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Multilingualism/Ethnicity and the Politics of Resource Allocation and Control in the Democratic Processes of Nigeria

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Abstract

In any political setting, the use of language is indispensable. The place of indigenous languages in a multilingual and multicultural setting cannot be overemphasised, because multilingualism could be either a blessing or a curse to the people in a given political setting. Based on the foregoing, this study investigates the nexus between multilingualism and ethnicity on one hand, and the allocation and control of resources on the other hand, in the political set-up of Nigeria. The objective of the study is to find out how languages form the basis for enhancing or hampering the progress of people in one geographical setting. The question is how it is that, after sixty years of independence and more than a century of nationhood, Nigeria has not gelled as one indivisible entity but still allows language and ethnicity to tear it apart. Qualitative analytic tools on written materials were used in this study. The findings show an intertwined relationship between language/ethnicity and political developments in Nigeria as this relates to resource allocation and control; that is, that language determines the flow of resources to any given people, be it at the federal or the state level in Nigeria at any given time. The implication is that Nigeria is divided along an ethnic/linguistic line more than anything else. The study recommends rotational governance and a fiscal policy whereby the control of resources in a given locality is devolved to the people of the immediate environment. This will enhance peaceful coexistence and inhibit the incessant quest for power and the 'winner-takes-all' syndrome witnessed in Nigeria's politics.

Keywords: Multilingualism/Ethnicity, Resource allocation/control, True federalism, Distribution of resources, Implications

Introduction

Nigeria, as it is presently constituted, consisted of separate entities prior to the advent of colonialism by the British imperialists. There were three distinct nationalities in existence – the Northern nation, the Western nation and the Eastern nation. These nations had their peculiarities in terms of religion, education and government. The Northern nation was predominantly Muslim; the Western nation was a blend of Christians and Muslims living peacefully together; while the Eastern nation was mostly Christian. Whereas the Northern nation was oligarchic in its administration – where, for instance, the Emir was both the head of state and of religion, and as a result wielded humongous powers and influence amongst the citizenry – and whereas the Western nation had a powerful Oba who superintended over the populace and exerted great power amongst the people, the Eastern nation was republican, without a centralised recognised king or Igwe. Its administration was by a group of recognised elders or married elder women (umuada). The East therefore did not have centrally recognised administrators, unlike the North and the West. This explains why the colonial masters did not find it easy to administer the East, unlike the North, which had already established systems of administration and structures. The colonialists therefore created 'Warrant Chiefs' in the East, while continuing to use the already established kingship structures in both the North and the West. The British government had subjective problems in the East because the people were not accustomed to having a strong ruler. So the hegemonic attributes of the Emirs and Obas were enhanced

in both the North and the West. That hegemony is still witnessed today in the process of administering a complex society with more than six hundred languages, and in the administration of the country's resources in a democratic setting in Nigeria.

Since the amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914, by Lord Frederick Lugard, the country has lived as separate entities lumped together by force into one country. Its numerous languages have become a barrier rather than a blessing, and there are apprehensions in various quarters. These apprehensions have been witnessed in different agitations by different component parts. In 1957, the **Willink Commission** was created to look into the fears exhibited by the minority-language speakers that the majority would swallow them. According to Ekweremadu (2012, p.5), the commission was created, among other things, to:

- ascertain the factors about the fear of minorities in any part of Nigeria and to propose means of allaying these fears, whether real or ill-founded;
- advise what safeguards should be included for this purpose in the constitution of Nigeria; and
- if, but only if, no other solution seemed adequate to the commission, to make detailed recommendations, as a last resort, for the creation of one or more new states.

The fear of marginalisation and suppression has not abated in the socio-political and linguistic activities of Nigeria, sixty-one years after her independence (cf. Ndiribe & Aboh, 2020).

In every multilingual and multicultural setting such as Nigeria, there are some underlying factors that, if left unaddressed, are capable of disrupting the corporate existence of the country. These underlying factors include language, ethnicity and resource allocation/control. In Nigeria, linguistic affinity – that is, the language one speaks or the ethnic group one comes from – plays a crucial role in determining who governs at whatever level, whether at the federal or the state level. The contestations and vigorous rivalries witnessed in the country's political set-up are a result of who controls the resources accrued to each stratum of government, which is in the hands of the chief executive to dispense with little or zero checks (2019–2022 specifically).

Whosoever is elected at every level of government determines the direction or flow of the resources in that set-up. The federal government, for instance, has large pools of revenue with which to carry out its governing functions. These resources are distributed through the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). These MDAs help in the day-to-day running of the activities of government. Thus, the extent to which the president, who controls the centre, selects his lieutenants determines the flow of resources around the constituencies of those involved. Therefore, if the president considers people from his own linguistic/ethnic background for juicy political appointments, the resultant effect of that selection is that resources flow ceaselessly to that linguistic region, to the detriment of other linguistic/ethnic groups. Aside from picking people from certain linguistic backgrounds for juicy appointments, the president can order any minister or director under him to carry out certain projects in his linguistic/ethnic constituency without resistance, because the president has the power to hire and fire. There is little or no check and balance in the governance of the country, especially under President Muhammadu Buhari (henceforth PMB), from 2019 to 2022. What the president is to the national

government is exactly what the governors are to the state governments; they wield such tremendous, unscrutinised powers.

To guard against these anomalies, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (henceforth FRN) mandates that the Federal Character Principle be adopted in sharing appointments at the centre and in the states with diverse linguistic and cultural heritages. The principle demands that the membership of any federal establishment must be drawn from various geographical representatives covering diverse linguistic and ethnic nationalities. But this Federal Character Principle has been obeyed in the breach in Nigeria, especially from 2015 to 2022, under the PMB administration.

Since the transition from military to civilian rule in May 1999, Nigeria has witnessed its longest period of uninterrupted civilian rule in its over sixty years of post-independence political history. The current Fourth Republic (1999–date) has exceeded the combined life spans of the country's preceding First (1963–1966), Second (1979–1983) and (aborted) Third (1992–1993) Nigerian Republics. This basic political stability and continuity should hold a promise for Nigeria's transformation from a 'winner-takes-all' politics of ethnicity to a resistant altruistic, egalitarian and irrepressibly generous democracy (cf. Ekweremadu, 2014a).

The objective of this study, therefore, is to find out how the linguistic background of the executive, either at the federal or the state level, determines the allocation and control of resources, and why there is usually an unhealthy competition at every election. The question is why Nigeria, as a nation, finds it difficult to gel as one indivisible entity devoid of rancour linked to ethnicity and language, over sixty years after independence. Although the study draws historical context across the First, Second and Fourth Republics, its primary deliberative lens is the recent administration of PMB, from 29 May 2015 to 29 May 2022.

The study is designed to provide an overview of the effect of multilingualism (many languages in a country) and ethnicity in dispensing resources in a multilingual setting such as Nigeria, with more than six hundred languages. The study adopts, as its methodology, a qualitative method in its data gathering and analysis. In doing this, secondary sources of data — from textbooks, journal articles, theses, magazines, newspapers and observation — were adopted in the study.

Conceptual Framework

Our conceptual framework defines multilingualism in terms of many/multiple languages co-existing in a state, in which each language is struggling to survive in a language-dominated and policy-driven society (Gautam & Pondel, 2022). Ethnicity, on the other hand, cannot exist unless individuals from different communal groups are in contact with one another. Mezieobi (2014) defines an ethnic group as a collection of people who are held together by cultural traditions of heritage that reflect their common ancestry, language, religion, pattern of dressing, and so on.

Significance of the Study

In the context of political development, political power-sharing and resource allocation and control within the Nigerian polity, frictions and tensions have developed as contacts among ethnic groups increased (Nnadi et al., 2018). Diversity emerges and exists when people from different identity orientations – such as races, nationalities, ethnicities and religions – come together to form a community that recognises and celebrates the values of all backgrounds (see Bagga-Gupta & Dahlberg, 2018; Gautam & Pondel, 2021, 2022; Rodriguez, 2018; Bagga-Gupta & Carneiro, 2021). The ongoing democratic processes in Nigeria (2015–2022) have become counter-productive in maintaining linguistic diversity, leading to the marginalisation of some sections of the country in the allocation and control of resources (see Ndiribe & Aboh, 2020). There is, therefore, an intertwined relationship between linguistic diversity, ethnicity and multilingualism in resource allocation and control, at least in the Nigerian setting. These will be the focus of subsequent sections.

Multilingualism and Political Structures in Nigeria

Agbedo (2019) opines that linguistic multiplicity/diversity presupposes the existence of many languages. These languages, according to him, are marked at different levels – sounds, word, phrase, clause/sentence, meaning and use – and have been designated with different nomenclatures such as Igbo, Tiv, Urhobo, Yoruba, Hausa, Fulfulde, Ijaw and Annang in Nigeria (p.10). In many multilingual settings, a particular language serves as the lingua franca. According to Seidlhofer (2008), a lingua franca is defined as a medium of communication among people who do not share a first language. Lingua franca interactions, she argues, happen in multilingual settings: they are bi- or multilingual encounters, because they bring into contact and mediate between the lingua-cultures of two or more speakers. Multilingualism entails the congregation of many heterogeneous languages represented by different ethnic groups.

Nigeria fits the definition above, since it uses English as its lingua franca and the language of international relations. Nigeria is, therefore, a good example of a multilingual nation. According to Lewis, Simons and Fennig (2015), the number of living languages spoken in Nigeria amounts to more than 600, classified as indigenous. They further contend that this makes Nigeria the third most multilingual country in the world, after Papua New Guinea (with 839 living languages) and Indonesia (with 707 languages). Among the languages spoken in Nigeria, English is the official language and French the second official language; Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba are the majority languages, whereas the other indigenous languages are minority languages. Of those more than six hundred indigenous languages, only 60 have standardised orthography (Emenanjo, 1991). Orekan (2010) posits that in Nigeria, Hausa-Fulani is spoken in the North as a first language by 20% of the population; Yoruba is spoken in the Southwest by 25%; and Igbo is spoken in the Southeast by 20%. The remaining 35% are speakers of the minority languages. This postulation is based on Lewis, Simons and Fennig (2015). Nigeria's last official population census was conducted in 2006.

The concept of Hausa-Fulani as a linguistic group is an interesting one. Whereas the Hausa, as an ethnic group in Nigeria, speak the Hausa language, the Fulani speak the Fulfulde language. Linguistically, what obtains is Hausa-Fulfulde: the Hausa language

belongs to the Chadic linguistic group, while Fulfulde belongs to the Niger-Kordofanian phylum. It is of interest to note that whereas most Fulfulde speakers also speak Hausa, not all Hausa speakers speak Fulfulde. So, living together in one geographical region over a long period of time has collapsed two heterogeneous peoples into one homogenous group – Hausa-Fulani. In this study, we shall treat Hausa-Fulani as a homogenous ethnic group in Northern Nigeria.

The political regime and the economic-resource changes that implied historic influxes of revenue into government coffers have been associated with puzzling changes at the topmost level of the political-executive-elite cadre (Kifordu, 2013). On this basis, intra-party and inter-party disputes have historically and currently been reported to be the outcome of manipulation and co-optation of powerful personalities, mostly linked to the office of the chief political executive.

The Second Republic (1979–1983) began with the election of a Northerner, Alhaji Shehu Shagari, under the then-Northern-dominated National Party of Nigeria (NPN). The most contending forces in the election were three pan-Nigerians representing the three major ethnic blocs of the Northern Region (Hausa-Fulani), the Western Region (Yoruba) and the Eastern Region (Igbo). The three were Alhaji Shehu Shagari of the NPN, Chief Obafemi Awolowo of the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe of the Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP). Even though Shagari won in seven states – Sokoto, Niger, Bauchi, Benue, Cross River, Kwara and Rivers, including the centre – the other two won the governorship slots in their respective regions. Awolowo won all the governorship elections in the Yoruba states of Lagos, Oyo, Ondo, Ogun and Bendel states in the Mid-Western Region. The same applied to Azikiwe, whose party won the three gubernatorial elections in the two Igbo-speaking states of Anambra and Imo, and in the Middle-Belt state of Plateau. The GNPP won Borno and Gongola, while the PRP secured Kano and Kaduna. The states' Houses of Assembly were determined on the strength of these regional parties.

In the Second Republic, six political parties participated in the 1979 elections, and all showed their presence at the polling booths. The results of the elections and the distribution of seats in the National Assembly – the upper chamber (Senate) and the lower chamber (House of Representatives) – showed that the ruling NPN got 36 senators and 168 representative members, the UPN 28 senators and 111 representatives, the NPP 16 senators and 78 representatives, the GNPP 8 senators and 43 representatives, and the PRP 7 senators and 49 representatives. The Second Republic was cut short by the military coup that toppled the government on 31 December 1983. The military held on to power from December 1983 to May 1999 (see country.studies.us/Nigeria/29.htm).

When the country returned to democracy in 1999, the issues of ethnicity and linguistic background were at the front burner in determining who should be the president of the country. The political structures of the country were fashioned on ethnic and linguistic hegemony. For instance, the three major political parties – the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the All Peoples Party (APP) and the Alliance for Democracy (AD) – even though they cut across all the geo-political regions of the country, yet represent some ethnic groups: the Igbo and the Niger Delta in the Southeast and South-south (for the PDP), the Hausa/Fulani people in the North (for the APP) and the Yoruba people in the Southwest (for the AD). The trajectories of the First and Second Republics were judiciously

maintained; elections reflected the ethnic and linguistic affiliation of each section. For instance, the APP won many states in the northern region, the PDP won many states across Nigeria at the centre, and the AD won all the Western states.

From 1999 to 2003, President Obasanjo accorded the Southwest some reasonably high levels of patronage, despite his rejection at the polls by that region in the 1999 presidential election. This patronage and resource allocation is one of the reasons for agitation by various zones to produce the president or the state governor. Based on this patronage by the president, the Southwest, under the platform of the AD, went into alliance with the PDP in 2003, and decided to field no candidate in order to frustrate the perceived Northern anti-Obasanjo agenda (see Alabi, 2003; Omotala, 2003).

From 1999 to 2015, there were some advancements in alignments and realignments in order to secure victory at the polls. Political parties either changed their names or discarded them entirely to present a new outlook that showcased the Nigerian project. For instance, the Alliance for Democracy metamorphosed into the new party – the Action Congress (AC) – to replicate what resembled the former Action Group. From 2003, the AC won all the elections in the Yoruba-speaking states. It later changed its nomenclature from AC to Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN). The APP later changed its name to the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP). In the Southeast, the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) was formed to serve as a Southeast regional party. Later, a Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) seceded from the former party, the ANPP. But in 2014, prior to the 2015 elections, the opposition parties merged into one mega-party – the All Progressives Congress (APC) – with the sole aim of winning the 2015 elections. These merger parties were the ACN, ANPP, CPC, and some factions of both the PDP and the APGA. The merger paid off, as the APC defeated the incumbent PDP in the 2015 general elections and became the ruling party. The victory of the APC, led by Muhammadu Buhari, changed the political architecture of the country. People of the Hausa-Fulani descent became the drivers of the political, economic and security sectors of the country. In the section that follows, the paper will discuss how language/ethnicity became the *sine qua non* in the allocation and control of resources in Nigeria.

Language and Resource Allocation and Control

Language is man, and man is language. This implies that without language, man is incomplete, and no political activity could be conducted without a language. In Rwanda, for instance, when a child is born, he or she is referred to as *kintu* 'thing'; but when the child acquires a language, he or she is referred to as *muntu* 'man/woman' (Ndiribe & Aboh, 2020). This implies that it is language that makes a child a human being. On the other hand, man is language, because without man, the essence of language will not materialise. When one's language is not accorded the respect it deserves, it results in hues and cries of linguistic ostracisation. Salami (2005) posits that, since ethnicity and language are often closely associated in Africa, both tend to comprise fundamental factors encroaching on political, economic, religious, educational and social issues in Nigeria.

The languages in Nigeria have been grouped into four major categories, as discussed hereunder:

- **The major languages** include Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, which constitute about half of Nigeria's population. They are the major languages because they have the highest number of speakers in relation to other languages.
- **The minority languages** include the other indigenous languages spoken in Nigeria. Some of them are Fulfulde, Berom, Tiv, Igala, Itsekiri, Kalabari, Koring and Urhobo, among others. The population of the minority languages ranges from less than one million to below one hundred (Igboanusi, 2008).
- **The foreign languages** in Nigeria are English, French and Arabic. English is Nigeria's official language, used in every sector. French occupies the position of Nigeria's second official language. Arabic performs mainly religious functions, as it is mostly used as the medium of instruction in Qur'anic education and worship. Arabic has found its way into some national monuments, such as the currency (naira) and the military (Army) logo. Other foreign languages, such as Chinese, German and Russian, are studied in some Nigerian universities (e.g., the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka).
- **Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE)** is generally regarded as Nigeria's unofficial lingua franca, based on its popularity and spread. It is, however, learnt informally (cf. Igboanusi, 2008). Notwithstanding the functionality of NPE, it remains stigmatised and unacceptable in official domains, as it is viewed as a corrupt form of language associated with the illiterate (Ogunmodimu, 2015).

In Nigeria, whoever controls the language also controls the resources. Since Nigeria has no local official language, the local language of whoever handles the resources at the centre gets more attention (Igboanusi & Peters, 2008). Therefore, every region wants its person to be the chief executive of the country, in order to direct the flow of Nigerian resources towards that language domain. In many cases, an individual in power becomes endeared to someone who speaks his local language. From the findings of Igboanusi and Peters (2005), it is observed that the ability to speak Hausa may attract favour to non-Hausa persons from Hausa speakers, while the lack of it is likely to attract discriminatory practices against the person. The above assertion suggests that a Fulfulde man at the helm of affairs will favour another person who speaks or understands his language over others, and that would be if there is no person from his linguistic bloc. This study aligns with, and reinforces, the assertions of Igboanusi and Peters (2008), with more insights on multilingualism and skewed allocation of resources in Nigeria.

The table below shows the languages spoken across the thirty-six states in Nigeria (the list is not all-inclusive; the list under 'Others' is incised drastically for want of space).

Table 1: Some languages spoken in Nigeria.

State	Geopolitical Zone	LGs	Major language(s)	Others
Abia	Southeast (SE)	17	Igbo	–
Adamawa	Northeast (NE)	21	Hausa	Fulfulde, Bura-Pabir, Huba, Bacama, Longuda, Mumuye, Konzee, Hya, etc.
Akwa Ibom	South-south (SS)	31	Annang, Ibibio	Igbo, Eghughu, Efai, Ekit, Enwang, Etebi, Oro, Uda, etc.
Anambra	SE	21	Igbo	Igala

State	Geopolitical Zone	LGs	Major language(s)	Others
Bauchi	NE	20	Hausa, Fulfulde	Warji, Diri, Pa'a, Tala, Dulbu, Lame, etc.
Bayelsa	SS	8	Ijaw	Ogbia, Kugbo, Okodia, Ekpeye, Epie, Okodia, etc.
Benue	North-Central (NC)	22	Tiv	Idoma, Igede, Igbo, Jukun, Utonkong, Yalla, Akweya-Yachi, etc.
Borno	NE	22	Kanuri, Hausa	Fulfulde, Shuwa Arabic, Marghi, Putai, etc.
Cross River	SS	18	Efik	Ekoi, Bekwarra, Ogoja, Ukelle, Etung, etc.
Delta	SS	25	Urhobo, Ijaw, Igbo	Itsekiri, Isoko, Urvie, Okpe
Ebonyi	SE	13	Igbo	-
Enugu	SE	17	Igbo	Idoma, Igala
Edo	SS	18	Edo	Etsako, Esan, Akuku, Enwan, Yakhee, Ikpeshi, Sasaru, Uneme, etc.
Ekiti	Southwest (SW)	16	Yoruba	-
Gombe	NE	11	Hausa	Fulfulde, Kanuri, Bolewa, Jukun, Shonge, Tiv, etc.
Imo	SE	27	Igbo	-
Jigawa	Northwest (NW)	27	Hausa	Fulfulde, Kanuri, etc.
Kaduna	NW	23	Hausa	Fulfulde, Gbagyi, Ashe, T'kurmi, Karo, Duya, Hyam, Berom, etc.
Kano	NW	44	Hausa	Kanuri, Fulfulde
Katsina	NW	34	Hausa	Fulfulde
Kebbi	NW	21	Hausa	Fulfulde, Kabawa, Dakarkari, Kambari, Bangawa, etc.
Kogi	NC	21	Igala	Nupe, Idoma, Ebira, etc.
Kwara	NC	16	Yoruba	Nupe, Bariba, Fulfulde, etc.
Lagos	SW	20	Yoruba	Cosmopolitan
Nassarawa	NC	13	Hausa	Jju, Tyap, Iten, Firan, Berom, Nungu, Duhwa, Hasha, Bo-Rukul, etc.
Niger	NC	25	Hausa, Nupe	Gbagyi, Gbari, Dibo, Kupa, Kamil, Ashe, etc.
Ogun	SW	20	Yoruba	-
Ondo	SW	18	Yoruba	-

State	Geopolitical Zone	LGs	Major language(s)	Others
Osun	SW	30	Yoruba	–
Oyo	SW	33	Yoruba	–
Plateau	NC	17	Hausa	Mala, Amo, Ruma, Gbiri-Naragu, Lere, Izare, Bankai, etc.
Rivers	SS	23	Igbo	Ikwerre, Kalabari, Khana, Etchie, etc.
Sokoto	NW	23	Fulfulde	Hausa
Taraba	NE	16	Wapan Daka, Hausa	Tha, Laka, Jiba, Edo, Tiv, Jukun, Yotti, etc.
Yobe	NE	17	Hausa	Kanuri, Fulfulde, Shuwa Arabic, etc.
Zamfara	NW	14	Hausa	Fulfulde, Gbagyi

Source: Linguistic map of Nigeria (2016) and personal correspondence.

The table above shows how linguistically diverse Nigeria is. Ninety-six per cent of the languages above represent an ethnic group (many ethnic groups are known by their languages, e.g., Yoruba people, Ijaw people, Kanuri people, Gbagyi people, etc.), which accounts for why there are hues and cries whenever a group considers its ethnic group sidelined. Ethnicity is represented by language.

In fact, the sidelining of other ethnic groups based on their linguistic background reached its highest crescendo in the last administration of PMB. Findings of *Saturday Punch*, 21 November 2015, showed that 14 of the nation's 17 security agencies were headed by Northerners who belonged to the same Hausa-Fulani linguistic bloc as PMB. Only three security agencies were headed by Southerners, with the Southeast having zero representation (cf. Ndiribe & Aboh, 2020).

Resource Allocation and Control: An Overview

Resource control describes the drive by geo-political zone(s), state(s), group(s) or any federating unit(s) not only to assert a claim of ownership over natural resources found or produced in their territory(ies), but also the right to determine the uses to which such resource(s) (or the proceeds therefrom) may be put (Ikeji, 2011). In the words of Ikeji (2011, p.25):

The quest for resource control by indigent communities is therefore a direct result of the perceived marginalisation and alienation that stem from skewed resource allocation and lopsided development benefits within the Nigerian space-economy; this has attracted intense and passionate political discourses across the geopolitical divide, which culminates into opposing and proposing views.

Ndiribe and Aboh (2020) are of the opinion that all agitations in Nigeria have one underlying factor – resource allocation and control. According to them:

Nigeria's call for unity in diversity appears to be a cosmetic invocation, where the government that preaches unity in diversity does otherwise through its violation of the Federal Character and its inequitable distribution of resources. These have resulted in different parts of Nigeria agitating for secession or, at least, resource control. These groups include, but are not limited to, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) in the South-south region; the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the Southeast region; the O'dua Peoples' Congress (OPC) in Western Nigeria; and Boko Haram, which represented an Islamic Republic in Northern Nigeria and also criticises western education in all ramifications. These groups represented various languages in the country – Ijaw, Urhobo, Itsekiri, Efik, Ibibio, Annang, Edo, Etsako, Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa, Kanuri, Fulfulde, etc.

The politics of 'winner-takes-all' has elevated the contentious issue of resource control, which has been on the front burner in Nigerian political discourse. As usual, the sections that benefit from the current structure of near-unitarianism favour the present federal structure, whereas those sectors that suffer as a result of the structure call for its abrogation. This is heightened by the fact that Nigeria, which is structured to be governed on the principles of federalism, is administered as a unitary state with respect to its centralist fiscal policy in revenue allocation.

There is always controversy whenever the issue of resource control and allocation is considered. Shehu, Othman and Osman (2018) maintain that resource control and allocation are an integral part of every federal system:

But for Nigeria, stiff disagreements, regional, economic and political power games and controversies over the control and allocation have characterised and negatively affected the success of its federalism. In Nigeria's practice of federalism for sixty-plus years, various issues of resource-control agitation, controversies, conflicts, disagreement over vertical and horizontal allocation of revenue, corruption and excessive politicking have shaped and dominated the entire federal system.

In the distribution and assignment of resources to the component units, certain factors have to be considered. Ekweremadu (2013) identifies those factors as the allocation principles, especially those of population, equality of states, internal revenue generation, land mass, terrain, and population density. What the sharing formulae entail is that those states with great land masses – like Niger, Borno, Kaduna and Kogi – will have more resource allocation over the Niger-Delta states of Bayelsa, Akwa-Ibom, Edo and Delta, which are considered the 'geese that lay the golden eggs'.

Shehu, Othman and Osman (2018, p.242) highlight the new sharing formula through the Modification Order Act of July 2002:

A new sharing formula through the Modification Order Act of 2002 provided for revenue sharing as: Federal Government (FG) – 54.68% (48.5% to FG, 1% to the Federal Capital Territory [FCT], 1.46% to Derivation and Ecology, 0.72% to the Stabilization Fund, and 3% to Mineral Development); States, 24.72%; and Local Government, 20.60%.

Olusegun Obasanjo, president from 29 May 1999 to 29 May 2007, modified the Act in 2004 to reflect the current sharing formula of 52.68% to the FG (48.5% to FG, 1% to the FCT, 1%

for Derivation and Ecology, 0.50% for Stabilization and 1.68% for Natural Resources Development); States got 26.72% (40% for Equality, 30% for Population, 10% for Land mass and Terrain, 10% for Social Development and 10% for Internal Revenue Generation); and Local Governments got 20.60% (cf. Suberu, 2013).

From the figures above (the 2002 and 2004 sharing acts), states do not receive equal amounts of revenue monthly. Out of the 24.72% (2002) or 26.72% (2004) of total revenue accrued to state governments, further computations are made to determine what each state receives. Forty per cent of the revenue is allocated equally to all states; 30% goes to population alone. This shows that the most populous states get more revenue than the less populous ones; in this case, states like Kano and Lagos get more revenue. A further 10% is allocated based on land mass; in this instance, Niger, Borno and Kogi states get a lion's share, while states like Lagos and Anambra get less. Finally, states receive 10% based on their abilities to generate revenue internally; here, states like Lagos, Rivers and Anambra get more, while states like Zamfara, Sokoto, Kebbi and Borno get less. All in all, Kano state gets more than all other states, based on its population and land mass. These are constitutional, not manipulation.

The configuration of the Nigerian Constitution places big resources and wealth at the disposal of the Federal Government. This control of huge resources by the Federal Government led to the politics of rivalry, ethnicity, discrimination, nepotism and anti-multilingualism. In the next section, the study outlines some of the resources at the control of the Federal Government and how the allocation and control of these resources form the fulcrum of negative politicisation in Nigeria. It also advances the fact that the multilingual nature of Nigeria is a curse rather than a blessing, because of the enormous resources with which nature has endowed the country.

The Constitution and Resource Control

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as amended, ceded sixty-eight (68) items exclusively to the FG. Second Schedule, Part I of the constitution refers to these items as the "Exclusive List." This list contains, inter alia: (2) arms, ammunition and explosives; (5) bankruptcy and insolvency; (6) banks, banking, bills of exchange and promissory notes; (7) borrowing of moneys within or outside Nigeria for the purposes of the Federation or of any State; (12) control of capital issues; (13) copyright; (15) currency, coinage and legal tender; (16) Customs and Excise duties; (17) defence; (24) exchange control; (25) export duties; (26) external affairs; (30) immigration into and emigration from Nigeria; (33) insurance; (36) maritime shipping and navigation; (37) meteorology; (38) the military (Army, Navy and Air Force); (39) mines and minerals, including oil fields, oil mining, geological surveys and natural gas; (41) nuclear energy; (45) the police and other government security services established by law; (46) posts, telegraphs and telephones; (48) prisons; (50) the public debt of the Federation; (55) railways; (58) stamp duties; (59) taxation of incomes, profits and capital gains, except as otherwise prescribed by the constitution; (63) trade and commerce; (65) weights and measures; and (66) wireless, broadcasting and television other than broadcasting and television provided by the government of the state, allocation of wavelengths for wireless, broadcasting and television transmission, among others.

What the list above implies is that all these resource-yielding and resource-spending entities must be managed by people who will ensure that the government carries out its functions uninhibited. It is from the revenues of these establishments that the three tiers of government — federal, state and local — share on a monthly basis, based on the template already discussed in Section 4 above.

The question of who occupies the juicy ministries, departments and agencies is as old as Nigeria. Every president makes sure that his own kinsmen and kinswomen occupy such important positions and, by extension, amass the resources that accrue to these establishments. Ndiribe and Aboh (2020) maintain that the virus of nepotism is universal when the politics of resource control and allocation is considered:

At the political level, the minority ethnic groups also voice out that they are being marginalised in Nigeria as it concerns political appointments and distribution of resources. But the issue is that when a leader from the minority language assumes the overall headship of the entity, he equally elevates his own people over and above other ethnic blocs. The leadership of former President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (2010–2015), who emerged from a minority group, is a case in point. It is the case of ethnicity above competence across all strata of the economy.

This observation by Ndiribe and Aboh is analytically decisive. It shows that the skewed allocation witnessed under PMB is **not peculiar to the Hausa-Fulani bloc, nor to any single ethnic group**. Rather, it reflects a deeper structural feature of Nigeria's near-unitary, highly centralised presidential system, in which the occupant of the chief-executive office is empowered to concentrate resources on his or her own linguistic constituency. Whether the incumbent is a majority or a minority figure, the logic of the system pushes him or her toward ethnic favouritism. The significance of this point for the present study cannot be overstated: it is precisely because the problem is institutional rather than incidental that the remedy must be constitutional (true federalism and resource control), and not merely a change of who happens to be in office.

Nigeria is a multilingual and multicultural entity. The multiplicity of language, culture, religion and faith are some of the harbingers of ethnic tensions in the country. To avoid unhealthy rivalry and nepotistic tendencies, the principle of "Federal Character" was enshrined in the 1999 Constitution of the FRN, Third Schedule, Part I, section 8 (paragraphs 2a–d). The principle states, *inter alia*, that the Federal Character Commission shall:

(a) work out an equitable formula, subject to the approval of the National Assembly, for the distribution of all cadres of posts in the public service of the Federation and the states, the armed forces of the Federation, the agencies, government-owned companies and parastatals of the states; (b) promote, monitor and enforce compliance with the principles of proportional sharing of all bureaucratic, economic, media and political posts at all levels of government; (c) take such legal measures, including the prosecution of the head or staff of any ministry or government body or agency that fails to comply with any Federal Character Principle or formula prescribed or adopted by the commission; and (d) carry out such other functions as may be conferred upon it by the National Assembly.

But the immediate past administration (2015–2022) ignored this principle and appointed people mostly from one linguistic and ethnic bloc to occupy all the sensible, resource-yielding and resource-spending establishments. For instance, if the consideration of who controls what in the federal set-up is anything to go by, then the resources of Nigeria are, at present, in the hands of the Hausa-Fulani ethnic group.

It is not in vain, or a coincidence, that there are contentions that the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary should not be headed by one ethnic/linguistic background. The table below shows the configuration of the country according to who controls what in the linguistic and socio-political activities of Nigeria (May 2019–May 2022).

Table 2: Configuration of sensitive political office holders in Nigeria

Political Office	Geopolitical Zone	Indigenous language (L1)	State	Functions
President	Northwest (NW)	Hausa/Fulfulde	Katsina	Commander-in-Chief
Chief of Staff	North-Central (NC)	Hausa/Fulfulde	Kwara	Director of staff under the presidency
Chief Justice of the Federation (CJN)	Northeast (NE)	Hausa/Fulfulde	Bauchi	Head of the Judiciary
Senate President (Legislature)	NE	Kanuri/Hausa	Yobe	Chairman of the National Assembly
Deputy Speaker, House of Representatives	NC	Hausa/Fulfulde	Plateau	Presides over the lower House in the absence of the Speaker
Chief of Army Staff	NW	Hausa/Fulfulde	Sokoto	Presides over the Army (armed force)
Chief of Naval Staff	NW	Hausa/Fulfulde	Kano	Presides over the Navy (armed force)
Inspector-General of Police	NE	Hausa/Fulfulde	Yobe	Presides over the Police (security force)
National Security Adviser (NSA)	NE	Hausa/Kanuri	Borno	Advises the president on security issues
Department of State Services (DSS)	NW	Hausa/Fulfulde	Kano	Heads the secret intelligence police (security force)
National Intelligence Agency (NIA)	NW	Hausa/Fulfulde	Katsina	Produces intelligence reports
Defence Minister	NW	Hausa/Fulfulde	Kano	Supervises the Army, Air Force and Navy
Finance Minister	NW	Hausa/Fulfulde	Kaduna	Presides over the country's finance

Political Office	Geopolitical Zone	Indigenous language (L1)	State	Functions
Education Minister	NE	Hausa/Fulfulde	Bauchi	Oversees education in the country
Justice Minister	NW	Hausa/Fulfulde	Kebbi	Principal law officer of the country
FCT Minister	NE	Hausa/Fulfulde	Adamawa	Oversees the development of the FCT
Agriculture Minister	NE	Hausa/Fulfulde	Borno	Oversees agricultural activities
Police Affairs Minister	NW	Hausa/Fulfulde	Sokoto	Presides over police affairs
Aviation Minister	NW	Hausa/Fulfulde	Katsina	Presides over aviation matters
Communication Minister	NE	Hausa/Fulfulde	Gombe	Directs communication matters
Power Minister	NE	Minority language	Taraba	Oversees power activities
Water Resources Minister	NW	Hausa/Fulfulde	Jigawa	Oversees water resources
Humanitarian Minister	NW	Hausa/Fulfulde	Zamfara	Co-ordinates emergencies and disaster management
Environment Minister	NW	Hausa/Fulfulde	Kaduna	Supervises environmental matters

Note: Table 2 encapsulates a selection of sensitive positions that favoured the Hausa/Fulfulde ethnic group, to a greater proportion, in consideration. It is not an exclusive list of all appointments made under the administration under review.

From the table above, one can see that the Hausa/Fulani ethnic/linguistic group has more advantage than all other linguistic blocs. Since the ministries are the dispensers of the country's wealth and resources, the minister of each ministry determines how the wealth of that ministry should be disbursed. In the Nigerian budget, Defence receives the highest chunk. The Defence Minister is in charge of disbursing funds to the appropriate arms under it. The Chief of Army Staff (COAS), the Chief of Air Staff (CAS) and the Chief of Naval Staff (CNS) supervise how their agencies' funds are expended. It is the duty of these officers to appoint officers who will head the procurement organs of their agencies, and giving out contracts is a big issue in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, the four highest earners of resources are the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), the Nigerian Customs Service (NCS) and the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA). All these parastatals were headed by people from the Hausa-Fulfulde ethnic background. The highest spenders of the budget include the following ministries: Defence, Finance, Education, Justice, FCT, Agriculture, Police Affairs, Aviation and Power (see Table 2 above). Consequently, the anti-corruption agencies — the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and the Nigerian

Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU) – were all superintended by people of the Hausa-Fulfulde linguistic/ethnic background.

Another ministry vested with huge control and allocation of resources is the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management. This ministry supervises the affairs of victims of natural, accidental and human disasters (cf. Table 2 above). During the 2020 COVID-19 lockdown in Nigeria, this ministry ordered the release of all the seized foreign rice and vegetable oil for distribution to the less-privileged in society. These items were transported to the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps in Northeast and Northwest Nigeria.

Ndiribe and Aboh (2020) assert that political denial of state resources is one of the reasons for agitation over marginalisation and suppression. The masses believe that the only way they could assert their presence in the affairs of their political environment is to be allowed to taste the governance of their domain. For instance, in Benue state, with many languages such as Idoma, Igede and Tiv (the major ones), it is mostly the Tivs who have been producing the governors of the state since its creation in 1976. In Benue state, an Idoma or Igede man has not been considered good enough to become governor. Important projects are sited mostly in the governor's home zone, and both human and material resources are deployed to the linguistic part of the chief executive. This accounts for why there is a politics of ethnicity in these areas. In fact, in Benue state, an opposition from these suppressed linguistic/ethnic backgrounds always agitates for rotational government, whereby each section is allowed to produce the governor at a stipulated time-tenure.

In the northern states of Sokoto, Borno, Kebbi, Jigawa, Zamfara, Kano, Katsina and Yobe, among others, only Muslims are allowed to become governors or deputy governors. The cabinets of these states are filled with Muslims, who are in the majority. By this make-up, the resources of the states are in the hands of Muslims, to the detriment of Christians and other minority non-Muslim faithful. It must be acknowledged, however, that religion and language/ethnicity are analytically distinct identity markers, even where they overlap geographically. In these northern states, the dominant linguistic bloc (Hausa-Fulani) happens also to be predominantly Muslim, which allows religion to operate as a further filter on access to the executive. The conflation of the two should therefore be treated carefully: the exclusion experienced by Christians in these states is a function of religion in tandem with, but not identical to, the linguistic-ethnic exclusion discussed elsewhere in this paper. Kaduna state had been on a Muslim/Christian or Christian/Muslim divide until Governor Nasir El-Rufai (May 2019–May 2023) – as reported – tilted the state toward all-Muslim affairs, insofar as the resources of Kaduna state are allocated and controlled by Muslims, to the detriment of the Christians.

In the Igbo-speaking states of Abia, Anambra and Enugu, the principle of rotational governorship has been adopted. In a spirit of give-and-take, these states allow each senatorial zone of the state to produce the governor for two consecutive tenures of eight years. By this arrangement, each senatorial district from which the governor emanates controls and allocates the resources of the state within the eight years of its occupancy of the state house. Within this time, the governor focuses 65% of the resources of the state on his place and people, and all the capital projects that eluded his constituency get executed. In these three South-eastern states, nobody cries much of marginalisation, because the

arrangement ensures that what one does not have at present will eventually come one's way when one's kinsman is at the helm of affairs. Agitations are fewer, and the destruction of property is almost nonexistent when it comes to state politicking. In these states, multilingualism is almost zero, because 95% of the populace speaks the Igbo language (cf. Table 1 above).

The multilingual nature of Nigeria and the way resources, both human and material, are allocated and controlled have serious consequences for the corporate existence of Nigeria. No nation or group thrives in an atmosphere of suspicion, hate, suppression and cheat. These and other implications of multilingualism are the focus of the next section.

Historical Perspectives and Implications of Multilingualism on Resource Allocation and Control

The 1999 Constitution of the FRN endowed the FG with enormous resources. The humongous resources at the disposal of the Federal Government are the sole reason for agitations and rancour. Based on who controls the resources at the centre, every geopolitical zone wants to produce the president of the country, so as to control the resources and allocate them to whoever it wishes. Because many groups and peoples feel marginalised by the power at the centre, there is always pressure to pull the centre down. The implication is that if a minority – claimed here to be less than 3% of the total population of more than 220 million – is perceived to control more than half of the country's resources, merely because its son or daughter is president, there are bound to be agitations and insurrections. (It should be emphasised that these percentage figures are best treated as indicative estimates drawn from observation and media analysis, rather than precise census-derived statistics; no official fiscal or demographic data currently confirms an exact share.)

Based on the perceived unequal share of revenue from the federation among some ethnic nationalities, Ekweremadu (2012, p.7) states that the 6th National Assembly (2007–2011) received forty-six (46) memoranda from a cross-section of Nigerian peoples requesting the creation of more states. The requests cut across all six geopolitical zones of the country.

The requests for new states emanated from people of the same linguistic/cultural background. In Nigeria, states benefit from federal resources; revenue sharing and allocation are the brain behind agitation for more state creation. The more states a region has, the more revenue that region gets. According to Ekweremadu (2012, p.13), the Southeast, with fewer states, receives less revenue monthly compared with other zones. In his words:

This inequitable distribution of States affects both the amount of revenue allocation that accrues to Southeast at the end of every month, both in terms of Statutory Allocations to States and LGAs from the Federation Account. This can easily be demonstrated using the Gross Statutory Allocations (GSA) to the 36 States of the Federation in August 2011.

He gives the breakdown of the revenue accrued to the six geopolitical zones of the country for August 2011 (see Table 3 below).

Table 3: Geopolitical zones and the revenue allocations

S/N Geopolitical Zone Gross Statutory Allocation (₦)

1	Northwest	29,281,883,345
2	Northeast	22,254,910,797
3	North-Central	21,486,537,516
4	Southwest	22,454,369,770
5	South-south	20,773,798,834
6	Southeast	16,771,515,500
Total		133,023,015,762

Source: Ekwere-madu (2012, p.13).

In Nigeria, for example, the Southeast region has seen deprivation of resources based on the configuration of the executive cabinet, as illustrated in Section 4.1 (Table 2) above. The Southeast has the smallest number of states (5) as against the Northwest's seven. It also has the smallest number of Local Government Areas, and the smallest number of federal and state constituencies, in Nigeria. Multilingualism in Nigeria portends everything negative, from the spectrum of politicking, to the selection of who would be the president, to the extent of how security-agency chief executives should be selected and distributed across the country. This is what I call '**negative multilingualism**,' where resources are distributed not on any known criterion but on the basis of ethnicity and language affiliation.

A look at Table 3 above shows that the Northern region received a whopping ₦73,023,331,658, representing approximately 55% of the total money shared, as against the Southern region's ₦59,999,684,004, representing approximately 45%, for the month of August 2011. Agitators from the southern part of the country, especially the people of the South-south, whose resources finance the entire country, remain a recurrent decimal. The South has always voiced its frustration, which it alleges was foisted on the country by the military rulers from the North. The South, especially the South-south, has condemned the 1999 Constitution and consistently canvassed for a holistic brand-new constitution, or what it terms the 'restructuring' of the way the Nigerian Federation is run.

Implications

Owing to the selective injustice in how resources are distributed, based on alleged ethnicity and language affinity, there is always agitation for resource control and self-determination. In the period under review (2015–2022), there were many dissenting opinions on how the country was run under PMB. There are currently agitations by separatist groups; Nnamdi Kanu and Sunday Adeyemo (popularly known as Sunday Igboho) are the chief proponents of these secessionist agendas. While Nnamdi Kanu agitates for the independence of the Eastern Region people (mostly Igbos – Biafra), Sunday Adeyemo seeks to achieve the independence of an Oduduwa nation in the

Western Region (the Yoruba). From the current happenings in the country, two of the three major language groups in Nigeria are threatening to have separate countries, while the Hausa-Fulani nation is the one clamouring for one indivisible country, precisely because it (Hausa-Fulani) is at the helm of affairs and has unfettered access to the commonwealth. The threat of secession is both linguistic/ethnic and political-economic. It is linguistic/ethnic because the adherents of these movements are mostly the Igbos (Southeast) and the Yorubas (Southwest). It is also political-economic because they cite a series of marginalisations perpetrated against them by the PMB administration. The agitations by these separatists have shaken the foundation of the entity so badly that the government is using arbitrary force to calm the situation, yet the insurrections rage on. It will be in proper perspective to state that these three nations existed separately before the annexation of the nations of Nigeria by British imperialists in 1914, through an amalgamation process that was meant to last for a century. The implication is that Nigeria is always in inter-nation/ethnic titanic battles amongst its peoples.

True Federalism and Rotational Government

True federalism is anchored on the decentralisation and distribution of governmental functions/powers, as well as finances, among different levels of government. Nnadi et al. (2018, p.253) see it as the "transfer of certain functions, resources and authority to lower governmental structures to usher in equity, fair and acceptable financial independence in resource allocation, retention, distribution, control and management." Onuoha and Nwanegbo (2007) see true federalism as the act of assigning functions or expenditure, resource allocation/revenue allocation and the resource transfer among the levels of government, in order to avoid any administrative gap. Ewetan and Urhie (2014) describe fiscal federalism as the distribution of schedules of duties and financial powers among the units of the federation.

In Section 4.1 above, it is shown that the Constitution of Nigeria deposits humongous resources at the coffers of the Federal Government. The states and the local governments engage in what Ekweremadu (2014a) refers to as a 'feeding-bottle' federalism. This, according to him, is a situation where the constituent states and localities of the federation are funded almost entirely by centrally collected and redistributed oil revenues, and have very little incentive to generate their own fiscal resources. He elaborates on this view in Ekweremadu (2014b, p.25):

As I said earlier, the number of states and local government councils, not the quantity of what the component units contribute to the commonwealth, determines the resources available to them for development. That is why a state government can go to sleep, come to Abuja at the end of the month to pick free money, and return to his or her state to continue with slumber and merriment, waiting for the next windfall. This is what I term feeding-bottle federalism.

The Nigerian Pidgin parlance of '*monkey de work, baboon de chop*' (robbing Peter to pay Paul) is at play in the current federalism being run in Nigeria. The resultant effects are perverse consequences, including fiscal hyper-centralisation and paternalism, a weak sense of financial responsibility (because it is free money) and transparency at the sub-

national level, and the feeling of economic dispossession in the oil-bearing Niger Delta, where agitations for sub-national resource control are the order of the day.

True federalism entails that the Federal Government hands over resources to their rightful owners; the component parts will then give a percentage of the revenue accrued to them to the Federal Government for the upkeep of its policies and programmes. The type of federation in practice in Nigeria presently, according to Ekweremadu (2014b), encourages corruption and indolence. The windfalls that state governments share every month do not come from the direct sweat of the people, and as such the people have no commitment to holding their government accountable for low performance. But if true federalism is enthroned, leaders at all levels will be forced to think hard about how to maximise the resources in their states, rather than depend on a monthly windfall from the Federal Government. Every state in Nigeria has abundant natural resources to tap from, if the country decides to practise true federalism; and the agitation for leadership at the centre will be reduced drastically. The unhealthy ethnic and religious bigotry that characterise Nigerian politics will also be whittled down.

The table below shows some resources present in each of the 36 states of Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja (the figures in brackets represent the actual number of resources).

Table 4: States and their natural resources

State	Mineral Resources
Abia	Petroleum, limestone, marble, etc. (19)
Adamawa	Granite, gypsum, salt, etc. (13)
Akwa Ibom	Glass sand, natural gas, uranium, etc. (11)
Anambra	Iron stone, natural gas, kaolin, etc. (8)
Bauchi	Kaolin, gemstone, feldspar, etc. (35)
Bayelsa	Salt, natural gas, petroleum, etc. (4)
Benue	Bentonite, crude salt, quartz, etc. (33)
Borno	Silica, uranium, gold, etc. (23)
Cross River	Limestone, quartz, petroleum, etc. (29)
Delta	Petroleum, natural gas, bauxite, etc. (12)
Ebonyi	Lead/zinc ore, limestone, salt, etc. (7)
Edo	Copper, gold, petroleum, etc. (12)
Ekiti	Clay, charnockite, lignite, etc. (13)
Enugu	Coal, crude oil, glass sand, etc. (12)

State	Mineral Resources
FCT Abuja	Kaolin, limestone, granite, etc. (10)
Imo	Crude oil, natural gas, marble, etc. (8)
Jigawa	Glass sand, granite, silica, etc. (10)
Kaduna	Muscovite, granite, gold, etc. (13)
Kano	Clay, beryl, gemstone, etc. (20)
Katsina	Gold, manganese, feldspar, etc. (24)
Kebbi	Salt, iron ore, gold, etc. (10)
Kogi	Marble, phosphate, dolomite, etc. (15)
Kwara	Clay, quartz, gold, etc. (12)
Lagos	Silica sand, bitumen, petroleum, etc. (6)
Nassarawa	Emerald, sapphire, glass sand, etc. (15)
Niger	Gold, marble, limestone, etc. (17)
Ogun	Kaolin, gypsum, phosphate, etc. (11)
Plateau	Monazite, columbite, glass sand, etc. (16)
Rivers	Petroleum, natural gas, silica sand, etc. (5)
Sokoto	Limestone, phosphate, granite, etc. (10)
Gombe	Graphite, kaolin, uranium, etc. (11)
Taraba	Tourmaline, sapphire, cassiterite, etc. (18)
Yobe	Salt, diatomite, epsomite, etc. (15)
Zamfara	Gold, alluvial gold, granite, etc. (8)
Ondo	Marble, gold, gemstone, etc. (6)
Osun	Clay, granite, talc, etc. (10)
Oyo	Kaolin, quartz, marble, etc. (13)

Source: Raw Materials Research and Development Council (RMRDC), Abuja, in Ekweremadu (2014c, pp. 26–28).

From the list, the thirty-six states and the FCT have a total of 514 natural resources, that is, an average of 13.90 natural resources per state, including the FCT. The twenty Northern

states, including the FCT, have 307 of the 514, whereas the seventeen Southern states have 207 natural resources (see the figures in brackets).

A critical look at the display of natural resources shows that the states with abundant natural resources are the least advanced and the most poverty-ridden. The least-endowed states, like Lagos, Rivers, Akwa Ibom and Anambra, are the most advanced states of the federation. The difference between the poor states and the advanced ones is the ability to develop the natural resources in their domains and improve on their Internally Generated Revenue (IGR), in addition to the revenue accrued from the federation sharing. Unfortunately, while every state evidently has what it takes to earn a living and contribute to national prosperity, these abundant resources lie fallow; and the few that are utilised, in the Niger Delta, continue to feed the whole nation, hence the agitation for resource control. If the country practises true federalism and resource control, every component will develop the resources at its disposal and contribute an agreed percentage to the centre; there will be minimum tension and apprehension in the polity.

Rotation of government is another factor that whittles down agitation on resource control and allocation. Once every section of the country is certain that leadership will get to it at the appointed time, it is assured that its son or daughter would right the wrongs done to it by the previous government. Though the Constitution of the FRN does not expressly provide for it, the doctrine of necessity warrants it for peaceful coexistence. There was an arrangement for rotational government at the return to democratic government in 1999. Because of the agitation that followed the annulment of the 12 June 1993 presidential election won by the Southwest politician Chief M.K.O. Abiola, the two frontline political parties of 1999 – the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Peoples Party (APP) – ceded their presidential candidates to the Southwest (Yoruba men). That ensured that whosoever emerged was a Yoruba person, to appease them over the annulment. By this singular arrangement, it was agreed that, after the tenure of the incumbent from 1999 to 2007, the next would go to the North. This arrangement was honoured, and a Northern person (Umaru Musa Yar'Adua) from the Northwest was elected in 2007.

Structurally, Nigeria is divided into six geopolitical zones, with thirty-six states and 774 local government areas. But politically, the administration of Nigeria is in two divisions – the North and the South. My position is that the country should be restructured to reflect the six geopolitical regions, with a well-mapped-out strategy to rotate government among these regions on a one-tenure duration of six years. Under this arrangement, every linguistic/ethnic group is given the chance to produce the president and thereby control the resources at the centre. Since the chief executive of either the state or the federation speaks a local/ethnic language, there is a relationship between multilingualism and resource allocation and control if true federalism and resource control are enthroned. It is worth noting, however, that this six-year, one-tenure rotation would generate a full-cycle period of roughly thirty-six years across the six zones; it is, therefore, a long-term institutional commitment. It would require a constitutional amendment to entrench, would replace the current two-term (eight-year) presidential arrangement, and must be weighed against legitimate concerns – for example, that non-re-electable executives may have weaker accountability incentives, or that rotating office on a purely zonal basis may not always place the most qualified candidate in office. These are not fatal objections, but they should be addressed honestly. The comparative evidence adduced in this paper –

notably the relative calm and reduced marginalisation complaints in the Igbo-speaking states that practise rotational governorship (Section 4.1) – suggests that, on balance, the stabilising benefits of rotation outweigh these costs. The PDP and the APC practised the same approach in 2019, when their presidential candidates were selected from the North, and there was a healthy competition and less violence; nonetheless, that election still accorded the Hausa-Fulani linguistic/ethnic group an edge in the allocation of resources.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the phenomenon of multilingualism/ethnicity and the politics of resource allocation and control in Nigeria. From the study, it has been established that the misapplication of multilingual settings in Nigeria is the cause of misapplied resource allocation and control. It has also been established that language, ethnicity and religion are used in determining the allocation and control of resources by both federal and state chief executives of the country.

Because 'winner-takes-all' operates in the politics of Nigeria, there is always a politics of rivalry in the country. They say that he who pays the piper dictates the tune. The political heads of every governmental unit determine the extent to which the other federating components will participate in the affairs of the country.

Nigeria has more than 600 languages spoken by more than 250 ethnic groups. It has been observed in this study that the Fulani (Fulfulde), with a small share of the population, is perceived to control a disproportionate share of the resources, because the president in the period under review is from that ethnic group, to the exclusion of others (see Table 2 above). This helps to account for why Nigeria has not gelled as a country since its independence in 1960. The author recognises, however, that this disproportionate control is not unique to any single administration; as Ndiribe and Aboh (2020) show, a minority-group president such as Jonathan also favoured his own people. The systemic lesson is that the exclusion arises from a hyper-centralised executive that concentrates resource-dispersal power in one office, regardless of the ethnic identity of its occupant.

This study advocates a diversity approach in salvaging the multilingual woes in Nigeria, which are occasioned by nepotism and hatred among the federating units. In order to douse the tension of ethnic rivalries, there is a need to be equitable in the distribution of resources and to be non-partisan in the implementation of the Federal Character Principle, because the root cause of resource exclusion is ethnic hatred. When one hates another based on ethnicity and language, it is not only about the language; rather, it goes beyond that to other federal considerations, including appointments into sensitive positions. Also, in order to reduce ethnic propagation and unruly rivalry, true federalism, whereby the component parts are allowed to control and utilise their God-given resources, is advocated in this study. When these are done, the sense of marginalisation and the robbing-Peter-to-pay-Paul syndrome would be reduced, and the federating units will develop at their own pace, without undue interference from the Federal Government. Notably, the country has witnessed more agitations of secession and break-ups in the period under consideration than at any time in more than a century of the nation's existence; both the Southwest and the Southeast have produced radical ethnic-freedom agitators.

As a recommendation, the study advocates rotational government, whereby each of the six geopolitical zones produces the president based on agreed timing, on a one-tenure arrangement. The states where the governorship has not yet rotated to other ethnic groups should arrange for rotational governorship on a senatorial basis, to ensure that the allocation and control of resources in those states reaches all the ethnic groups. The doctrine of necessity was adopted in 1999, at the return of democracy, to douse the tension caused by the annulment of the 12 June 1993 presidential election believed to have been won by the Southwest candidate. In the 1999 election, only Southwest candidates were allowed to contest, and the eventual president emerged from the Southwest. Nigerians could amend the constitution to reflect rotational government among the six geopolitical zones; the states should follow the same process to ensure the equitable distribution of political offices, starting from the governorship.

Leaders should shun the politics of language, ethnicity and religion in the allocation of resources, both at the federal and the state government levels. It is only when the agitation for equity and fairness is assuaged by inclusivity that the country will achieve its full potential among other countries in Africa and beyond.

The study also recommends a total restructuring of the policy that gives the Federal Government the exclusive right of ownership of the sixty-eight items that generate resources in the country, and instead the adoption of the fiscal/true-federalism policy, to douse the tensions that have persisted as a result of the marginalisation, suppression and alienation of certain linguistic and ethnic blocs, as it concerns the allocation and control of the resources of the country.

Limitations and directions for future research

This study relies on qualitative, secondary sources and on media and observational data for the period 2015–2022. Consequently, its percentage estimates (e.g., the share of resources perceived to be controlled by the Hausa-Fulani bloc) should be read as indicative rather than precise. Future studies could strengthen the empirical base by drawing on quantitative analyses of federal appointment distributions, fiscal transfers, audit records of project siting, and longitudinal data covering more than one administration, to test the generalisability of the 'executive concentration' thesis beyond the PMB years.

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