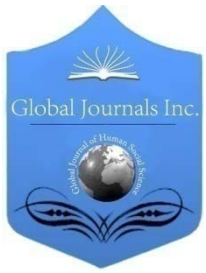
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Political Party Rebellion, Legislative Politics and Balance of Power in the 8th National Assembly of Nigeria

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Abstract- The issue of equitable power sharing in the All Progressives Congress (APC) controlled federal legislature has been very contentious in the 8th National Assembly of Nigeria. This paper analyses the legislative politics and politics of office distribution in Nigeria focusing on how elite struggles for power and influence shape the internal conflicts and implementation of zoning principles in the National Assembly. Legislatures evolve and develop internally in reaction to broader political environment. Zoning and rotation principle are part of a democratic culture used to address the problems inherent in a plural society of underdeveloped states. The zoning principle is structured to deliberately ensure some degree of diversity. This is indispensable to the maintenance of the Nigerian State due to its diversity in ethnicity, religion, language, education, etc. This article analyses the conflicts arising from an attempt to change the zoning principle and office distribution imbedded in the federal character principle in Nigeria. It focuses on how elite struggle for power and money shape the conception, implementation, and continuity of zoning of offices and positions in order to maintain ethnic balancing. The article adopts a methodology involving qualitative research based on a review of published literature.

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Peter Mbah [α] & Anthony Egobueze [σ]

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Keywords: zoning, federal character, senate, internal conflict, national assembly.

I. Introduction

Legislatures are the heart of any democratic government across the world and are not static institutions. It is the yardstick for measuring the views of the people in a democracy (Egobueze, 2013:2). They evolve and develop internally in reaction to broader political environment (Rotimi, 1988; Forgette, 1997). As political institution, it is seen as an important organ used to address the important question of unity and stability in any given society. However, this historic role played by the legislature has not attracted much attention, unlike the executive and the judiciary especially in the developing countries like Nigeria. This development according to Boyton and Kim (1975) 'may be attributed to the nature of legislative office that is neither the owner of the purse or the sword'. There seems to be little literature on legislature as an organ of government, legislative behavior and legislative conflicts within the legislature itself in Nigeria. Compared with the advanced Western democracies, literature on Nigerian legislature is not as rich as those of the western world. Many reasons accounted for this. First, most of the available historical accounts of the role of colonial legislatures were actual documentation of the British.

In spite of the strategic importance of the legislature, adequate and scientific explanations to the conflicts within the two chambers especially in the Senate have not been given considerable academic attention. Political analysts and academics rarely focus attention on scientific explanation of the conflicts between the Senate and the House of Representatives or within any one of them in Nigeria (Mbah, 2014:677).

When we speak of politics, we refer to all activities that are directly or indirectly associated with the emergence, consolidation and use or exercise of state power (Nnoli, 2003:12). The state is its centerpiece and it refers to what the politicians do. The 8th Legislative session of the National Assembly began in 9th of June, 2015. Legislators had arrived in Abuja for their inauguration session and were faced with how to elect the principal officers of the Assembly, maintaining zoning balance and myriad of other problems and issues relating to the Nigerian economy. The elections of Senator Bukola Saraki of All Progressives Congress (APC) the majority party in the Assembly, Senator Ike Ekweremadu and Senator David Mark of People's Democratic Party (PDP) as Senate President, Deputy Senate President and Senate Leader respectively means that a larger-than-usual deception is being carried out and also the elections of Rt. Hon. Yakubu Dogara and Hon. Lasun Yusuf (APC) as Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives respectively, is not an unusual event in the annals of Nigeria's political history. In other words, the politics inside the legislative house is not new. However, the emergence of the leadership of the 8th National Assembly has thrown up many issues which have generated conflicts and crisis within the APC and the Assembly. This has put into debate the merits and faults of majoritarian and party theories to explain legislative actions.

Mbah, (2014:678) argues that many scholars and social commentators see the prevalent explanations

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of the conflicts in the National Assembly as part of unavoidable teething problems of a nascent democracy. Also, Haber, (citation needed) argues that in some African countries, the legislature remains young with stunt growth and fragility due to the devastating consequences of wars, conflict and dictatorship. Conflicts within the National Assembly are not merely the result of the learning process of the new democratic process. It is assumed that legislators will realize the co-ordinate characters within National Assembly and, therefore, the desideration of cooperative work. There are other reasons advanced that sound rhetoric favouring one chamber or the other and this has accumulated in both the popular press and the writings of political scientists. Much of this rhetoric revolves around the legitimacy of disagreement between the Senate and House of Representatives. In many publications by scholars, there are opinions that the platform of a party winning the majority in each Chamber usually breeds disagreement and conflict. Usually, if the same party wins a majority in legislature, output is often held to reflect the extent of disagreement between the members. It is expected that conflicts will be common between the two Chambers when different parties are in the majority in both Chambers. In this case, issues are usually seen from different views and perspectives (Mbah, 2014: 678). Increasingly this explanation is deemed to be an optimist's dream.

In this case, if issues are seen from different views and perspectives, no party will be willing to abandon its position. Consequently, conflicts and disagreements will be based on policy disagreements. The 2015 general elections made the All Progressives Congress (APC) pivotal in the National Assembly. The National Assembly is not divided by electoral results. Nigerians expected that acting upon their strengthened bargaining position in the National Assembly, that rancorous and conflictive relationships could be reduced to its barest minimum. It was assumed that a party with a majority in the two chambers of the legislature and controls the executive will then be able to carry out its platforms. This has not been the case.

However, in a country such as Nigeria where economic development is at the lowest level, the motivating factor has always been private and sectional interests as the driving force of politics and of the feuds within the chambers. Many legislators from the opposition party and some from the APC see the proverbial "hand of Esau and voice of Jacob" in these conflicts. Consequently, many allegations have been made. Accusing fingers have been pointed at the former Leader of the APC, Ahmed Tinubu for leading some legislators' against the election of Burkola Saraki as the Senate President to destabilize the National Assembly. Some see it as PDP plan to slight the APC government.

This paper, therefore, aims to critically evaluate how insistence of the maintenance of the zoning principle as a balance of power mechanism reinforces the conflictive and rancorous relationships within the APC controlled National Assembly, especially the Senate. This strand of analysis is central in framing our problematique for the conflict in the Senate Chamber. In reality, APC intra-legislative conflicts are not as a result of a different party controlling the two legislative arms, being in minority in the Assembly or in the Senate, learning process and on the issue of principle and dedication to good legislation by standing on both sides of public interest, but, however, reflect a great deal of party rebellion and insistence by some members in maintaining the zoning principle. The significance of this study is that first, it could serve as an experimental control for testing some assumptions underlying the study of legislative conflicts in Africa particularly those positing a link between quality of leadership and zoning. Second, studies of the legislature focus attention on inter-party legislative conflicts rather than intra-party legislative conflicts and this has not received much academic attention in the study of legislatures in Nigeria.

II. African Legislature: A Conceptual Reflection

A legislature is the embodiment of the doctrine of popular sovereignty, which recognizes that the people as are the source of all political power. Citizens choose by popular vote the legislators, or representatives, whom they want to serve them. The representatives are expected to be sensitive to the needs of their constituents and to represent their constituents' interests in the legislature (http://legal-dictionary.thefree-dictionary.com/constituents). Discussions about African democracies have generally focus on good governance, leadership, and transparency of the executive branches, with less attention on the pivotal role that legislatures have to play in further advancing the continent's democratic processes today (Sanders, 2014). The study of African politics has long focused on the role of the executive, or on the party, and less commonly on the role of parliament. Big men and a few women dominated national politics, either as autocrats or, infrequently, as democrats. They and their close associates were salient and largely determinative of political machinations and outcomes. Thus the executive branch was for many decades omnipotent in the majority of sub-Saharan African politics (Protberg, 2013).

Orji (2008: 125) argues that intense elite struggles for power are a striking feature of Nigerian politics. The key element of the struggle has been the tension between elites from the largely Moslem North and the Christian South. The underlying issues behind the political tension are the fears in Northern Nigeria that the more educated Southern elite would dominate state institutions as well as concerns in Southern Nigeria that the more populous North would have upper hand in

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majoritarian electoral contest. The foregoing argument has dominated political science literature regarding conflicts in Nigeria before and after the Nigerian civil war. However, the internal conflict within the APC does not follow this fault line of Moslem North and Christian South divide, for both Saraki and Lawan including Dogara are from the North. Governing parties that are internally divided have greater difficulty in forming the legislative majorities necessary to pass laws quickly, especially if their preferences are further away from the opposition (Haber, 2015). Again, cultural considerations, historical experiences, and political realities affect the evolution and development of legislative bodies (Ornstein, 1992:3). In some countries, the legislature remains very weak despite the return to multiparty politics, the holding of presidential and legislative elections at regular intervals, and even the alternation of power between rival political parties (Barkan, 2009:3). In Nigeria, the reality lies somewhere in between-the legislature remains weak, but aspires to, and to a limited extent has achieved, a larger role (Barkan, 2009). Some of the setbacks of the development of legislatures in Africa and conflicts therein, according to Barkan (2009:4) is that the colonial legacies in Francophone and Lusophone Africa were not any more supportive of the development of a legislature that could perform the core functions.

In explaining what constitutes a strong legislature, Krishnan (2013:3) argues that a good starting point in answering such a complex question is to determine whether examples of effective legislatures can be identified. Developing a benchmark to measure against will allow the characteristics of strong, effective, and independent legislatures to be determined. These would allow different political systems to be analytically assessed and distinctions to be made between weak legislatures that rubber-stamp and stronger legislatures with the abilities to act with or without executive or party approval (Krishnan, 2013:4).Legislative ineffectiveness is part of larger issues of poor governance and weak state structures (Krishnan, 2013).

Recent studies of legislative organization have advanced competing distributive, informational, and partisan theories of legislative organization. Analyzed in light of principal-agent framework, each offers a distinct account of the reasons for and the conditions most conducive to different types of legislative rules reform. In particular, the principal-agent framework permits better understanding of the conditions promoting partisan reform of House rules under the Senate President or the Speaker (Forgette, 1997: 375). Recent positive theory based on United States Congressional studies argues for policy preference-based models to explain the choice of legislative institutions; an alternative theoretical approach holds that re-election goals shape preferences over institutional arrangements. Still other theorists emphasize "supply-side" explanations of partisanship and party leadership in enabling legislators to overcome collective action problems in policy and institutions (Remington, 1998:545). The problem remains, however, that these diverse approaches cannot be combined into a single comprehensive theory to explain internal conflicts within legislative houses, especially that of Nigerian legislature. In recent theorizing, Putnam (2007) contends that ethnic and racial diversity can dampen both out-group and in-group cohesion. In other words, theories of racial or power threat are a sub-set of theories of realistic group conflict (Wong and Drake, 2006:5). The central claim is that the presence of an out-group in sufficient numbers will generate competition for scarce resources and thus local hostility (Hopkins, 2010:41). Hopkins further contends that since the mechanisms are exclusively local, the effect should be a function of local population shares and vary over time to the extent that population shares do (Author omitted 2010:41). Threat might be especially acute in places of relative or increasing resource deprivation (Branton and Jones, 2005) or of rising out-group political power (Dancygier, 2007). To be sure, realistic group conflict is not the only way through which to view Nigeria's response to local crisis arising from political change. The kind of social conflict in the legislative assembly refers to the struggles over values and claims to status, power, and scarce resources.

It is in part of this underdevelopment that many (donor) initiatives were introduced in the period from the 1990s onwards to "build the capacity" of parliament in different parts of Africa. And without doubt, there were, indeed, technical capacities in need of being developed. But clearly, the issues arising from the weaknesses of the legislature are not simply or only technical in nature; in fact, they are mainly – and perhaps overwhelmingly political in nature (CODESRIA, 2006:1). These problems have manifested themselves in a variety of ways, including through the struggles for relative autonomy from the executive, tensions arising from the tendency towards presidentialism in Africa's new democracies, the instability and fragmentation of political parties, the poor structuring of the relationship between elected legislators and party bosses, the easy vulnerability of electoral systems to various kinds of manipulation, etc (CODESRIA, 2006:1). Thus, African legislatures are largely absent from comparative body of literature about parliaments and their members.

The ongoing leadership crisis about the elections of the Senate President and Speaker House of Representatives have been profoundly affected by the All Progressives Congress (APC) rejection of Senator Burkola Saraki and Yakubu Dogara who they argue were not the first choice of the party in 109 Senate and 360 House of Representatives dominated by the APC. Since the inauguration of the 8th National Assembly and the election of the leadership of both the Senate and the House of Representatives where Senator Burkola Saraki

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and Hon. Yakubu Dogara emerged Senate President and Speaker of the House of Representatives respectively against the position of their party, the APC, the party which won the Presidential and National Assembly elections has been thrown into crisis. The elections of these two principal officers and the subsequent chaos that resulted therefron proved a bombshell for the party. This is because according to Easterbrook (1983:547-548) legislatures comprise many members; they do not have "intents" or "designs". It is not only impossible to reason from the one statute to another but also impossible to reason from one or more sections of a statute to a problem not resolve. The existence of agenda control within a legislature makes it impossible for a party-even one that knows each legislator's complete table of preferences-to say what the whole body would have done with a proposal it did not consider in fact. As a federal state, an acknowledgement of the diverse interests needs to be accommodated.

In fact, one cannot rule out the possibility that faced with electing principal officers in the National Assembly would follow party guidelines strictly without considering politics of region, religion and ethnicity in a heterogeneous country like Nigeria. Politics and appointments or even elections consider the foregoing factors as ingredients of national politics. The bone of contention was between the "Like Minds" loyal to Burkola Saraki and the "Senate Unity Forum" which was formed as Senator Ahmad Lawan's support base. The Lawan group has the support of the APC leader, Ahmed Tinubu while the Burkola Saraki's group is a radical group who believes in equity and zoning. The President comes from the North West while the Vice President comes from the South West. In their reasoning, it will be unfair to also have the Senate President from the North East in the person of Ahmed Lawan who comes from Yobe State and Speaker of the House, Femi Gbajabiamila who comes from Lagos State, the South West, and the same zone as the Vice President. If this is allowed to happened, the North Central will lose - out completely in the national scheme of things. The Chairman of the APC comes from the South -South in the person of John Oyegun. So, Saraki, from the North-Central had to act fast, of which he acted and got the Senate President against the spirit and guideline of his party. Arguably, the main character in Buhari's quest to victory was National leader of the APC, Ahmed Tinubu. He played important role in the election of the President by mobilizing the entire South West to vote for Buhari. But that is not to deny the unifying factor, the zoning formula. These two groups were the power contending forces in the Senate.

Therefore, the crisis and conflict in the Senate is induced by the struggle of like Minds, loyal to Burkola Saraki to reintroduce the zoning principle in the Senate which the PDP used in sharing important national offices when they controlled the Federal government from 1999 to 2015. This principle is driven by the Federal Character principle in the 1999 constitution. The introduction of the principle was due to claims of marginalization and demands for more equitable sharing of petroleum resources to all sections of the country, ethnic or states. Years of centralism by the military undercut ethnic-based politicians. Consequently, federal character was a negotiated balance between centripetal (military) and centrifugal (ethnic) instincts in the Nigerian political lexicon (Ibeanu, 2012: 19). Widely popular claims, especially in the South, state that military rule was a guise for domination by the North also meant that an ideology of balance between North and South, between Christians and Moslems and among States and geo-political zones should become a central principle of constitution making in Nigeria (Ibeanu, 2012). Section --- of the constitution of Nigeria 1999 outlaws discrimination on the basis of race, gender, or religion. Undoubtedly, one of the most discussed issues in Nigeria today is the issue of political zoning. Zoning, properly defined, is an arrangement in which political offices at the national, state and local government are distributed or rotated to ensure that no part of any political configuration is shortchanged. The concept seeks to formalize a pattern whereby the geo-ethnic origin or zone of the national leadership alternates or is accommodated in major political offices. It is an attempt to address the important question of unity in diversity and stability through consciational practices.

Accordingly, any practice by a political party that undermines the clarity, visibility, and purity of that choice goes against the grains and constitutes a violation of the constitution. This principle has become a major plank on which the Nigerian political class has framed the discourse of national unity and stability. This is what the Saraki group wants maintained that fueled the crisis in the Senate. The Part arguing otherwise that its first choice for the post of Senate President was Ahmad Lawan, while also recommending Femi Gbajabiamila for Speakership. However, members of the House of Representatives elected Yakubu Dogara, who represents Bogoro/ Tafawa Balewa Federal Constituency in Bauchi State, North East, as the Speaker of the 8th Assembly. Mr. Dogara defeated Femi Gbajabiamila, who represents Surulere federal constituency, Lagos state, South West, in a keenly contested election.

The plan to dictate to the National Assembly whom to elect as principal officers could have been possible under the parliamentary system where the party that wins the majority seats in the parliament determines the allocation and the direction of leadership. But Nigeria is practicing presidential system of government as is provided for in the Constitution of Nigeria, 1999 which does not recognize party supremacy after electioneering victory for the office of

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the Senate President and the Deputy Senate President as well as the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives. However, the APC wanted to dictate how National Assembly officials should emerge which is a departure from the spirit and letters of the Constitution Section 50 of the constitution states that:

> There shall be:- (a) a President and a Deputy President of the Senate, who shall be elected by the members of that House from among themselves; and
>
> (b) a Speaker and a Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, who shall be elected by the members of that House from among themselves (FGN,1999).

members of the National Assembly are free to elect their leaders without recourse to any party.

Positive political institution focuses on designing models that recognize that political decisions are not made in an institutional vacuum (Schwartz, Spiller and Urbitztondo, 1994). Legislatures have political parties, committees, caucuses, recognition and addenda rules all of which add to the predictability of policy decisions. Easterbrook (cited in Schwartz, Spiller, and Santiago, 1994:52) suggested that the presence agenda control makes it impossible to predict what would emerge from the legislative process. This is because politics is fraught with uncertainty. Office holders do not know with precision the preferences of other holders on every issue especially in the developing countries where state power and political positions mean money. One can never fully anticipate how the personnel of any branch of government will change in the near future. Changes in the political environment lead to changes in the saliency of various issues for political actors (Schwartz, Spiller, and Urbiztondo, 1994:52). Certainly, when the inauguration of the 8th National Assembly took place on the 9th of June, 2015, and some principal officers emerged, nerves were raised, protest from some members of the APC followed and rejection of the elected officers by the aggrieved party members who felt that what happened was an act of rebellion, refused to recognize their leadership in the National Assembly. In-fighting and intrigues on how to remove them led to the rowdy session on June 25, 2015 in which the Maze which is the symbol of authority was nearly snatched in order to achieve the removal of the Speaker of the House of Representatives. This forced the House to adjourn plenary till July 28, 2015.

a) The Politics of Zoning, Conflict and Balance of Power in the 8th National Assembly

The Nigerian Federation is an assembly of several nationalities striving to forge a more perfect union from peoples of diverse heritage. To further this objective, various forms of affirmative action have been proposed and taken to promote the feeling of belonging and inclusiveness by all segments of the country. The terms Federal Character, Zoning, Rotation, Uniform Development, National Character, etc, have been used to describe the various forms of affirmative action designed to engender feelings of belonging and national inclusiveness in appointments to positions of national leadership. The degree of acceptance of affirmative action in our national life is evidenced in an agency like the Federal Character Commission that is enshrined in the Constitution of the country (Ovienmhada, 2015:1).

The office sharing arrangements express the tendency of the Nigerian elite since the 1970s to manage ethnic diversity and promote a Nigerian state project by avoiding divisive politics and emphasizing 'unity in diversity'. This position shows the basis, contradictions and ambivalence that underline the principles of federal character and zoning as modalities for sharing power, positions and resources between the Nigerian elite, and on the other hand, as frameworks and processes through which the elite seek to realize their interests within nonviolent distributive politics (Orji,2008:125).

b) Zoning and Conflict in the 8th National Assembly

The zoning principle is based on the latitudinal or horizontal relations relating to nation building which deals with interactions among constituent social forces in the emergent nation-state. The central content of this set of relations is the nature of competition and cooperation among the various social forces-ethnic, racial, religious etc- either created or nurtured by colonialism as part of vertical relations of aggregation (Ibeanu, 2012:13). Zoning is an arrangement in which political offices at the national, states and local governments are distributed or rotated to ensure that no part of any political configuration is short-changed or marginalized. It is a form of socio-political contract (Akinola, 1996:18), which is used for purposes of rotating major offices. It is, therefore, opium for maintaining unity and political balance which is necessitated by the logic that the more politically-endowed zone does not dominate the politically disadvantaged zone with its economic advantage. In this kind of arrangement, we do not underrate the importance of political power in distribution of scarce resources where the ruling is unproductive and weak economically. However, over a decade of return to democracy, Nigeria's federal system has been resilient to some of the political tensions that would have otherwise torn it apart (Nkume-Okorie, 2014:15).

Nigeria's aspirations have been usually centred on how to develop a broad and universally accepted framework for crisis free and equitable transfer of power, sharing of offices, including political participation (Ojonugwa, 2015). Ojonnugwa further argues that in order to fashion out a new formula to create a basis for equitable distribution of political power through the electoral process, one of such suggestions was the proposal for the principle of zoning of political offices

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among the six geo-political zones structure. This was first recommended by the 1995 Constituent Assembly organized by General Abacha's administration. Although the recommendation was never contained in the 1999 constitution, the six geo-political zones have come to be recognized as the basis for power sharing. It was on the strength of this that the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), through a consensus, adopted zoning of political offices for the 1999 general elections (Ojonugwa, 2015).

It was originally introduced into Nigeria's polity during the second republic (1979- 1983) in the Article 21 of the internal rules and regulations of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), which was the ruling party at that time. In the Fourth Republic, the PDP, which has been in power since 1999 till 2015, retained this practice internally. The practical operation of zoning demands that key positions, such as that of the office of the President of the Republic, the Vice-President, the Senate President and his vice, the Speaker of the House of Representatives and his deputy and the Secretary to the government of the federation, be occupied by people from different States and geopolitical zones (Ojonugwa, 2015: 4). In the Fourth Republic, the PDP, which was in power since 1999 till 2015, retained this practice internally to share appointments and offices. The practical operation of zoning demands that key positions, such as that of the office of the President of the Republic, the Vice-President, the Senate President and his vice, the Speaker of the House of Representatives and his deputy and the secretary to the government of the federation, be occupied by people from different states and geopolitical zones. The This principle has also been extended beyond the Federal level to both State and Local governments.

One of the factors that led to the principle of zoning is the fear of domination by one ethnic group or zone by another in elective positions and appointments. In other words, the problem of ensuring a reasonable degree of unity under conditions of diversity is central in the structuring and running of federal governments (Awa, 1973:99). The degree to which unity is achieved will determine whether the inclusive government will persist as a political system. Consequently, a political community exists in a society whose members' posses' mutual sympathy and loyalty with respect to their participation in a common political unit, regardless of differences in custom, religion, social economic status, nationality, etc. In other words, in a political community, there are among the people, a shared national identity. In every society it is the common political structure shared by the members that tends to create minimal affective bonds among them (Awa, 1973). The National Assembly is one. The commitment to values enables men to devise means for reconciling or adjusting conflicting interests and for turning coercive force into legitimate authority (Cohen, 1968:28). When people enter public life, they bring their backgrounds and experiences with them. Sometimes, these present ethical dilemmas in the form of conflicts of interest. In the legislature, conflicts typically arise when a legislator has the potential to receive a personal benefit based on his or her public position. States are aware that conflicts of interest must be addressed and most have done so either directly or indirectly through the federal character principle or zoning.

In Nigeria, zoning has been accepted as an important political reality, hence there is always a concerted effort to ensure its application in all issues or distribution of offices to reach a harmonious and stable polity. For example, the introduction of the Federal Character Commission in the Constitution is a deliberate provision to safeguard the interests of both the majority and minority ethnic nationalities. Today, the appointment of Federal Ministers is based strictly on the realization of the imperative of zoning. Constitutionally, each State of the federation is as a matter of Constitutional requirement to be represented in the Federal Cabinet (Osuji, 2014: 2). It was not envisaged that in a country of 36 States; six geopolitical zones and a population of over 180 million people with so many fault lines, will agree to the choice of a political party picking its candidates without considering zoning (Ayelabowo, 2015). Ideologically, zoning is an imperative for the resolution of ethnic conflict in Nigeria. This is because the notion that ideology will destroy ethnicity is political fallacy. Thus, in the contest between the two, ethnicity which has the greater energy due to its rooted nature will prevail (Akinola, 1996), and because it prevails, the zoning principle is adopted as an ideology for maintaining ethnic balance. Although Nigeria consists of no less than 250 ethnic and linguistic groups, the problem of integration goes beyond such heterogeneity (Akinola, 1996:22). Three ethnic groups, Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa/Fulani is greater than most other African national populations, and this suggests the need for greater ingenuity in the art of political engineering (Akinola, 1996). Each of the major groups is larger than most African countries. Riker (cited in Akinola, 1996:19) posits that Nigeria is one of ex-British Federalisms that does not display the unification of a number of separate colonies no one of which have been viable alone. Therefore, marked differences in language, religion, custom, and culture could not be obliterated by the mere fact of amalgamation (Odumosu, cited in Akinola, 1996: 19). It was an attempt to converge diverse interest of the various nationalities that the social construction of zoning as a model emerged. Her size and underdevelopment makes it imperative for its adoption. Nigerian politics relates to zoning of national leadership and who gets what, how, and when.

So its re-introduction in the 8th National Assembly has become a source of conflicts and rancour within the ruling APC. For a very long time, major political appointments have been based on party

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guidelines and recommendations made by the party and these were followed for appointments into public positions but not always in the election of principal officers of the National Assembly. Although zoning is not necessarily constitutional, but the federal character principle is, and has helped in the inclusion of diverse groups and interests in the sharing of political power. The principle is a way to diffuse ethnic, religious and other sectional interests as the basis for sharing political offices (Okwenna, 2011:4). The Peoples Democratic Party employs this in order to rotate resources among the geo-political zones in Nigeria. Any issue unresolved in political parties may however have a reverberating effect on the political landscape of Nigeria. What was supposed to be an internal arrangement by the APC is actually impacting heavily on the political evolution of Nigeria. The Constitution of most parties recognizes Nigeria as having six (6) geo-political zones. These zones have been the basis of power sharing and political participation, especially since the 1995 Constitutional Conference. The six geopolitical zones are designed to ensure equal participation of all the segments of the country in its administration. Indeed section 14 (3) of the 1999 Nigeria constitution recognizes this affirmative principle in what it calls the "Federal Character", which is to foster equity, justice and fairness among Nigerians from the various zones of the country.

The 8th Senate of the National Assembly was inaugurated on June 9, 2015 amid controversies. The controversy started from a competition between Senator Bukola Saraki, APC member representing Kwara Central Senatorial District in the North Central Geo-Political zone and Senator Ahmad Lawan, another APC member representing Yobe North in the North East Geo-Political zone of Nigeria in the race to the office of President of the Senate. The Senate instantly became divided into two factions, the pro-Saraki and the pro-Lawan groups. This conflict was provoked by struggle over the choice of leadership of the Senate. Disagreement or conflict in the senate is not new. The previous conflicts in the Senate have always been traced to the meddlesomeness of the executive arm in the choice of who will occupy the two presiding offices, President and Deputy of the Senate and other principal officers of the National Assembly (Chukwu, 2015:12). In 1999, when the Fourth Republic was inaugurated, President Obasanjo took the advantage of his office to impose leaders on the Senate and House of Representatives in his desperate effort to install stooges who would be loyal to his interferences in the affairs of the legislature. The conflict was, however, worse in the Senate because the Senators then were more prone to Obasanjo's manipulative tendencies than their counterparts in the House of Representatives. This explained why the eight years of Obasanjo in office produced five Presidents of the Senate (Chukwu, 2015:12).

Currently, the pro-Saraki faction operates under the umbrella of the Like Minds Senators (LMS) while the pro-group operates under the aegis of the Senate Unity Forum (SUF). Before the Senate leadership election, these groups used all available means including blackmail, positive persuasive campaigns and pernicious propaganda to market their candidates to then Senators-elect. Within the APC, the party leadership was behind Senator Lawan and did everything within its powers including negotiation, persuasion and perhaps intimidation, to convince or cow Senator Saraki to relinquish his ambition to his rival but these could not deter Saraki, as he defied all pressures to go for the contest. This defiant attitude and perceived disregard for party supremacy by Saraki provoked the leadership of the party to draw a battle line between him and the party's power brokers such as the former Governor of Lagos State, Bola Tinubu, the National Chairman of the APC and President Muhammadu Buhari.

Saraki eventually emerged as the President of the Senate on June 9, 2015. The APC hierarchy expected that Saraki haven won the election might at least allow Lawan to be appointed or selected as the Senate Majority Leader and George Akume as the his Deputy as a compromise to the party . The APC through its National Chairman and the Peace Committee made several attempts to persuade Saraki to respect some of the decisions of its leadership However, this did not happen. Owing to this strong stance of the Saraki Group, the leadership of APC vowed to fight back. This explains why the Senate has not known peace in the last few months after its inaugurated.

The APC appears to have given its enemies a stick to beat the party. This is because the absence of APC Senators in the Chamber ensured the emergence of Senator Ike Ekweremadu of the PDP as the Deputy Senate President. For two weeks, the governing party was at war with itself over the election of Burkola Saraki and Yakubu Dogara as Senate President and Speaker of House of Representatives respectively. While the inauguration of the National Assembly was going on, the APC Senators were at the International Conference Centre for a meeting with the President, which gave the Saraki group and PDP the opportunity to have their way. This is because elected legislatures usually include a combination of perspectives that is very different from the perspectives of the people they are supposed to represent or even their party. They are wealthier, better educated, with fewer women, fewer working class people, and so on. They are not "representative" of the people who elected them in terms of their demographics and points of view. This is what the Hannah Pitkin calls "descriptive representation" (Pitkin, 1972). They are not only different in their perspectives compared to the people they represent, they are also largely diverse.

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There is overriding heterogeneity of perspectives in terms of party affiliation, ethnicity or state of origin among elected legislators in the National Assembly. Consequently, the National Assembly is used to balance ethnicity and region or zone. The Senate represents equality of State, while the House represents geographical spread. Building on theories of legislative decision-making and intra-party politics, we argue that the speed at which bills are passed and peace maintained is driven by the governing party's internal cohesiveness and its ideological distance to the opposition. Governing parties that are internally divided have greater difficulty in forming the legislative majorities necessary to pass laws quickly and maintain internal stability especially if their preferences are further away from the opposition (Haber, 2015). From the APC, especially Lawan and Femi Gbajabiamila groups, there is the argument that zoning was never a policy that could work with polarized and suspicious political elites like ours. They argue that zoning negates the vital principles of democracy because it shrinks the political space of choice. (authority missing)

In a multi-state, zone and multi-ethnic state, the distributive network of the dividends of democracy lacks clarity. This is because ethnicity has become such a complex subject in national debate in Nigeria. The competition that it generates tends to have its roots in delusion, economics, fear, ignorance, perception, religion and most of all politics among others. William (1978) (cited in Akinola, 2013:2) who also carried out a study of interaction among the nations and nationalities in the Nigerian State, observed that: "Harmony, co-operation and unity have manifestly not characterized social and political life in post-independent Nigeria. Whenever the Nigerian political system has most dramatically experienced breakdowns - constitutional crisis, political immobilism, coups d'état, civil war, etc. - this has always occurred within a context of inter-ethnic controversy. The accuracy of this observation is supported by the fact that almost all the major crisis that has fundamentally affected the security of the Nigerian State can be traced to her balance of power problems (Akinola, 2013:2).

This configuration of variables leads both politicians and citizens to define their political interests in terms of their ethnic and/or regional identities rather than in terms of different positions on issues that are shared by peoples of different regions and ethnic groups. Put differently, in plural and agrarian societies where most people are tied to the land and their local community, one's place of residence and the cultural and linguistic affinities one shares with one's neighbours often defines one's perspective of politics. This is especially true when political leaders and aspiring leaders mobilize the population on the basis of these identities during the run-up to an election or for other political objectives (Mozaffar, Scarritt, and Galaich 2003; Posner 2004, 2005). It is also a configuration of factors that encourages the formation of patron-client political organizations and retards the development and performance of the legislature.

The conflict in the National Assembly especially between the two groups can be explained by adopting the Hortala-Vallve (2008) approach by modeling the negotiation that leads to a vote trading agreement as a non-cooperative dynamic game. A negotiation is a process of joint decision making. It is communication direct or tacit, between individuals who are trying to forge an agreement for mutual benefit. Hortala-Vallve (2008:6) models it as a repeated game with an endogenous status quo: in each period any alternative can challenge the status quo; the majoritarian winner becomes the status quo for next period; and the process only ends when no legislator wishes to continue the process any further and thus, the status quo at the point when the process ends is the policy that is finally implemented. In this model, legislators are farsighted in the sense that they consider not only the benefits of voting in favour of a particular policy today, but also the benefits of alternatives that are likely to replace that policy in the future (Hortala-Vallve, 2008). Penn (2009) also considers farsighted legislators but looks at a situation where a policy is enacted every period and "decisions made today can greatly affect the types of decisions that are feasible tomorrow.

The transfer of power between fractions of the dominant classes in Nigeria is such a contested terrain. In the ensuing warlike struggles, different groups and individuals try to outdo one another in bending fragile rules and short-circuiting laid down processes. Winners and losers alike distrust the rules as well as themselves, thus further weakening the rules and procedures, and making it impossible for a stable regime of power transfer and winner to emerge. This lawlessness also explains why personalization of power and private concepts of public business are very rampant (Ibeanu and Mbah, 2014:46-47) and the struggle for positions within the APC controlled National Assembly is rife and cut throat in nature.

Since the State is all-powerful and there are few safeguards on how its tremendous power is to be used in a moderate and civil manner, groups and individuals take a great stock in controlling the power of the postcolonial State. Politics is everything and everything is politics, including life and death. In Nigeria, whoever wins in politics wins everything, and whoever loses, loses everything, including lives and livelihoods. The primacy of politics becomes even worse as economic resources contract or become more concentrated, usually as a result of the persistence of the colonial economic project that supports dependence, stagnation and underdevelopment. As this happens, the social base of the postcolonial State becomes even narrower, further intensifying the primacy of politics. Arbitrariness,

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lack of moderating political institutions and the narrow social base of the postcolonial state lead to a general lack of faith in it by the people (Ibeanu and Mbah, 2014:43). Therefore, this state exhibits a very low level of legitimacy. Low legitimacy further denudes the confidence of disadvantaged groups in the capacity of the State to protect their interests. Nor are dominant groups less distrustful of the State. For dominant groups, lack of confidence in the State's impartiality strengthens their resolve not to relinquish or share power with political adversaries (Ibeanu and Mbah, 2014: 43) such as electing Senator Ike Ekweremadu from the PDP as the Deputy Senate President. The Nigerian state exists as prebends parcelled out to various sectional interests, in the Nigerian case, ethnic interests in particular. Thus, politics becomes fiercely prebendal as ethnic and other sectional interests engage themselves in a fatal contest for increasing, allocating and defending their share of the "powers" of the State (Joseph, 1987).

From the foregoing, we can deduce that the characteristics of the Nigerian State have heightened conflicts and the Nigerian politics is seen in the following general ways according to Ibeanu and Mbah (2014:48):

- Excessive premium on power converts politics into warfare rather than a process of bargaining, discussion and orderly transfer of power.
- There is a weak sense of a shared future, especially among the constituent ethnic groups. Consequently, the primacy of politics and premium on power persist. There is a dominance of exclusive rather than inclusive strategies of power.
- Absolutism and totalitarianism of the State are leading to widespread deradicalisation of politics through the so-called "politics of consensus". The antinomy of "politics of consensus" is that it is pursued in a context of deepening exclusivism and lack of a sense of a shared future.
- Related to the deradicalisation of politics is the use of dubious plebiscitary and acclamatory methods like rallies, popular drafts and nominations (rather than institutionalized party- or community-based competition) as means of selecting political officers and reaching decisions.
- There is an overwhelming inclination towards personalization of rule and sit-tight mentality (self-succession) among political leaders because of the limitless power and prestige conferred by the enormity of State power.
- Absence of effective institutional mechanisms for moderating political competition leads to conversion of political competition into warfare among ethnic groups, thereby elevating the military, the masters of warfare and antithesis of democracy, into a position of social pre-eminence (Ibeanu and Mbah, 2014: 48).

For the past fifteen years, beginning with Chief Olusegun Obasanjo's Civilian regime of 1999-2007 to the administration of Shehu Musa Yar' Adua and Acting President Goodluck Jonathan to 2015, the PDP had sustained the Presidential Zoning between Southern and Northern sections of the country. Although the zoning was breached with the death of Yar'Adua, in 2011 elections, advocates of Presidential Zoning often cite peace and stability in the polity as the main reason. The zoning formula was extended to the sharing of principal positions in the National Assembly to maintain peace and stability in the country.

Consequently, the politically powerful and strategic positions of the President and Vice President, the Senate President and Deputy Senate President, Speaker and Deputy Speaker, Majority Leader and principal officers of the National Assembly as well as other important national offices, by established federal character convention, always took into appropriate account the distribution and rotation of offices among the six geo-political zones. However, the military regims did not recognize this rule especially in zoning the office of the President or Head of State. In this respect, the North had produced six military Heads of State namely Gowon, Mohammed, Buhari, Babangida, Abacha and Abubakar. Part of the zoning system since 1999 within parties especially the PDP was informed by the need to better accommodate the interests of Nigeria's numerous ethnic groups, by rotational and zoning process to ensure fairer political distribution of key national offices.

However, the Senate leadership crisis in the Fourth Republic actually commenced when the need arose for the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) as was in the case with the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) in 1979, to come up with an acceptable zoning formula for the country. The PDP, therefore, decided to zone its elective positions between the six geo-political zones. In the zoning formula that was to emerge, the South-west took the presidency; the Vice Presidents' slot was zoned to the North-east and Senate Presidency to the South-east; the Speaker to the North-west, Deputy Speaker to the South-south zone. Thus as soon as it became apparent that the Senate Presidency had been zoned to the South-east, intense underground campaigns commenced within the Senators-elect and amongst political stakeholders from the zone (Banjo, 2013:3).

The tables below show the distribution of offices according to geo-political zones under the PDP government in the National Assembly from 1999-2015.

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Table 1 : Principal Officers in the National Assembly, 1999 – 2003

S/N	PRESIDENT	DATE	NAME	PARTY	ZONE
1.	President	1999-2007	Olusegun Obasanjo	Peoples Democratic Party	South West
2	Vice President	1999-2007	Atiku Abubakar	Peoples Democratic Party	North East
3	Senate President	1999-1999	Evan Enwerem	Peoples Democratic Party	South East
	Senate President	1999-2000	Chuba Okadigbo	Peoples Democratic Party	South East
	Senate President	2000-2003	Anyim Pius Anyim	Peoples Democratic Party	South East
4	Deputy Senate President	2003-2007	Ibrahim Mantu	Peoples Democratic Party	North Central
5	Speaker	1999-2000	Salisu Buhari	Peoples Democratic Party	North West
	Speaker	2000 -2003	Ghali Umar Na'Abba	Peoples Democratic Party	North West
6	Deputy Speaker	1999-2003	Chibudom Nwuche	Peoples Democratic Party	South South
7	House Leader	1999-2003	Mohammed Wakil	Peoples Democratic Party	North East
8	Chief Whip	1999-2003	Bawa Bwari	Peoples Democratic Party	North Central
9	Deputy Leader	1999-2003	Mao Ohuabunwa	Peoples Democratic Party	South East
10	Deputy Whip	1999-2003	Samuel Sadiq Anwo	Peoples Democratic Party	South West

Source: Compiled by the authors

Table 11 : Principal Officers in the National Assembly, 2003 - 2007

S/N	POSITION	DATE	NAME	PARTY	ZONE
1.	President	1999-2007	Olusegun Obasanjo	Peoples Democratic Party	South West
2	Vice President	1999-2007	Atiku Abubakar	Peoples Democratic Party	North East
3	Senate President	2003-2005	Adolphus Wabara	Peoples Democratic Party	South East
	Senate President	2005-2007	Ken Nnamani	Peoples Democratic Party	South East
4	Deputy Senate President	2003-2007	Ibrahim Mantu	Peoples Democratic Party	North Central
5	Speaker	2003-2007	Aminu Bello Masari	Peoples Democratic Party	North West
6	Deputy Speaker	2003-2007	Austin Opara	Peoples Democratic Party	South South
7	House Leader	2003-2007	Abdul Ningi	Peoples Democratic Party	North East
8	Chief Whip	2003-2007	Bawa Bwari	Peoples Democratic Party	North Central
9	Deputy Whip	2003-2007	Patricia Ette	Peoples Democratic Party	South West
10	Deputy Leader	2003-2007	Gilbert Nnaji	Peoples Democratic Party	South East

Source: Compiled by the authors

Table 111 : Principal Officers in the National Assembly, 2007 – 2011

S/N	POSITION	DATE	NAME	PARTY	ZONE
1.	President	2007-2010	Umaru Musa Yaradua	Peoples Democratic Party	North West
2	Vice President	2007-2010	Goodluck Ebele Jonathan	Peoples Democratic Party	South South
3	Senate President	2007-2011	David Mark	Peoples Democratic Party	North Central
4	Deputy Senate President	2007-2011	Ike Ekwerenmadu	Peoples Democratic Party	South East
5	Speaker	2007-2007	Patricia Etteh	Peoples Democratic Party	South West
	Speaker	2007-2011	Oladimeji Bankole	Peoples Democratic Party	South West
6	Deputy Speaker		Usman Bayero Nafada	Peoples Democratic Party	North East
7	House Leader		Akogun Tunde	Peoples Democratic Party	South South
8	Chief Whip		Bethel Amadi and later Emeka Ihedioha	Peoples Democratic Party	South East
9	Deputy Leader		Baba Shehu Agaie	Peoples Democratic Party	North Central

Source: Compiled by the authors

Table IV : Principal Officers in the National Assembly, 2011-2015

S/N	PRESIDENT	DATE	NAME	PARTY	ZONE
1.	President	2011-2015	Goodluck Ebele Jonathan	Peoples Democratic Party	South South
2	Vice President	2011-2015	Namadi Sambo	Peoples Democratic Party	North West
3	Senate President	2011-2015	David Mark	Peoples Democratic Party	North Central

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4	Deputy Senate President	2011-2015	Ike Ekwerenmadu	Peoples Democratic Party	South East
5	Speaker	2011-2015	Aminu W. Tanbuwal	Peoples Democratic Party	North West
6	Deputy Speaker	2011-2015	Chukwuemeka Ihedioha	Peoples Democratic Party	South East
7	House Leader	2011-2015	Hon. Mulikat Akande	Peoples Democratic Party	South West
8	Chief Whip	2011-2015	Hon. Isiaka Bawa	Peoples Democratic Party	North East
9	Deputy Whip	2011-2015	Muktar Mohammed	Peoples Democratic Party	North Central
10	Deputy Leader	2011-2015	Hon. Leo Ogor	Peoples Democratic Party	South South

Source: Compiled by the authors

The above tables are clear precedents and practices for majority leadership positions since 1999. These constitute precedents, practices and balance of power at both the Senate and the House of Representatives as enshrined in the Standing Orders of National Assembly. This is supported by the Federal Character which has very strong constitutional foundations. They are indeed mandatory provisions of the 1999 Nigerian constitution (Vanguard, 2015:43).

However, the APC wanted to have in both the Senate and the House of Representatives is Ahmed Lawn from the North East as Senate President, Femi Gbajabiamila from the South West as the Speaker, the same geo-political zone as the Vice President. The Saraki group kicked against this, arguing that the two key political positions cannot go to the South West, thus his groups' insisted on zoning according to the precedent set already by the immediate past PDP government.

c) *The Policy of the Federal Character and Balance of Power*

Since the 1978 Constituent Assembly that produced the 1979 constitution, the so-called principle of Federal Character has emerged as a central principle of constitution making in Nigeria (Ibeanu, 2012:21). This principle according to Ibeanu, has become a major plank on which Nigerian petty bourgeoisie has framed the discourse of national unity. However, section 14 of the 1999 constitution means much more than sharing of public offices according to federal character in order to maintain national unity. The section reads as follows:

- The Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be a State based on the principles of democracy and social justice
- It is hereby, accordingly, declared that:
  - sovereignty belongs to the people of Nigeria from whom government through this constitution derives all its powers and authority;
  - the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government; and
  - the participation by the people in their government shall be ensured in accordance with the provisions of this constitution.
- The composition of the Government of the Federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also to command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few state or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that Government or in any of its agencies.
- The composition of the Government of a State, a local government council, or any of the agencies of such government or council, and the conduct of the affairs of the Government or council or such agencies shall be carries out in such a manner as to recognize the diversity of the people within its area of authority and the need to promote a sense of belonging and loyalty among all the people of the Federation (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2011:35-36).

The subsection that insists that in reflecting federal character, only the best from various "States, ethnic or other sectional groups" must be considered is not out of place. Ibeanu (2012:23) explains that the absence of such a provision, federal character will only privilege the family, friends, praise singers and courtiers of people in government, who in turn got into government by being, family, friends, praise singers and courtiers of people who were in government, who in turn were family, friends, praise singers, and courtiers of people who preceded them in government, and so on and so forth. Therefore, federal character is an attempt to solve the daunting challenge of nation building by the social construction of zoning of political offices. With federal character, the constitution cedes to each section of the federation a sense of belonging by ensuring that a few states or a few ethnic or other sectional groups do not have dominance over others.

It will be very unfair to the spirit of the 1999 constitution, if the House for instance, should follow the APC guideline. It will lead to the following unjust result:

Speaker: North East

Deputy Speaker: South West

Chief Whip: North East

House Leader: South West

Deputy House Leader: North West

Deputy Chief Whip: South South (Vanguard, 2015: 42)

APC National Chairman: South South

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In this arrangement, the North Central and South East are completely edged out of the power equation and this is what the Speaker of the House wants to avoid by insisting that all the six geo-political zones should be accommodated in sharing the principal positions. Thus as soon as it became apparent that the Senate Presidency had been zoned to the North-east, intense underground campaigns commenced within the Senators-elect, especially Senators from the North Central who feared that they will be excluded from the national scheme of things if they do not act fast. So, Burkola Saraki had take the lead, and campaigned for the Senate Presidency.

The table VII below shows the eventual zoning outcome after Saraki shunned the APC list.

Table VII : 2015 Senate Principal Positions

S/N	Position	Date	Name of Officer	Party	Zone
1.	Senate President	2015	Sen. Bukola Saraki	APC	North Central
2.	Deputy Sen. President	2015	Sen. Ike Ekweremadu	PDP	South East
3.	Majority Leader	2015	Sen. Ali Ndume	APC	North East
4.	Deputy Majority Leader	2015	Sen. Bala Na' Allah	APC	North West
5.	Chief Whip	2015	Sen. Olusola Adeyeye	APC	South West
6.	Deputy Chief Whip	2015	Sen. Francis Alimikhena	APC	South South
7.	Minority Leader	2015	Sen. Godswill Akpabio	PDP	South South
8.	Deputy Minority Leader	2015	Sen. Emmanuel Bwacha	PDP	North East
9.	Minority Chief Whip	2015	Sen. Philip Tanimu	PDP	North Central
10.	Deputy Minority Chief Whip	2015	Sen. Biodun Olujimi	PDP	South West

Source: Compiled by the author

Table VIII : 2015 House of Representatives Principal Positions

1.	Speaker	2015	Rt. Hon. Y. Dogara	APC	North East
2.	Deputy Speaker	2015	Hon. Yusuf Lasun	APC	South West
3.	Majority Leader	2015	Hon. F. Gbajabiamila	APC	South West
4.	Deputy. Majority Leader	2015	Hon. Alhassan Doguwa	APC	North West
5.	Chief Whip	2015	Hon. M.T Mongunu	APC	North East
6.	Deputy. Chief Whip	2015	Hon. Pally Iriase	APC	South South
7.	Minority Leader	2015	Hon. Leo Ogor	PDP	South South
8.	Deputy. Minority Leader	2015	Hon. Chukwuma Onyema	PDP	South East
9.	Minority Chief Whip	2015	Hon. Yakubu Barde	PDP	North West
10.	D. Minority Whip	2015	Hon. Binta Bello	PDP	North East

Source: Compiled by the author

Table VII above accommodates the six geo-political zones in the appointment of principal officers of the Senate while the House of Representatives on table VIII did not. This is because the Speaker followed the party list in its selection of principal officers. For instance, the North Central was not represented or accommodated in the appointment of principal officers of the House. What the rebellion in the National Assembly needed was equity, fairness and justice in the distribution of power, wealth, legitimacy and social justice in the legislature and Nigeria, since the issue of quality of representation is not in the first line of consideration for now.

Consequently, the critical defining factors are clan, ethnic group, state, region or religion. However, ethnic chauvinism remains the most politically potent factor in politics. Still, ethnic identity exists in complex relationships with other factors in defining politics in Nigeria. Sometimes, politics is defined along the lines of ethno-regional identity as in the case of the North, South and Middle Belt, at other times, it is defined in terms of ethno-religious groupings as in the Moslem North and Christian South (Ibeanu, 2012). Other defining factors include minority versus majority ethnic groups, and numerous sub-ethnic identities.

When nation-state building fails in the latitudinal dimension, it finds expression in:

- Renewal of primordial identities and solidarities;
- Communal competition among subject communities for access to central power, especially competition among communities that were antagonistic prior to their common subjugation to the centralizing power;
- Strategies for evading the state's demands and coercion vis-à-vis other groups;
- Alliances and projects for collective class empowerment;
- Cultivation by groups of new exclusivity identities and solidarities; and
- Manoeuvres for forms of exclusivity by which the elite of particular groups and communities attempt to disable potential competitors (Ake, 1997 cited in Ibeanu, 2012:13).

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d) Zoning as Balance of Power

Balance of power is a widely used concept in international relations, one whose importance in the understanding of the political dynamics in multi-ethnic states has been undervalued due to the limitations in the interpretations of its meanings (Akinola, 2013:1). The basic theme of the balance of power theory is that the international system is anarchical in the absence of a common government and goals. The management of this anarchy is based on the power relations among states (Akinola, 2013:1). However, within the state system, especially in a multi-ethnic and underdeveloped states such as Nigeria, it is presumed to be more anarchical, the un-integrated and therefore managed by a strong consensus, hence the need to balance power through the policy of the federal character and zoning.

The underlining principle of the balance of power concept is that, the pursuit of power and zoning of power and offices is the common denominator to which all struggle for power and internal conflicts can be reduced, and the notion that any preponderant power struggle outside the gates of the federal character and zoning will always be a menace to the interest and security of other ethnic nationalities and zones. This is because Nigeria is a state of multi-ethnic nationalities but not a nation of individuals. In which case, balancing for survival within the state's internal system is as important as the balancing between states in the international system. The North-South divide and the creation of the six geo-political zones create a platform in which internal dynamics of crisis is reduced. Consequently, balance of power implies an objective arrangement in which there is relatively widespread satisfaction with the distribution of power, so that no one zone or a group of zones can hold others to ransom with impunity. As a policy guide, the federal character principle as provided by the 1999 constitution prescribes how to maintain this balance, but failed to provide how to reverse or deter any state or zone from seeking to enjoy over-balanced power. It was the need to balance power that led to the party rebellion in the 8th National Assembly and internal conflict there from. This is because the balance of power changed character, intensity and scope when the APC controlled National Assembly was about to be inaugurated in June 2015, thus the internal legislative politics and refusal to accept a consensus candidate in both chambers of the legislature.

However, ever since the Dutch political scientist Arend Lijphart "discovered" consociational democracy in the late 1960s as a model for maintaining democracy in plural societies, power-sharing and democracy have been viewed as closely linked. The two are not as incompatible as was often thought and claimed. Lijphart's argument demonstrated that democracy in divided societies was possible if elites cooperated, even when the masses remained divided. In a consociational democracy, elite cooperation takes the form of executive coalitions in which the leaders of all main social groups are represented; proportional allocation of offices and resources including autonomy for social groups in the legislature is important to them. For Lijphart, democracy in deeply divided societies is possible only when power is shared instead of monopolized *(https://www.researchgate.net/publication/26592571_Democracy_and_Power-Sharing_in_Multinational_States_Thematic_Introduction). Thus,* Power-sharing becomes synonymous with democracy in plural societies such as Nigeria. However, this power sharing is used as a balance of power mechanism for ensuring relative stability, peace and unity. The absence of this balance could increase the intensity, the stake and the resources for maintaining the balance of power.

However, at the local levels - nations, nationalities and tribes - where state power has become means of wealth accumulation, fear of domination has always been a major trust for zoning. The difference in attitude is caused by a lack of ownership of the centre, which is not the case at the local level. The resources at the centre have no legitimate owner, but the sub-systems do. There is competition at the local level with no intention to destroy existing resources; but there is conflict at the centre, giving rise to a destructive attitude and a lack of prudent management (Akinola, 2013).

Olaiya, Apeloko, Amanchukwu, and Shiyanbade, (2014: 12) shows the importance of zoning especially in the Federal Legislature in Nigeria using the sampling instrument (questionnaire) randomly distributed to 150 respondents. From the empirical study of the National Assembly, it was found that a majority of the members were overwhelmingly in favour of the entrenchment of the zoning of important national offices into the constitution. This was on the grounds, however, as suggested by 71.7% of the members that the extant mode of power sharing had all but lost salience with the political elite. In addition to this 73.7% of the legislators submitted that without the zoning principle the likelihood of the government apparatus being manipulated to the desires of an ethnic group was present. Thus, in conclusion, 85.1% of the legislators were of the view that given the ignoble role ethnic contentions had caused the country's democracy in the past, zoning principle had the wherewithal to lay it all to rest- once and forever.

III. Conclusion

The 8th Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria was no doubt born into crisis, given the historical circumstances of its birth. Therefore, the unfolding events that has taken hold of the political stage in Nigeria has made it difficult to predict clearly what future zoning and the process of distributing political offices have in Nigerian politics. The advocates of zoning see

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it as a solution to the lingering fear of domination especially in an emerging democracy and multi-ethnic society such as Nigeria. We feel strongly that the issue of federal character in the election or appointment of principal officers of the Senate or House of Representatives is cardinal, legal, moral, and constitutional principle that should be respected.

Secondly, improving institutional strength and accountability of the legislature could be another sustainable way to address it. The National Assembly must truly be transparent and play a more significant role in how the future of the nation should be shaped. In other words, the Senate should be transformational and transactional innovators in promoting good governance through balance of power mechanism which will lead to sustainable development and equitable wealth distribution rather than conflictive struggle for political positions and wealth.

Our third contention is that the notion of governance requires a more expanded notion of conflict transformation not only in the Senate but in the entire national politics. This is needed in order to take into account the various phases and evaluations of the conflict process and determine where timely interventions can be made to resolve and prevent the outbreak of conflict especially in the National Assembly. A renewed effort by the legislature must finally address the issue of leadership crisis and develop frameworks and mechanisms for the resolution of their conflicts. There is considerable evidence from the behavioural irregularities which characterize the social, economic and political direction of events in the Nigerian state, that its unbalanced structure which the introduction of zoning is trying to balance and is the most critical factor to the country's inability to synthesize its enormous resources into effective economic, military and governmental mechanism to further its national interest.

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