Power Sharing and Zoning Formula for Managing Nigeria's Diversity: A Case of the Fourth Republic

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ABSTRACT: Nigeria is composed of plural and multi-complex societies with multiple ethnic groups of up to 500 cultural diversities. This country surmounts the obstacles of managing diversity through an informal setting popularly identified as a zoning formula and power sharing among the federating units. The pattern and trend in which the practice maintains Nigeria's diversity is a good lesson for a study of plural societies and consociationalism. The study aimed to examine the nature and dimension of zoning formula and power sharing in Nigeria and analyze how the strategies of zoning formula and power sharing helped manage diversity in Nigeria. The study was identified as a descriptive qualitative method that sought to describe Nigeria's strategy for managing diversity. The study uncovered that power sharing and zoning consist of constitutional and unconstitutional ones, with the former supported by legal provisions. Simultaneously, the latter is designed based on principles and gentleman agreements. The study recommended that constitutional provisions should never be sacrificed on the altar of the personal elite agreement. Instead, sharing power through zoning should be retained to prevent suicide for credibility and competency. It is a plausible shock absorber that will continue to sustain Nigerian federalism, and other plural societies can borrow this model as a political means of resolving diversities.

KEYWORDS: Consociationalism, Constitution, Nigeria.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Politics is about a convenient arrangement of power sharing and resource allocation in the way of giving and taking will satisfy the basic desires of societal members.[1] In this regard, no matter how one portrays it, no society in the contemporary world can claim total homogeneity. Differences in ethnic composition, religious beliefs, geographical settlement, and other personal desires led to conflict over power control.[2] Plurality is an attribute of all modern societies, especially in the African states.[3]

Nigeria is composed of plural and multi-complex societies with multiple ethnic groups of up to 500 cultural diversities.[4] Management of diversities in a society like Nigeria takes beyond formal or legal constitutional backing. Agreements and tacit arrangements are necessary for containing the competing aspirations and pressures of the component groups. The country currently surmounts the obstacles of managing diversity through an informal setting popularly identified as a zoning formula and power sharing among the federating units. The pattern and trend in which the practice maintains Nigeria's diversity is a good lesson for studying plural societies. With a democratic system of ruling and a federal structure of the political arrangement, the multiplicity of ethnic groups, religious beliefs, and cultural diversities made the contest for power intense and chaotic.

Many scholars emphasized that Nigeria is in a crisis of governance and development because of the extreme struggle for power control at the

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[1] Brendan O'Leary, "Power Sharing in Deeply Divided Societies: An Advocate's Introduction" in Joanne McEvoy, ed, *Power Sharing in Deeply Divided Societies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013) at 1.

[2] Bernard Grofman, "Electoral Rules and Ethnic Representation and Accommodation: Combining Social Choice and Electoral Systems Perspectives" in Joanne McEvoy, ed, *Power Sharing in Deeply Divided Societies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013) at 67.

[3] Allison McCulloch, "The Track Records of Centripetalism in Deeply Divided Societies" in Joanne McEvoy, ed, *Power Sharing in Deeply Divided Societies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013) at 67.

[4] Okwudiba Nnoli, *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria* (Onitsha: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1987).

center.[5] Many studies argued that Nigerian politics is bedeviled with ethnicity, religious manipulation, and regional sentiments, which made power competition, particularly at the center, a difficult task since political independence sometimes leads to the threat of secession.[6] Thus, if diversity is not managed appropriately, it will threaten the co-existence and governance of the country.

This study aims to identify that despite numerous studies as presented above, none had paid adequate attention to the strategies of survival and management of Nigeria's diversity, which ushered in the longest democratic experiment in the Fourth Republic. It aims to contribute to knowledge by filling the research gap. In addition, the work has other specific objectives to examine the nature and dimension of zoning formula and power sharing in Nigeria and analyze how the strategies of zoning formula and power sharing helped manage Nigeria's diversity.

The discussion is structured into the following parts. First, the examination of politics in divided societies in the Nigerian context. Second, a revisit to the so-called "consociational democracy" or "democracy in plural societies." Third, an exploration of power sharing in Nigeria and the analysis of the constitutional division of power in the Fourth Republic. Fourth, examining

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[5] JNC Hill, *Nigeria Since Independence: Forever Fragile?* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Okwudiba Nnoli, *supra* note 4; Rotimi T Suberu, "The Struggles for New States in Nigeria: 1976-1990" (1991) 90:361 African Affairs 499–522 issue: 361volume: 90; Richard Joseph, *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria* (New York: Cambridge, 1997); Larry Diamond, *Class Ethnicity and Democracy in Nigeria: The Failure of the First Republic* (London: Macmillan Press, 1995).

[6] Larry Diamond, *supra* note 5; Staffan I Lindberg, *Democracy and Elections in Africa* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2006); Sa'id Adejumobi, "Introduction" in Sa'id Adejumobi, ed, *Governance and Politics in Post-Military Nigeria: Changes and Challenges* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan) 1; Micheal Peel, *A Swamp Full of Dollars: Pipelines and Paramilitaries at Nigeria's Oil Frontier* (USA: Lawrence Hill Books); Wale Adebanwi & Ebenezer Obadare, *Democracy and Prebendelism in Nigeria: Critical Interpretations*, 1st ed (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Carl A Le Van, *Dictators and Democracy in Nigeria: The Political Economy of Good Governance in Nigeria* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Uyilawa Usuanlele & Bonny Ibhawoh, *Minority Rights and the National Question in Nigeria*, 1st ed (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

the politics of zoning in the Fourth Republic. Fifth, a discussion of power sharing and zoning formula linked to the future of Nigeria's democracy.

II. METHODS

The research adopted the research design of a qualitative approach to data collection and data analysis. The study was identified as a descriptive qualitative method that sought to describe Nigeria's strategy for managing diversity. A qualitative approach was involved in gathering large assembled data from primary or secondary sources to generate ideas and themes that can be grouped into several arrangements for analysis.[7] Thus, the research used secondary sources of data collection because the topic is wide, making data gathering through primary sources difficult. The sources consulted for this research included books, journals, newspapers, internet sources, reports, and other related documents.[8] The data collected were analyzed and interpreted using content analysis, where the data obtained were presented in themes and sub-themes identified based on the discussion of the subject matter.[9] The study paid much attention to theoretical building and application in explaining Nigeria's power sharing and zoning phenomenon. Consociationalism is adopted and applied throughout the contents and context of the study to justify the need to identify the subject matter as a model and as a practical policy implication with positive results for future reference.

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[7]   Merriam B Sharan, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (San Francisco: Wiley & Sons, 2009); Uma Sekaran & Roger Bougie, *Research Methods for Business: A Skill Building Approach*, 1st ed (India: John Wiley & Sons, 2013); John W Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches* (California: Sage Publication, 2014).

[8]   Robert Bogden & Biklen Sari Knopp, *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theories and Methods*, 1st ed (Boston: Pearson Education, 2007).

[9]   Virginia Braun & Victoria Clarke, *Successful Qualitative Research: Practical Guide for Beginners*, 1st ed (New Delhi: Pearson Education Inc, 2013); Howard Lune & Bruce L Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*, 4th ed (New Delhi: Pearson Education Inc, 2017).

III. DIVIDED SOCIETIES IN THE NIGERIAN CONTEXT

A. Politics in Divided Societies

Politics in divided societies, the deeply divided ones, takes the form of power sharing, which is not mysterious to perceive but easily front to misperception. Politics is the struggle to access power to influence policy and decision-making and determine a favorable resource allocation—those who succeed in acquiring power influence the societal direction, while the powerless lack such privilege. Politics, therefore, is the competition to access power for that purpose.[10] Politics in divided societies entails any effort at blocking the monopolization of power by one group, be it a descriptive such as ethnic, religious, or regional or a social such as elite or any other category. Politics in divided societies or power sharing is a deliberative democratic arrangement of managing diversities, avoiding conflicts, and devolution of power to avoid the dilemma of exclusion of one category.[11] Politics in divided societies, it was observed, created global conflicts at alarming rates. For instance, The Heidelberg Institute on International Conflict reported that there are 230 political conflicts worldwide, with 164 being internal conflicts, and 36 out of the 164 are extremely violent, with 51 having a low-level intensity of conflicts.[12] This has been observed as the repercussions of politics in divided societies where power sharing and competition ended in violence by warring factions. The pursuit of peace in many divided societies today takes the form of power sharing with contending groups to avoid an escalation of crisis because of a power scramble that will throw societies into avoidable conflicts.[13]

Democracy can achieve peace and a truly democratic structure in plural societies only if consociation is adopted. This means sharing power or involvement of all members of societies from various levels and groups in

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[10] Brendan O'Leary, *supra* note 1.

[11] Ian O'Flynn, *Deliberative Democracy and Divided Societies* (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 2006).

[12] *Ibid.*

[13] Chandra Lekha Sriram, *Peace as Governance, Power Sharing, Armed Groups and Contemporary Peace Negotiations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

consensus on power sharing and political representation.[14] Lijphart hypothesizes that plural societies, by a definition that he identified with some elements such as ethnic composition and religious differences as well as cultural variations, can achieve harmony, stability, good governance, and democratic progress if an opportunity is given to all members alike to participate in the process of decision making.[15] However, as beautiful as the above propositions are, and as this study, to its much satisfaction, adopted this theory in explaining the juxtaposition of the discussions, there are limits to how power sharing based on consensus is sometimes undemocratic. Some countries like Nigeria, which relied on such a philosophy, often sacrificed merit for that purpose, leading to misgovernance. A good example is how President Umaru Musa Yar'adua, a sick-ridden former Governor of Katsina State, was imposed vehemently on Nigerian Presidency despite his health challenges during the tenure of his Governorship. The consequences were the eventual death of the President just two years into his tenure, which opened up a wide vacuum for succession in the 2011 Presidential Election between the North and the South of the country.[16] However, Kelly stresses that despite the loopholes in Lijphart's theoretical postulation; there is no plausible explanation or model for managing power or politics in plural or divided societies better than in consociation.[17] It has to revolve around the question of legality and constitutional provision. Some countries made such an arrangement constitutionally.

There are challenges to power sharing or politics in divided societies. While many analysts and Political Scientists settled on the submission that it is the best alternative to managing conflicts and diversities in deeply divided societies, some challenges of the modalities for the sharing are arising. Many structures are used for power sharing. One of them is a

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[14] Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] Olusegun Adeniyi, *Power, Politics, and Death: A Front-Row Account of Nigeria Under President Yar'adua* (London: Prestige Publishers, 2010).

[17] Brighid Brooks Kelly, *Power sharing and Consociational Theory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

coalition government. Guaranteed representation in the constitution, like a fixed number of ministerial slots and parliaments, territorial devolution, federalism, autonomy, and a strong delegation of responsibility are other measures of sharing power in plural societies.[18] The challenges are likely imminent and can manifest in changes that may catch up with the societies. For instance, one group can try to dominate or violate the agreement, or the pattern designed may be obsolete in some groups' perception, which may cause conflict and dissatisfaction. This has already been witnessed in many states, including the highly stable ones like USA, Britain, and Russia, and other new states such as Nigeria, India, and Indonesia.[19]

Nigeria's pattern of pluralism in the Fourth Republic involves the politics of ethnicity, regionalism, and religion. Power sharing is centered on the division of responsibilities based on the above three elements. The division is further configured into sub-division where the North, for instance, is divided into what unofficially is termed core north, referring to Northeast and Northwest. In contrast, in the Southeast and Southsouth, a taxonomy of division is purposely created for the Delta-Igbo and the Southeast Ijaw or Ibibio. These elements are difficult to reconcile and are only managed by power sharing in principle. As discussed in the preceding sections, some arrangements are constitutional, while others are only organized based on a gentleman's agreement. Therefore, politics in divided societies must be arranged and conducted in a manner of consensus, give and take, satisfactory power sharing, and recognition of majority and minority interests. Failure to do this may result in violence and conflicts that create instability and political crisis. This is an interesting subject matter of study, mainly because it needs to be addressed by global scholarship, except in a few cases. This is the motivation behind identifying Nigeria as an outstanding area that will make genuine ideas and models for global entertainment and policy practice.

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[18] Ian O'Flynn & David Russell, "Introduction: New Challenges for Power Sharing" in Ian O'Flynn, ed, *Power Sharing: New Challenges for Divided Societies* (London: Pluto Press, 2005) at 1.

[19] *Ibid.*

B. Pattern of Power Sharing in Plural Societies

There are various patterns and structures of power sharing across plural societies around the globe. In some instances, it is constitutionally arranged to avoid conflict of interest and legal issues. In other states, it is hurriedly arranged after a deep disagreement in power contests. In others, it is carried out using an informal agreement. Many diverse and plural societies adopted a political structure as a means of power sharing.[20] Federalism is one of them. About 30 countries worldwide operate a federal system of government contemporarily. These 30 countries are significant in terms of demographic strength as they constitute 40% of the total global population. They are politically and economically influential because they involve states like the USA, Canada, France, Germany, Nigeria, India, South Africa, Brazil, Malaysia, Australia, Mexico, and many other globally strong states.[21] In these states, power is shared using a governmental structure that brings the government closer to all components and elements of the society with autonomy and self-governance for self-belonging. For instance, in these states, it is legally provided in the constitution that each component unit of government, mainly structured into federal or central government, state governments, and local governments or provinces or counties, have their specified powers in the constitution. The formula for revenue generation and sharing, electoral powers and processes, and limits are all illustrated unequivocally in the respective constitutions of these federal states. In this perspective, power is shared constitutionally among the various interest groups in each state. Most diversities are anchored around ethnic differences, religious beliefs, regional locations, and economic interests. Federalism is the most practical model for managing diversities and power sharing in complex plural societies.[22] However, despite the

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[20] Scott Gates & Kaare Strom, *Power Sharing and Civil Conflict (Centre for the Study of Civil War PRIC*, CSCW Policy Brief (Centre for the Study of Civil War PRIC, 2008).

[21] Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, "What is Federalism?", *Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance* (2021), online: <https://www.idea.int/news-media/what-federalism>. Accessed on April 7, 2021, at 10:25 pm.

[22] Daniel Bochsler & Andreas Juon, "Power sharing and the quality of democracy" (2021) 13:4 European Political Science Review 411–430 at 20.

above eloquent presentation of a model of federal power sharing processes, most federal states have contending conflicts and agitations for an alternative federal restructuring. One of the most intensified situations is the Nigerian situation, where some section of the country is agitating for a total overhaul of the current system for a new one that is, according to them, satiable to them.[23]

Another pattern for power sharing is an institutional arrangement that guarantees a joint role in the control of the executive, where a president and a prime minister are carved out for joint power control. In some instances, like France, it was initially designed in this way. In other places like Kenya and South Sudan, it was adopted to assuage either temporarily or interim rival conflicting groups.[24] Other power sharing logics are designed towards minority veto power, group autonomy, and a special form of legislative representation for a particular group. The most prominent model of power sharing is the one presented by Lijphart as consociational democracy. Four main patterns were identified as follows: (1) a grand coalition, (2) a system of mutual veto power, (3) proportional representation, and (4) segmental autonomy, such as federalism.[25]

The fundamental question on power sharing is whether it is democratic or not. The major arguments presented by the champions of power sharing like Lijphart, O'Flynn, and O'Leary. Because it enables a consensus that will satisfy all power competitors, is it promoting peace, democracy, and peacebuilding, especially in plural societies? [26] However, power sharing is an albatross on genuine democratic ideal values. In the first place, it contradicts democratic tenets of a free and fair election because where power is agreed to be shared on consensus, it does not matter whether an authentic election holds. In the Nigerian context in 1999, the elites

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[23] Harriet Seun Dapo-Asaju & Oludayo John Bamgbose, "The Quest for Restructuring the Nigerian Nation: Myth or Reality? The Role of Libraries in Amplifying the Debate" (2019) 47:1 International Journal of Legal Information at 21.

[24] Scott Gates & Kaare Strom, *supra* note 20 at 2.

[25] Siri Aas Rustad, *Power sharing Agreements, Negotiations and Peace Processes* (Oslo: Center for the Study of Civil War, 2008) Oslo.

[26] Arend Lijphart, *supra* note 14 at 6; Ian O'Flynn, *supra* note 11 at 2; Brendan O'Leary, *supra* note 1 at 3.

unanimously agreed that power must go to the South. In particular, Southwest, to appease the aggrieved Yoruba, whom the Military President scuttled an opportunity to control the presidency in 1992, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, after an election in which a Yoruba, MKO Abiola was led was annulled. Another area for improvement with power sharing is that it impedes the accountability of leaders. Once they have realized that they have an automatic chance to rule even if they are not performing, they can display their personal desires ahead of public interest.[27] Additionally, power sharing runs contrary to the spirit of democracy which is competition. Credible and competent leaders are sidelined in favor of the give-and-take purpose. An example is a Nigerian context where in 2007, it was agreed by a mutual consensus that power must rotate to the North. Thus, regardless of how qualified, all the candidates were, the ruling PDP stepped down those from the South.

This was made because of a seriously sick anointed Yar'adua, single-handedly evil machinations of former President Obasanjo, who eventually led to the shoddy and controversial election that gave Yar'adua victory. However, the presidency was short-lived for only two years due to terminal illness.[28] It was speculated that Obasanjo deliberately orchestrated this plot, having failed to actualize his illegal ambition of a third term that may probably see him becoming a life President, as obtainable in many African countries. This study, however, attributed the antecedents of the Yar'adua Presidency saga to the laxity and lukewarm attitude of the Northerners who failed to resist such a deliberate plot. They should have secured the guaranteed Northern zoning of the presidency and resisted Obasanjo's effort at a foiled pre-coup for the North. Otherwise, if such failure materializes, it prevailed upon Yar'adua to decline for a healthy ground and replace him with a stronger and healthy candidate.

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[27] Scott Gates & Kaare Strom, *supra* note 20 at 3.
[28] Siri Aas Rustad, *supra* note 25 at 2.

C. Nigerian Federalism and Political Structure

Nigerian federalism traced its root from the vicissitudes of the historical antecedents of the interplay of the forces of colonialism. Nigeria experienced three major historical epochs which are significant in shaping the evolution and destiny of the current entity territorially. The pre-colonial era presented a plethora of kingdoms, chiefdoms, societies, and organizations enmeshed in mutual rivalry, cooperation, and interdependence with distinguishing features of different cultures, languages, religious faith, and geography.[29] In the colonial epoch, the mega-ethnic groups of Hausa/Fulani, Igbo, and Yoruba were merged artificially and compulsorily by the arbitrary handiwork of the British colonial exploiters.[30] Nigeria sailed through the murky and muddy waters of struggles and controversies of consensus and disagreement before settling for peaceful decolonization in 1960, leading to political independence on October 1, 1960. The third historical epoch in Nigeria is the post-colonial era from 1960, which continues to manifest the effects and impacts of colonial imposition and arbitrary artificial territorial creation where the rivalry between the Northern and Southern regions in terms of power control and economic control continue to escalate. The root of the federal system was sown during the colonial era.[31]

As examined above, Nigerian Federalism started its journey during colonialism. In 1914, the colonial Governor General Frederick Lord Lugard amalgamated the separated Northern and Southern Protectorates and declared a colony of Nigeria.[32] The frontiers of federalism were laid down in 1944 when Governor Arthur Richard introduced regionalism 1944. He made the Nigerian territory a conglomerate of the East, North, West, and the colony of Lagos, with each independent in revenue

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[29] James Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (London: Longman, 1960).

[30] HE Alapiki, "States Creation in Nigeria: Failed Approaches to National Integration and Local Autonomy" (2005) 48:3 African Studies at 65.

[31] Dele Adetoye, "The Nigerian Elite and State Creation: The Creation of False Ethnic Dichotomies for Self Aggrandisement" (2016) 16:1 Global Journal of Human Social Science: Political Science at 4.

[32] Adiele E Afigbo, "Background to Nigerian Federalism: Federal Features in the Colonial State" (1991) 21:4 Publius at 29.

generation and remittance and a premier in each region supported by a regional assembly except Lagos, where the Governor General resided.[33] Federalism was consolidated in the Nigerian colony in 1951 when Sir Macpherson expanded the independence of the regions and their autonomy. It was further strengthened constitutionally after the intervention of the British colonial secretary Sir Oliver Lytetton in 1954.[34] Nigeria fought and secured political independence under an already pre-determined political structure of federalism as designed purposely by the British colonizers.[35]

The Nigerian pathway toward independence and federalism could have been smoother. There were several incidences of an attempt to either break or delay the process in some regions based on political interest.[36] The first military coup attempted to dismantle Nigerian federalism and replaced it with a unitary system with the motive of forging a united nation, according to the bloody coup plotters.[37] There were internal efforts to design genuine federalism and render autonomy for the minority agitations to sustain national unity, eventually leading to state creation in the 1970s.[38] Nigerian federalism is one of the strongest in Africa, owing to the level of autonomy and inclusion efforts made by various governments. It spans from state creation to local government autonomy and forming a federal character system that accommodates all interests in allocating developmental projects, political appointments, and public service employment.[39]

The Nigerian political structure has been undergoing several changes and amendments. The first political system experimented with was the

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[33] Isawa J Elaigwu, "Federalism: The Nigerian Experience" (1996) 4:1 Federalism Theory and Application at 56.

[34] Isawa JElaigwu, "Federalism in Nigeria's New Democratic Polity" 32:2 The Global Review of Federalism at 95.

[35] Ladipo Adamolekun L, "Introduction: Federalism in Nigeria" (1991) 21:4 Publius: The Journal of Federalism at 11.

[36] John P Mackintosh, "Federalism in Nigeria" (1962) 10:3 Politics at 103.

[37] Rotimi T Suberu, "The Nigerian Federal System: Performance, Problems, and Prospects" (2010) 28:4 Journal of Contemporary African Studies at 477.

[38] Rotimi T Suberu, *supra* note 5.

[39] Rotimi T Suberu, "Federalism in Africa: The Nigerian Experience in Comparative Perspective" (2009) 8:1 Ethnopolitics 67–86.

parliamentary system of British style, where a President and a Prime Minister governed for six years from 1960 to 1966 before the bloody coup that targeted Hausa/Fulani ethnic group leaders for assassination.[40] The parliamentary structure was disrupted significantly by the bloody coup in 1966, leading to a prolonged exacerbated military rule from 1966 to 1979. The First Republic (1960-1966) ended with a parliamentary structure, but the Second Republic (1979-1983) introduced an American style of a presidential system of government.[41] In the First Republic, regional Premiers and Legislatures were maintained, but in the Second Republic, regions were abolished, having been replaced with states. A President and a Vice President with a National Legislature replaced the old structure, while at the state level, state Governors, their Deputies, and State Houses of Assemblies emerged. The national legislative representation was based on the population of each state accordingly.[42] The presidential system was maintained similarly in the Aborted Third Republic (1991-1992) and the Fourth Republic (1999-2021). However, in the Fourth Republic, two lawmaking bodies were introduced with a Senate where each state, irrespective of population or size, is allocated three Senators, including the Federal Capital Territory Abuja. Simultaneously, in the House of Representatives, the membership is constituted based on the population and size of the states.[43] For instance, Kano, the most populated state, has 24 Members in the House, while Bayelsa, the least populated, has five Members. Similarly, the 36 states in the federation have executives, Governors and their Deputies, State Houses of Assemblies with membership based on the population and the size of each state, and the

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[40] Babayo Sule, Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani, & Bakri Mat, "Political Behaviour and Voting Pattern in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: The Case of 2015 Presidential Election" (2017) 4:4 Journal of Education, Arts and Sciences 1–13.

[41] Agbude Godwyns Adeniyi, "Political Culture and the Future of Democracy in Nigeria" (2010) 2:34 Sustainable Human Development Review 47–65.

[42] Jake Dan Azumi, Attahiru Jega, & Sam Egwu, "The Challenges of Re-Federalising Nigeria: Revisiting Recent Debates on Political Restructuring" (2019) 7:1 Journal of Political Sciences and Public Affairs 1–8.

[43] Nsembe Edward Lenshie, "Ties that Bind and Differences that Divide: Exploring the Resurgence of Ethno-Cultural Identity in Nigeria" (2014) 13:2 Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa) 153–212.

774 local governments also have executive Chairmen and their Deputies and Councillors for each ward across them. The judiciary is also configured to follow federal courts, state courts, magistrates, and area courts for local governments.[44]

IV. REVISITING CONSOCIATIONAL DEMOCRACY

The theory of consociational democracy is also well known as democracy in plural societies. It is a comprehensive and rigorous study of its kind formed by Arend Lijphart in his effort to present a workable model that will permanently resolve power sharing and politics in heterogeneous and complex societies. In such a way, a satisfactory formula is designed to accommodate all conflicting interests harmoniously. Although the theory was later expanded by many researchers, either broadened to include larger areas than the original case studies espoused by Lijphart or to narrow them by picking a singular or smaller case, all the assumptions and modeling still revolve around Liphart's earlier conception.

Lijphart argues that achieving and maintaining a stable democracy and governance in plural societies is extremely difficult.[45] He further emphasizes that consociational democracy moderated and modified the above submission of the difficulty of achieving a sustainable democracy in plural societies as a possibility.[46] Stable democracy and governance are achievable in plural societies when the centrifugal tendencies are subsided in an accommodative cooperative manner based on the consensus of leaders of various segments that constitute the plurality. Elite cooperation is the primary concern or idea of consociational democracy.[47] Lijphart confidently assumes that consociational democracy is both empirical and normative in its approach.[48] It is empirical as presenting practical case studies of smaller

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[44] Victor E Ita, Ebong Itoro E, & Tonye Inimo-Etele, "Restructuring Nigerian Federalism: A Prognosis Nation-Building and Socio-Political Stability" (2019) 5:1 Journal of Political Science and Leadership Research 1–18..

[45] Arend Lijphart, *supra* note 14.

[46] *Ibid*.

[47] *Ibid* at 7.

[48] *Ibid* at 11.

European states of Austria, Belgium, Netherlands, and Switzerland. Also, it analyzes how they can constitutionally and practically forge a consociation that will guide the larger understanding of the theoretical postulation. These smaller European countries reached the peak of their consociation in the 1950s. Then they were gradually vanishing in consensus, not because consociationalism is irrelevant anymore but superfluous. Lijphart identifies plural societies,[49] as those with tendencies for a sharp division in religion, ideology, race, ethnicity, language, cultural and regional or geographical differences.

Consociational democracy can be designed in various ways; according to Lijphart, one of them is a 'Grand Coalition' where some competing groups may ally to secure power which ordinarily, by their disposition, they may only get the leverage to secure victory if they strengthen each other.[50] Another method of forging consociation is 'Mutual Veto,' where the majority can have its way into power in a society with multiple interest groups. However, the other smaller groups can be given the privilege of veto power to protect their interest. 'Proportionality' is another strategy of consociation where representation, either at the parliament, executive, or other vital decision-making bodies, is designed based on a proportion of the population of each group in that society. Another and the most obtainable worldwide is 'Segmental Autonomy and Federalism', whereby law and powers are designed and shared among the structures and component units of governments with autonomy and self-governance in many cases. Finally, 'Secession and Partition' is the following form of consociation where societies that could not withstand their diversities opted for a final division of territories with independent and autonomous settings. Federalism is considered the most feasible means of achieving this theory's empirical and theoretical application. Most consociational states operate federalism since it has readily available alternatives for power sharing and alternatives for the autonomy of competing interest groups.[51]

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[49] *Ibid* at 21.
[50] *Ibid* at 61.
[51] Daniel J Elazar, "Federalism and Consociational Regimes" (1985) 15:2 Publius: The Journal of Federalism 17–34.

Lijphart further presented some conditions favorable for Consociational Democracy.[52] They include a balance of power, a multi-party system, federalism, constitutional proportional representation, and the structure of cleavages. Apart from the four smaller European countries studied by Lijphart,[53] he also divided consociationalism into the First World and the Third World practices. Some, according to him, are success stories while others are a failure, but overall, consociationalism is a model for plural societies, concluded Lijphart. Canada and Israel are good examples of semi-consociational societies, while Lebanon and Malaysia are examples of consociations in developing countries. At the same time, Cyprus is a practical example of a failure of consociation.[54] To support Lijphart, Kelly agreed that consociation could be studied and presented quantitatively with valid results even in modern times.[55] Kelly identified Austria, Netherlands, and Switzerland as the much-celebrated success of consociation, while Nigeria, Northern Ireland, and South Africa are newer political systems yielding positive consociational results.[56] In modern discourse, two groups dominate the debates on democracy in plural societies; consociationalism and centripetalism. The first advocates' group representation and power sharing, while the second recommends institutions that promote multi-ethnic parties.[57] The study by Bogaards adopted Lijphart's empirical and normative mixture model where, drawing from examples of some states including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, Fiji, Lebanon, Malaysia, and Northern Ireland, an empirical and a theoretical relationship was established between Consociationalism and Centripetalism.[58]

Lijphart initially built consociational democracy to explain democratic stability in some smaller European democracies. However, as other states emerged that were plural, the theory was expanded and extended beyond

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[52] Arend Lijphart, *supra* note 14 at 92.

[53] *Ibid*.

[54] *Ibid* at 71.

[55] Brighid Brooks Kelly, *supra* note 17.

[56] *Ibid* at 61.

[57] Matthijs Bogaards, "Consociationalism and Centripetalism: Friends or Foes?" (2019) 25:4 Swiss Political Science Review 519–537.

[58] *Ibid*.

the earlier case studies. Lijphart used Almond's classification of Western democracy to design a comparative study of Consociationalism in Europe and other parts of the world.[59] Almond classified Western democracy into Anglo-American political systems (exemplified by Britain and the United States), Continental European political systems (France, Germany, and Italy), and the Scandinavian and Low Countries. Thus, using consociationalism, Lijphart refined Almond's classification for a more consolidated theoretical and empirical study of democracy in the modern world.[60] Consociationalism met resistance and criticisms from many scholars through debates on its feasibility and undemocratic features. The concepts, causes, manifestations, and consequences associated with consociationalism are being debated contemporarily.[61] One of the problems linked to consociation is its failure to apply in some instances instead of the assumed peacebuilding and consensus-driven motive. Lebanon is a typical case here, where a consociation was built by confessional elites of various segments. However, the elites turned corrupt and lacked accountability and national patriotism. They led to misgovernance, patriotism, and clientelism that profoundly defeated the consociational arrangement.[62] In another view, Stojanovic argues that consociational democracy is not ideal for practice because, at best.[63] It falls back into ethnocracy, where ethnic politics will dominate governance, or at worse, it may turn into a liberal democracy where consociationalism will naturally and automatically vanish as against the anticipation of power sharing.

Consociationalism is relevant in understanding the democratic operation and Nigerian politics, particularly in the Fourth Republic. The foundation of the Fourth Republic in 1999 was entirely built on consociationalism from its inception. The elites agreed on power rotation and zoning of

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[59] Arend Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy" (2011) 21:2 World Politics: A Quarterly Journal of International Relations 205–207.

[60] *Ibid.*

[61] Ruby B Andeweg, "Consociational Democracy" (2000) 3:1 Annual Review of Political Science 509–536.

[62] Imad Salamey, "Failing Consociationalism in Lebanon and Integrative Approach" (2009) 14:2 International Journal of Peace Studies.

[63] Nenad Stojanovic, "Democracy, Ethnocracy and Consociational Democracy" (2019) 41:1 International Political Science Review.

strategic political offices without the prior consent of the electorates. Any President that emerges from the North, the Vice will automatically come from the South and vice versa. And this is also applicable in other important top offices such as the Senate, President, and Speaker House of Representatives. Despite the practical adoption of consociationalism, only some studies pay deserved attention to the nature and operation of consociationalism either with Nigeria as a case study or in comparison with other similar areas of study. Njoku attempted to explain how relevant consociationalism is to Nigeria.[64] However, he needs to receive more academic support in debates and further work on the subject matter to draw attention. This study is an effort and is considered a theoretical contribution to the debates on consociational democracy. This study believed that consociational democracy is theoretically suitable for Nigeria and has been practically applied for over 20 years in the Fourth Republic, as established in the discussion section. Nevertheless, for consociational democracy, where power sharing and zoning of strategic offices are adopted, Nigerian democracy might have collapsed.

V. POWER SHARING IN NIGERIA AND CONSTITUTIONAL DIVISION OF POWER IN THE FOURTH REPUBLIC

Power sharing in Nigeria or consociationalism, is practically divided into two. The first is the constitutional or legal provision from the constitution, while the second is the elite segmental arrangement, as rightly observed by Lijphart in his consociational democracy. The first category is adopting a federal structure with three tiers of government as provided by the Nigerian 1999 Constitution Federal, State, and Local Governments.[65] The pathway toward federalism is a challenging one or an easy one. The process began in 1914 when British colonial exploiters amalgamated Northern and Southern protectorates. The engendering of the federal was completed in 1954 by Sir

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[64] Raphael Chijioke Njoku, "Consociationalism: its Relevance for Nigeria" (2007) 5:2 Nationalism and Ethnic Politics 1–35.

[65] Yahaya T Baba, "Power Sharing and the Implications for Democratic Governance in Nigeria: The Case of National Assembly (1999-2011" (2017) 8:4 Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences 111–121.

Oliver Lytetton, the British colonial secretary, six years before the formal political independence. The first tier of government to exist was local government under the Native Authority system introduced by Lugard's Ordinance.[66] Later as observed above, the British colonizers systematically introduced the federal system in 1944 and consolidated it in the 1951 and 1954 Constitutions. States emerged in the 1970s after a bitter and bloody Civil War was fought between the Biafran secessionist separatist group and the Nigerian government. Nine states were introduced, and an additional 12 by General Yakubu Gowon, the military President, between 1966 and 1976. Successive military regimes created additional states making a total number of 36 by 1996. Local Government Reforms were initiated in 1984 to give more autonomy to local people for self-governance.[67]

The creation of states and local governments was to placate the bitter elite regional rivalry and incessant agitations from various ethnic, religious, and regional groups in the country.[68] By 1999, when the Fourth Republic began, there were constitutionally three tiers of government in Nigeria; the Federal with headquarters in FCT Abuja, 36 states across the six geopolitical zones of Northeast, Northcentral, Northwest, Southeast, Southsouth, and Southwest. Also, 774 local governments were in existence as of 1999.[69] Again, consociationalism is adopted in Nigeria because states and local governments gave regional and local elites the opportunity for autonomy and power control. Centrifugal powers were devolved into centripetalism, another exhibition of consociationalism. The Second Schedules of the 1999 Constitution provide three clear-cut divisions of powers among the three tiers of government in which the Exclusive List is

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[66] Okonkwo C Eze, Alexander Elimian, & Uchenna G Chinwuba, "The Politics of State Creation and National Integration in Nigeria" (2015) 8:1 Journal of Politics and Law 113–121.

[67] Bassey A Okon et al., "States and Local Government Areas Creation as a Strategy of National Integration or Disintegration in Nigeria" (2013) 3:1 Journal of Educational and Social Research 237–245.

[68] Okpu Ugbana, "Nigeria's Dilemma: Development or New States" (1988) 38:2 Italian Institute for African Orientation 183–203 issue: 2.

[69] David D Yongo, "States creation since 1967: An Imperative of the Military Contribution to Nation-Building in Nigeria" (2015) 7:3 African Journal of History and Culture 71–78.

exceptionally for the Federal Government, such as mining, currency, security, and foreign policy. The Concurrent List is shared between the Federal and State Governments, including education, health matters, and agriculture. The Residual List is shared by the state and local governments, including tax collection, market affairs, abattoirs, agriculture, primary health care, and basic education services.[70] Additionally, fiscal federalism or revenue sharing formula is constitutionally designed as: 52.68% for the Federal Government, 26.72% for the 36 states, and 20.60 for the 774 local governments. Attached with the formula in distribution or allocation is the 13% derivation formula for the oil-producing states since Nigeria depends on oil as the major source of foreign exchange and export. A result of agitation by the Niger-Delta people on resource control. The population is another yardstick in addition to internally generated revenue. Again, it displayed the practice of consociationalism in Nigeria, where powers and resources are allocated to agitations and contributions to foster peace.[71]

In the legislative arm of government, the constitution provides a convincing and satisfactory proportional representation, as suggested by Lijphart in the assumptions of consociationalism. Each state is represented in the National Assembly in the Upper Chamber of the Senate with 3 Senators irrespective of the population, size, or economic strength. In this regard, there are 109 Senators from the 36 states and FCT Abuja.[72] It assures a consensus where all majority and minority groups are given equal representation in the biggest lawmaking decision-making body. For instance, Kano State is populous while Bayelsa is the smallest, but they all have an equal number of three Senators in the Senate. Each state is now proportionally represented in the Federal House of Representatives based on population. Kano has 25 representatives, Lagos has 24 representatives, some other highly populated

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[70] Uwomano Benjamin Okpevra, "A Critique for Nigerian Federalism and Need for Restructuring Towards Achieving Vision 2030" (2021) 1:1 Fudan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences 265–284.

[71] Usman Sambo & Babayo Sule, "Local Government Autonomy and Inter-Governmental Relations in Contemporary Nigeria" in IO Aransi et al., eds, *Contemporary Issues in Nigerian Public Administration: A Festschrift in Honor of Professor Barrister Ishaq Isola Omoleke* (Ile Ife: Department of Public Administration Obafemi Awolowo University, 2020) 617-640.

[72] Rotimi T Suberu, *supra* note 38.

states of Kaduna have 15 and Rivers 13 representatives, while lesser populated states such as Gombe have six members and Bayelsa 5. It is to enable all segments of the Nigerian groups to have their voice represented. It is a power sharing in a plural society.

In the Executive arm of Government in Nigeria, the constitution provides for a compulsory representation from each state, at least a Minister. Some fortunate states sometimes end up getting two. Additionally, each state has a Federal Permanent Secretary for equal representation. Furthermore, an Agency, Federal Character Commission, was established. The objective of the Agency is to monitor employees in the national civil service to ensure that all states and local governments are represented based on equality and equity. It is to protect the minority groups from being dominated by the larger ethnic groups or bigger states from dominating the smaller states or, in some instances, to protect the educationally less advantageous states from being dominated by the highly educational states. This process enabled some minor groups to have their societies represented in national decision-making. For instance, the Kanuri ethnic group, dispersed across the Northern states, is predominantly located in Borno and Yobe. Giving them a state with a monthly federation allocation and other interventions provides them with an opportunity for autonomy and independence. The same with several other ethnic groups such as Tiv, Jukun, and Idoma in Benue, Ijaw in Bayelsa, and Igala and Ebira in Kogi State. In this regard, the country, unconscious of consociational democracy, practices consociationalism in advance more than many case studies. However, there is no adequate literature to refer to Nigeria as a case study except that of Njoku.[73]

Although consociationalism is depicted and exhibited practically in the above legal provisions of power sharing, there is a problem that consociational democracy encounters. Earlier, from 1999, the consensus was perfected in a mutual agreement, but as the journey into the Fourth Republic went more intense, issues that were a setback to consociationalism emerged. Agitations for resource control by the oil-producing states in

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[73] Raphael Chijioke Njoku, *supra* note 65.

Niger-Delta intensified, leading to militancy in the region and sabotage of the Nigerian economic mainstay. Calls for true federalism manifested where the constitutional fiscal arrangement of revenue generation and allocation is challenged, particularly by the oil-producing states. Additionally, calls intensified for restructuring Nigeria by different regions, specifically the Southern part of the country. The Southeast continues with the agitation for additional state creation. The politics of state creation continues across the country and local government creation. Some sections of the country agitated for the abolition of the House of Representatives, which the other populous states perceived as an attempt at manipulating a proportional representation based on the population component. The hitherto workable consociationalism in the Fourth Republic is reversed gradually, weakening the theory's applicability in Nigeria. The expressed dissatisfaction from all angles of the country continues to manifest daily, so there is a need to revisit Nigerian consociationalism immediately. However, the pattern of power sharing is one of the best in representing all warring factions and interest groups across the country.

VI. THE POLITICS OF ZONING IN THE FOURTH REPUBLIC

The issue of zoning is not a legal matter in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. In essence, it is unconstitutional. The elite used a scintillating arrangement from 1999, with the masses or electorates unaware. When the military decided to restore Nigeria to the path of democratic rule, a Constitution was designed, which is tagged 'Nigerian 1999 Constitution'. The constitution is unequivocal on zoning. No section provides a zoning formula. All the elective offices in the country were presented with the minimum requirements that contestants must fulfill before they are eligible for the contest.[74] Surprisingly, neither the People's Democratic Party (PDP), which ruled Nigeria for 16 years (1999-2015), nor the All Progressives Congress (APC), which has been ruling from 2015 to date,

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[74] TA Olaiya et al., "Rethinking Zoning Formula as Political Panacea for Ethnic Conflict and Governance Crisis in Nigeria" (2014) 4:26 Research on Humanities and Social Sciences 1–14.

provided a section in their constitution or even manifesto on zoning. The elite, in their wisdom, designed such a clandestine agreement based on what was later called a 'gentleman agreement. The elite unanimously agreed that power should first go to the South. To appease the aggrieved Yoruba ethnic group who has been nursing an old wound of the annulment of June 12, 1992, Presidential Election was anointed by the Northern elite for the plum position. It set their son on the path of an indisputable victory, a Yoruba man, former military General Olusegun Obasanjo.[75]

However, the consociational agreement was nearly bastardized and betrayed by President Obasanjo in 2007 when he orchestrated evil machinations of a 'Third Term Agenda' to perpetuate himself into power for life. The Nigerian Senate rescued the situation after they rejected an alleged N50 million bribe offer for each. Obasanjo, not satisfied and agonized by the decision and pressure from the Northerners who blocked his attempted life Presidency, did not give up but plotted a grand political strategy where he anointed a sick Northerner with a terminal disease, President Umaru Musa Yar'adua, for the presidency in 2007.[76] Late President Yar'adua could not hide the full manifestation of his chronic illness when he collapsed twice during the campaign. By the time the controversial 2007 Presidential Election was concluded, the Human Rights Watch reported it as one of the most violent and scandalous elections in the world.[77] President Yar'adua was already worn out with fatigue and sickness that kept deteriorating his health until his eventual death in 2010 when his Deputy, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, succeeded him. The Northerners struggled hard to convince the South that the North must complete the eight years of the supposed Yar'adua Presidency, but Jonathan persuaded them to allow him to serve one term.[78] It has displayed

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[75] Yahaya Yakubu, "Consociational Power Sharing and Political Equality in Nigeria: What Role for Federal Character Principle?" (2018) 2:10 International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science 1–5.

[76] Musa Abdullahi Sakanko & Joseph David, "The Effect of Democratic Zoning System on Nigeria Economy: Evidence of Niger State" (2018) 17:1 Etikonomi 25–36.

[77] *Reports on Violence in Nigeria's 2007 General Election*, by Human Rights Watch (Abuja: Human Rights Watch, 2007).

[78] Olusegun Adeniyi, *supra* note 16.

consociationalism as negotiations for power and zoned remain the elite's focal point. They are all in their efforts to neutralize conflict, as suggested by Lijphart, since the complex Nigerian nature will not allow any region, religious group, or ethnic segment to control power permanently as obtainable in smaller African countries. Many African leaders, such as Paul Biya in Cameroon, Yoweri Museveni in Uganda, Omar El Bashir in Sudan, and late Idris Deby in Chad, and other smaller African countries, succeeded in establishing a political dynasty that sustained them in power permanently. In Nigeria, such a phenomenon will not be possible because of the existence of two imbalanced but closely competing regions of North and South.[79]

President Jonathan secured victory in the 2011 Presidential Election after convincing the North to accept that he was serving just one term, as the Northern elite later narrated when the intensity of the clash between the North and South on the presidency heated.[80] By 2015, the North made it emphatic that it would not settle on anything but the presidency, no matter the repercussions. President Jonathan remained recalcitrant and continued with his pursuit of the second term. This contradiction existed on the verge of the establishment of a strong coalition opposition party of APC in 2013, which threatened to wrestle power from the PDP, which it did.[81] To augment the dilemma of Jonathan's candidature and PDP's chances of winning, Muhammadu Buhari, the lone standing strong opposition leader with a cult-like followership in Northern Nigeria, emerged as the party flagbearer of APC.[82] The 2015 General Election was a battle between President Jonathan and APC's Muhammadu Buhari. Buhari won the

79 Wouter Veenendaal & Leila Demarest, "How Population Size Affects Power sharing: a Comparison of Nigeria and Suriname" (2021) 27:3 Contemporary Politics 271–291.

80 Emmanuel Remi Aiyede, "Federalism, Power Sharing and The 2011 Presidential Election in Nigeria" (2011) 11:1 Journal of African Elections 31–53.

81 Siri Aas Rustad, "Between War and Peace: 50 years of Power sharing in Nigeria" (2008) 6:1 Centre for the Study of Civil War 1–5.

82 Babayo Sule, Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani, & Bakri Mat, "Opposition Political Parties and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria: Examining All Progressives Congress (APC) in the 2015 General Elections" (2018) 21:4 Tamkang Journal of International Affairs 81–112.

presidency, setting an unprecedented record of an incumbent President unseated by an opposition party in Nigeria's political history since independence.[83] This scenario exhibited how the Nigerian elite takes the consociational democracy with utmost faith that zoning must be accentuated irrespective of the opposing powers to avoid conflict. Obasanjo was blocked in 2007, and so also Jonathan in 2015. It simply sent a message that no zone, either North or South, will allow itself to be manipulated or shortchanged in the game of power in the future.

Apart from the seat of the President, other top political seats too were zoned. For instance, whenever the President emerged from the North, a Muslim-dominated region, he must be a Muslim. At the same time, his Vice must be a Christian from the South with Christian dominance in the Southeast and Southsouth and a significant Muslim population in the Southwest. In the same vein, a Southern President usually should be a Christian and his Vice a Muslim from the North.[84] In the National Assembly, whenever the Senate President is from the North, his Deputy emerges from the South and vice versa. The same applies to the House of Representatives. All these seemingly calculated arrangements are never enshrined in the Nigerian Constitution nor the parties' constitutions. The elites automated their grand strategy as they felt it desirable to maintain a peaceful power sharing using a zoning formula. This phenomenon succeeded in at least keeping the fragile national unity in a wheel of continuity. The aggressive and volatile ethnic, religious, and regional components also calm themselves with the arrangement. However, for this structural arrangement, Nigeria may have drifted into chaos that may cost the national existence. Even with the current zoning, some groups, such as the Igbo, are contemplating why they should remain in the union when they have been deliberately deprived of the presidency since 1966. The Igbo question is becoming a headache for the country as the Indigenous

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[83] Akindiyo Oladiran Opeyemi, Mohammed Siyaka, & Adanri Opeyemi, "Power Sharing Conundrum and the Challenges of 2015 General Elections in Nigeria" (2014) 2:3 International Journal of Development and Economic Sustainability 9–21.

[84] Ayo Awopeju, Olufemi Adelusi, & Ajinde Oluwashakin, "Zoning Formula and the Party Politics in Nigerian Democracy: A Crossroad for PDP in 2015 Presidential Election" (2012) 2:4 Research on Humanities and Social Sciences 11–19.

Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) secessionists are now threatening to separate from federalism using violence. In the same way, once the Southwest started sensing an attempted plot by the North to continue with the presidency in 2023, the Sunday Igboho-led Oduduwa separatist movement was initiated. Responding through violence is one strategy adopted to prevent any section of the country from perpetuating itself into power.[85]

VII. THE FUTURE OF NIGERIA'S DEMOCRACY

Power sharing is a shock absorber of Nigerian volatile and turmoil politics. It should be regarded as the stabilizer which successfully keeps the embers of nationhood in the country rolling. However, recent unfolding development is threatening the success of consociationalism or plural democratic success in Nigeria. It was earlier noted that President Obasanjo attempted to violate this arrangement, but the Senate thwarted his plot. President Jonathan also attempted but failed.[86] Recently, such rumors on the possibility or intention of President Buhari to continue after his eight years in 2023 were vehemently debunked by himself as unfounded and uncalled for. The battle on where the presidency should go in 2023 is threatening to tear the country apart and retrogress the consociational practice in the country. The Southern Governors threatened that power must go back to the South, while some Northern elite dismissed such threats as empty and unconstitutional. Zoning is a political term that gained currency in the Oxford Dictionary of African Politics. It is defined as "A political practice in Nigeria under which political parties agree to split their presidential and vice-presidential candidates between the North and South of the country and also to alternate the home area of the President between the North and South. The principle of zoning is designed to ensure that neither the North nor the South of the country is ever permanently excluded from power and that no one party is seen to only

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[85] Lateef Oluwafemi Buhari, "Separatist Agitation and Quest for State Police in Nigeria" (2018) 3:3 European Journal of Social Sciences Studies (European Journal of Social Sciences Studies) 249–262.

[86] J Bayo Adekanye, *Power Sharing in Multi-Ethnic Political System* (Geneva: UN Research Institute for Social Development, 1997).

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represent one part of the country."[87] This global recognition of Nigeria's consociational practice suffix portrays it as a model worthy of emulation by countries with a similar plurality.

After the defeat of President Jonathan by President Buhari in 2015, the North has been controlling centrifugal power for six years now. It is expected that the ruling APC will, based on the consociational arrangement, zone the Presidential ticket back to the South. The stumbling block to that is the opposition PDP, which is poking nosing to destabilize this arrangement because the last time they held power, it was at the Southern hand. The elites in PDP are confidently arguing and justifying that PDP must, as a matter of principle and gentleman agreement, as they termed it, zone the Presidential seat back to the North. If the PDP zones the ticket to the North, the North may continue to rule at the center. This will not augur well for the consociational settings that have been enjoying continuity but with instability. Of all these, the pundits and commentators are busy arguing that zoning and power sharing are unconstitutional and are taking the country backward.[88] For instance, a scenario where of all the healthy and strong contestants, only President Yar'adua was anointed by the PDP in 2007. Many better candidates might have emerged if the ticket had been left open. Today, the PDP, in a strategic move, is saying that it will leave the ticket open for all interested candidates, but all pointers are pointing towards a Northern candidate. In contrast, the APC clearly will zone the ticket to the South.[89]

The consequences of zoning and power sharing are that it promotes ethnic voting, regional politics, religious sentiments, mediocrity, and sacrifice of credibility and competency in favor of power sharing.[90] Some Ministers are

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[87] Nic Cheeseman, Eloise Bertrand, & Sa'eed Hussaini, *A Dictionary of African Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

[88] Remond Alexandra, "Power sharing in Africa: Does It Still Have a Role to Play?" (2015) 1:1 E-International Relations 1–8.

[89] Leo Sobechi, "Power Sharing Schemes Worsen APC's Zoning Confusion," *The Guardian Newspaper* (18 April 2021), online: <https://guardian.ng/politics/power sharing-schemes-worsen-apcs-zoning-confusion/>. Accessed on 26 December 2022.

[90] Scott Gates et al., "Power Sharing, Protection and Peace" (2016) 78:2 The Journal of Politics 1119–1215.

appointed based on the federal character who are non-performing and could not be replaced even if there are capable hands from other states just because of federal character. The same applies to public services. Besides, the zoning of major political offices in Nigeria sometimes heralded electoral violence and rigging of elections, and leaders defied accountability and transparency while the citizens were rendered choiceless. It is perceived as undemocratic and unconstitutional also. For instance, in 1999, the significant contestants in Alliance for Democracy, Olufalae, and PDP, President Obasanjo, were all from the Southwest as against the six geopolitical zones in the country and FCT Abuja. Also, in 2003, 2007, and 2011 Presidential Elections, violence characterized by rigging and manipulation accompanied the outcome of the results because, in the case of 2003, the ruling PDP decided to continue at all costs. In 2007, despite the two major contenders, President Yar'adua and President Buhari coming from the same geopolitical zones with the same ethnic, religious and regional identity and emerging from the same state, the ruling PDP could not give any chance to an opposition party. In the 2011 Presidential Election, the country was polarized into the North versus South, and the same was replicated in 2015. In 2023, the same scenario may re-emerge. Some of the inter-religious violence in Nigeria is attributed to the local power sharing and zoning of political offices.[91] Contrarily, Le Van believed that power sharing and zoning is a model working in Africa to curtail violence and conflict in plural societies.[92] It has succeeded in working peace out of the civil war in states like Kenya and Zimbabwe. At the same time, it deterred another outbreak in Nigeria.

Thus, the Nigerian political trajectory in the Fourth Republic is at a crossroads. A Rubicon has been attained, believed that democracy has come to stay in the country has spent the longest experiment of 21 years, which surpassed the total accumulated years of the First, Second, and Aborted Third Republic. Therefore, power sharing and zoning are those of

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[91] Jonas B Bunte & Laura Thaut Vinson, "Local power sharing institutions and interreligious violence in Nigeria" (2016) 53:1 Journal of Peace Research 49–65.

[92] Carl A Le Van, "Power Sharing and Inclusive Politics in Africa's Uncertain Democracies" (2010) 24:1 Governance 31–53.

the elixirs sustaining this democracy. Power sharing was not spelled out in the First and Second Republics, prompting the politicians to sail the country and rock the boat in power struggles. However, in as much as power sharing and zoning are tranquilizers in peacebuilding in Nigeria and conflict prevention mechanism. The future of Nigerian democracy is at stake because of the tendency to betray the agreement as experienced during Obasanjo and Jonathan, just as the body language of some Northern stalwarts is pointing toward retaining power in the North beyond 2023. Whatever may unfold in 2023 and beyond, Nigeria owing to its mega size, population, complex nature, and ability to surmount an existential threat severally, including Civil War and post-2015 CIA prediction of disintegration.

VI. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that power sharing and zoning in Nigeria consist of constitutional and unconstitutional trends. Adopting a federal structure enabled a constitutional sharing of power in the legislative and executive arms of government. Nigeria's complex nature made it convenient for the elite to design a power sharing arrangement, although out of the context of legality, but suitable for attaining a satisfactory political system that will guarantee peace and stability. Most states operating Lijphart's consociational democracy received adequate attention as case studies, but Nigeria did not. Consociationalism is at work in Nigeria, yet, few studies paid any attention to that. This work presented the Nigerian version of consociational democracy, where an empirical and a normative approach explored how the Nigerian version operates, including its successes and challenges. The Nigerian model is a role model for similar plural societies operating in newer democracies in developing states. Nigeria may not secure a stable peace and a strong democratic building without power sharing and zoning principles. It is here to suggest that while power sharing and zoning will continue to be relevant in Nigerian political sustainability, the phenomenon should not be a sacrifice on the altar of mediocrity and undemocratic practices. Any zoning should ensure that credibility and

competency are considered in addition to the popular will of the electorates. Violence, manipulation or rigging, disenfranchising the voters, and other inimical undemocratic practices should be eschewed. It suggests that the elite may try to imbibe the protégé of patriotism in their approach to national politics, which will gradually wither away this process for an integrated national politics that will no longer require the zoning for peace to prevail. In order words, consociationalism should be gradually eschewed by the elite not because it is not good but because it will prolong genuine national integration and political development in the long run.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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