

The Outcome of Institutional Engineering in Nigeria

Osaka University

Osaka School of International Public Policy

Associate professor Michiya Kawamura

1. The Present Nigerian Society (in terms of ethnic relation)

- Small ethnic conflicts are chronically arising in Nigeria. Except for Boko haram, a radical religious cult movement. I would like to focus more on other ethnic conflicts.
 - ✓ What I want to insist is that a catastroph like Biafra war is unlikely to happen in present Nigeria.
- Ethnic factors become a little less obvious but is still influential.
 - ✓ Ethnic parties are prohibited by the constitution.
 - ✓ Ethnic minority can be a president like the president Good Luck Jonathan (Though he was not fully elected through a fair and open process).
 - ✓ However, when you try to pursue an economic, social or political interest in Nigeria, an ethnic ties is the most reliable tool to seek it.
- Is it impossible to overcome those small but frequent ethnic conflicts?

2. Integration and Consociation

- There are two major different approaches for multi-ethnic society to pursue a political stability.
- Integration (Argued by Donald Horowitz)
- Integration policy aims to prevent people from forming their claims according to ethnic cleavages.
- This policy tries to establish neutral or generalized rules under which diverse people are more likely to behave as a member of the whole society.
- Then it tries to build an bridging party in which multiple groups can participate to pursue a shared interest.

- Consociation (insisted by Arend Lijphart)
- This policy first tries to satisfy groups' pride and secure each group's solidarity, by letting each of them have its own autonomous sub-society.
- And then it tries to pursue a whole state's will-formation through cooperative group leaders' negotiation.

3. The Improvement of Nigerian Politics

- Nigeria has divided its territory into smaller units several times (=institutional engineering). And at the same time, keeping and defending the federal character (=keeping integration as a country and securing the autonomy of each unit). it have improved Nigerian Politics to some extent.
- Generally speaking, A smaller unit is convenient for people to reach an agreement thanks to it's ethnic simplicity inside, while a bigger unit is not useful because it includes many dissents who are subject to oppression.

- Owing to this institutional engineering, smaller ethnic groups can have their own states (=consociational aspect).
- By being divided into many small units, the cultural or social interest of a large ethnic groups is differentiated into those that are different depending on the unit. They feel difficult to organize an integrated ethnic claim. (=integrational aspect).
- The Nigerian institutional engineering has both aspects of integration and consociation.

Why can dividing into small units contribute to political stability?

- If each ethnic group has a distinctive culture, history, clear boundary and membership, this dividing policy may cause a fatal conflict because each unit can uncompromisingly try to fulfill their own pride and interest.
- However, Nigerian ethnic groups, mainly based on the distinct language or dialect, have a malleable culture, boundary and membership.
- Therefore, each unit would not relentlessly try to satisfy its cultural attachment and as a result, the coordination of different interests among small units become less difficult.

4. Problems still remained

- The dividing policy have succeeded to some extent, especially in avoiding a fatal clash like Biafra war. Of course some major ethnic groups like Hausa Fulani still hold a dominant political power, yet they come to use their power less apparently.
- However, distributive rules for resources such as political power, wealth, land properties are not well established. There are few general rules established in Nigeria.

- In particular, a valid decision making process is not properly built within each local unit.
- Therefore, minorities within minorities come to think of secession. There are still many small conflict in which minorities within minorities want to have their own political units.
- However, there are more than 250 ethnic groups in Nigeria. If those secessionist claims are generously permitted, secessions become endless and political instability increases.

Other ethnic conflict

- We need many generalized rules in society, for example, how to win a political support, how to permit and protect a trading activity, how to distribute natural resources, or how to admit a land property.
- If generalized rules are well established, people don't have to use a illegitimate power behind the scene when they pursue their objectives.
- However, there are few general rules established in Nigeria, so people cannot help using their ethnic connection in pursuing their own economic, social and political interests.
- Though many conflicts in Nigeria inherently rise from non-ethnic matters, they soon assume an ethnic character.

5. Examples whose roots are not necessarily ethnic

- Northern area
Riots of Boko Haram, the Islamic extremists ▪ ▪ ▪ caused by economic disparity, generation gap, or social frustration.
- Middle area
Antagonism between farmers cropping plants and pastoralists pasturing livestock ▪ ▪ ▪ how to distribute land use rights among different occupational groups.
- Southern area
indigenous people (fishers whose ground was polluted by petrol) often make riots or kidnap petrol businessmen. ▪ ▪ ▪ how to distribute resources (=oil income) between the center and the local governments. People are not convinced of the present distribution rule.

- These conflicts may have something to do with ethnicity or culture, but there are many other reasons.
- More generalized and legitimate distribution rules could have been established, if this conduct had been tried when the dividing policy more or less mitigated ethnic hostilities and the state enjoyed the economic growth thanks to the petroleum surge in last twenty years, because during these occasions, groups could afford to suppress their particular interest than ever.

I don't intend to insist that ethnicity should be excluded from the scene of making a generalized rule.

- Ethnic groups should have a certain role in making and applying a generalized rule.
- (watch dog role.) Ethnic groups could and should keep an eye on the deviation and deterioration of rules.
- However, criticisms from an ethnic perspective sometimes based on self-interests. Moreover, ethnic groups often want directly to control the making and applying rules.
- In the end, the society gets unstable.

6. Conclusion

- Two conditions are necessary.
 1. Generalized rules should be fairly applied to any groups (integration).
 2. group differences should be protected by giving them their own unit (consociation).

The balance between them is important.
- The Nigerian institutional engineering could approach this balance to some extent. Making small units enables Nigeria to make a flexible coordination between the units.

- However,

A flexible coordination within a unit should have been pursued at the same time.

More generalized and legitimate distribution rules could have been established.

- Nigeria has missed the timing.

When states were once divided into smaller units and ethnic interests came to be more easily coordinated, it gave a chance for coordination of non-ethnic interests. It should have led to an establishment of generalized rules. But it was almost neglected.