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# HOW THEORETICALLY OPPOSITE MODELS OF INTERETHNIC POWER-SHARING CAN COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER AND CONTRIBUTE TO POLITICAL STABILIZATION: THE CASE OF NIGERIA<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT** The aim of this article is to demonstrate the thesis that the stabilization of Nigeria's complicated political situation is furthered by the functioning in that country of institutions based on two models of interethnic power-sharing<sup>2</sup> – consociationalism and centripetalism – and that the two are to some extent complementary in Nigerian practice, despite the fact that political theory sees the two as opposites of each other. The article begins with a short analysis of the political situation in Nigeria. This is followed by a presentation of the problem of defining the notion of political stability and an assessment of the same in the Nigerian context. The article then goes on to discuss the nature of centripetalism and consociationalism and of specific centripetal and consociational institutions involved in the stabilization of the political situation in Nigeria. The article ends with the author's conclusions about the initial thesis.

**Keywords:** hybrid political system, interethnic power-sharing, consociationalism, centripetalism, Nigeria

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<sup>2</sup> The expression “interethnic power-sharing” is used interchangeably with the identical notion of “ethnic power-sharing” by D.L. Horowitz, ‘Ethnic Power Sharing: Three Big Problems’, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (2014), p. 5.

## 1. NIGERIA AND ITS POLITICAL SITUATION

Nigeria is the most important state on the African continent, given the size of its economy,<sup>3</sup> and it is also the most populous one. Its population reached about 185 million in mid-2015 according to estimates, and this makes it the world's seventh most populous state.<sup>4</sup> Nigeria is also a vast country with an area of nearly 924,000 km<sup>2</sup>. It is inhabited by members of about 250<sup>5</sup> ethnic groups,<sup>6</sup> the largest of which are the Hausa-Fulani (about 29% of Nigeria's population), the Yoruba (about 21%), the Igbo (about 18%) and the Ijaw (about 10%).<sup>7</sup> As many as 522 languages are spoken in Nigeria,<sup>8</sup> although the sole official language is English. It is estimated that about 50% of Nigeria's inhabitants are Muslims, who live mainly in the north of the country, while Christians make up 40% of the population and live mostly in the south of the country.<sup>9</sup> About 10% of Nigerians follow indigenous beliefs.<sup>10</sup>

After gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria functioned as a federation of three regions: The North (dominated by the Muslim Hausa-Fulani), the West (dominated by the Christian Yoruba) and the East (dominated by the Christian Igbo). Even though in each region one ethnic group was predominant, all were inhabited by many smaller groups. The three largest groups had their own ethnic parties, which competed aggressively with each other at the central government level. As a result, the newly established

<sup>3</sup> According to the estimates of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Nigeria's nominal GDP in 2014 amounted to about 594 billion USD, which made this country the world's 21st largest economy and the largest in Africa. See International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, 2014, at <<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2014/02/weodata/index.aspx>>, 11 September 2015. The poorly diversified Nigerian economy is growing largely thanks to revenues generated by various taxes and levies paid by entities extracting energy resources, especially oil. The U.S. Energy Information Administration estimates that in 2014 Nigeria was the largest producer of oil in Africa (13th in the world) and that it was the world's 6th largest exporter of this resource. See EIA, *Total Petroleum and Other Liquids Production – 2014*, at <<http://www.eia.gov/countries/country-data.cfm?fips=NI>>, 11 September 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Worldometers, *Nigeria Population 2015*, At <<http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/nigeria-population/>>, 24 September 2015.

<sup>5</sup> 'Nigeria', Encyclopedia of the Nations, 2015, at <<http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/economies/Africa/Nigeria.html>>, 13 September 2015.

<sup>6</sup> The term "ethnic group" (hereafter also "group") is understood by the author as *a group of people who see themselves as a distinct cultural community; who often share a common language, religion, kinship, and/or physical characteristics (such as skin color); and who tend to harbor negative and hostile feelings toward members of other ethnic groups*, as defined in A. Lijphart, 'Multiethnic Democracy' in S.M. Lipset (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Democracy*, Vol. 3, London 1995, p. 853.

<sup>7</sup> Index Mundi, *Nigeria Demographics Profile 2014*, at <[http://www.indexmundi.com/nigeria/demographics\\_profile.html](http://www.indexmundi.com/nigeria/demographics_profile.html)>, 17 September 2015.

<sup>8</sup> 'Nigeria', Ethnologue: Languages of the World, 2015, at <<http://www.ethnologue.com/country/NG>>, 17 September 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Index Mundi, *Nigeria Demographics Profile 2014...*

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

Nigerian state with a plural, i.e., multi-ethnic and multi-religious society, became subject to serious tensions almost from the outset. At the root of such tensions lay also clear cultural differences, especially those which set Muslims and Christians apart: The question of the division of budget revenues, which to a great extent originated from the exploitation of oil fields of the Niger Delta; and the problems related to the different political traditions of the main ethnic groups and the difficulty of reconciling them for the purpose of running an independent state.

Tensions erupted in the second half of the 1960s, when the army began to play a decisive role in Nigerian politics. In January 1966, during an unsuccessful military coup conducted mainly by the Igbo, a considerable proportion of Nigeria's leading politicians, public functionaries, and high-ranking officers from the Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba ethnic groups were killed. As a result of the complicated political situation that followed the attempted coup and the ensuing persecutions of the Igbo, especially by the Hausa-Fulani, in 1967 the Igbo proclaimed the secession of the oil-rich Eastern Region and the establishment on its territory of the independent Republic of Biafra,<sup>11</sup> which was then attacked by the federal forces of Nigeria, now ruled by a military junta.<sup>12</sup>

From 1967 to 1970 the country was embroiled in a civil war, the so-called Biafra War,<sup>13</sup> which, according to most sources, cost the lives of over one million people. The Christian Igbo were opposed by the mostly Muslim Hausa-Fulani and the Christian Yoruba. The Biafra War had the characteristics of an ethnic conflict.<sup>14</sup> After the end of the war, which was won by the federal side, the political situation in Nigeria gradually stabilized, something that certain experts saw as being due mainly to the introduction in that country of the institutions of a centripetal political system.<sup>15</sup> Such a system allows members of the political elite of different ethnic groups to share power, and encourage reconciliation, cooperation, and political integration across ethnic lines, while weakening the significance of such divisions in conditions of multi-ethnicity. In practice, centripetalism helps to reach these goals by the simultaneous use of a number of specific institutional arrangements, especially those related to the manner in which the territory is structured, the rules by which the head of state is chosen, and the principles governing the functioning of political parties.

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<sup>11</sup> The Biafra Republic, with its capital in Enugu, was recognized by only 5 states and existed formally until 1970.

<sup>12</sup> This junta was established as a result of a coup in July 1966.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, R. Luckham, *The Nigerian Military. A Sociological Analysis of Authority and Revolt 1960-67*, Cambridge 1971, pp. 298-340 (*African Studies*, 4).

<sup>14</sup> The notion of ethnic conflict ("ethnic conflict", "interethnic conflict") is understood by the author as defined by Errol A. Henderson, as a dispute between rival groups, which identify themselves mainly in terms of ethnic criteria (i.e., connected with such common traits as ethnicity/nationality, language, religion and race), and which raise group claims to resources on the basis of their group rights. See E.A. Henderson, 'Ethnic Conflict and Cooperation' in L. Kurtz (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, and Conflict*, Vol. 1, San Diego 1999, p. 751.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example D.L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Berkeley 1985, pp. 612-613.

The emergence of centripetalism in Nigeria did not prevent the breakout of conflicts. These were, however, of a lesser scale than the Biafra War and were not strictly ethnic in character. The most serious present conflict in Nigeria is the ongoing revolt of the extremist Muslim organization Boko Haram (Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad), which is directed against the Nigerian authorities, against Christians, and against those Muslims who tolerate Western influences above all in education, science, administration and the political system. Another important conflict, one whose intensity has decreased recently, has been going on since the 1990s in the Niger River delta: The members of mostly two ethnic groups inhabiting this area, the Ijaw and the Ogoni, grouped in a number of armed organizations, are opposed, in the words of their leaders, to the economic exploitation by the central government. This conflict, however, has its own specific character because the direct targets of the attacks by the Niger River delta rebels are not so much the forces of the Nigerian state, but the workers and the installations of Western companies extracting oil and gas in the Niger River delta. Still, by targeting the petroleum industry, the rebels are reducing Nigeria's budget revenues, 80% of which, according to the Nigerian political scientist Rotimi T. Suberu,<sup>16</sup> derive from various taxes and levies paid by entities exploiting the resources of the Niger River delta. At least 13% of those revenues should be returned to several southern states where such resources are extracted. Considering the very high degree of corruption in Nigeria however, the transfer of those funds to the authorities of the Niger River delta states does not necessarily mean they are spent rationally for the benefit of the local population.

All reports about the state of democracy in the world published thus far by *The Economist Intelligence Unit* (Democracy Index 2006, 2008, 2010-2014)<sup>17</sup> classify Nigeria – in keeping with the extensive criteria adopted by their authors – as an authoritarian state. Even though it uses democratic electoral procedures, Nigeria is considered an undemocratic state for, among other reasons, an excessive concentration of power at the presidential level and a still insignificant degree of separation of powers (including a rather modest degree of judicial independence); a deficit of the rule of law; numerous manipulations and falsifications at election time; a very high level of corruption among politicians and state functionaries; and a long period without alternation of power,<sup>18</sup> which took place in Nigeria in 2015 for the first time since the restitution of civilian government in 1999. For a period of 16 years, full power in Nigeria at the federal level was in the hands of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) which, according to official but strongly contested election results, won successive presidential elections, which are very important given the presidential system of government in place in Nigeria, and

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<sup>16</sup> R.T. Suberu, 'Federalism and the Management of Ethnic Conflict: The Nigerian Experience' in D. Turton (ed.), *Ethnic Federalism. The Ethiopian Experience in Comparative Perspective*, Oxford 2006, pp. 75-76 (Eastern African Studies).

<sup>17</sup> The Economist Intelligence Unit, [http://www.eiu.com/Exception.aspx?aspxerrorpath=/public/topical\\_report.aspx](http://www.eiu.com/Exception.aspx?aspxerrorpath=/public/topical_report.aspx), accessed: 03 Apr. 2015.

<sup>18</sup> About these and other such phenomena, see for example R.T. Suberu, 'Nigeria's Muddled Elections' in L. Diamond, M.F. Plattner (eds.), *Democratization in Africa. Progress and Retreat*, Baltimore 2010, pp. 121-135 (*Journal of Democracy Book*).

elections to both houses of parliament. During this period, it also won regional elections in over half of states.

## 2. POLITICAL STABILITY IN NIGERIA

In the literature, Nigeria is seen as a state with little political stability. As this notion is often understood in many ways, it is worthwhile to recall its usual essence. The notion of a state's "political stability" includes political and economic elements. Taking into consideration the many proposals put forward by scholars or research centers attempting to define or analyze this notion, one can state that it includes, first and foremost, elements such as lasting governments (i.e., not subject to too frequent changes) governments enjoying some form of legitimacy; a state where internal violence is absent;<sup>19</sup> a low level of social tensions and the existence of public order; the rule of law, strong constitutional mechanisms and accountability of those in power; a competent and efficient administration that is sensitive to the needs of citizens, and other state institutions; the lack of structural changes accompanied by violence and a breakdown in the functioning of state institutions and of the rule of law; a low level of corruption; and a business climate favorable to the development of entrepreneurship and investment.<sup>20</sup>

According to the Fragile State Index 2015,<sup>21</sup> prepared by the influential research center Fund for Peace, Nigeria comes 14th on the scale of least to most stable countries and belongs to the so-called High Alert group of countries.<sup>22</sup> The level of stability of a given state is defined in that ranking on the basis of 12 indicators: social (Demographic Pressures, Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, Group Grievance, Human Flight and Brain Drain), economic (Uneven Economic Development, Poverty and Economic Decline) and political and military (State Legitimacy, Public Services, Human Rights and Rule of Law, Security Apparatus, Factionalized Elites, and External Intervention). Although Nigeria does not yet belong to the group of politically stable countries, its political situation is undoubtedly far more stable than at the time of the

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<sup>19</sup> And in international surroundings, if it affects internal security.

<sup>20</sup> K. Trzeciński, 'Czym jest stabilność polityczna państwa?' [What is the Political Stability of a State?], *Przegląd Politologiczny* [Political Science Review], No. 2 (2015), pp. 44-45, at <<http://dx.doi.org/10.14746/pp.2015.20.2.3>>, 23 September 2015.

<sup>21</sup> See Fund for Peace, *Fragile States Index 2015*, at <<http://fsi.fundforpeace.org/rankings-2015>>, 24 September 2015. About the methodology used in creating the index, see Fund for Peace, *Fragile States Index 2015: The Methodology Behind the Index*, at <<http://fsi.fundforpeace.org/methodology>>, 18 September 2015.

<sup>22</sup> Fund for Peace, *Fragile States Index 2015: The Indicators*, at <<http://fsi.fundforpeace.org/indicators>>, 18 September 2015. The said index assigns 178 countries to one of the following groups: Very High Alert, High Alert, Alert, High Warning, Warning, Low Warning, Less Stable, Stable, More Stable, Sustainable, and Very Sustainable. The higher the level of political (and economic) stability of a given state, the higher the group to which it is assigned. In the Fragile State Index 2015, the world's least stable country is Southern Sudan, which is the first on the Very High Alert group, while the most stable country is Finland, which is the only country in the Very Sustainable group.

Biafra War or after its end when, as Donald L. Horowitz points out, *there was great fear of renewed ethnic conflict, but no group knew which group would be victimized next.*<sup>23</sup>

Of course, the political stability of a state does not emerge overnight, but is usually the result of a long-term political stabilization process. It would appear that the difference between the notions of “stabilization” and “stability” has to do with the fact that the first refers to the process of stabilizing a given phenomenon (such as the political situation in a given state) or to the culmination of that process, while the second refers to a settled state.<sup>24</sup> Usually, the elements that are indispensable in order to stabilize a political situation and, in effect, to secure political stability are appropriate political institutions. In certain multi-cultural states, including Nigeria, these are institutions of interethnic power-sharing, i.e., of a political system that includes in the governing process politicians representing or simply originating from different ethnic groups and/or various religious communities. Experience has repeatedly shown that elites which are allowed to participate in government and given the possibility to defend the interests of their groups mitigate the behavior of the members of such groups in their relations with other groups, and this in turn has a positive influence on the stabilization of the political situation in a plural society.

### 3. CONSOCIATIONALISM AND CENTRIPETALISM

Two models of interethnic power-sharing are distinguished and opposed to each other in the abundant literature on the subject: Consociationalism and centripetalism.<sup>25</sup> The logic of consociationalism is based on the concept of primordialism which, as Arend Lijphart explains, presupposes that ethnicity understood as ethnic identity *is an inherited characteristic and, if not permanently fixed, at least very difficult to change.*<sup>26</sup> From a primordialist perspective, the idea of creating pan-ethnic societies in multi-ethnic states seems utopian. The direct opposite of primordialism is instrumentalism. According to this concept, the nature of ethnicity is fluid and plastic and this carries important political consequences. Proponents of the instrumentalist approach think that ethnicity can be roused to pursue particular aims but, on the other hand, that its significance can be reduced for the purpose of building pan-ethnic societies. The instrumentalist approach seems to be supported by those politicians and constitutionalists in multi-ethnic states who see no need to introduce in such states political systemic solutions

<sup>23</sup> D.L. Horowitz, ‘Ethnic Power Sharing...’, p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> K. Trzciński, ‘Czym jest stabilność...’, p. 38.

<sup>25</sup> See for example T.D. Sisk, *Power Sharing and International Mediation in Ethnic Conflicts*, Washington, DC 1996; D.L. Horowitz, ‘Ethnic Power Sharing...’; S. Wolff, ‘Consociationalism, Power Sharing, and Politics at the Center’ in R.A. Denemark (ed.), *The International Studies Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2, Malden, MA 2010; B. Reilly, *Democracy and Diversity. Political Engineering in the Asia-Pacific*, Oxford 2007 (*Oxford Studies in Democratization*); M. Basedau, *Managing Ethnic Conflict. The Menu of Institutional Engineering*, Hamburg 2011 (GIGA Working Papers, 171).

<sup>26</sup> A. Lijphart, ‘Multiethnic Democracy’, p. 855.

that reflect existing ethnic divisions. In consequence, they usually opt either for authoritarian structures or for the uncomplicated institutions of liberal majoritarian democracy. In the middle, between primordialism and instrumentalism, lies constructivism.<sup>27</sup> Admittedly, its proponents are in agreement with the primordialist view that ethnicity is something given or set in advance, but they also state that it can then be shaped for the purpose of attaining some desirable goal having to do with, for example, the political modernization of the state. Constructivist premises serve as a basis for the logic of centripetalism.

The theory of consociationalism presupposes that when society in a given state is plural in character and, especially, strongly divided ethnically, individual ethnic groups should possess their own distinct representation in state government (in the form of ethnic parties, for example) and to be able to participate in political decision-making. Such a state entrenches existing ethnic divisions.<sup>28</sup> Centripetalism presupposes the opposite – the possibility of political integration of the groups' elites above ethnic divisions, thus weakening the importance of the latter. Centripetalism, in contrast to consociationalism, by definition promotes ethnically neutral legal practices concerning the status of individuals and groups in multi-ethnic conditions – something that is supposed to strengthen the process of integration, the reaching of which is the purpose of centripetal institutions.

Empirical centripetalism (Nigerian and Indonesian)<sup>29</sup> is made up of the following institutional solutions:<sup>30</sup> A territorial structure within the framework of which large ethnic groups are “broken down” so their members live in distinct, preferably multi-ethnic territorial and administrative units – something that is supposed to make the elites of one and the same large group representing various regions compete with each other, for example for funds from the central budget; the constitutional requirement for candidates in presidential elections to obtain a territorial distribution of votes (the

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<sup>27</sup> The division into primordialism, instrumentalism and constructivism is promoted by, for example, A. Lijphart, *ibid.* Compare the other division proposed by I. Shapiro, *Stan teorii demokracji* [The State of Democratic Theory], trans. by I. Kisilowska, Warszawa 2006, pp. 125-127.

<sup>28</sup> See A. Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies. A Comparative Exploration*, New Haven, CT 1980; *idem*, *Thinking about Democracy. Power Sharing and Majority Rule in Theory and Practice*, London 2008.

<sup>29</sup> Thus far, centripetalism was implemented only in Nigeria and Indonesia. On the subject of Indonesian centripetalism see, for example, D.L. Horowitz, *Constitutional Change and Democracy in Indonesia*, New York 2013 (Problems of International Politics); E. Schneier, *The Role of Constitution-Building Processes in Democratization: Case Study – Indonesia: The Constitution-Building Process in Post-Suharto Indonesia*, Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Stockholm 2005, at <[http://www.idea.int/cbp/upload/CBP\\_indonesia.pdf](http://www.idea.int/cbp/upload/CBP_indonesia.pdf)>, 16 September 2015; A. Ellis, *Constitutional Reform in Indonesia: A Retrospective*, March 2005, at <<http://www.constitutionnet.org/files/AEpaperCBPIndonesia.pdf>>, 16 September 2015.

<sup>30</sup> See for example B. Reilly, *Democracy and Diversity...*, esp. pp. 83-91; *idem*, ‘Centripetalism’ in K. Cordell, S. Wolff (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Ethnic Conflict*, London 2011, esp. pp. 291-295 (*Routledge Handbooks*); *idem*, ‘Centripetalism: Cooperation, Accommodation and Integration’ in S. Wolff, Ch. Yakinthou (eds.), *Conflict Management in Divided Societies. Theories and Practice*, New York 2011, pp. 57-64.

support of the electorate in a considerable number of the given state's regions), the fulfillment of which is necessary to assume the office of president; and supra-regional and interethnic political parties required to form ethnically heterogeneous lists of candidates in different elections.

The nucleus of consociationalism is made up of four institutions:<sup>31</sup> grand coalition governments (such as, for example, governments formed by ethnic parties or governments made up of politicians representing specific segments of plural society or preferably originating from all of those groups); cultural autonomy for individual linguistic groups (if they live in one specific area then the autonomy can also be of a territorial nature, for example that of ethnic federalism); proportionality in political representation and in the appointment of members of the civil service; and a limited veto right for the minorities (taking at times the form of a requirement to obtain a qualified majority for certain types of changes to the law).

The experience of states that have, at least in part, implemented consociationalism at home (especially Cyprus, Lebanon, Malaysia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and India), shows that consociational institutions can take various forms. In particular, there can be variations of grand coalition governments, including, for example, governments led by a pan-ethnic party (in India, for example); a rotational presidency (such as in Bosnia and Herzegovina); between ethnic (and/or national) groups; or religious (and/or denominational) communities.

And so, in India, for example, especially during the governments of Jawaharlal Nehru from 1947 to 1964, the council of ministers, though usually formed by a single party (the Indian National Congress at the time, now the Congress Party), was an unusually inclusive government, for it included the representation, as described by Rajni Kothari, one of India's leading political scientists, of *all the major sections and interests of society*.<sup>32</sup> More specifically, the members of that government originated from various religious, linguistic and/or ethnic, and regional groups. In Lebanon in turn, in 1943 the main political forces signed an agreement (it was later modified), the so-called National Pact, as part of which religious and denominational communities were to appoint their members to the most important government positions. In consequence, a Maronite sits as president, the office of prime minister goes to a Sunni, and the position of Speaker of the one-house parliament is filled by a Shiite. This system also applies to the division between segments of plural society of parliamentary mandates, the posts in the civil service and ministerial portfolios.<sup>33</sup> On account of its distribution of positions between re-

<sup>31</sup> See A. Lijphart, *Thinking about Democracy...*, p. 42.

<sup>32</sup> R. Kothari, *Politics and the People. In Search of a Humane India*, Delhi 1989, p. 27 quoted in A. Lijphart, *Thinking about Democracy...*, p. 45. See also K. Trzeciński, 'Słów kilka o potencjalnej przydatności indyjskich rozwiązań politycznych dla demokratyzacji państw Afryki Subsaharyjskiej' [A Few Words on the Potential Usefulness of the Indian Political Solutions for Democratization of the Sub-Saharan African States] in I. Kraska-Szlenk, B. Wójtowicz (eds.), *Current Research in African Studies: Papers in Honour of Mwalimu Dr. Eugeniusz Rzewuski*, Warsaw 2014, pp. 355-366.

<sup>33</sup> See A. Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies...*, pp. 147-150. The Lebanese National Pact *de facto* did not function during the civil war period from 1975 to 1990.



ligious or denominational communities, Lebanese consociationalism is at times referred to as confessionalism.<sup>34</sup> In Cyprus in turn, the 1960 Constitution introduced the so-called bi-communitarian state, entailing a parity of representation between the national and religious communities in the exercise of state authority. The result was a separation of the highest executive authority in the state between the president representing Cypriot Greeks, and the vice-president representing the Cypriot Turks. Moreover, this Constitution enshrined the principle of the separation of public functions, including mandates in the House of Representatives and ministerial posts, between the two communities proportionally to their numbers in the population as a whole.<sup>35</sup>

Lijphart thinks that consociationalism does not always need to be a formally institutionalized system, but can be present solely in certain systemic solutions and, at the same time, be in part reflected in the political custom or practice in place. And so, for example, a government made up of political parties representing members of various ethnic, linguistic, or religious groups is the purest form of a grand coalition based on the consociational power-sharing model. There can be other consociational solutions at the level of the legislative and executive branches, such as, for example a coalition defined not in terms of a division of power between political parties formed on the basis of, for example, specific ethnic groups or religious communities, but rather on the maintenance of a measure of participatory proportion between representatives of most ethnic, linguistic, or religious groups of a plural society. Therefore, for Lijphart, the cases of, say, Lebanon, Cyprus, or India, bear out the thesis that as far as the most important consociational institution – the so-called grand coalition – is concerned, one can use the wider term of “universal participation”, or that of a “cartel of elites” to use the notion coined by Ralf Dahrendorf.<sup>36</sup> In Nigeria, three centripetal institutions are complemented with consociational solutions whose traits are primarily those of universal participation or of a cartel of elites. Nigerian consociational institutions can also be treated as a variation of the consociational institution of proportionality in political representation and in the appointment of civil servants.

#### 4. NIGERIAN CENTRIPETAL INSTITUTIONS

Most institutions of Nigerian inter-ethnic power-sharing are typical of centripetalism. These are: 1) a territorial structure that “breaks up” large ethnic groups so that they end up living in distinct territorial and administrative units (hereafter called a centripetal

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<sup>34</sup> I. Harb, *Lebanon's Confessionalism: Problems and Prospects*, U.S. Institute of Peace, March 2006, at <<http://www.usip.org/publications/lebanons-confessionalism-problems-and-prospects>>, 18 September 2015.

<sup>35</sup> These arrangements were practically in force until 1963, and their implementation was ultimately suspended after the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 and after the de facto division of the island into two separately governed parts.

<sup>36</sup> A. Lijphart, *Thinking about Democracy...*, p. 29. See also R. Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany*, Garden City, NY 1967, p. 276.

territorial structure); 2) the requirement of a territorial distribution of votes (support) in presidential elections, the fulfillment of which is necessary to win the presidential office; and 3) supra-regional and inter-ethnic political parties.

#### 4.1. The centripetal territorial structure

After gaining independence, Nigeria made use of two distinct models of federalism one after the other: Ethnic and centripetal. From 1960, when independence was proclaimed, to 1966, when the army seized power, this state was divided simply into several regions, initially into three (North, West and East), and from 1963 (following the separation of the Mid-Western Region from the Western one), into four. In each of the first three regions, one of the country's largest ethnic groups (Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba or the Igbo) was predominant. Nigeria's territorial division thus had the characteristics – admissible under consociationalism – of ethnic federalism. Until 1967 the northern region, amounting to over 2/3 of Nigeria's area was the most important of all, because it was inhabited by over half the country's population, and had the greatest number of electoral votes.<sup>37</sup> As a result, the Hausa-Fulani consistently sought to play a dominant political role in the federation.<sup>38</sup>

After the army took power in 1966, centripetal federalism began to take shape in Nigeria. In 1967, after the four regions were replaced by 12 states, the three largest ethnic groups found themselves living in as many as seven of the new territorial units. As Horowitz points out,<sup>39</sup> this, along with the temporary de-legalization by the army of ethnical parties, freed the smaller ethnic groups from the control of regionally dominant groups and paved the way for new alliances. The situation changed again in 1976 when, as a result of the country's successive reorganizations of the territorial structure and the creation of 7 new states, Nigeria now had a total of 19. Horowitz has calculated that the Hausa-Fulani then lived in about half of them, the Yoruba in five, and the Igbo in two.<sup>40</sup> This led to an increase of intra-ethnic disputes as a result of inter-state competition for a share in development projects financed by the central government.<sup>41</sup> What was also significant was the fact that in the new situation over half of the states were ethnically heterogenic. Within the new multi-ethnic states, inter-ethnic political coalitions emerged to defend state interests. Disputes at the intra-ethnic level and inter-state rivalry reduced the risk of conflicts at the inter-ethnic and, at the same time, federal level.

These trends became more pronounced at a later time with the introduction by the army of further changes in the territorial divisions. In 1987, two more states were established in Nigeria, followed by nine in 1991, and another six in 1996. Suberu points out

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<sup>37</sup> R.T. Suberu, 'Federalism and the Management...', p. 69.

<sup>38</sup> D. L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups...*, p. 612.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 604.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 604-605.

that Nigeria's present territorial division into 36 states has led to a situation where the Hausa-Fulani are a majority in nine states, the Yoruba in seven, and the Igbo in five.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, as many as 15 states are governed by smaller ethnic groups.

The multiple modifications of Nigeria's territorial division after 1966 consisted in creating from the federation's larger parts new, smaller states which, in the first years of Nigerian independence, were part of the above-mentioned three regions dominated by Nigeria's three largest ethnic groups. In addition to "breaking up" these groups so that their members would inhabit different states and, at the same time, to creating states dominated by other groups than the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba or the Igbo, the changes in Nigeria's territorial structure have also led to the division of areas in the oil and natural-gas-rich Niger River delta (initially mostly a part of the Eastern Region into as many as 6 states controlled by smaller ethnic groups.<sup>43</sup> In consequence, the principal area of extraction of energy resources has been effectively stripped of domination by the Igbo who, from 1960 to 1967, had administered the Eastern Region and governed, from 1967 to 1970, the secessionist Republic of Biafra which emerged in its stead, in its entirety or parts thereof, as the Biafra War unfolded.

#### 4.2. The requirement of territorial distribution of support in presidential elections

In Nigeria's presidential system of government, there is a centripetal requirement that candidates in presidential elections secure a territorial distribution of votes, the fulfillment of which is indispensable for the assumption of the presidential office. This requirement is meant to assist in the emergence of pan-ethnic presidents,<sup>44</sup> who can play an important role in limiting conflict<sup>45</sup> and, therefore, in stabilizing the political situation.

The requirement of a territorial distribution of votes in presidential elections was first introduced in Nigeria<sup>46</sup> by the Constitution of the Second Republic of 1979.<sup>47</sup> Its provisions about the requirement in question are in their majority identical to those presently in force pursuant to the Constitution of the Fourth Republic of 1999.<sup>48</sup> In keeping with the 1999 Constitution, the Nigerian president is both Head of State and Chief Executive (art. 130 (2)). He is elected in universal elections to a four-year term (art. 135 (2)). The same person cannot hold presidential office for more than two terms (art. 137 (1) (b)).

<sup>42</sup> R.T. Suberu, 'Federalism and the Management...', pp. 73-74.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>44</sup> The term "pan-ethnic president" is promoted by B. Reilly, 'Centripetalism', p. 292.

<sup>45</sup> T.D. Sisk, *Power Sharing...*, p. 55.

<sup>46</sup> B. Reilly, 'Introduction' in idem, P. Nordlund (eds.), *Political Parties in Conflict-Prone Societies. Regulation, Engineering, and Democratic Development*, New York 2008, p. 14.

<sup>47</sup> The Second Republic fell with the military coup in 1983. The later attempt to create the so-called Third Republic of Nigeria in 1993 ended unsuccessfully. The 1993 Constitution of the Third Republic never fully came into force, and the military remained in power in Nigeria in the years 1983-1999.

<sup>48</sup> *The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria of 29 May 1999*, at <[http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/text.jsp?file\\_id=179202](http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/text.jsp?file_id=179202)>, 17 September 2015.

The territorial vote distribution requirement refers to states, of which there are presently 36, as the basic units of territorial administration and to the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja (art. 3 (1) and (4)). In keeping with the Nigerian Constitution, when more than two candidates take part in a presidential election (a typical situation), the office of president falls to the one who won the greatest number of votes overall, and no less than 1/4 of votes cast in each of at least 2/3 of all the states of the federation (including the FCT) (art. 134 (2) (a) and (b)).

If no candidate meets both requirements necessary to assume the office of head of state in the first round, a second round of presidential elections is called (art. 134 (4)). Two of the candidates who ran in the first round take part in it: the one who won the greatest number of votes in the entire country and one of the remaining candidates (art. 134 (3) (a) and (b)). The Constitution provides that in the latter case it is not the candidate with the second largest number of votes in the entire country who passes to the second round, but the one who obtained the most votes in the greatest number of Nigerian states (art. 134 (3) (b)).

The second round of presidential elections in Nigeria can, but does not have to, determine the Head of State. In keeping with the Constitution, for one of the candidates in this round to be able to assume the office of president, in addition to obtaining a simple majority of votes he must, as in the first round, obtain no less than 1/4 of the votes cast in at least 2/3 of all the states of the federation (including the FCT) (art. 134 (4) (a) and (b)). In consequence, if the candidate who wins a simple majority of votes does not meet the territorial vote distribution requirement, a third round of elections must be held.

Both candidates from the second round of presidential elections in Nigeria take part in the third round. The one who will become president is the one who succeeds in obtaining a simple majority of votes (art. 134 (5)). It is only in the third round of elections for the head of state, therefore, that the Constitution of Nigeria forgoes the territorial vote distribution requirement.

Nigeria held presidential elections under the 1999 Constitution in 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015. Each time, a candidate won in the first round and always obtained over 50% of votes cast, despite the fact that in Nigeria presidential elections can be won by the candidate who simply obtained the greatest number of votes, i.e., who won a relative majority,<sup>49</sup> providing that the territorial vote distribution requirement is fulfilled. Earlier, under the 1979 Constitution, in the years 1979-1999 presidential elections were held four times. In 1979 and 1983, the favorite of the election won in the first round by obtaining a simple majority of votes.<sup>50</sup> In 1993 and 1999 the favorite of

<sup>49</sup> African Elections Database, The 19 April 2003 Presidential Election, at <[http://africanelections.tripod.com/ng.html#2003\\_Presidential\\_Election](http://africanelections.tripod.com/ng.html#2003_Presidential_Election)>, the 21 April 2007 Presidential Election, at <[http://africanelections.tripod.com/ng.html#2007\\_Presidential\\_Election](http://africanelections.tripod.com/ng.html#2007_Presidential_Election)>, <<http://africanelections.tripod.com/ng2007presidential.pdf>>, the 16 April 2011 Presidential Election, <[http://africanelections.tripod.com/ng.html#2011\\_Presidential\\_Election](http://africanelections.tripod.com/ng.html#2011_Presidential_Election)>.

<sup>50</sup> African Elections Database, The 11 August 1979 Presidential Election, at <[http://africanelections.tripod.com/ng.html#1979\\_Presidential\\_Election](http://africanelections.tripod.com/ng.html#1979_Presidential_Election)>, the 6 August 1983 Presidential Election, at <[http://africanelections.tripod.com/ng.html#1983\\_Presidential\\_Election](http://africanelections.tripod.com/ng.html#1983_Presidential_Election)>, <<http://africanelections.tripod.com/ng1983presidential.pdf>>.

the election won in the first round by obtaining an absolute majority of votes.<sup>51</sup> The above data would seem to indicate that the requirement in question is meaningless in practice. In fact, quite the opposite is true: Electoral manipulations notwithstanding, this data suggests that the victors in those elections are politicians whose views and actions, especially on issues that are sensitive for inter-ethnic relations, are moderate. Their political moderation allows them to obtain wider support than that of the ethnic group from which they originate. This is precisely the effect that the centripetal territorial vote distribution requirement in presidential elections is meant, by definition, to produce.

### 4.3. Supra-regional and inter-ethnic political parties

After the army seized power in Nigeria in 1966, political parties were outlawed. They recovered their freedom to act when civilian rule was restored in 1978, albeit for a short period, which saw a renaissance of large ethnic parties representing mainly the interests of the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and the Igbo. The Constitution of 1979, however, allowed only supra-regional and, at the same time, inter-ethnic parties to operate (art. 202 (b) and (e), art. 203 (1) (b) and (2) (b)). In this manner ethnic parties were *de facto* outlawed. This had fundamental repercussions, especially for the Hausa-Fulani who, it will be recalled, are Nigeria's largest ethnic group and had sought to dominate the central government during the initial period of Nigerian independence.

As a result of the introduction of the requirement of forming supra-regional and inter-ethnic parties, during the Second Republic (1979-1983), the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), whose basic electorate is in the north of Nigeria among the Hausa-Fulani, had to seek wider support, not only among smaller ethnic groups, but even among the Yoruba and the Igbo. The success of this undertaking is possibly the reason behind the victory of its candidate in the 1979 presidential elections, although the fairness of those elections was questioned. A similar situation took place during the elections to the two houses of the Nigerian parliament in 1979 and 1983, in which the NPN won. Donald L. Horowitz, the leading theoretician of centripetalism, is convinced, however, that it is mainly the specific nature of Nigerian centripetal federalism at the time that caused the need for parties to seek wider supra-regional and inter-ethnic support, while the chief NPN activists were simply the quickest and most accurate in identifying this new need and adapted their strategy accordingly. In his opinion, NPN's success reflects the correctness of the assumption holding that federalism can create a new framework for electoral understanding on the side of both the electorate and the party leadership, because in Nigeria increasing the importance of divisions in the North, the new structure in the end decreased the more dangerous divisions at the central level.<sup>52</sup> Horowitz moreover

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<sup>51</sup> African Elections Database, The 12 June 1993 Presidential Election, at <[http://africanelections.tripod.com/ng.html#1993\\_Presidential\\_Election](http://africanelections.tripod.com/ng.html#1993_Presidential_Election)>, the 27 February 1999 Presidential Election, at <[http://africanelections.tripod.com/ng.html#1999\\_Presidential\\_Election](http://africanelections.tripod.com/ng.html#1999_Presidential_Election)>.

<sup>52</sup> D.L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups...*, p. 612.

stresses that a multi-ethnic state framework also led to the emergence of inter-ethnic political coalitions.

In 1983 the army once again took power in Nigeria. After its rule ended and the Constitution of 1999 was adopted, the requirement for supra-regional and inter-ethnic political parties returned. Presently, no association is allowed to function as a political party if membership in it is not accessible to every citizen irrespective of place of origin, ethnicity or religion (art. 222 (b)). The main seat of any Nigerian political party has to be in the Federal Capital Territory (art. 222 (f)). Moreover, neither its name, nor symbol or logo of any party can contain any ethnic or religious connotation whatsoever, or indicate that its activities are limited to some part of Nigerian territory (art. 222 (e)). In keeping with the provisions of the Nigerian Electoral Act of 2010 (art. 82 (4) (c) (iii), (iv) and (v)), which complements the Basic Law in this respect,<sup>53</sup> the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), which is responsible for registering the symbols of political parties, is prohibited from allowing the use by parties of symbols associated with chiefdoms, tribes, ethnic groups, religions or religious cults in any election.

In keeping with the Constitution, the statute of each political party in Nigeria has to include a provision requiring the organization – in keeping with democratic principles and at no rarer than every 4 years – of internal elections of the party's main activists or members of their executive council (art. 223 (1) (a) and (2) (a)). The statute must also include a guarantee that the composition of the said council will be a reflection of Nigeria's "federal character" (art. 223 (1) (b)),<sup>54</sup> and specifically, that it will be made up by persons originating from no less than 2/3 of all the states of the federation (including the FCT) (art. 223 (2) (b)). These provisions are important because in Nigeria only membership in a supra-regional and inter-ethnic political party gives citizens the possibility of obtaining a parliamentary mandate and to take part in the work of one of the two houses of the National Assembly, while a candidacy in parliamentary elections has to be financed by the party of which they are a member (art. 16 (2) (b)).<sup>55</sup>

## 5. NIGERIAN CONSOCIATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

In Nigeria the three centripetal institutions discussed above are complemented by consociational arrangements, which represent above all a variant, in the wide sense, of Lijphart's "grand coalition", of "universal participation" or the "cartel of elites". They are: 1) the formal requirement of multi-ethnic and/or multi-religious composition of the cabinet or of other authorities and institutions; and 2) the linkage of two informal

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<sup>53</sup> 'The Electoral Act 2010', *Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette*, Vol. 97, No. 64 (24 August 2010), at <<http://www.inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/EA2010.pdf>>, 4 September 2015.

<sup>54</sup> In Nigeria there is the so-called Federal Character Principle (FCP).

<sup>55</sup> Similarly, a Nigerian citizen can run for the office of president only if he is a member of one of the political parties active in that country, and his candidacy is financed by that party (art. 131 (c) of the Constitution of 1999).

institutions: a rotational presidency between Muslims and Christians and of the vice-presidency falling to a member of the opposite religious community and other ethnic group than those from which the president comes from.

### **5.1. The requirement of the multi-ethnic and/or multi-religious composition of the cabinet and of other institutions**

According to the Nigerian Constitution of 1999, the composition of the federal government and of all federal government agencies should reflect Nigeria's "federal character" and there cannot be in them any preponderance of persons originating, as it was formulated, from a "few" states, ethnic groups or segments of another type ("sectional groups") (art. 14 (3)). The above-mentioned state organs also need to perform their obligations in a manner that does not favor any specific Nigerian states, ethnic groups or segments of another type (art. 14 (3)). The Constitution further indicates that the composition of the government has to include at least one minister from each of the 36 states, and this person has to be an indigenous inhabitant of this state (art. 147 (3)).<sup>56</sup> The president nominates all ministers and other important state functionaries (including ambassadors and high commissioners in countries which are members of the Commonwealth of Nations) in keeping with Nigeria's federal character (art. 171 (2) and (5)).

The multi-ethnic and multi-religious character of Nigerian society also has to be reflected in the composition of organs of the Nigerian state and local authorities. In keeping with the Constitution, the composition of state governments and local governing councils and of all institutions subject to those authorities, as well as the manner in which they play their function, should reflect the "diversity of the people" living in the areas to the jurisdiction of those organs and to "promote a sense of belonging and loyalty" among all citizens of the Federation of Nigeria (art. 14 (4), art. 192 (2) and 197 (3)). This principle concerns even to the composition of corporate boards of management and supervisory boards in companies in which a given state has shares, and also to "councils of universities" and other institutions of higher education in each of the states (art. 197 (3)).

Those of the above-mentioned arrangements which concern the composition of the federal or state ministerial councils should be seen as a variation of Lijphart's grand coalition. The totality of the Nigerian consociational arrangements presented in this part of the article are also reminiscent of another element of consociationalism, namely the institution of proportionality in political representation and in the nomination of members of the civil service, although in the case of Nigeria one cannot speak of the existence of any given proportions regarding ethnic groups of religious communities.

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<sup>56</sup> For the sake of comparison, it is worthwhile to note that, in keeping with the provision of the Constitution of 1979 (art. 135 (3)), also at least one minister in the government should originate from each Nigerian state, but the Basic Law sets the number of these at 19 (art. 3 (1) and Appendix I). See the *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria of 1 October 1979 (enacted on 21 September 1978)*, at <[http://www.constitutionnet.org/files/nig\\_const\\_79.pdf](http://www.constitutionnet.org/files/nig_const_79.pdf)>, 4 September 2015.

Nonetheless, there are regional proportions in the composition of the federal council of ministers.

Although the above-mentioned arrangements could reconcile the interests of individual ethnic groups and religious communities, Anthony Akinola,<sup>57</sup> a Nigerian intellectual, thinks that there are too many ministers in Nigeria. This could reduce the effectiveness of the political decision-making process. The maintenance of the multi-ethnic and/or multi-religious composition of the cabinet or of state and local authorities and institutions of various type most certainly also generates additional operational costs for public institutions. These problems were already obvious many years ago to Arend Lijphart,<sup>58</sup> the principal theoretician of consociationalism, but he is of the opinion that such costs are worth incurring for the sake of greater political stability in plural societies.

## 5.2. The rotational presidency and the specific nature of the vice-presidency

The formal requirement that the composition of the cabinet and of other authorities and institutions reflect the federal character of Nigeria (i.e. so that in practice they would be multi-ethnic and/or multi-religious) is accompanied by an informal institution of a rotational presidency, assumed in turn by a Muslim and a Christian, linked with the institution of the vice-presidency which falls to a member of the opposite religious community and ethnic group than the ones from of which the president is a member.<sup>59</sup>

The rotation of the presidency, almost alternately between a Muslim and a Christian, has been fixed as a political custom in Nigeria during the PDP governments in 1999-2015. The institution of vice-president, which is a constitutional part of the presidential system now functioning in Nigeria, is affected in turn by an informal arrangement used in Nigeria during the period of civilian governments: Prior to the elections, a presidential candidate has to choose a running-mate (who will become vice-president in case of electoral victory) of a different ethnic and religious background than his own.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>57</sup> A. Akinola, 'Nigeria: Akinola – On Rotational Presidency and State Creation', *The Guardian*, 18 July 2014, at <<http://allafrica.com/stories/201407180749.html>>, 16 September 2015.

<sup>58</sup> A. Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies...*, p. 51.

<sup>59</sup> See for example N.O. Nkume-Okorie, *Rotation and zoning: Extra-constitutional frameworks for Nigeria's political stability*, 05 February 2014, [http://www.consultancyafrica.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1645:rotation-and-zoning-extra-constitutional-frameworks-for-nigerias-political-stability&catid=42:election-reflection&Itemid=270](http://www.consultancyafrica.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1645:rotation-and-zoning-extra-constitutional-frameworks-for-nigerias-political-stability&catid=42:election-reflection&Itemid=270), 9 September 2015; SA Rustad, *Power-sharing and Conflict in Nigeria. Power-sharing Agreements, Negotiations and Peace Processes*, Oslo 2008 (CSCW Papers), at <[http://file.prio.no/Publication\\_files/Prio/Rustad%20282008%29%20Power-sharing%20and%20Conflict%20in%20Nigeria%20%28CSCW%20Paper%29.pdf](http://file.prio.no/Publication_files/Prio/Rustad%20282008%29%20Power-sharing%20and%20Conflict%20in%20Nigeria%20%28CSCW%20Paper%29.pdf)>, 9 September 2015.

<sup>60</sup> On the subject of the existence of a similar arrangement in multi-cultural Kenya, see 'The Results of the 2013 Kenyan Presidential Election', African Studies Centre, Leiden 2013, at <<http://www.asclen.nl/news/results-2013-kenyan-presidential-election>>, 21 September 2015.



Such arrangements can contribute to the lowering of inter-ethnic and inter-religious tensions in Nigeria. It is worthwhile to repeat, however, that the institutions of a rotational presidency and of a vice-presidency falling to a member of the opposite religious community or ethnic group than the ones the president originates from are not constitutional arrangements, because formally speaking the president and vice-president in Nigeria are elected in a general election, and the electoral victory of specific candidates should not depend on their place of residence, the religion they practice, or their ethnic background.<sup>61</sup>

It is worthwhile to note that for many years there have been discussions in Nigeria about introducing, following the proposition of some Nigerian intellectuals and part of the political class, a rotational presidency based on 6 zones defined in geographical terms: South-East, South-South, South-West, North-East, North-West, North-Central. Such a proposal was one of the subjects discussed at the conferences concerning systemic reforms organized in Nigeria in 1994-1995 and in 2005.

## 6. CONCLUSION

As we have seen above, Nigeria adopted a hybrid model of inter-ethnic power-sharing – one that combines institutional arrangements that, in the opinion of western political theoreticians are characteristic of two different and theoretically opposite models of inter-ethnic power-sharing: centripetalism and consociationalism. This divergence between Nigerian practice and western theory bears out the statement of the outstanding Africanist Patrick Chabal, holding that contemporary western Africanist political theory should not limit its interpretive options to those which fit the known (mainly western) categories of analysis.<sup>62</sup> Although both the theory of centripetalism and that of consociationalism are empirical in character because they emerged as a result of observations of political reality in multi-ethnic (multi-national) and/or multi-religious (multi-denominational) countries and are based on an in-depth analysis of real examples of power-sharing, the conclusions that follow from such analyses are at times of an excessively abstract nature. The Nigerian example demonstrates that one should not be tightly bound by a set theoretical framework, for some institutions of the two power-sharing models need not be mutually exclusive in practice, even if the concepts they derive from are contradictory. It is worthwhile to remember that centripetalism tries to overcome differences between segments of a plural society and integrate its members – including and especially the political class – above ethnic cleavages. In contrast, the institutions of consociationalism, although also working toward building compromises in plural society, taken together entrench ethnic (national) or religious (denominational) divisions. In Nigeria there is no attempt to make use of the

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<sup>61</sup> R.T. Suberu, 'Federalism and the Management...', pp. 76-77.

<sup>62</sup> P. Chabal, Africa. *The Politics of Suffering and Smiling*, London 2009, p. 103 (*World Political Theories*).

totality of centripetal and consociational institutions at the same time, and the leading centripetal approach is enriched by just a few arrangements of the consociational type. These mainly have to do with one of the four institutions of consociationalism – that of the great coalition, which, as Lijphart points out, can vary extensively in practice. The example of Nigeria shows, therefore, that certain arrangements which are ideologically opposite because they are based on constructivism on the one hand and on primordialism on the other, can complement each other and serve together to stabilize the political situation in a plural society in which such a task is certainly not a simple one.

The key question, however, one that has to do with the Nigerian model of inter-ethnic power-sharing is whether or not it contributes at all to stabilize the political situation in Nigeria. Answering this question is not easy. One can conclude that in Nigeria a complex process of political stabilization – one that may one day be successful, especially in conditions of lasting economic development, reduction of poverty and leveling of social inequality – is certainly under way. The use in Nigeria of a combination of centripetal and consociational arrangements is certainly not a remedy to all ills that exist or arise in Nigeria's multicultural environment, nor can it be. It does not eliminate religious tensions between Muslims and Christians, although it certainly contributes to their reduction and to the fact that they tend to manifest themselves at a local community level. Moreover, one should take into account the fact that Muslim and Christian religious communities are far more numerous in Nigeria than individual ethnic groups, and religious conflicts often break out unexpectedly following sudden events of only symbolic significance at times. Nigerian inter-ethnic power-sharing is also not a remedy for the Islamic extremism present in Nigeria (manifested mainly in the actions of Boko Haram) although, of course, the phenomenon of extremism in any country can be seen as extra-systemic by definition.

The success of combining arrangements proper to both models of inter-ethnic power-sharing in the stabilization of the political situation or in the future attainment of stability in multicultural conditions is, for the time being, quite uncertain. Although the intensity of ethnic conflict in Nigeria has decreased following the implementation of complementary centripetal and consociational institutions, this evolution cannot be explained solely by the existence of mixed inter-ethnic power-sharing. The reduced significance of conflict behavior in relations between ethnic groups and the building of inter-ethnic accommodation may just as well be due to many other factors, including the slow, if systematic, economic growth and increasing urbanization, which leads to greater inter-ethnic contacts and co-dependencies.

It is nonetheless worthwhile to note the fact that there has not been a civil war in Nigeria following the Biafra War, after which power-sharing arrangements were introduced, even if a number of lesser rebellions did take place. The situation is quite different in many other plural societies of Sub-Saharan Africa. Most certainly a comparative study between Nigeria and such large multi-ethnic African states as Ethiopia, Sudan, Angola or the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire) would be a tempting proposition. Power-sharing institutions were not formally introduced in any of those

countries, at least before the 1990s, and every one of them was for many years the scene of ongoing and renewed armed conflicts on a large scale.

There is no doubt that Nigeria is a laboratory of sorts in which it is possible to study the effectiveness in multi-ethnic conditions of a specific hybrid model of inter-ethnic power-sharing, one which is capable of limiting ethnic conflict and of contributing to political stability. As the evolutionary dynamics of the world's political systems – barring a sudden breakdown due to the revolution or war – are usually slow, it would be unwise to expect that the possible success of the political arrangements used in Nigeria could be easily emulated in other countries with plural societies. To this end, what is needed above all is political will and knowledge of institutional engineering that could help reduce conflict between different segments of society and, in consequence, bring about political stability.

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