

ZONING OF POLITICAL POSITIONS IN NIGERIA: A CRITICAL LOOK AT THE ANAMBRA STATE 2021 GOVERNORSHIP ELECTIONS

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Abstract

The paper takes zoning of political positions in Nigeria: a critical look at the Anambra state 2021 Governorship Elections, to x-ray the origin of zoning of political positions in the state by looking at world overview of the zoning of political positions. The paper intends to offer solutions to the serious struggles witnessed every election circle in the state and beyond. The researchers pointed out the constitutional provisions of zoning and federal character. Empirical data, through questionnaire to determine the opinion of Ndi-Anambra on the burning issue of zoning of political positions was applied. A total of 1,630 questionnaires were administered to 5 respondents randomly in each of the 326 political wards of Anambra state. 71% of Anambraians supported zoning. The paper therefore concluded by suggesting the benefits of zoning of political positions based on the findings through data gathered.

Keywords: zoning, Elections, federal character, equity, political positions.

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Introduction

Zoning of political position, according to Nicheeseman (2019), is a political practice in Nigeria under which political parties agree to split their Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidates between the North and South of the country, and also to alternate the home area of the President between the North and South of the country. Zoning is common and liken to a consociationalism, a stable democratic system in deeply divided societies that is based on power sharing between elites from different social groups.

Section 14(3) of the Nigeria Constitution of 1999 (as amended) guarantees federal character to promote national unity and Loyalty. The zoning of political positions in party politics dates back to the Second Republic, when the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) operated the zoning formula as a strategy for the re-unification of the country after the civil-war. In 1995, during the General Sani Abacha constitutional conference, Dr. Alex Ekwueme and Chief Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu supported by the other southern politicians and members of the conference, championed the cause of rotating the presidency among the six (6) geo-political zones. The geo-political zones are for the purpose of rotational presidency after the annulment of June 12 elections (Zik, 2010).

For Antonia (2002), zoning formula seems to fit into the heterogeneous and federal nature of the Nigerian state, helping to accommodate all groups as much as possible and therefore reducing complaints of domination and/ or marginalization. On this note, it helps to make the system more inclusive (of identifiable groups) and therefore supportive of the democratic culture.

Some political parties, in line with section 14(3) of Nigeria constitution made provision for zoning of political positions. The Article 7 subsection 2(2) of the PDP constitution states how elective and party officers should be shared or zoned. It states inter alia:

In pursuance of the principle of equity, justice and fairness, the party shall adhere to the policy of rotation and zoning of party and public elective officers, and it shall be enforced by the appropriate executive committee at all levels.

Excavating the zoning policy in the international bodies and politics, a good look at the UNO/UN. (United Nations Organization) United Nations. The appointment of the Secretary General is done by the General Assembly, but on the recommendation of the Security Council.

The Security Council is made up of six (6) world powers but they consider other contents of the world by consultation and zoning. A look at origins of former Secretary General:

1. GladwynJebb (United kingdom) Acted 1945 – 1946
2. Trygve Lie (Norway) 1946 – 1952
3. Dag Hammarskjold (Sweden(1953-1961)
4. U Thant (Burma now Maynmar) 1961 – 1971
5. Kurt Waldheim (Austria) 1972 – 1981
6. Javier Perez de Ceuller (Peru) 1982 – 1991
7. Boutros Boutros – Ghali (Egypt) 1992 – 1996
8. Kofi a Annam (Ghana) 1997 – 2006
9. Ban Ki-moon (Republic of Korea) 2007 - 2016
10. Antonio Guterres (Portugal) 2017 to date

Source,Wikipedia(2023)

From the OAU/AU (Organization of African Union) which transformed to African Union, zoning is also considered in the appointment of her secretary general;

1. KifleWodajo (1963 – 1964) Ethiopia – East Africa
2. Diallo Telli (1964 – 1972) Guinea – West Africa
3. Nzo Ekangaki (1972 – 1974) Cameroon – Central Africa
4. William Eteki (1974 – 1978) Cameroon – central Africa
5. EdemKodjo (1978 – 1983) Togo – West Africa
6. Peter Onu (1983 – 1985) Nigeria - West Africa
7. Ide Oumarou (1985 – 1989) Niger – West Africa
8. Salim Ahmed Salim (1989 – 2001) Tazania – West Africa
9. Amara Essy (2001 – 2002) Coted’ovoire) West Africa
10. Alpha OumarKonare (2003-2008) mali-west Africa
11. Jean Ping (2008 – 2012) Gabon –Central Africa
12. NkosazanaDlamini-zuma (2012 – 2017) South Africa – South Africa.
13. MoussaFaki (2017 – to date) Chad-central Africa

Source,Wikipedia(2023)

From the above statistics, it is clear that zoning of political positions is adhered to in the international politics, whether the principles of zoning is stated or not. In Nigeria, zoning is only a temporary solution to the political power problem in Nigeria. It was the legendary and charismatic Dr. K.O Mbadiwe, who in 1982 said “zoning is a pragmatic and necessary policy, we have zoned to unzone”. Zoning to unzone was Mbadiwe’s unique way of describing a formula of accommodation for the distribution of political power in the country. It was a transitory measure towards national unity, it was of course, an internal party politics, not a national policy, neither was it a constitutional arrangement before section 14(3) of the 1999 constitution as amended.

Zoning was also practised in Nigeria 1999 till date which led to the emergence of presidents Obasanjo/Atiku, Yar’ Adua/Jonathan, Buhari/Osibanjo, and Tinubu/Shetima respectively.

Origin of zoning in Anambra State

Anambra state is one of the five (5) states that is in South-East geo-political zone of Nigeria, with an estimated area of 4,865sqkm, made up of 21 L.G.As, 183 communities towns, 326 political wards and about 2.4 million registered voters. As the state approaches 2025 gubernatorial election, politicians across the length and breadth of the state have started jostling for political relevance by positioning themselves on how to produce the next governor of the state. But, most importantly, the issue of where the next governor will come from after the incumbent has exhausted his tenure. Anambra is made up of three senatorial districts: Anambra North, Anambra central and Anambra South. A closer observation of the political atmosphere will reveal a very serious debate and disagreement on which zone should produce the next governor of the state ahead of the election (GAFORUM, 2023). One would have thought that with Anambra South senatorial zone occupying the government house at present that the issues of rotational governorship is settled. It is a fact that each of the 21 local government areas in Anambra state can produce a sound individual who is qualified to contest and become governor no matter the criteria. But that is not to be, as politicians across the three senatorial zones have started expressing interests in the governorship seat, despite the perceived understanding on the rotation with everyone arguing in favour of his political interest. A table of periods all the 3 senatorial zones produced governors shown below:

Anambra South Zone

Table 1

S/No	Name of Governor	Period in Office	No. of month/ysr
1	Dr. C.P Ezeife	2 nd January 1992 to Nov. 1993	1 year 9 months
2	Dr. C.C Mbadinuju	29 th May 1999 to 28 th may 2003	4 years
3	Dame VirgyEtiaba	Nov. 2006 to Feb. 2007	3 months
4	Prof. C.C Soludo	17 th March,2022	Till date
		Total	6 years,still counting

Source,Gaforum(2023)

Anambra Central Zone**Table 2**

S/No	Name of Governor	Period in Office	No. of month/ysr
1	Dr. Chris Ngige	29 th May 2003 to 16 th March 2006	2 years, 10 months
2	Mr. Peter Obi	17 th March 2006 to 16 th March 2014	8 years
		Total	10 years, 10 months

Anambra North Zone**Table 3**

S/No	Name of Governor	Period in Office	No. of month/ysr
1	Willie Obiano	17 th March 2014 to 16 th March 2022	8 years
		Total	8 years

SOURCE: GAFORUM, 2023

To some schools of thought in Anambra state are of the opinion that, zoning political positions ought to be in three spheres, zoning amongst the senatorial zones, zoning to various religious denominations in the state and zoning to the female gender.

Ideally, zoning political power may not strictly conform to the classical idea of democracy. In the arguments of the universal democrat, zoning limits the political space, minimizes scope for leadership search and may not offer best political options, in terms of allowing for the emergence of the best candidate, thereby promoting mediocrity and discrimination, but seems to align with Aristotle's assertion that there is always problem with the majority when he opted for Aristocracy (Okafor C, 2020).

For every sound mind, zoning political positions, there is the possibility that zoning can make it possible for each zone to come up with its best; those great minds who would have being discouraged to join the madding crowd of aspirants are now encouraged. It is assumed that almost all they zones in Anambra state can produce over 50 best political personalities and gubernatorial aspirants and candidates, any time, any day, quality should not be compromised by the zones.

We are all aware that unlike before now, most traditional political leadership system in Anambra communities was a function of hereditary system. But now, due to cultural dynamism, equity and inclusiveness, rotational arrangements had been generally accepted. This includes Igweship, president-Generalship, and special political representation such s councillorship, (Okafor, 2020) based on this burning issues of zoning political position, the researchers sampled the opinion of NdiAnambra on the zoning of governorship.

Theoretical Framework

The researchers adopted conflict theory in the course of the research, developed by Karl Marx, is a theory that states the working of a society. It postulates that, the polity is always in a perpetual conflict because of limited resources. Conflict theory holds that social order is maintained by domination and power rather than by consensus and conformity.

According to Karl Marx, those with wealth and power try to hold on to it by any means possible, mainly by suppressing the poor and powerless. A major premise of the conflict theory is that individuals and groups within the state or society will work to maximize their own wealth, advantage and power.

The central tenets of the conflict theory can explain many types of social conflict in the society. Some theorist believe, as Marx did that social conflict is the force that ultimately drives change and development in a state or society. Marx's version of the conflict theory focused on the conflict between the two main classes. Each class consists of a group of people bound by mutual

interests and a certain degree of property ownership. Marx theorized about the bourgeoisie, a group that represented members of the society who holds the majority of the wealth and means. The proletariat is the other group. It includes those considered working-class or poor.

The major takeaways of conflict theory are;

- 1) It focuses on competition among groups within the society or state over limited opportunity or resources.
- 2) It views social and economic institutions as tool of the struggle among groups or classes, used to maintain inequality and the dominance of the ruling class.
- 3) It sees the society as divided along lines of economic class.
- 4) Later version of the conflict theory took to other dimensions of conflicts among the capitalist factions and among various social, religious, and other types of groups. The researchers therefore anchor the research, “a perception survey on zoning of political positions in Nigeria, a critical look on Anambra governorship elections.”.

Objective of the Study

To determine the impulse of NdiAnambra on the current zoning arrangement for the office of the Governor in the year 2025.

Scope of the Study

This study focused its attention on the following:

- a. The current zoning formula as it affects the office of the governor.

Research Methodology

The choice of method for data collection is governed by the nature of the survey. This being an exploratory study, personal interviews and documentary were evidence used.

Population Sample

The survey is restricted to only Anambra State. Cost and time influenced the decision to limit the unit and area of sampling from a total of 2.4 million registered voters covering 326 political wards of Anambra State. Five questionnaire were randomly distributed in each of the 326 wards, totaling 1,630 questionnaires.

Finding

A total of 1,630 questionnaire were distributed of which 1,405 were returned. The data showed that 886 respondents were male while 519 were female. The total number of invalid questionnaire were 17 while 208 were not returned. A total of 1,344 respondents were active voters while 52 were inactive voters. All respondents were 18 years and above. A total of 992 representing (71%) of respondents affirmed the current zoning to south, 28 respondents (2%) preferred central and 14 (1%) preferred North while 365 (26%) of the respondent were indifferent.

Conclusion

Zoning of political power promotes equity in the special distribution of development handouts and infrastructure because, inspite of, the policy of simultaneous development of every sector and zone by successive governments in the state, a political tourism to Alor and Idemmili area (home town of governor Chris Ngige), Agulu and Anaocha (home town of governor Peter Obi) and Aguleri via Umueri (home town of the WillieObiano) show that each of these areas once produced a governor of the state. Today, the hitherto under-developed Anambra North is wearing a very good look including a Cargo Airport (Okafor, 2020).

Senator Ben. Obi (2017) succinctly captured what zoning of political positions does to a people or nation; zoning of political positions is a harbinger of peace in the state because it creates and nurtures a sense of belonging in the people wherever they may come from. For Instance, the people of Anambra North now feel stronger. Peace reigns in this type of political environment because the people feel recognized, accommodated and are convinced that if it is not their turn this time, it would be theirs next. This is political inclusiveness is democracy in action.

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