 15 percent of the country's total population, monopolise the top positions of government. *The New York Times* expressed the same fact in neighbouring Burundi in anatomic shorthand. To substantiate its claim that 'In Burundi, The Tall Are Ruling The Short', the paper noted that the president of Burundi, three quarters of his cabinet and the National Assembly, about 13 out of 15 provincial governors and all the army officers are Tutsi (AF Press Clips, Washington D.C., 5 June 1987:16). It becomes understandable why the conference of Catholic Bishops in that country had argued that the crisis can only be resolved if there is a 'basis of equity and respect for the rights and duties of all groups' (*News Watch* 12 Sept. 1988:27).

It is clear enough that most of the conflicts in Africa have manifested themselves as ethnic conflicts; that is, conflicts in which the contending actors or parties defined themselves (or are so defined by outsiders) in terms of ethnic criteria such as nationality, culture, language, religion and race (Stavenhagen 1983:5). The main explanation

lies in the dynamic nature of ethnicity. Ethnicity is closely connected with the concept of ethnic group. An ethnic group may be described as a group of people who share common biological characteristics, territory, cultural symbols, value systems and normative behaviour (Birth 1969:10; Otite 1979). On the other hand, ethnicity can be defined as the feeling of allegiance to or identification with an ethnic group, whether such a unit existed in the pre-colonial period or not (Sanda 1979:3-4). But while it is assumed that membership of an ethnic group is based on descent, the reality of our contemporary world has shown that ethnicity is neither stagnant nor conservative since new ethnic boundaries are continuously being created.

To start with, a religious conflict can easily become an ethnic conflict if there is a coincidence between the ethnic frontier and the line of religious demarcation in a multi-ethnic country. This is the case in Northern Nigeria and Northern Sudan where the acceptance of Islam had blurred the sharp edge of ethnic differences, thereby substituting for it, a new identity based on the acceptance of the new faith. This explains why the fear of religious domination has always accentuated ethnic conflict in both countries. In 1966, the President of the Constituent Assembly in Sudan expressed the linkage when he argued that the dominant feature of Sudan is Islam and that its overpowering expression is Arab. He concluded that Sudan will not be able to preserve her identity or prestige except under an Islamic revival (Alier 1973:24). The attempt to impose Islam as a State religion is one of the issues uniting the different ethnic groups in the South against the ruling elite in the North.

Ethnicity also has the capacity to feed on class conflict and can in turn be modified by it. Osaghae (1994:13) noted that the goals and benefits of ethnicity are primarily personal, even when group solidarity is mobilised and the stakes are dressed in constitutive garb. Ordinarily, the scarcity of resources in Africa makes it very difficult for any government to be suitably placed to satisfy every sectional or personal needs. Hence, much of the competition takes place over the sharing of resources, particularly what Gamson (as cited in Otite 1979:94) called the problem of access to the corridor of power and organs of government. As the competition becomes acute, the actor mobilises his or her kinsmen by

posing as an ethnic messiah. The struggle is subsequently taken up by most group members who now see it as a common cause. This explains why Adam and Giliomee (1979:61) defined ethnic mobilisation as the process whereby personal interests become a common cause. It is also in this context that Osaghae (1994:13) argued that ethnic conflicts, whether at group or sub-group levels, are individual conflicts writ large.

John Garang, the leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Army, adequately perceived the close connection between economic forces, class conflict and ethnicity. Garang believed that the crucial issue in Sudan is not self-determination but social and economic development. He lamented that the first generation of Sudanese politicians failed to address the issue but jostled for power among themselves. Consequently, the gap between the developed and the backward areas of Sudan continually widened. He added that the actors who were fighting for power and prestige then began to beat the ethnic drum. And while the groups from which the rulers came saw the problem as a class struggle, those from the backward areas who had been excluded from power saw it as a struggle between their own groups and the dominant group. His interpretation of the danger signal is worth repeating here:

Thus, Africa is presenting a new type of national struggle arising out of her peculiar economic and social conditions. In answer to this new challenge, the call for self-determination is out of the question and therefore irrelevant. The paramount question is that of the unity of all masses in the entire country for the purpose of liquidating the remnants of colonialism in all fields—economic, social, political and cultural—and the advance to progress and socialism. The national question is secondary to the question of progress (cited in Wai 1980:86-87).

The difference between those who emphasise the National Question and those who support 'Social progress' is partly responsible for the current intra-SPLA conflict heralded by the Nasir Declaration of 28 August 1991 announcing the deposition of Garang as leader of the SPLA (Kok 1996:558-562).

In Africa, the pull of ethnicity has turned out to be stronger than the bond of class solidarity. The same situation in Kenya inspired Oginga

Odinga to write his novel, *Not Yet Uburu*. Odinga, according to Ali Mazrui, belonged to the school of thought which saw the succeeding regime in Kenya as a case of continuing dependency. He tried to lead a movement based on class-consciousness and dedicated towards basic reform and social transformation. He expected the peasants and workers of Kenya to rally behind his Kenya People's Party. But in the end, his only followers were fellow Luo of almost all classes (Ali Mazrui 1980:93).

It is now clear that the modern theoreticians erred in their claim that modernisation will eradicate tribalism or ethnicity. The resilience of ethnicity in contemporary times has made scholars like Melson and Wolpe (1971), Hansel (1966) and others to talk of retribalisation and supertribalisation. Marxist scholars would prefer to use neo-ethnicity to describe the same phenomenon. This is a new form of ethnicity characterised by the revival of ethnic identities in a bid to have access to power and alter the relations of political and economic power in contemporary situations. Consequently, most Africans now judge the degree of satisfaction of their group aspiration by the number of their local notables in high positions of government. Hence, when the former Nigerian Head of State, General Abacha, unceremoniously dropped Rear Admiral Allison Madueke as his Chief of Naval Staff, a group of Igbo elders did not only express 'great shock' on 'the manner in which our son was removed'; they urged Abacha to make 'equity' and 'justice' the hallmark of his government (*Daily Sketch* 16 Sept. 1994:1). The perception of issues through the ethnic prism has produced new theories and myths to justify or explain existing unequal relationships.

Morton B. King (1956:83) has pointed out that 'the defining characteristics, without which the minority/majority relationship will not exist, actually find expression in the majority claiming superiority and imputing inferiority to members of the minority group'. What is even noticed in the countries in focus is that the dominant groups have invented the myth to justify their hold on power. The divide-and-rule policy of the colonial master may, therefore, be interpreted as an instrument to achieve a divinely ordained caste system. At the height of the June 12 crisis in Nigeria, Chief Adegunle Ajasin fell back on the well-known practice of heaping the blame on the British.

The British government had always preferred that power reside with the Northerners, because of their own selfish interest, to the exclusion of their Southern counterparts. It was their ploy on the eve of independence and there is indication even now that they are still fond of that policy thinking (*Razor* 19 Oct. 1993:7).

On the other hand, respectable Northern elders like Sheikh Gunmi, Alhaji Maitama Sule, Liman Ciroma, Ismaila Mamman and others have come out at different times to say that the Northerners do not owe any gratitude to the British since it is their birthright to lead the country (*Punch* 27 Feb. 1994:19, *Razor* 19 Oct., 1993:1). While Sheikh Gunmi publicly declared that a Southerner can only rule the country over his dead body, Alhaji Maitama Sule argued that 'the Igbos are gifted for technology, the Yorubas endowed for commerce and Hausa-Fulani destined to rule' (*The Guardian* 13 March 1994:A7). One newspaper disclosed that a group of Northerners, acting under the banner of the Northern Consultative Forum, urged General Abacha to topple the Interim National Government before December 1993 to make it impossible for Chief M.K.O. Abiola to actualise the June 12 mandate (*Razor* 19 October 1993:3).

Similarly, official spokespersons in Sudan may blame the current crisis in Southern Sudan on the British who administered the territory as a separate entity. The fact remains that the Southerners have not been able to overcome the stigma of slavery just like the Blacks in the United States. Lake and Rotchild (1996:57) observed that 'In Sudan, Southerners with strong memories of slavery and perceptions of low status bridle at any new evidence of disrespect. Thus, they viewed the Sudanese government's decision to apply Islamic (Sharia) law to them as well as to the Muslims living in the country's North as a confirmation of their second-class status'. The conquering race attitude of the Northerners is a complicating factor in the crisis.

The Tutsis in Rwanda see themselves as the chosen race. The story of creation in Rwanda talks of Kigwa who descended from heaven and gave birth to three sons—Gatwa, Gatusi and Gahutu—the fathers of the three ethnic groups in Rwanda. To choose his successor, Kigwa gave each of them a pot of milk to watch over during the night. While Gatwa

drank his own, Gahutu fell asleep and mistakenly spilled it on the floor. It was only Gatusi who successfully accomplished the task. For that reason, Kigwa chose him as leader forever free from menial jobs. Gahutu was to be his servant while Gatwa, for his gluttony, was to be a pariah forever. It was even an accepted belief that whosoever attempted to change the arrangement would be revolting against God. The fear of divine sanction and the fact that the Tutsi could incorporate Hutus who had distinguished themselves into the Tutsi clan, like the French assimilation, helped to keep protest down. René Lemarchand (1970:33) stressed that this myth provided the moral justification for the maintenance of a system whereby a tiny minority assumed the status of a ruling class by exploiting the masses. Malinowski (nd:126) corroborated this view by saying that the myth for Rwandese is 'neither a fictitious story, nor an account of a dead past; it was a statement of a bigger reality still partially alive ... through its precedents, its laws, its morals, etc.'

Admittedly, the root of minority problem is present in every heterogeneous society. Marden and Meyer (1962:25) have revealed that minority demands for any given period is a reflection of both 'the forces generated within the group and its reaction to the treatment it receives from the dominant group'. This leads us to a review of past attempts to find a solution to the problem of power-sharing in the countries under study. We will also see why the efforts failed to allay the fear of ethnic domination. At any rate, as experts in the field of inter-group relations are now increasingly aware, ethnic conflict is caused by what Vesna Pesic, a peace activist in former Yugoslavia, calls the 'fear of the future, lived through the past' (Lake and Rotchild 1996:43).

There are many ways of avoiding inter-group conflicts particularly where ethnic groups occupy identifiable geographical areas, as in Africa. As the case of Rwanda-Burundi and Czechoslovakia suggests, the groups could agree on a 'peaceful divorce' or non-violent agreed secession; they could settle for federation or confederation, regional or functional autonomy or cultural pluralism, like the case of Switzerland. The means of achieving any of these options include negotiation, mediation, arbitration, recognition and power-sharing. But more importantly, stable ethnic relations are contingent on a 'contract' that specifies, among other

things, rights and responsibilities, political privilege and access to resources of each group (Lake and Rotchild 1996:49). In fact, as Lake and Rotchild added, the most important part of the contract is the safeguards it contains to render the agreement self-enforcing. Their analyses reveal that this could take a variety of forms; first, power-sharing arrangements, electoral rules, or group vetoes that prevent one ethnic group from setting government policy unilaterally; secondly, minority control over critical economic assets, as with the whites in South Africa or the Chinese in Malaysia; and thirdly, as was found in Croatia before the breakup of Yugoslavia, maintenance of ethnic balance within the military or police forces to guarantee that one group will not be able to use overwhelming organised violence against the other. What is immediately obvious is that all these varieties of safeguards revolve around the issue of balance of power. For this reason, the power-sharing arrangement constitutes the most crucial aspect of the management of inter-group conflict in Africa today.

The three countries under study have experimented with federalism, which is widely accepted as the most efficacious instrument for assuring self-rule and shared rule in a multi-ethnic State (Schmitt 1996:21). Yet, the outcome has been less than satisfactory. This, itself, can be attributed to distortions in the operation of the federal arrangement. Nigeria, by conservative estimate, has about 250 ethnic or linguistic groups in a geographical area of 913,072.89 square kilometres. But the irony of the situation, as E.A. Afigbo (1991:14) argued, is that the federal structure adopted in 1954 did not reflect the cultural or geographical diversities of the country. It was reflective of the administrative systems of the colonial period.

One consequence of this was the structural imbalance in which the Northern Region was larger than the Western and Eastern Regions put together. Besides, each of the regions had a majority group whose population exceeded the rest put together. The Hausa-Fulanis were in the majority in the North, the Igbos, in the East, and Yorubas, in the West. Each of these groups used its in-built majority to its advantage in the competition for power and influence both in the region and at the centre. The instability this created confirms the view of Arthur Lewis

(1965:65) that plural societies cannot function peaceably if politics is regarded as a zero-sum game which functions according to the 'erroneous definition that the majority is entitled to rule over the minority'. It was to arrest this trend that the army took over the government and divided the country into twelve States in 1967. Significantly too, each of the three major ethnic groups was fragmented into two or more States, or administrative units ostensibly to curb their domineering posture.

The territorial approach to minority problem has one major attraction. It is able to shield an ethnic group from the influence of its erstwhile dominant neighbour. As a minority spokesman explained before the Willink Minorities Commission in Nigeria in 1958, there is no better solution to the fear of the lamb that finds itself in a zoo with a lion than the iron cage. But State creation has failed to resolve the Minority Question in Nigeria for a number of reasons. First, the relocation of the administrative boundary merely redistributed the majority/minority category with its associated fears and grievances. Today, more minorities have emerged from the 36 States than in the days of the three regions. This in itself points to the contextual character of the minority/majority relationship and the limitations of the territorial approach to it. More importantly, State creation has not ended the fear of northern domination or the habit of treating Nigeria as the sum total of its three major groups. Until 1991, the States that were carved out from each of the defunct regions continued to meet together under one guise or the other. It was in an attempt to bury the ghost of regionalism that General Babangida proscribed all regional ventures and institutions in 1991. The problem was compounded by the adoption of the Distributive Pool Revenue Allocation Formula in 1979. Under this arrangement, all the States receive equal allocation from the federal budget. And, judging from the pattern of State distribution, one can conveniently argue that State creation has become a means of sustaining the overlordship of the majority groups.

Another significant incident that had a bearing on the way federalism is operated in Nigeria was the adoption of the Principle of Federal Character in 1979. This is very similar to the Affirmative Action in the

United States. Unfortunately, the implementation of Federal Character is left to the whims and caprices of individual political actors and the principle has become a quota system exercised almost wholly in favour of the North. Doyin Okupe expressed the frustration of some Nigerians with the political structure, when he declared:

All that Nigerians demand of the federation, and all that they can reasonably demand, is not equality of outcomes, but equality of opportunity. That is all federation is about, that is what this federation should offer them, or it will slowly but surely disintegrate (1988:36).

The search for a viable political framework that can guarantee that no group or groups can perpetually dominate the other led to the adoption of the Rotational Presidency system and the division of the country into six geo-political zones.

Although a member of the Sudanese Ruling Command Council (RCC), Colonel Mohammed Al-Min Khalifa, had boasted in 1991 that 'we have through federation created equal distribution of power and wealth' (See *Sunday Guardian*, 18th August, 1991:A3) in Sudan, the federal arrangement adopted in Addis Ababa in 1972 was never satisfactorily implemented. Commenting on the autonomous rule in 1983, Adamolekun had this to say in the *African Research Bulletin* (1991:174-175):

The 10 years of autonomy have not been happy. The government in Khartoum had never handed out the money to which the South felt entitled and the countryside remains pitifully backward. Southern politicians have 'no respect for public finance', as one Northern politician tactfully put. The Khartoum government might have continued to leave the South as a squabbling African backwater if it had not been for the discovery of oil in the South, followed by more disturbance than usual (*African Research Bulletin* May 1-13 1983:58-47).

The Republican Order No.1 of 1983, called Organisation of Regional Rule in the Southern Provinces, divided Southern Sudan into three regions. These were Bahr El Ghazal, Equatorial and Upper Nile along the lines of the colonial provinces with the same name. While some of the Southern leaders agreed with the government's explanation that the decentralisation will enhance the share of the South in the national

budget and improve its representation in the central government, others interpreted the organisation as a ploy to weaken the South by a divide-and-rule policy. The irony of the situation is that it was President Gaafar El-Nimeiry, who had preached the gospel of political accommodation at the Addis Ababa Peace Conference of 1972 who later revoked the concession of autonomy to please the Northern hard-liners in his government. The current President, General El-Bashir, has continued to tow the same line. All efforts to persuade him to relax the posture failed to receive a hearing at the Abuja Peace Talks in 1993. The meeting broke up in deadlock on 17 May, 1993 with Khartoum accusing Nigeria of attempting to impose her own arrangement on Sudan. (*The Guardian* 1st June 1993:7; *Sunday Times*, 30th May 1993:8). The breakdown of the mediation is partly responsible for the continued warfare in Sudan, with El Bashir pointing an accusing finger at Uganda and Eritrea. (See *Tribune* 23 Jan. 1997:4).

While military dictatorship tilted the Federation-State relations in favour of the central government in Sudan and Nigeria, it did not give the federal structure a chance to succeed in Rwanda. The Army in Rwanda is Tutsi-led and Tutsi-dominated. Hence, the Tutsi could rely on this to implement policies exclusively in their favour. The only option opened to the Hutus, who constitute 85 percent of their country's population, is to seek a reversal of status, through violence. The reprisal attack explains why that country has been a theatre of ethnic cleansing. And, inevitably, the problem has spilled into the Great Lakes region. All efforts to contain the situation in the past by imposing embargo on the Tutsi-led government have not produced any tangible result. Britain admitted that a British Company, Mil-Tech, successfully flouted the arms embargo imposed on Rwanda by the United Nations by supplying part of the arms used in the genocide of 1994. (*Vanguard* 23 Jan. 1997:5). In a swift reaction to recent developments, neighbouring countries have also imposed an embargo on Rwanda in an attempt to force the head of the military junta to hand over to a democratically elected government. It is doubtful whether this will succeed.

Generally speaking, foreign involvement in ethnic conflicts in Africa has now brought relative peace to the continent. One expects that once the great powers were free from the restraints of ideological competition typical of the Cold War era, they would be in a position to mitigate ethnic conflicts by leading the warring parties to peaceful solutions and compelling them to honour agreements. The paradox of the post-Cold War period, as Lake and Rotchild (1996:68) have observed, is that the United States and other great powers lack the political will necessary to make a sustained commitment to this role. Worse still, where the foreign powers mostly affected by the conflicts had intervened, their involvement had been partisan or served to prolong the conflict. The situation can be illustrated with reference to Rwanda, Sudan and Nigeria.

When the Rwandan civil war broke out in October 1990, between the Government of Rwanda and the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF), the concerns and pressures from Germany, France, Belgium, Burundi and Tanzania resulted in a number of cease-fires. The peace move initiated by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) produced the Arusha Declaration of August 1993, which provided for the safe return of Rwandan exiles, power-sharing in a multi-party transitional government and the withdrawal of foreign troops from Rwanda. Until 1994, when UNO established the United Nations Observer Mission in Uganda-Rwanda (UNOMUR) to monitor the ceasefire in Rwanda, this world body resisted all pressures to get involved in Rwanda (OAU/CN/1884(LXII)C; United Nations Peacekeeping Information Notes, May 1994:124-126). On the other hand, France was actively involved in the crisis through Operations 'Noroit', 'Amaryllis' and 'Turquoise'. But while the intervention of France was expected, in her capacity as the former colonial master, the nature of involvement was not inspired by a desire to settle the dispute on its own merit. France's involvement was guided by the Franco-Rwandan Treaty of 1975 (amended in 1992) which mandated France to send troops to maintain the regime in power in Rwanda. To explain her partisanship, France interpreted the Rwandan crisis as an invasion of a friendly and democratic country by armed bandits from Uganda. The open and unconditional support France gave to General Habyarimana eventually encouraged him to set aside the Arusha Agreement. The role played by France in the Rwandan crisis made Mel McNulty

(1977) argue that the Rwandan war is neither an ethnic war nor an Anglophone plot but a product of the failure of foreign policy, especially French military intervention in Rwanda between 1990 and 1994.

The conflict in Sudan has also provided an opportunity for foreign powers to pursue their own interests in the Horn of Africa. Here again, the role of France is significant. According to Tekle (1996:502-503) France's involvement is guided by three considerations:

- (a) Sudan's oil deposit;
- (b) her strategic position in Central Africa; and
- (c) the hope that a friendly relationship with Sudan will help to dissuade Sudan from extending help to dissidents in her client State in the Horn of Africa.

Hence, when Sudan assisted France with the capture of Ilich Ramirez (alias Carlos the Jackal) in Khartoum in 1994, France reciprocated by supplying the government of Sudan with French satellite photos of Southern Sudanese rebel positions and allowed Sudan to attack the locations from neighbouring Central African Republic. In addition to diplomatic support, France also intervened to block Sudan's expulsion from IMF and has offered direct financial assistance to the government in Khartoum (Tekle 1996:502-503). On the other hand, the policy of the United States is guided by her concern for free trade, democracy and human rights. The United States regard Sudan as a terrorist State and her goal is to strengthen the military capacity of neighbouring States such as Ethiopia and Eritrea. At any rate, Sudan's support for the establishment of Islamic States in the Horn of Africa has won the approval of Iran but brought Egypt, Israel, Ethiopia and Eritrea into the opposite camp.

The political crisis in Nigeria has attracted world attention. While Obi C. (1997) has traced the accentuation of the Ogoni crisis to the globalisation of the oil economy, the African-Americans' support for the actualisation of the June 12, 1993 presidential elections is best understood in the context of race-relations in the United States (Akinyele 1998:593-613). The failure of foreign intervention to provide solutions to these crises brings us back to the issue of power-sharing, which is central to many of the disputes.

It is quite evident that the minority and ethnic problems in the countries under study cannot be resolved through violence but by a power-sharing formula that will give every section or group a sense of recognition. A similar awareness had led Lebanon and Guyana to experiment with proportional representation while the use of the weighted vote was once contemplated for the Asians in Kenya. Stability is maintained in India by reserving a fixed number of parliamentary seats and jobs for the scheduled castes. The inclusion of a power-sharing provision in the interim Constitution of South Africa encouraged the white National Party of W.F. De Klerk to co-operate with President Nelson Mandela so as to dismantle apartheid. Hence, the inclusion of rotational power-sharing at federal and State levels in the 1995 Draft Constitution in Nigeria is of particular significance (Friedrich Ebert Foundation 1996:143,334).

At the federal level, six key executive and legislative offices will be rotated among six newly-created geo-political zones. The offices are those of the President, Vice-President, Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Senate, and Speaker of the House of Representatives. The geo-political zones are North-west, North-east, North-central, South-west, South-east, and South-South. The arrangement is for an experimental period of 30 years. On the basis of the new arrangement, General Sani Abacha created six new States in October 1996: one from each of the zones. A huge sum from the Petroleum Trust Fund was also shared out on the zonal basis (*The Guardian* 9 Dec. 1996:1).

However, it will be profitable to specify the mode of implementation to avoid the distortions that had made the goals of the Federal Character unattainable. It is also to be expected that any of the groups could exploit an ambiguous clause to its advantage, thus provoking grave insecurity. A clearly formulated rule is also essential if Rwanda, Sudan and other African States are to benefit from the Nigerian model. Under General Abacha's administration, there was anxiety and suspicion over the order of rotation. Four of the five chairmen of the political parties were from the North and some people interpreted this as a good development that would pave way for the emergence of a southern

president to compensate the South for the injustice of June 12, 1993. Others argued that it illustrated the Northerners' hold on the party machinery and their determination to hold on to power at the centre since the party chairman could metamorphose into a presidential candidate, judging from the experience of the Second Republic (*The Guardian* 13 Jan. 1997:1). Besides, many Nigerians can still recollect that the National Party of Nigeria had implemented the principle of zoning in a manner that emphasised the political primacy of the North. In November 1978, the party divided the country into four zones—North, West, East and Minorities. While promising to rotate the important party offices among the zones, all the presidential aspirants were from the North and the 'Minorities' eventually became subsumed under the East. As Richard Joseph (1991:148) argued, the arrangement also allowed politicians who acquired their posts on the basis of 'personal tenacity' and 'capital investments' to pass for representatives of their blocs. The party jettisoned the zoning arrangement by allowing President Shehu Shagari to run for a second term in office.

To ensure that the order of rotation does not generate controversy in the future, I propose that accredited representatives of the six zones meet to work out an acceptable arrangement. They may concede the presidency to the South-west to correct the wrongs of the past while selecting the other posts through the ballot. The procedure should be duly televised to clear all doubts.

To ensure that the president and prime minister do not come from the same geographical or cultural zone, the following pairings may be considered. First we may label the zones as follows, for easy reference.

1. The South-west comprising Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Ekiti, Osun and Oyo States, with a combined population of 17,600,641 and 15 senatorial districts.
2. The South-east comprising Anambra, Abia, Enugu, Imo and Ebonyi States, with a combined population of 10,712,675 and 15 senatorial districts.

3. The South-south comprising 6 States: Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Rivers and Bayelsa. The total population is 12,939,226 and there are 18 senatorial districts.
4. The North-central zone comprising Kwara, Kogi, Benue, Niger, Plateau and Nasarawa States with a combined population of 12,211,984 and 21 senatorial districts.
5. The North-east zone has six States: Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Taraba, Yobe and Gombe. The total population is 11,907,122. The senatorial districts are 18 in a number.
6. The Northern-west zone has seven States: Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara. The combined population is 22,764,192. The number of senatorial districts is 21.

Since the arrangement is expected to last 30 years, it means that the president and other key officials can have one term of 5 years only. The following order of rotation can then be considered:

First Term: President/Zone 1;
Prime Minister/Zone 6;
Second Term: President/Zone 5;
Prime Minister/Zone 2;
Third Term: President/Zone 2;
Prime Minister/Zone 4;
Fourth Term: President/Zone 6;
Prime Minister/Zone 2;
Fifth Term/President Zone 3;
Prime Minister/Zone 5;
Sixth Term: President/Zone 4;
Prime Minister/Zone 1.

The above scenario offers the following advantages:

- (A.) It will pacify the South-west (Yoruba) over the annulment of the election of June 12, 1993.

- (B.) It will ensure that the President and Prime Minister are made to come from the two geographical sectors (North and South) of the country at any given time.
- (C.) It will ensure that the President or the Prime Minister does not come from the same geographical section on two consecutive terms.
- (D.) It will ensure that no two zones are paired together twice.

It is proposed that only the zone that will produce the president should organise the primaries to select presidential candidates. The candidates must necessarily pick their running mates from the zone to which the post has been allotted. The election itself must be nationwide. Even though the functions of the Senate President and the Speaker of the House of Representatives are clear enough, each of the four executive officers should have control over specified government functions and agencies. For instance, if the President presides over the Council of State, the Prime Minister should be responsible for the control of the parastatals. The Vice-President may be placed in charge of the Police, while the Deputy Prime Minister may oversee affairs concerning ministries. The sharing of responsibility will discourage the ganging up of zones and the use of State power to the exclusive advantage of any zone.

Sudan and Rwanda can adopt this model, bearing in mind their local circumstances. Sudan, on account of her size, can conveniently make use of the eight administrative regions while creating two more 'key offices'. Rwanda, on the other hand, can divide the 270 cantons into three regions, thus allotting two offices to each zone at a time. And, while the number of years could be reduced from five to four in Sudan to bring the experimental period to 32 years, in Rwanda, the number of years in a term could be extended to six. In all these three countries, the political arrangement should make it difficult for the Army to seize power. This is because the unitary command structure of the Army is directly opposed to the principle of loose federation embedded in zoning. To reduce the danger of a military takeover, the Army should be decentralised into regional or area commands. The governor in each of the States in the zone could then preside over the Army Council on a yearly rotation. It is

important to stress that this arrangement should be transitional because the balance of power could change over time. The failure to come to terms with this reality in Lebanon, where power was shared out on the basis of population of the religious sects, has been responsible for the conflict in that country (Akinyele 1992:80-81). At the end of the experiment, representatives of the zones should come together to reappraise the arrangement.

A number of arguments can be raised against the rotational presidency and zoning of political offices. For instance, a committed federalist had argued that Nigeria should have been transformed into a federation of ethnic nations rather than of six power zones (Interview with Prof. Osuntokun, former Nigerian Ambassador to Germany). The opposition to the linguistic or ethnic criterion for State creation in Nigeria stemmed from the official conception of national integration as a process of forging a unity that transcends ethnic barriers (Akinyele 1990:563). Besides, not everybody would accept that a group of 11 million people should be treated equally with another whose population does not exceed 20,000. While the creation of zones may not go far enough, it is nevertheless an improvement on the existing arrangement.

For the sake of convenience and fairness, the new power blocs should be based on the administrative regions of the colonial period. To start with, each of the ethnic groups in Africa occupies an identifiable geographical space or homeland. Some of them may have been fragmented by internal boundaries while several smaller ones may have been administered together in a political unit. Under the new arrangement, the likelihood is that an ethnic group with a large population will either stand alone or become divided into more than one zone, while several smaller groups can be constituted into a zone. The sharing of power on zonal basis will therefore take care of the dilemma as to whether the criterion of size or population should be employed, since it combines both. At any rate, even if the political boundaries of the colonial period violated ethnic frontiers, a new form of loyalty would soon be built around such administrative boundaries. The overlapping or cross-cutting of the ethnic boundaries will produce new identities that would promote greater stability in addition to the benefit of power-sharing itself.

It has also been argued that rotational presidency is undemocratic. A Committee of Elders in a position paper argued that such an arrangement would alienate and disenfranchise millions of Nigerian citizens whose areas are not the zones to produce the president and deny the country the opportunity of producing the best material for the exalted office of the president (*The Guardian* 9 June 1993:34). Prof. Ango Abdullahi, a vocal spokesman of the North, even considered the arrangement as a plot to weaken the North, whose only asset is its large population (*National Concord* 15 Feb. 1994:3).

To start with, the arrangement still permits voting at the national level, even though the presidential candidates are restricted to a particular zone. Now, considering the total number of years during which candidates from one section of the country have monopolised power at the centre, we could readily concede that rotational presidency creates a better chance for the best candidates to emerge. If majorities continue to rule by interpreting democracy simply as a game of number, the minorities will be frustrated to the point of opting out of the federal union. The political experience in Nigeria, Sudan and Rwanda shows that only consociational democracy can guarantee political stability in deeply divided African countries.

Lastly, some people may interpret the rotation of power as shadow chasing or a ploy by the elite to hold on to power. Alhaji Liman Ciroma (*Sunday Guardian* 13 Feb. 1994:A18) had this to say:

The central issue we have to confront in our present circumstances cannot be solved by rotation or multiple vice-presidency. What we need is to devise a system which ensures that whoever becomes president has a truly national constituency, agreeable disposition and total commitment to the Nigerian State. Even more important, we have to forge a system that ensures that those who occupy public office at whatever level perform their duties in a way that promotes national unity and equitable development of our body politic. No amount of rationing or zoning will solve our fundamental problems.

While it is to be admitted that ethnicity serves the interest of the elite, it is equally true that ethnic groups look up to their sons in government as emissaries. It is this linkage that recommends the equitable distribution

of important government posts among ethnic groups of the country. As at now, the fact that those contesting political offices have always claimed to be in politics in deference to the 'wishes of their people', is a reality we must face. On the whole, rotational presidency and zoning will reassure all that they can attain the highest political office in the country and reduce the fear of sectional domination that is responsible for many of the conflicts in Africa.

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Abstract: The nature of conflicts in Africa has continued to attract the attention of scholars. This is largely because most of the violent conflicts currently witnessed in the world are taking place on the continent. This article attributes the ethnic character of most of the conflicts to the capacity of ethnicity to modify or feed on other forms of conflicts. Using Nigeria, Sudan and Rwanda as case studies, the article proposes the adoption of Rotational Presidency and the Zoning of important State offices as a solution to the fear of sectional domination which is at the centre of many conflicts.

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