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FEDERALISM AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION
IN NIGERIA (1999-2007)

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Abstract
This study examined the concept of federalism and the issue of national integration in Nigeria from 1999 to 2007. It is observed that governance in Nigeria is replete with very many contradictions, controversies, paradoxes and crises emanating from the country’s fragile experiment in a multi-ethnic federalism. These have generated conflicting interests, which have over the years lingered unresolved since Lord Lugard forced the amalgamation of disparate and isolated ethno-linguistic nationalities into a country in 1914. Considerable information on federalism, national integration and related concepts were synthesized. The literature review identified gaps, which the study addressed. Source of data for the study were basically secondary, while content analysis was used as the method of data analysis. The study adopted integration theory as the theoretical framework of analysis which offered a reliable framework in which the subject was carefully examined. Based on the data collected and analyzed, the paper argues that the centralized nature and the constitutional provision, structural imbalance in composition, resources and power sharing account for the impediments that exist in Nigerian federalism, while the long reign of military rule in Nigeria accounts for the tensions and contradictions observable in Nigeria’s Federal System. It was recommended, among others that the present federal system be radically restructured to give more empowerment and relative independence to the states.

Introduction
Nigeria is a plural society constituted by nearly 400 ethnic communities and several religious groups. The pluralism of the nation resulted from the process of its creation by the British colonialists. Several nationalities with relatively divergent and independent political and economic structures at different levels of development were brought together through colonial subjugation. The foundation and general outcome of what we have today as Nigerian federalism was therefore laid in the colonial era.
Since gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria has been struggling to manage its diversity. Federalism was adopted as the most viable solution to the management of the country’s ethno-religious pluralism, in particular. Thus all constitutions since 1960 have more or less defined the structure and principle of Nigerian government as federalism. Nigeria has been governed for thirty years (30) yrs by eight (8) distinct military administrations. Even a prolonged programme of transition to the democratic rule which would have ended military rule in 1993 was sabotaged and aborted by the very military administration that had elaborately initiated and crafted the project. In essence, Nigeria returned to democratic rule in May 1999 after more than fifteen (15) straight years (1984-1999) of destructive military rule. As a result, the federal structure has been eroded and replaced by a unitary structure that replicates the military command hierarchy and structure.

The whole idea of federalism in Nigeria is rooted in the British colonialist agenda which informed the amalgamation project. Through amalgamation, the British imposed a unified economic system which allowed them to maximize exploitative profits through minimum government that denied the various constituent units the advantages of their geographical location. To further stress the economic importance or reasons apart from other motivating factors like geographical contiguity, similarity of political institution, the need for military security, desire to be independent of foreign power, the expectation of desirable economic benefits from the forced union form the basis of amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914 (Osuntokun, 1980:95).

According to Tamuno (2000:15) the British were the prime movers and did what mattered most to them, since local public opinion for and against these schemes were neither sought nor given prime consideration. He noted that: “British policy-makers therefore explored new ways of doing old things (to optimize colonial control with minimum resources). Pragmatic economic base considerations, such as these provided the reason d’etre of the (1898-1914) schemes concerning amalgamation in Nigeria. Their prime consideration (that of the 1898 Selborne Committee) was to use funds available from the richer “south” to offset the adverse standing of the less prosperous “north” and so reduce fiscal dependence on scarce imperial grant-in-aid”.

Through these devices, none of the federating units negotiated the advantages and disadvantages of the federal framework; neither was any of them confronted with the fact of what they could lose by not joining or inspired by what their regions could gain by being a member of the federation. These unresolved problems were left for Nigerian political elites to tackle. To this end, Nigerian federalism labours excruciatingly and unceasingly like an expectant mother in the hands of an untrained doctor.
As a result, governance in Nigeria is replete with many contradictions, paradoxes, pathologies and irregularities that currently plague the federal system. Hence pressures for fundamental federal reforms have remained persistent, intense and a diverse feature of contemporary Nigerian politics.

In spite of the above, other conflicts and tension generating areas in Nigerian federalism are indigeneship, controversy, confusion over the status of local governments, crises and failure of over-centralized policing and continuing clamour for political and fiscal decentralization or true federalism among others. That is probably why the sharing of revenue accruing to the nation’s Distributable Pool Account (DPA), is said to be the most emotionally charged and volatile issue of Nigerian federalism. There has neither been an agreement nor consensus over how the wealth of the nation should be shared among the federating units. These multiple pathologies of Nigerian federalism have largely animated the unrelenting pressure, clamour and agitation for resources control, self-determination, secession threats and minority questions among other contending issues that make one to wonder whether the continued practice of federalism in Nigeria is a panacea to the nation’s complex problems.

It is against this background that this paper examines federalism and national integration in Nigeria to ascertain whether the practice of federalism has been able to integrate the people of Nigeria with regard to her diversities in culture, religion, custom, beliefs and value systems among others.

The Concept and Features of Federalism

The concept of federalism has attracted the attention of scholars, political activists, politicians and public affairs commentators over the years. The earliest most profound theoretical exposition is probably the eight five (85) essays that appeared in 1788 under the now famous title *The Federalist*. These essays were actually written in defense and support of the 1787 Constitution of the United States of America.

Federalism is a term described as a structural device for managing the affairs of a plural society. A considerably large number of scholars have written extensively on the concept of federalism. It has almost become a convention to begin its conceptualization with the work of Kenneth C. Wheare generally regarded as the originator of the modern concept of federalism (Okoko, 1998:16).

Wheare (1966:10) defines federalism as the “method of dividing powers so that the general (central) and regional (component) governments are each within a sphere coordinate and independent”. Though this definition has been criticized as legalistic and fixed or static by scholars like Livingstone (cited in Nwolise, 2005:115) and others; it remains the classical definition of federalism.
Watts (1999:1) refers to federalism as the basic notion of involving the combination of a shared rule for some purpose and regional self rule for others within a single political system so that neither is subordinate to the other. Watt goes on to elaborate that: “The function of federalism is not to eliminate intense differences but rather to preserve regional identities within a united framework. Their function, therefore is not to eliminate conflicts but to manage it in such a way that regional differences are accommodated. But how well this is done in practice depends often upon the particular form of the institution adopted within the federation” (Watts 1999:110-111).

In the view of Leff (1999:210), federalism, after all, is generally understood as an institutional arrangement whereby authority and functional competence are shared among different levels of government. Other scholars like Simeon and Conway among others, regarded federalism as the sole rationale for managing diversity in political order. Accordingly Simeon and Conway (2001:339) assert: “The logic in support of federalism is simple: conflict will be reduced by a measure of disengagement of separation. Harmony will be increased in a system in which territorially concentrated minorities are able to exercise autonomy or self-determination on matter crucial to their identity and continued existence, without the fear of being overridden or vetoed by the majority group. Similarly a federal system would limit the ability of the majority to impose its will on the minorities. Hence, they will be reconciled to the system”.

Federalism as Tamuno (2000:13) observes, is a form of government where the component units of a political organization participate in sharing powers and functions in a cooperative manner through the combined forces of ethnic pluralism and cultural diversity. Others tend to pull people apart (Tamuno, 2000:13). This kind of political arrangement tends to accommodate the interest of both centre-seeking and centre-fleeing forces. The strength of federalism as Shastri notes is its capacity to meet two important demands in contemporary political systems. These are; the need to construct an efficient, dynamic and modern state, and the desire to “celebrate” diversity. Federalism connotes both a set of institution and processes and a strategy for political arrangement (Shastri, 2001:2).

Federalism is distinguishable from other arrangements of unitary and confederal structures by its levels and sources of power. In a federal system there are at least two levels of authority, the central and the regional, and both derive their authority not from one another, but from the constitution. But in a unitary system of government, the governments of the constituent units ultimately derive their authority from the central authority, while in a confederal system the central government ultimately derives its authority from the constituent units (Watt and Blindenbacher, 2002:25).
Nwabueze (1983:1) throws more light on the concept, by stating that: "Federalism is an arrangement whereby powers of government within a country are shared between a national (nation-wide) government and a number of regionalized (i.e., territorially localized) governments in such a way that each exists as a government separately and independently from the others, operating directly on persons and property within its territorial area, with a will of its own, and its own apparatus for the conduct of its affairs and with an authority in some matters exclusive of all others".

The Concept of National Integration

The concept of National Integration expectedly is replete with different definitions. Morrison, et. al. (1972:385) say: "it is a process by which members of a social system develop linkages so that the boundaries of the system persist overtime and the boundaries of sub-systems become less consequential in affecting behaviour. In this process, members of the social system develop an escalating sequence of contact, cooperation, consensus and community".

Integration according to Ake (1967:3) can be defined by "the extent that the minimal units (individual actors) develop in the course of political interaction a pool of norms". Coleman and Roseberg (1964:9) see it as the progressive reduction of cultural and regional tensions and discontinuities in the process of creating a homogenous political community.

Duverger (1976:177) defines it as "the process of unifying a society which tends to make it a harmonious city, based upon an order its member regard as equitably harmonious". To Jacob and Tenue (1964:9), it is a "relationship of community among people within the same political entity... a state of mind or disposition to be cohesive, to act together, to be committed to mutual programmes". And Binder (1964:630), see integration as involving the creation of a very high degree of comprehensiveness. On the other hand, Etzioni (1965:4) argues that a community is cohesive when "(a) it has effective control over the use of the means of violence; (b) it has a centre of decision making capable of effecting the allocation of resources and rewards; and (c) it is a dominant focus of political identification for a large majority of politically aware citizens". Indeed, Weiner (1976:180–182) distinguishes five different senses in which the term can be used, thus: territorial, national, elite-mass, value and behaviour.

These conceptualizations of integration give no clear indication of what the end product would look like and how one would recognize an integrated polity. The following posers by Neuman (1976:1) are indicative: How much cohesion and which commonly accepted norms denote an integrated political or social unit? How would an observer identify integration, or is it dependent on some other manifestations (such as conflict) to demonstrate a lack of integration?
What institutional form will an integrated unit take? - will it be democratic or authoritarian? Would it be a centralized organizational entity with full sovereignty, or would it be a loose federal unit? Or are institutional forms irrelevant to integration?

In the light of the foregoing, integration refers to the degree of cohesiveness of a nation; the extent to which it’s various elements interconnects to form a consolidated unit. Therefore, integration among other contending definitions is the process of bringing together culturally and socially discrete groups into a single territorial limit for purposeful cooperation or outright unity between them.

Theoretical Discourse

There exists an avalanche of eminent theorists that produced extensive interaction in the field of inter-group relation in plural societies/states. The Nigerian nation-state is a plural state and given the focus of this study, which is to examine the extent of unity, if any, brought into the Nigerian polity through the practice of federal system; the integration theory has been adopted as the theoretical framework.

To this extent, this study adopts integration theory as propounded by Milward (1992) to enhance understanding of how unity is created from formerly disparate groups promoting what is common to them while de-emphasizing their areas of difference. According to him, “Integration is simply the adaptive response of plural, small and medium size states to global challenges they could not face individually. Far from replacing the nation-state, integration is a strategy to consolidate it” (Milward, 1992).

These definitions of integration presupposes existence of some elements of pluralism, which may be ethnic, socio-cultural, economic, language or political by which each group may be marked to the point of engendering some measure of self-consciousness, that can hinder the process of creating a sense of territorial nationality. The territorial unit so created through integration process is to reduce tension in a pluralistic society in order to bring about unity and homogeneity.

Milward identifies several dimensions of integration. First national integration... suggests the bringing together of the disparate parts of a society into a more integrated whole, or to make out of small societies a closer approximation of one nation. Closely observing the above dimension, we find out that calls for reduction in the parochial attachments in favour of a common identity so that people or citizens can have a sense of belonging and oneness within a nation as a whole rather than seeing themselves as belonging to special groups based on religion, language, ethnicity and culture.
In this respect, Cooper (2001:18) points out that every case of integration requires some central common authority as in the case of United States of America. He argues that the diversities in the USA, notwithstanding, the position of her central authority is not in dispute and her legitimacy is unquestionable. On the other hand, studies reveal that this is not the case with most of the states of Africa, including Nigeria Scot (cited in Ibobje and Dode, 2005:275). In most African states, the legitimacy of the state is frequently challenged by powerful groups and individuals, as well as regional blocs and ethnic units, thereby creating integration problems.

The second dimension of integration identified by Milward which is territorial refers to the state’s ability in penetrating the length and breadth of its territory. In other words, it is a “growing ability of government to exert authority throughout the realm”. Hence, people transfer commitment and loyalty from small tribes, villages or petty principalities to the larger central political system.

Transferring or adapting loyalty from one tribe to national may not be an easy task as Milward would make us to believe. Therefore, Elaigwu criticized the definition. According to Elaigwu (1983) (cited in Obiyan, 1997), the process of nation building does not involve: “Transfer of commitment and loyalties” from the narrow or parochial level of ethnic groups to a larger political unit such as Nigeria. He further argues that belonging to a particular ethnic group such as Yoruba, Igbo, Igbira, Tiv, etc. “is a matter of identity” and “you can not transfer it”. In other words, “you cannot cease being an Igbo or Hausa simply because you so declare”.

Elaigwu (1994:149) argues further that the process of national integration or nation-building refers to attempts by ruling elites at the centre (civilian or military) to create unity among heterogeneous groups in the state in order to build a new political community called nation. Accordingly, national integration can further be understood in two ways: through the process and through strategy. The national integration through the process according to Elaigwu (1983) can be subdivided into vertical and horizontal dimensions. The vertical dimension involves the progressive acceptance by the people of the legitimacy of the central government as a symbol of the emerging nation irrespective of the political incumbent and not merely the acceptance of the people, the authority and coercive power of the state.

The process of national integration on the horizontal dimension on the other hand, according to him involves: “The acceptance of other members of the civil body as equal fellow members of a corporate nation. A meaningful process of national integration in this sense involves or lies in the recognition of the right of every member of the state to share of common history, resources, power to
allocate resources, values and other aspects of the state buttressed by sense of belonging to one political community” (Elaigwu, 1983:462).
On the whole, national integration involves acceptable and fashionable mechanism of uniting or bringing together diversified society into a common fold out of the cleavages that might have been rooted in history, religion, cultural differences or as a result of the dynamics of the external pressures.

Therefore, the ultimate goals of national integration as a process is the political unification of the constituent unit into one whole nation, the type of Plato’s Polis (city-state). This is known as the process of state-building as opposed to process of nation-building.

Discussion

The finding shows that despite being a sovereign state, Nigeria has been reeling from one problem to the other, which makes integration difficult. To start with, the federating units were not consulted for the federal framework. According to Tamuno (2000:15), the British were the prime movers and did what mattered most and of interest to them, since local public opinion, for and against these schemes were neither sought nor given prime consideration. He noted that “British policy-makers therefore explored new ways of doing old things (to optimize colonial control with minimum resources). Pragmatic economic based considerations, such as these provided the raison d ’etre of the (1898 – 1914) schemes concerning amalgamation in Nigeria. Their prime consideration (that of the 1898 Selborne Committee) was to use funds available from the richer “South” to offset the adverse financial standing of the less prosperous “North” and so reduce fiscal dependence on scarce imperial grant-in-aid”.

Through these devices, none of the federating units negotiated the advantages and disadvantages of the federal framework; neither was any of them confronted with the facts of what they could lose by not joining, or inspired by what their regions could gain by being a member of the federation. These unresolved problems were left for the Nigerian political elites to tackle. There are no indications that these problems have been resolved even more than fifty years after.

Nigeria’s federal system is highly centralized. Coleman (cited in Peil 1976:115) observes that the “excessive centralization and statism of most developing countries ... not only mean greater vulnerability as a result of unfulfilment of populist expectation; it also means heightened inefficiency”. Unlike Switzerland, which despite being a small country, remains one of the most decentralized countries in the world as noted by Koller (2002:27). Above all, it also means the absence of critically important supportive capacity in the society,
because the public cannot respond to, direct, or restrain a policy which is so far removed from it as a centralized government tends to be (Koller, 2002:115).

The long reign of military rule has no doubt created the structural problems of Nigerian federalism. In line with its command structure, Nigeria’s federal system has been over-centralized to the extent that it reflects more of the unitary arrangement than a federal one (Elaigwu, 1998:6-7). Yet, Nigeria began with a formal federal constitution in 1954, which was decentralized to accommodate the diverse ethnic groups. For instance, each of the constituent federating units, known then as regions, operated its own regional constitution, police, civil service and judiciary. Each region even had a separate coat of arms and motto, distinct from that of the federation. With the incursion of the military into governance, the federal government acquired more powers to the detriment of the federating units. The first coup in 1966 abolished regional police. Though it brought government closer to the people, the creation of twelve states on the eve of the civil war in 1967 entailed considerable loss of power by the federating units. The Murtala - Obasanjo military junta in its bid to reduce “divisive tendencies” in the nation, abolished states’ coat of arms and mottos making all governments in the country to adopt the coat of arms and motto of the federation, bringing about, from the benefit of hindsight, a false sense of unity. In addition, the federal military government took over assets owned by states or group of states like television stations, stadia and newspapers, thereby strengthening the powers of the federal government at the expense of the states in terms of asset ownership. This made the contest for political power at the federal level a lot more intense among the federating units and it laid the foundation for many years of crisis and instability (Policy Briefs, October 1999). This viewpoint is supported by Tamuno (1998:29) who attributes the travails of Nigeria’s federalism to “successions of military rulers at the federal and state levels” who perverted the system through “robust centralism”. Similarly, Adejumobi (2002:5) posits rather definitively: “Since independence in 1960, the emphasis has been on maintaining Nigeria’s federal structure and system of government, but the long years of military rule has perverted the idea”.

The restructure of civilian democratic rule, on the other hand, was swiftly accompanied by various attempts to re-assert the rights of the sub-national units in the federation, as a result of the perverse political consequences of Nigeria’s over-centralized and corrupt fiscal federalism. These have been most evident in the syndrome of youth militancy, state violence and anarchy in the oil-rich Niger Delta, from which much has been taken and little returned, except, perhaps, environmental disaster, economic destitution and political repression (Diamond, 2001:XV).
In addition, many state governments have denounced or resisted the centralization of the minimum wage structure, the imposition of national anti-corruption law on all levels of government, the centre exclusive arrogation of the authority to declare public holidays, and the establishment of centralized institutions like the National Judicial Council (NJC), the National Primary Education Commission and Unitary Police Structure (Suberu, 2005:223).

The preceding stricture presents a grueling examination of the torturous travails of Nigerian federalism, democracy and the capacity of the leadership, the sheer vulnerability and ineffectiveness of Nigeria’s over-centralized regulatory institutions especially the police, in ethnic conflict situations. In essence, ethnic violent convulsions in Nigeria are not inherently rooted in the country’s diversity but reflect and indicate the dysfunctional or unstable character of the country’s federalism which is contrary to the tenets of federalism that is designed to promote the peaceful co-existence and accommodation of disparate ethnic communities (Egwu, 2001). Some major instances of violent conflict in the Fourth Republic are instructive in this regard:

1. The Kaduna, Owerri and Aba ethno-religious violence arising from the Sharia crisis of February and May 2000 which claimed some 1,500 lives was the single most turbulent and fragile eruption of ethno-religious conflict in the new democracy.

2. Others include the communal mayhem in Warri, Ile-Ife, Jos, religious riots in Kaduna (over Sharia), factional strife in Obudu and Ekori (over succession to traditional throne), youths’ militancy in Bayelsa for self-determination and resource control, and political struggles for the control of local government councils (Bassey, 2005:38). As one perceptive journalist puts it: “Nigerians from all walks of life are openly questioning whether their country should remain as one entity or discard the colonial borders and break apart into several separate states. Ethnic and religious prejudices have found fertile ground in Nigeria where there is neither a national consensus nor a binding ideology. Indeed, the spread of virulent strains of chauvinism in Nigeria is part of a worldwide phenomenon playing out in Indonesia, the Balkans, the former Soviet Union and a host of other African nations” (Maier, 2001:xx).

All these are indicative of the bruised, despoiled, brutalized and broken psyche of the citizens which is reflected in the character of inter-group interaction with adverse consequences. This scenario is reflected in the mindless corruption, insensitivity, unconscionable vandalism, killing, maiming, arson and wanton criminality unleashed by some citizens. Underlying all these intense ethno-regional/religious violence are competition for scarce and over-centralized resources and the apparent failure of the federal system to sufficiently
decentralize and deregulate access to opportunities in order to afford some degree of security to groups that may feel relatively underrepresented, marginalized or displaced politically at the center (Suberu, 2005:230).

**Some Current Challenges and Strategies for National Integration**

Despite all the highlighted problems facing Nigerian federalism, the country is regarded as a pioneer and an exemplar in Africa in the use of power-sharing mechanisms and practices to promote inter-ethnic inclusiveness, or discourage sectional imbalance and bias, in decision making processes (Suberu, 1996:71 – 72). It is these integrative mechanisms that have been holding the convoluting federation together. Commencing from the post-civil war time, policy makers came up with the idea of promoting interaction and cooperation among the Nigerian elite. The assumption of the policy is that if the elite is forced to interact with the environment outside their natural milieu, they are likely to have better understanding of the Nigerian state. This is the reason behind the establishment of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) by Decree No. 24 of 22 May 1973. The scheme enlists all young graduates for a mandatory one-year national service. However, the implementation of the scheme is frustrating both in terms of entrenched ethnic favouritism and brazen misappropriation of funds. For instance, young graduates cannot secure jobs where they serve because they are not indigenes, followed by other discriminatory practices. Even, when employed, it is on contract basis.

Another accommodative strategy adopted in Nigeria is the “federal character” principle. It is defined as “fair and effective representation of the various components of the federation in the country’s position of power, status and influence” (Government’s View and Comments on the Findings and Recommendations of the Political Bureau, 1987:86-87). As laudable as this integrative mechanism is, the wide gap between intent and practice is making it counter-productive. The policy has been criticized for invading the integrity and standards of public bureaucracy and such other governmental bodies that normally require safeguards from party politics. Another problem is that the policy has been a mask for ethnic-cleansing (Dewan, 1995). It also suffers from a faulty philosophical premise (Ayoade, 1982:21; 1988:13). In essence, the policy is engendering federal instability rather than integration.

In an extensive nationwide survey carried out by the international Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA, 2001:101), the impact of the “federal character” policy on citizenship was explored. It is believed that it has created three types of Nigerian citizens; namely, indigenes, non-indigenes, and those citizens who are unable to prove that they belong to a community indigenous to any state in Nigeria as well as women married to men from states
other than their own (IDEA 2001). Such a multiple system of citizenship inevitably engenders discrimination in jobs, land purchase, housing, admission to educational institutions, marriage, business transactions and the distribution of social welfare services. Most of the respondents to the survey agree that the situation should change to one in which citizenship is based solely on residence.

The constitutional provision as contained in 1999 Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria has equally acted as a moderating influence on the exacerbated impediment to Nigerian cohesion through the political representation and accommodation of sub-national constituencies at the federal level which has been advanced by a wide variety of means including, the equal representation of all the states of the federation in the powerful Senate (the upper chamber of the bicameral federal legislature); the appointment of at least one federal minister (member of the federal executive council) and Ambassador or High Commissioner for foreign missions from each state of the federation; the conscious, although by no means completely successful attempts by the Obasanjo administration to fulfill the constitutional mandate of “federal character” in the distribution of public positions and resources; and the adoption of a more or less informal ethno-regional power-sharing arrangement by the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) (Suberu, 2005).

Under the power-sharing arrangement, the six most important political positions in the federation were shared among the six geopolitical zones as follows: President of the Federal Republic (Yoruba southwest), Vice-president (Hausa-Fulani/minority northeast), President of the Senate (Igbo southeast), Deputy Senate president (ethnic minority Middle-Belt or North-Central), Speaker of the House of Representatives (Hausa-Fulani north-west), and Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives (ethnic minority south-south or Niger Delta). As expected, at the end of the maximum two terms of the Yoruba president in 2007, the presidential slot went to the Hausa-Fulani of the North-West. The other key political positions shared among the geopolitical regions are Vice President to the South-South, Senate President to the North Central, Deputy Senate President to South-East. Others are Speaker of the House of Representative to the South-West and the Deputy Speaker of House of Representative to the North-East. A major attraction of this power-sharing arrangement is its flexibility and informality as a political party convention, which helps to prevent the kind of ethno-sectarian polarization and gridlock that has tarnished more rigid or constitutionally entrenched power-sharing arrangements in countries like Lebanon and the former Yugoslavia. (Suberu, 2005).

A further accommodative feature of Nigeria federalism involves the use of the revenue allocation system to redistribute centrally collected oil revenues to all the states of the federation. This distribution policy has helped to prevent large
disparities in the access of the various Nigerian groups to financial resources, promote a sense of national loyalty in resource-poor sections, and consolidate the authority of the central government. But the “boomerang effects” of this distributive system are evident in the feelings of economic dispossessment in the oil-endowed regions, the economic dependency and complacency of the sub-national units, the development of a debilitating and divisive “national cake-sharing psychosis,” the enervation of any incentives to genuine economic development and diversification, the over-centralization of the federation, and the potentially explosive tendency, underscored by the massive PDP victories in the April-May 2003 elections, towards hegemonic domination of the entire federation by the ruling factions at the center (Suberu, 2005).

It is, however, crucial to note that minorities’ agitation for self-determination is being tackled. The restless oil-rich Niger Delta region is being gradually placated with higher revenue allocation through the constitutional provision for the re-allocation of not less than 13 percent of federally collected oil revenues on a regional derivation basis. This may redress the problem of ecological degradation and developmental neglect in the region but only if public functionaries in the zone eschew corruption. Beyond higher revenue allocation, a development corporation, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), was established to address the needs of the region.

A final feature of the accommodative strategy adopted between 1999 and 2007 although it has not been explicitly articulated in Nigeria, the strategy of pragmatic, piecemeal, integration renewal, has been implicit in several political developments in the country since the restoration of civilian rule in 1999. These include:

- The bold, balanced, and broadly anti-centralist jurisprudence of the independent Supreme Court as it has arbitrated a series of constitutional or federal-state disputes over revenue allocation, local government, anti-corruption legislation, urban planning and party-registration.
- The enactment of the on-shore-offshore oil dichotomy abrogation law in 2004. This underscored the possibilities for a political and legislative, rather than constitutional or narrowly legalistic, resolution of the persistent clamour for resource control in the Niger Delta (Suberu, 2005:7).
- The proposed Fiscal Responsibility Act, which has been initiated by the former ministers of finance, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala. This is designed to address the culture of inconsistency, indiscipline, waste and corruption in Nigeria’s public finance by committing all tiers of government to effective, disciplined and coordinated budgetary planning, implementation and reporting; by institutionalizing a stabilization strategy for saving, managing and investing windfall oil revenues; and by establishing high standards of
financial disclosure and public access to comprehensive information on government finances (Okonjo-Iweala, 2004:61).

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are considered appropriate:

1. Federalism in Nigeria should be reconstructed to recognize ethnic and religious factors. The historical legacies of discrimination against groups based on their ethnic or religious origins must be addressed. In so doing, the granting of autonomy to regions must be real and power must be shared, not shifted. However, the federating units cannot be defined on ethnic and religious basis. Ethnic and religious enclaves are dangerous for their members and even more dangerous for the minorities that find themselves within them. It should be remembered that when the basis for group definition narrows down the following primordial criteria, the production of minorities increases: groups that thought they belong start discovering that they do not quite belong. The construction of federalism requires that a political basis for the construction of legitimacy must be discovered.

2. There should be a re-structuring of the Nigerian society, economically and politically in the direction of letting the states control their resources. This will reduce the huge sums of money dumped at the centre and consequently reduce the cutthroat and near warfare struggle to control the centre. On the other hand, it will help to unleash the latent productive capacity of every state, which will invariably stimulate healthy economic competitions among states and geopolitical zones, leading to substantial economic growth and development through active participation of state in wealth creation.

3. To build this institutional capacity, states must have their own constitutions through which they can reflect their interests and set their priorities within the overall framework of the Nigerian nation. Such provisions would enable them, for instance, to determine the size of their legislative assemblies, the qualification for membership, their pay based on their unique circumstances, fix salaries and perquisites for their public servants provided the minimum wage rate set by the Federal Government is not contravened, and organize governance to reflect their unique capabilities, priorities and cherished traditions.

4. In essence, Nigerians need to find a solution to the country’s crisis of unity in fiscal federalism, political re-structuring, derivative revenue sharing and the extensive decentralization of the present warped union where too much power and resources are concentrated in the centre. Nigeria equally needs an entirely
different governance approach based on a different philosophy that will guarantee groups’ rights by recognizing the heterogeneity of the polity.

5. Finally, the summation of the aforementioned recommendations is that we must take seriously the meaning of federalism. In a federal system, the Federal Constitution is ratified by a specified proportion of the constituent states. In a genuine federal system, each constituent unit has its own constitution in which it decides how many legislative chambers it desires and in which it decides where its capital should be located. Each unit of a proper federal system should be allowed to select and fly its own flag, in addition to the Nigerian. If the Boys Scout of Nigeria, the Nigeria Police Force, and the Nigerian Army have their distinct flags, what prevents states from having their own flags? Federalism requires that each level of government exercise appropriate authority in judicial matters, along with a civilian police formation. It is a disgrace that Nigeria has one police establishment. Does anybody really believe that the Nigeria Police can handle land cases in local communities, settle marital problems between husbands and wives, arrest petty thieves in remote villages, patrol the highway, catch armed robbers and still be efficient? Where else in the world is such concentration of policing powers practiced? Is it not wiser to confine the Nigeria Police to Federal responsibilities of law and order, leaving state matters to the states, and local matters of law and order to local police? Let no one ridicule our communities by saying they cannot raise police units. Before British colonial rule, our communities had indigenous police formations. At any rate let those that care and can raise their police be so permitted by Federal and State Constitutions.

These recommendations if considered and implemented will go a long way in promoting a federalist spirit and national cohesion in Nigeria and other federating states in Africa.

Conclusion

Going by the various conceptualization of federalism by different scholars as analyzed and re-echoed in this work, the glaring fact that federalism is a governmental arrangement that is compatible with multi-ethnic, multi-national, culturally heterogeneous societies like Nigeria is indicated.

However, in this study, it becomes clear that, the federal or central government in Nigeria is too preponderant due to its “granting power" in relation to the state. A domineering federal system exists in Nigeria where the states are reduced to mere administrative units. This condition is made possible through the constitutional enactment of oppressive and obnoxious laws. The failure of a federal-state in Nigeria is largely due to the militarization of governance for thirty years of the nation’s independence that has produced the stringent calls for the dissolution of the union. Thus, the foundation and general outcome of what we
have today as Nigerian federalism was laid in the colonial era. The strength of the centre and the contradicting tendencies, as well as the hegemony of the federal might which was already in place during the colonial days was passed on to the post-colonial Nigerian state. The Independence Constitution 1960, the 1963 Republican Constitution, the 1979 Constitution, the 1989 Constitution, the 1995 Draft Constitution and the 1999 Constitution did not depart from the general tendencies established during colonialism with regard to the centralizing tendencies in content, spirit and structure of the Nigerian federalism.

The Republican status of the 1963 Constitution, and Presidentialism of the 1979 Constitution, and the programatism of the 1989 Constitution did not in any way strengthen the Nigerian federalism. The long period of military rule, the hierarchical structure and the command style of administration combine to frustrate the benefits derivable from the state-creation exercise embarked upon by different regimes to stabilize the Nigerian state.

There is no doubt that the constitution has to play a critical role in the redefinition of Nigerian federalism. But that role would have to be combined with the political clarity of the goal of federalism, which is the creation of a stable and just polity. Federalism, if properly structured and managed will be functionally beneficial to the Nigerian people. This study therefore views the practice of federalism in Nigeria as inherently antithetical and therefore explains the continuing impediments and contradictions of the system in terms of the fraudulent, unjust, paralytic federal arrangement practiced in Nigeria. This is because the structural transformation implicit in the Nigerian federalist spirit can materialize only if the efforts, ingenuity and resources of the people are fully mobilized for national integration.

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