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Conflict Resolution: the Truncated Zoning Arrangement and the Buhari Political Tsunami in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The Nigerian Fourth Republic ushered in a democratically elected government in 1999 that paved way for the civilians to take over government after a long period of military rule in Nigeria. This made the political parties to project their candidates for contest in occupying the political positions at the federal, states and local government levels. Thus, such projection through the ruling political party that won the election in 1999 known as the People's Democratic Party (PDP), went into zoning arrangement that could give the country's six geopolitical zones a place for participation in the administration of the country. This arrangement coordinated the highest positions such as the President, Vice-President, President of the Senate, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Secretary to the Government of the Federation, and Chairman of the ruling party. However, such arrangements were only practiced from 1999 to 2011. The zoning arrangements were truncated in 2011, which led to conflict in the Northern part of the country. The objective of the study therefore, is to examine the consequences of the truncated zoning arrangement and lessons from the Buhari Political tsunami in 2015 general elections in Nigeria, with interest on how to resolve such conflicts that emanated. The study made use of qualitative research and the review of previous literature as sources of data collection. The findings revealed that,

many people were killed during the years 2011-2015 under study; both private and public properties were also destroyed. This study recommends constitutional approach regarding the zoning formula to accommodate all the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria in order to resolve the conflicts therein.

Keywords: Conflict Resolution, Zoning formula, Buhari Political Tsunami, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian state established her foundation in 1914 during the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates by the British leader, Lord Lugard. The country was led by the British authorities during the colonial era. However, the British authorities handed over to the Nationalists in 1960, October 1st (Akinboye and Anifowose, 2008: 239-243). This was the beginning of the country's leadership under the control of Nigerians who sought to develop the Nigerian state as a country that is endowed with so many resources ranging from natural to agricultural and human resources (Terwase, Abdul-Talib and Zengeni, 2014: 539). Nigeria, from 1960-1966 experienced some challenges that bedeviled the country's growth and development. These periods were characterized by various challenges that led to the military takeover of the country on the 15th of January, 1966. The country's foun-

dation was built in 1914 and over the years, it became a place for political tussle. First among many others, the issue of ethno-religious challenges that faced the country as well as the regionalism factor which was not well handled by the then leaders of the Nigerian state. Akinboye and Anifowose (2008: 249) argued that, the first military coup that took place on the 15th of January, 1966, several top military officers from the Northern part of the country were killed by the Igbo military officers.

The first military coup brought in Major-General Aguiyi-Ironsi, an Igbo by tribe from the Southern part of the country to power as the Head of State and leader of the Nigerian State. This made the Northerners through a counter coup that overthrew the Aguiyi-Ironsi led government since the likes of the Prime Minister, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and Usman Danfodio, the Sultan of Sokoto who were Northerners that were killed in the first coup that was organized by the Ibos from the Southern part of the country. This was the beginning of regional and ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria after the country gained her Independence in 1960. The quest for power amongst the major and the minority ethnic groups in Nigeria also became a major political tussle. Who then shall rule Nigeria, of what tribe and from which religious background? These questions remained unanswered from the period of the military rule in 1966 through to the time of the civilian rule in 1979, (under the leadership of President Shehu Shagari), to the time of the military regime of General Sani Abacha in 1993-1998.

The general Sani Abacha led government sought to bring a lasting solution to the quest for

power in Nigerian politics, through his organized constitutional conference which envisioned issues that needed to be discussed and agreed upon, that would be enshrined into the Nigerian constitution. According to Awopeju, Adelusi and Oluwashakin (2012) there was need for both the Northern and the Southern parts of the country to unite after the annulment of the June 12 general election that took place in 1993 and which was annulled by General Ibrahim Babangida. This was the reason behind the issue of rotational presidency in Nigeria to create an avenue for Nigerians to be united and to promote peace as well as political stability within the country. This notwithstanding, the Abacha led government organized a constitutional conference to look into issues such as zoning of the presidency between the North and South, which could give an opportunity between the major and the minority ethnic groups to have a fair share of leading the country. Another issue to be discussed was the issue of inclusion of the six geopolitical zones into the Nigerian constitution to give way for equal representation of the people from the ethno-religious perspectives to regional representation within the country. However, the death of General Sani Abacha could not let the issues mentioned above to see the light of day. These also could not be integrated into the Nigerian constitution, thereby leaving zoning and rotation of power in the hands of the political parties when the democratically elected government took over power in 1999.

The general objective of this research paper is to examine the issues that led to the conflict between the North and the South, as well as the consequences therein; also to bring to the fore the knowledge on how such issues could be resolved.

The specific objectives of this research paper

include the following:

- 1) To examine holistically what led to the conflict between the North and the South.
- 2) To highlight the consequences of the crisis that emerged from the conflict therein.
- 3) To bring to the fore the lessons from the Buhari Political Tsunami in Nigeria.
- 4) To recommend measures that can be taken in resolving the conflict.

The study would address the issues that led to the conflict between the North and the South, as well as consequences that emanates from it. This will help to develop measures that can be taken in resolving the conflict thereby promoting peace, unity, security and political stability of the Nigerian state. The study will also contribute to knowledge on how such issues that relate to the conflict therein can be resolved. It will contribute to literature on conflict resolution, peace and security studies as well as providing a means of understanding the subject of conflict resolution to research students who are undertaking their research study in that area.

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research work will be using some concepts in analyzing the data gotten from the field work as well as key information from other sources so as to give a clear understanding of the work. The following concepts will be used:

CONCEPT OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

This refers to the process of tracing the root causes of conflicts without being biased, and seeking solutions to such issues through peaceful negotiation and dialogue between parties involved,

and for those who are aggrieved in order to promote peace, unity and political stability with the said environment or polity entity (Best, 2011).

CONCEPT OF PEACE AND SECURITY

The absence of violence, crisis and conflict, be it political, social and economic can be referred to as peace, while the protection of lives and property within a given environment can be referred to as security (Best, 2011; Richmond, 2007). Therefore, peace and security concepts involve the absence of conflicts and violence in an environment and where such environment is protected, the people are secured with their properties as we consider the Nigerian context.

INTEGRATION THEORY

Lijphart (1971) argued the theory of integration into three classifications known as subnational, national and international. However, this work is concerned with subnational and national classification of theory, to give us an understanding of this research work. Integration theory connotes national unification of a people from different backgrounds like in the case of Nigeria where the country is endowed with different ethnic groups ranging up to 300 languages as well as a diversification of religious backgrounds with Nigeria's population of over 170 million people (Terwase, Abdul-Talib, and Zengeni, 2014).

However, this work intends to focus on the part of national integration which aims at uniting the people from different ethnic diversities in Nigeria. In the work of Khurana (2014) connotes that, national integration projects a view of having a people of one country with the notion of common identity. This also reveals that, there are

other identities such as ethnicity, religion, and regional backgrounds, yet the people are seen as one people. We then make use of the national integration as the backbone of uniting the Nigerian people whom are from different ethnic nationality and a spread background of regionalism. In this case, we are looking at how unity among the people would promote peace and harmonious relationship between the diverse ethno-religious and regional diversities into the whole as one Nigeria.

The Nigerian state is subdivided into six geopolitical zones which also represents the people of diverse origins. We have mostly the Hausa-Fulani as the major ethnic group in the Northern part of the country although; there are so many other minorities from the Northern part of Nigeria. The North consists of three major zones such as North-West, North-Central and North-East. In the Southern part of the country we equally have three zones such as the South-South, South-East and South-West, now in these zones; the Yoruba purely occupies the South-West and the Igbo in the South-East. The minorities are mostly found in the South-South region of the country. Until all these people are united into a whole as one people, then peace, unity, and political stability would be sustainable within the Nigerian polity. This is where the quest for national integration is promoted in view of resolving the conflicting issues such as zoning of political positions for equal representation in Nigeria.

RESEARCH METHOD

i) Population and Sample:

This research made use of six (6) respondents during the interview section selected from the

six geopolitical zones. Those interviewed were from the field of peace and security studies, academics and official of New Partnership for Africa's Development. The researcher selected Six States namely Kaduna, Taraba, Benue, Oyo, Enugu, and Rivers, from the six geopolitical zones known as the North-West, North-East, North-Central, South-West, South-East and South-South respectively.

ii) Sources of Data:

This work made use of qualitative research involving the use of primary and secondary sources of data collected from the field work. The primary data consisted of oral interview using semi-structured and unstructured interview. Some of the sources also involved the retrieval of archival records such as videos and internet sources.

iii) Technique of Data Analysis:

This research work therefore, employed historical, descriptive and interpretative method of analysis. The research paper also made us of content analysis and transcription of data sources available from the field to give a deeper understanding of the work.

ROTATION OF POWER AND THE TRUNCATED ZONING ARRANGEMENT

Over the years, political leadership of Nigeria was domiciled in the Northern part of the country especially the years of military rule in Nigeria which took place from 1966 to 1976. General Olusegun Obasanjo, a Yoruba man from the Southern part of the country, as well as the then leader of the country from 1976-1979 was the one who conducted the election that brought in President Shehu Shagari as the democratically elected

president of Nigeria (Akinboye and Anifowose, 2008). However, during the Shagari led administration from 1979 to 1983, power was still residing in the Northern part of the country since Shagari was from Sokoto State, a Northern part of Nigeria. The Shagari led government then was later overthrown by the military through a coup that brought in Major-General Muhammadu Buhari (1983-1985), to General Ibrahim Babangida (1985-1993), then Chief Ernest Shonekan (August, 1993-November, 1993), General Sani Abacha took over from November, 1993 and died in power as the country's leader on the 8th of June, 1998. Abacha's death brought in General Abdulsalami Abubakar who stayed in office as the country's leader from June, 1998 to May, 1999, the year that ushered in a democratically elected government after the military takeover in 1983-1999 making up to sixteen (16) years of military rule.

In 1999, a democratically elected government opened new doors for what was said to have been in the Nigerian constitution during the General Abacha constitutional conference that was organized to come out with solutions to issues such as zoning/rotation of power between the North and the South which became a practice through the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). According to Awofeso (2014), zoning inside the PDP was political arrangement that was basically designed for ethnic peace. By this, the PDP enshrined in their constitution at article 7.2 [c] though in part "they shall adhere to the policy of rotation and zoning of party and elective offices" thus, showing a means to achieving greater unity and peace amongst the diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria through equity, justice and fairness since all the zones comprise of different ethnic groups, as well as the issue of

religion being solved. The zoning of elective positions was then practiced from 1999-2003 in the first term of President Olusegun Obasanjo. He later contested for second term with the support of the Northerners even within the PDP, and he won the election that brought him back to power from 2003-2007 making a period of two terms, eight years in all (1999-2007) as seen in table 1 below.

TABLE 1: ZONING OF POLITICAL OFFICES ACROSS THE SIX GEOPOLITICAL ZONES IN NIGERIA

Political Office	Geopolitical Zone	Duration
President	South West	1999 to 2007
Vice President	North East	1999 to 2007
Senate President	South East	1999 to 2007
Speaker of the House of Representatives	North West	1999 to 2007
Secretary to the Government of the Federation	South-South	1999 to 2007
Chairman of PDP	North Central	1999 to 2007

As at 1999-2007, the eight years of Nigeria's leadership was domiciled in the southern part of the country under the leadership of former President Olusegun Obasanjo from the South-Western part of the country since the presidency was zoned in the southern part of the country as agreed by the PDP through their internal arrangement. Thus, they have agreed to zone the presidency to the Northern part of the country for another eight years since the Southern part had spent their eight years of leadership. Omodia and Egwemi (2011: 272-273) argued that, the whole essence of rotation of power between the North and the South as well as along the six geopolitical zones is to give an opportunity to other ethnic groups to participate in the leadership of the country which makes them to

have a sense of belonging and being part of the Nigerian political system. They also felt that, power was shifted to the North in 2007 after eight years of which the presidency was residing in the Southern part of the country. President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua was elected as president in 2007, he was a former Governor of Katsina State from 1999-2007. Yar'Adua later died in office on the 5th of May, 2010, and his Vice was made President of Nigeria on the 6th of May, 2010, according to the Nigerian constitution.

President Goodluck Jonathan, who took over the leadership of the country after the death of Yar'Adua, being a Southerner and a Christian, had the ambition of contesting for Presidency in 2011 presidential election. That became the biggest challenge for the PDP and the root cause of the truncated zoning arrangement within the PDP. It also became a battle between the North and the South. The former President Olusegun Obasanjo, a Southerner and a Christian had ruled the country for eight years from 1999-2007, then the North had only spent two full years through the leadership of the late Yar'Adua. Then, another Christian and a Southerner through President Goodluck Jonathan became president after the death of Yar'Adua. His ambition, made him contested for the 2011 general elections and won, he ruled from 2010-2015 making five years of another Southern presidency. During the democratic dispensation, the South ruled from 1999-2007 and 2010-2015. The North saw this as betrayal and marginalization of the North, out of the sixteen (16) years of democratic rule after the military handed over power in 1999. The North ruled only for two years out of the sixteen years since zoning was truncated in 2011 by the PDP, referring to it as not part of

the Nigeria's constitution in order to give room for President Jonathan to actualize his ambition in 2011. (Ojukwu and Olaifa, 2011: 31; Omodia and Egwemi, 2011: 272-273; Terwase, Abdul-Talib and Zengeni, 2015: 57).

Idowu (2015) argues that:

"the Obasanjo's government had agreed that there will be zoning formula, Obasanjo being a Yoruba man ruled for eight years 1999-2007 and from the South; then it will be the turn of Hausa/Fulani who are from the North after 8years of Southern leadership, it will go back to the North and that was why Umaru Musa Yar'Adua became the president. After the death of Yar'Adua, for us to follow the zoning formula, another president of Nigeria must come from the North to complete that four years of Yar'Adua, they allowed him to spend those four years, but it was Jonathan that restructured that thing, and the zoning was destroyed because he said he wants to continue for the next second term before this election can be held in 2015".

According to Joseph (2014), an elder statesman in the person of the former minister of finance, Mallam Adamu Ciroma disclosed on how zoning was truncated by the PDP with the support of the former President Olusegun Obasanjo to pave way for President Jonathan to contest in 2011, thereby destroying the zoning arrangement which would have allowed a Northerner to rule between 2011-2015 to complete Yar'Adua and the North's term of 2007-2015. President Jonathan's victory of 2011 elections even with the fact that he is from the minority ethnic group and from the South-South region, it gave him the boost to even contest the 2015 presidential election even with the fact that his party PDP had gone into crisis and was divided.

LESSONS FROM BUHARI POLITICAL TSUNAMI IN 2015

Having created a scenario where during the democratic dispensation, after the military administration handed over power to a southern leader Olusegun Obasanjo in 1999, northern leaders felt challenged as a result of the fourteen years of Southern leadership from 1999-2015. Going back, before the sixteen years of democratic rule, the military had stayed in power from 1983 down to 1999 bringing it to a total of sixteen years in which the 16 years were spent by the Northern leaders although, Chief Ernest Shonekan stayed in power as a Southerner only from August, 1993- November, 1993. The rest of 1983-1999, only three months were spent by a leader from the Southern part of the country under the administration of Shonekan as Head of Interim Government. From Major-General Mohammadu Buhari 1983-1985, General Ibrahim Babangida 1985-1993, General Sani Abacha 1993-1998, and General Abdulsalami Abubakar 1998-1999 were all Northerners. However, this Northern hegemony was still broken by the North since they handed over power to the Southern leadership without use of force but through a peaceful democratic process (Akinboye and Anifowose, 2008).

This was the major reason among other reasons why the wave of change in 2015 was so strong seeing an incumbent government helplessly being defeated in an election by an opposition. So, between the North and the South, the South-West which is the Yoruba regime felt marginalized by the Jonathan administration between the periods of 2011-2015, thereby giving a strong support to the North during the presidential election that was held on the 28th of March, 2015. During the

period of 2011-2015, the top political positions in Nigeria were zoned across the North-West, North-East, North-Central, South-East and South-South. The South-West that is the Yorubas, were not occupying any of those top six positions in the country, for this, Idowu (2015) laments that:

"If you look at power distribution again under Jonathan's administration, about 60 positions/jobs at the top that is at the federal level in the country, only few were occupied by the Yorubas, and that is one of the sources of agitation by the Yorubas that they will never vote for Jonathan in the second period of the election in 2015".

In table 2 below, it shows how the top six positions were distributed among the zones in Nigeria where the Yorubas from the South-West were not part of it. That is why during the 2015 general elections, the Yorubas supported the North since their own son Professor Yemi Osinbajo was the running mate of General Mohammadu Buhari who was popularly called GMB. General Mohammadu Buhari of All Progressive Congress (APC) contested against the then incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan of PDP. Some of the states from the Southern part of the country were already in the hands of the APC as political party since the leaders of such states were the governors of the APC. The states includes: Lagos, Ogun, Osun, Oyo, Edo, Imo, and Rivers (All Progressive Congress, 2015).

When zoning was truncated in 2011 as seen in table 2 above, the North ended up with four positions as against two in the South as we have seen with the Presidency as it went to the South-South and the Secretary to the Government of the Federation went to the South-East. The positions

TABLE 2: THE TRUNCATED ZONING ARRANGEMENT IN 2011

Political Office	Geopolitical Zone	Duration
President	South - South	2011 to 2015
Vice President	North West	2011 to 2015
Senate President	North Central	2011 to 2015
Speaker of the House of Representatives	North West	2011 to 2015
Secretary to the Government of the Federation	South East	2011 to 2015
Chairman of PDP	North East	2011 to 2015

of the Vice-President, Senate President, Speaker of the Federal House of Representative and Chairman of the Ruling Political Party went to the North-West, North-Central, North-West and North-East respectively. The South-West were left without any position and becoming the only zone that had no position among the six (6) top positions between the period of 2011-2015. According to Ibaraye (2015) in his views notes that:

“zoning can serve as a tool in addressing the issue of marginalization, like what we have seen in the administration of President Jonathan from 2011-2015, the position of the Speaker of the House of Representative was supposed to be occupied by the South-West, but due to political maneuvering, the position went to the North-west which Hon. Aminu Waziri Tambuwal became the Speaker. This made the Yorubas feel sidelined and marginalized and they were not pleased with the administration of President Jonathan”.

In 2013, the political calculations towards 2015 general elections started and then opposition political parties merged together in order to obtain a formidable force to dislodge the ruling political party, the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) that

ruled the country for sixteen years, 1999-2015. On the 6th of February, 2013, the All Progressives Congress (APC) was formed through a merger of three political parties known as Congress for Progressive Change (CDC), All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) and Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) though, the Governor of Imo state who was elected under the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) also joined the merger as a faction from the APGA to form the All Progressives Congress which became a formidable force and the first Political Party to beat an incumbent President as seen during the March 28th, 2015 presidential, national Assembly and gubernatorial elections that were held on the 11th of April, 2015. Furthermore, the APC Governors were in a total number of fourteen (14) before the 2015 general elections, from the Northern part of the country they consisted of Governor Abdul’aziz Abubakar Yari of Zamfara State, Governor Ibrahim Geidam of Yobe State, Governor Umaru Tanko Al-Makura of Nasarawa State, Governor Kashim Shettima of Borno State, Governor Rabiun Musa Kwankwaso of Kano State, Governor Abdulfattah Ahmed of Kwara State, Governor Aliyu Magatakarda Wamakko of Sokoto State. Those from the Southern part of Nigeria consist of Governor Rotimi Amaechi of Rivers State, Governor Adams Oshiomole of Edo State, Governor Rochas Okorocha of Imo State, Governor Babatunde Raji Fashola of Lagos, Governor Ibikunle Amosun of Ogun State, Governor Abiola Adegemi Ajimobi of Oyo State and Governor Rauf Adesoji Aregbesola of Osun State (All Progressive Congress, 2015).

The crisis within the Peoples Democratic Party which was not resolved thereby creating an avenue for five of the Governors of Peoples Democratic

Party to decamp to the fold of the All Progressive Congress in 2013, these five governors were from Rivers, Kano, Sokoto, Kwara and Adamawa state. That of Adamawa was later impeached by his State House of Assembly in Yola, the State capital. The 2015 general elections gave a major boost to the All Progressive Congress having their presidential candidate come from the Northern part of the country that felt marginalized since the return of democratic rule in 1999. Some of the Governors within the PDP could not withstand the Buhari tsunami even in the Northern part of the country where the APC won the elections in PDP controlled states as seen from the strong support for Buhari during the presidential campaigns across the country.

The Buhari supporters in the Northern part of the country took the PDP by surprise where all the seven states in the North-West known as Sokoto, Zamfara, Kano, Kaduna, Kebbi, Jigawa, and Katsina were won by Muhammadu Buhari as well as states from the North-central such as Niger, Benue, Kogi and Kwara states. That of the North-East swept by the Buhari Tsunami includes Borno, Gombe, Adamawa, Bauchi and Yobe. However, the incumbent President Jonathan of PDP won only three states from the Northern part of the country known as Taraba, Plateau and Nasarawa States out of the Nineteen Northern states. In the Southern part of the country, the Buhari Political Tsunami won Lagos, Ogun, Osun, Oyo and Ondo states while the incumbent President Jonathan won only Ekiti State out of the Six States from the South-West. At the end of the general elections, the APC got hold and control of twenty-two states out of the thirty-six States of the federation. The PDP Board of Trustees through the Secretary

concurred on these form of defeat that the opposition party (APC) gave them at the general election as unstoppable, the wave and reign of change in the Nigerian political system through what he called the Buhari Tsunami (Benjamin, 2015; Buhari, 2015; Wakaso, 2015; and Choji, 2015).

CONCLUSION

The Nigerian state since the period she gained her independence to date (2015 under study), the Nigerian State witnessed series of changes from one government to another that the country has under gone through the leadership of the colonial masters to the time of her independence. However, in all the administrations of the military and the civilians, one thing remains constant, a nation embodied with diverse ethnic backgrounds and diverse religion both from the Northern and Southern part of the country.

This paper thus, has made attempts to try to show case some of the underpinning issues that need to be addressed. The most important is how the Nigerian state can integrate her diverse ethnic groups into a united people who see the country first as their nation which need their collective responsibility in building the country Nigeria. The military rule in the past, created a gap between the South and the North since power was in most cases residing in the Northern part of the country as seen between the periods of 1966-1976, and 1983-1999 which were years spent in office under the leadership of Northern leaders thereby creating an imbalance between the North and the South.

In 1999, the South also got hold of power and felt this is the time to pay the North for the years spent during the military regime by the Northerners. Hence, zoning of the presidency between the

North and the South was no longer fashionable as the President Jonathan also from the South got hold of power after the death of President Yar'Adua on the 5th of May, 2015, felt it was an opportunity for him to rule for eight years, i.e. 2011-2019 which made him through his party to truncate the zoning arrangement that was put in place to help rotate the presidency between the North and the South. It was practiced from 1999-2007, and rescheduled or zoned for the North to rule from 2007-2015. The unity of the Nigerian people can only produce a stronger nation through using the opportunities refers to as gotten from unity in diversity.

Since the zoning arrangement was truncated by the PDP which could have given fair share of power rotation to all the six geopolitical zones, the APC took the advantage and presented a Northerner in the person of Buhari, who also got hold of a South-West leader to run with him for the presidential election that swept the North and part of the South for them to beat the incumbent president. Therefore, the research paper concludes that, zoning should be allowed in Nigeria to give equal opportunity to all the six geopolitical zones where the presidency and the top positions discussed in the paper should rotate in order to have a united Nigeria where peace and political stability would be achieved or sustainable through the integration of the people of Nigeria as one united country.

IMPLICATION

This research paper, therefore, recommends the following:

i) Zoning should be made constitutional in order to allow all the six geopolitical zones to have

equal opportunity to rule the country Nigeria. This will promote unity in diversity as seen during the administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo from 1999-2007. According to Terwase, Abdul-Talib, and Zengeni (2015) when zoning is made constitutional, it will give equal opportunity to all the six geopolitical zones as well as promote unity between the Christians and Muslims. Religion will no longer be used as a tool in fighting political interest, thus, the North and the South will be united. Also, each zone will wait for their turn of leadership as it reflects within the Nigerian constitution as suggested. Therefore, this issue of zoning/rotation of presidency should be enshrined in the Nigerian constitution to avoid truncation when in the hands of political parties as witnessed during the PDP/Jonathan led government in 2011 after the death of President Yar'Adua. Zoning will therefore solve all forms political conflicts between the North and the South.

- ii) The re-orientation of the hearts and minds of the Northern and Southern Christians and Muslims, the majority and the minority ethnic groups in Nigeria, to love the country Nigeria. Nigeria should be considered first before personal interest/ambition. The country cannot move forward when selfish or personal interest is considered before the interest the country at large. Nigerians must stand as a united people who see themselves as one and should promote unity in diversity.
- iii) Early warning mechanism: As noted in the work of Terwase, Abdul-Talib, and Zengeni, (2015), the early warning mechanism should be put in place to monitor and address issues that may

result to social and political conflicts in Nigeria at the early stage. Such issues should not be ignored like the zoning of the presidency to the North in 2011-2015 which was ignored and further truncated by the PDP. In as much as the North agitated for it, the issue was still trashed into the dustbin of history.

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NOTE:

Idowu Johnson was interviewed from Ibadan,

Nigeria on the 14th of April, 2015.

Nemi D. Ibaraye was interviewed from Port

Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria on the 7th of

April, 2015.