



Federalism in A Post-Colonial State: A Case of Nigeria

¹Onuigbo, Richard A. & ²Eme, Okechukwu Innocent

¹Department of Political Science
Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu, Nigeria
Email: ifeifeonuigbo@yahoo.com

²Department of Public Administration & Local Government
University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria
Email: okechukwu.eme@unn.edu.ng, okechukwunnunt@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The quest for the restructuring of the Nigerian political system has been made relentlessly since the 1914 amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates by the British Colonial conquerors. Since the 1990s, the challenges of restructuring and federalism have become increasingly interlinked both in public debate and on political agendas. In early 2017, various ethnic identities threatened the state and her stability. The idea of a nexus between restructuring and dis-membering of Nigeria gained political momentum and coalesced into two major assumptions that now define Nigeria's federalism debates on restructuring. The study recommends real leadership political will and their commitment on issues raised as parts of the recommendations. The paper concluded by positing that there is the need to engage agitators and address and redress the complaint of marginalization, winner takes all, political mentality, ethnic and religious irredentism among others in the polity.

Keywords: Federalism, Nigeria, Post-colonial state, Restructuring & Marginalization

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a polity created by our erstwhile colonial master the United Kingdom, made up of many ethnic nationalities, but a nation waiting to be born. In this paper we will argue that, given the diversity inherent in our national make-up, the only form of government that can create national unity and cohesion, and enable Nigeria achieve the promise of its dynamic peoples, is true federalism. Such a form of government requires a fundamental overhaul of the 1999 constitution presently in force to achieve national unity and cohesion as well as the development of the component parts of the federal state at their own pace. Nigeria today is called a "federal republic" but in reality is a unitary state. This reality is the result of military intervention in our polity through the first coup of 1966.

Arising from the above, the study will identify the variations in the strength of federal powers in relation to sub-national units in many countries. The United States, for example, went through conceptual battles between its Founding Fathers in the country's early years, with the "federalists" favoring a strong centre that nevertheless left the states with enough space and powers to grow without suffocation, and the 'anti-federalists' that wanted stronger states and a weak center. The federalists won. In the European tradition of federalism, the sub-national units or regions have tended to be more powerful than central governments.

The Meaning and Nature of Federalism: A Theoretical Overview

The essence of a true federation, such as we had under the 1960 and 1963 Constitutions, is an agreement to form it by its constituent units, and an appropriate balance of powers between the constituent units and the center. A perversion of this cardinal principle has created injustice, which has created disunity. It has led to a retreat from Nigerian-ness, egged on by these valid resentments at inequity and injustice, back to primordial identities that make a mockery of our nationhood.

Federalism aims to address the problem of integration at all, and with the problem of the Nigerian integration in particular. In other words it is the problem of the Nigerian Union, the problem of the future of the Nigerian Union, its final shape, its organization, relations between the polity and its sub-units. Those problems are very important and simultaneously very difficult; not only difficult from the theoretical side, but also from the side of politics and policy, first of all, governments of the federation.

The majority of social scientists and scholars think about federation as the federal state. They assume that also the federation of the states should be constructed on the pattern of the existed federal states – first of all, democratic and decentralized states. Usually they are thinking about federal structure of the USA. Federalism, by contrast, is understood as dynamic idea defined by a political system based on the principles of liberty, equality of rights, and the autonomy of members of that system. The dynamic nature of that idea points rather to its implementation during the integration process, than to the assumed plan. The understanding of the federalism as dynamic process leading to federal structure of the Nigerian Union requires the recognition of the nature different models of federal states. So, the first task is to present and to learn about main theories of federalism.

As pointed out by Wheare (1964:112), a foremost classical writer on federalism,

The modern idea of what federal government is has been determined by the United States of America- Any definitions of federal government which failed to include the United States would thereby be condemned as unreal- for the federal principle has come to mean what it does because the United States has come to be what it is...

Corroborating Wheare's assertion above is the observation by Yarbrough (1976:43) that Federalism is "the uniquely American contribution to the theory and practice of free government". Meanwhile, the term federalism has been subjected to various definitions without losing its essential characteristics or content (Obianyo, 2005:176). Thus, Wheare's (1964:10) defined federalism thus: "By Federal principle I mean that methods of dividing powers so that general and regional governments are each within a sphere coordinate and independent". Wheare (cited in Dare, 1979:27) further states:

I have put forward uncompromisingly a criterion of federal government. The delimited and coordinate division of governmental functions and I have implied that to the extent to which any system of government does not conform to this criterion, it has no claim to call itself federal.

Wheare's definition and his rigid stance on the concept of federalism elicited many criticisms. Critics contend that his definition was legalistic, inflexible, unrealistic, as well as neglecting certain socio-economic, cultural and political realities or forces that shape federal societies. Thus, Livingstone (1956:12) emphasizing sociological factors or federal qualities of a society and avers that "The essence of federalism lies not in the institutional or constitutional structure but in the society itself. Federal government is a device by which the federal qualities of the society are articulated and protected". He emphasized the essential role of economic, social, political and cultural factors in the formation of federalism" (Obianyo, 2005:177). Livingstone's definition emphasized those factors that make power division as encapsulated in the constitutional provisions as well as unity inevitable. As pointed out by Ezeani (2018 :6) "Constitutionalism is a critical factor that cannot be underestimated in the functioning of federalism, at the same time, it ought to be recognized that a number of factors may, singularly or in combinations, determine the complexity, as well as facilitate the dynamism of a federalism".

In contrast to Wheare's legalistic stance, Friedrich (1968) sees federalism as a process rather than a design. In other words, federalism is a general principle of social organization which is a process that operates in the direction of integration and differentiation, the pattern of direction of these depend essentially on sociological criteria which include prevailing attitude, values, preferences, propensities and interests of the various actors at the material time (Friedrich, 1963:286). Thus, Friedrich (1968) sees the degree of federalism as a function of sociological rather than legal criteria as proposed by Wheare (1964). Although Friedrich's process view has been criticized as open-ended, it nevertheless sensitizes us to the changing the evolving nature of the federal balance of power and to the fact that intergovernmental cooperation usually cuts across the formal constitutional division of power" (Ifesinachi, 2007:48).

Elazar (1962:44) focuses on the centrality of power in the integration process of systems. In other words, federal system of government is a means of ensuring equitable power sharing among diverse groups in a society.

It is important to note that the legal, process, power and sociological views of federalism are mutually inclusive. The process or sociological definitions are either complimentary or supplementary to Wheare's definition. Thus, as rightly pointed out by Jinadu (cited in Ifesinachi, 2007:49), sociological variables take on meaning and significance within the legal framework provided by a federal arrangement.

Given the above definitions, federalism is defined here as a system of government adopted by people with diverse background who form a political union but at desire time want to preserve a limited autonomy. In other words, it is a system of government that emphasizes unity in diversity, division of powers between levels of government and limited autonomy of the constituent units (Amadi et al, 2017:4).

Thus, it is important to note that federal instrumentalities to borrow Livingstone's (1956), can be found in several forms of political system-ranging from centralized to decentralized and even to a loose structure of supranational cooperation. Awa (1976:7) observes that the federal model involves a whole range of institutional variations implementing the principles of co-ordinate authority (Ezeani, 2018).

Similarly, Ayoade (1996:43) identified three models of federalism that any federal system can gravitate to viz:

1. Coordinate Authority Model
2. The Overlapping Authority Model, and
3. The Inclusive Authority Model

The **coordinate model** according to Ayoade (2001:45) "defines a peripheralised, weak or decentralized federation. The centre is weakened to strengthen the periphery just as in the early days of the American Union...the relations between the state and centre are autonomous" However, the local government is subordinate to the state because they are created by action of state law. The **overlapping model** guarantees an interdependence between the three levels of government and necessitating political bargains among them.

At the other extreme of the continuum is the **inclusive authority model** "in which there is a hierarchical relationship between the levels of government dominated by the central government". Both the state and the local governments are subordinate and dependent on the central government with the result that what exists is a centralized federal system. What is implicit in the above models is that "a federation which starts as one of the three models may grow into any or both of the other two". (Ayoade, 2001:55). For instance, one may rightly argue that the first stage of Nigerian federalism-1948-1966, approximated the coordinate authority model, whereas the present federal system fits into the inclusive model.

It is important to mention that generally, federations have been created by what Akindele (2001:37), called the processes of aggregation, disaggregation or by a mixture of both. Asobie (2001:126) described it as the processes of integration and differentiation. For instance, American federation was created through the process of aggregation of thirteen colonies which gave birth to the American Confederacy in 1776 which subsequently transformed itself to a federation in 1867. The federation has further expanded through the processes of further aggregation and incorporation of new territorial states or provinces (Akindele 2001:3). The Nigerian federation was created through the processes of aggregation and disaggregation. The amalgamation (aggregation) of the Southern and Northern protectorates in 1914 gave birth to Nigeria. The subsequent processes of administrative decentralization (disaggregation) through creation of regions prepared the way for emergence of the first truly federal colonial administration in 1954. The country has further expanded by processes of further disaggregation through the instrumentality of creation of states.

While we recognize the fact that there may not be rigid stipulations characterizing federalism, there must be a form that must be recognized as federal. The principal attributes of federalism are outlined as follows:

1. The division of power among the federating units. In other words, there is an irrevocable division of power between the central political unit and the sub-national political units, and this division of power is usually enshrined in a written constitution.

2. There is a clear decentralization of power. This means that the political system has “at least two tiers or levels of government each endowed with independent legitimacy (in its own sphere) and a constitutionally guaranteed sphere in the overall system, and possesses its own set of institutions, power and responsibilities” (Elazar, 1956:21-22).
3. The powers to amend and constitution resides with both levels of government acting in cooperation
4. The existence of an independent judiciary or body to adjudicate dispute arising from clash of powers between the federal and state governments.
5. The principle of non-concentration of power. This implies that “the authority for state/regional and central/national governments to exercise powers cannot be withdrawn without mutual consent” (Asobie, 2001;127). This principle is fully guaranteed in the constitution.
6. Financial independence of both levels of government. This principle requires that the federating units must be financially independent as financial subordination runs contrary to the principle of federalism.
7. There is the principle of territoriality. This implies that the area of authority of the constituent units is territorially based.
8. The federal principle is a part of the national culture. According to Asobie (2001:128) “This culture embraces a commitment to constitutionalism and a distinct preference of the political actors for non-concentration of power, a tradition of wide acceptance of popular democratic government...” In this paper, we shall examine the extent to which the present Nigerian federalism conforms to the above principal attributes of federalism.
9. The absence of market inequalities among component units. This implies that none of the component units in a federation should be as large and powerful as to dominate others (Ezeani,2018).

METHODOLOGY

This study had three major phases: inception, research and synthesis. The first phase gathered preliminary information about the case study of Nigeria with in the context of restructuring and federalism in Nigeria. The second phase was research-based and included the finalisation of the study design and methodology, data collection and analysis, and the final report writing in the respective issues the case study country covers. Two approaches were adopted in the research component of the study: a literature review (desk research), which involved reviewing and synthesising existing evidence from primary and secondary documents on the relationship between restructuring and federalism. The secondary data was sourced to fill the inevitable gaps in evidence provided through a rigorous desk review of the relevant and related literature on key issues (See Table 1), found in scholarly articles, government reports, media reports and publications of nongovernmental organisations and that of international organisations. From the extant literature reviewed, a range of different issues and tendencies of federalism were identified and examined where we found that there were limited attempts by scholars to link restructuring and federalism to the CHANGE mantra particularly under the present administration. Therefore, this study provides an analytical understanding of the relationships between these issues.

Table 1: Issues reviewed during the desk research

Key Issues	Analysis
Restructuring and Federalism	Analysed the political and socio-ethno context of restructuring and federalism
Tendencies and types of Federalism	Interrogated the differences and similarities in the prevalence, types and dynamics of restructuring and federalism in different decentralised and centralised environments, and the key factors - local, national, global driving them
Implications and challenges of restructuring and federalism in plural societies	Explored the concept of restructuring, federalism, Nigeria's federalism, the nature of these concepts and the dynamics and their relationship across different levels of governance
Analysis of mechanisms that are in place to address agitations in plural polity like Nigeria	Analysed the responsibilities, resources, accountabilities, organized incentives or opportunities; and forms of mechanisms in the management of diversities in plural societies.

Federalism in a Post- colonial state: An analysis of Nigeria

The theoretical framework of analysis adopted for this study is the Marxist theory of post-colonial state. Post-colonial theory points out the legacies of colonial era, particularly in the socio-economic field, which reproduces the unequal relations between the metropolitan centres and their peripheries. The theory came up as a reaction to weberian theory of the state as a centralized organizational structure, impartial and independent force, a sovereign whose decision are binding, a neutral empire that caters for the main interest of every member of the society, an instrument of coercion and domination, an engine of growth and development and hence rises above class interests.

This weberian view of the state does not take into account most of the state, especially, in Africa that have been historically and inextricably trapped, which the Marxist post-colonial concept has come to take care. For Marxist-oriented scholars, the state is rather an instrument of class domination, the centrality of the state and its apparatus as the main instruments of primitive accumulation especially by the dominant class and their collaborators (Alavi, 1972). In line with the above view, Rimmer (1970) rightly noted that the colonial state in Africa was bifurcated, having been characterized by centralized and decentralized form of despotism. This duality coupled with its racist ideology and practice resulted in the externalization of the colonial state by the subjects. However, the neo-colonial state unique attributes can be traced to the colonial government who discouraged the emergence of a strong indigenous bourgeoisie that inherited control over the neo-colonial state apparatuses had a weak economic base, and hence relied on this control for its own capital accumulation and self-reproduction.

Consequently, the state and its apparatus and institutions have become the main instruments for perpetuation of class interest and for willful alienation, appropriation and self-reproduction of dominant class. The point above about the economic centrality of the postcolonial state immediately confronts us with another of its more compelling attributes: its role as a source of wealth for aspiring social-economic groups in the periphery of capitalism (Suberu,1989) . This critical role of the postcolonial state as an instrument of class formation and consolidation has been identified by Ralph Miliband as one of the most distinctive features of the state in Third World formations. As he put it, 'The state is here the source of economic power as well as an instrument of it; the state is a major means of production' (Miliband, 1977:109). Richard Sklar has, in a similar vein, observed that dominant class formation in developing countries 'is a consequence of the exercise of power' and that 'class relations, at bottom, are determined by relations of power not production' (Sklar, 1979:536-537).

The central role of the postcolonial state in the process of class formation and consolidation has important consequences for the character of politics or the competition for state power. To put it bluntly, the

economic centrality of the state in postcolonial societies transforms the struggle for state power into a particularly frantic, fraudulent and violent affair which throttles such requisites for liberal democracy as moderation, tolerance and respect for the rules of the political game (Suberu,1989). The role of the economic centrality of the state in thwarting constitutional behaviour is bluntly acknowledged by Ake;

Because of its extraordinary importance, the struggle to control the power of the state becomes very intense-one might say hobbesian. Since the stakes are so high the competitions do everything to win. Little attention is paid to constitutional behaviour, and the law is amended, reinterpreted, on blatantly violated from day to day to suit the purposes of the hegemonic faction of the bourgeoisie (Ake, 1976:11).

Ake's arguments above were developed as part of an effort to explain the political economy of Africa (Suberu,1989). However, virtually the same arguments have been invoked by Merle King in explaining political instability in Latin America. According to King (1968; 500):

As political office provides a uniquely dynamic opportunity to acquire an economic base of power, sufficiently large segments of the population are prepared to take the ultimate risk of life in a revolt, in a coup d'état, to perpetuate a characteristic feature of Latin American politics-chronic political instability. In the distinctive power structure of Latin America, government serves as a special transformer through which pass the currents of economic ambition.

As King argued, on oil boom, which has brought about a pirate capitalism in which the state is the major source of wealth and fortune for the ruling elite (King, 1983). In his view, (Shankar, 2015) opines that "dynamics of the colonial history manifested into the post-colonial leading to hangover colonial suppression complex". According to him, the core element of this dynamics is the existence of the inherent lack of capacity at individual, communal, state and national levels, a reflection of the same phenomenon. This affects not only economic productivity and output of nations, but the using ability for an individual to successfully empower one's self towards achieving his or her upliftment.

When applied to Nigeria, a Marxist post-colonial framework enables us to unravel why the restructuring debate is a class struggle between the elite and is not about the interests of the people. The constitution is not just the grundnorm of a country but is also a mechanism for addressing all forms of inequality and exclusion, but the present constitution of Nigeria seems skewed to addressing the interest of a few. The debate on restructuring has seen the emergence of three categories of people: protagonists, antagonist and the centrists. Each has legitimate reasons for holding their views. What has remained absent is the fact that the debate has not been between citizens and government but a class struggle between the ruling elite from different geographical extractions. This debate is in no way rooted in the wishes of the Nigerian people. Or how do we classify a debate about the future of the country, where over one hundred and seventy (170) million of the country's population (that is "the youth" who are the present and future of this country) are not involved in the conversation. The largest concentrations of youth in Africa are in Nigeria which is, more importantly, projected as one of country expected to have the concentration of these population growth between 2015 and 2050. This explains why the British Council, in a recent study, stated that youth, not oil, will be Nigeria's most valuable resource in the 21st century. This social category is critical to the growth and development of the Nigerian state and it is this category that the Nigerian elite has not reflected in the discussion on restructuring (Itodo,2018).

Regrettably, Nigeria is moving slower than its potentials. Despite its ranking as one of the fastest growing economies in the world, poverty and inequality are on the rise. In 2016, OXFAM reported that the total wealth owned by the five richest Nigerians can lift Nigerians living below the poverty line at \$1.90 out of poverty for one year. This degree of extreme poverty coupled with rising unemployment creates opportunities for social disharmony and instability. Nigeria's unemployment rate is fixed at 14 percent, with the youth making up 68 percent of country's total unemployed and underemployed population (NBS, 2016). According to a recent report released by the Bureau of Public Service Reforms, this figure is

bound to rise, as to maintain the current unemployment rate of 14 percent, Nigeria needs to create 3 million jobs per annum. However, the view being espoused by the champions of restructuring tend to suggest that Nigeria's developmental challenges, poor economic growth, and social discontent will be addressed once the country is politically and economically restructured to devolve power, as well as vest control of natural resources in sub-national entities. While this sounds plausible, the current realities negate this school of thought. The Nigeria story is showing that poverty and inequality are not driven by lack of resources but ill-use, misallocation and misappropriation of public resources (Idodo,2018). While we not campaigning against the restructuring of the country, yet restructuring must serve the interest of all citizens and in particular young people and women. In reality, this means not just inclusion in the governance process but, importantly, investments in social protection (in health, education, political and economic empowerment).

It is safe and sound to say that the ongoing debate on restructuring is focused on moving some items on the exclusive legislative list to the concurrent list in the constitution. Yet, these same classes of people who are clamouring for the devolution of power are in the same breath advocating for the centralisation of power. How do we explain the proposed abolition of State Independent Electoral Commissions (SIECs) from the 1999 Constitution and the vesting of the independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) with the powers to conduct local government elections? Or how do we reconcile the 2017 Constitution review process and the agitation for restructuring? Obviously, the ongoing constitution amendment process presents a unique opportunity to restructure Nigeria. However, the National Assembly in July 2017 voted against several amendments that could have doused the tension created by the restructuring debate. For instance, the outcome of the votes on the devolution of power is a testament that the restructuring debate is a class struggle between the elite and is not about the interests of the people. The constitution is not just the grundnorm of a country but is also a mechanism for addressing all forms of inequality and exclusion, but the present constitution of Nigeria seems skewed to addressing the interest of a few. In conclusion, restructuring makes no meaning to Nigeria if it does not guarantee good governance, accountability and service to the people.

This explains why, unlike in the west, the state in Nigeria is not perceived or seen in the weberian sense of an impartial and impersonal entity. Due to its colonial historical trajectory, the state is conceptualized as alien institution whose powers are used to further the interests of those who wield them. Much of Nigeria's inability to implement programmes with far reaching impact stems from systemic weaknesses at the state level. As a result of the interplay between formal and informal spheres, political reciprocity between patrons and clients influences the operation of political institutions and makes them susceptible to private capture and personalization (Watts, 2007: 637-660). The capture of state resources was done through the use of ethnically based patron client networks and the sharing of the national cake was decentralized (Oarhe and Aghedo, 2010: 131).

All these explain why the Nigerian elites pay less attention to revolutionary policies and programmes that would transform Nigeria's political development and application, and rather concentrate in plundering the economy which they see as a major source for the pursuit and realization of their personal and parochial interests and satisfaction. From the foregoing, the Marxist theory of post-colonial state offers a holistic, coherent and in-depth explanation of the problems plaguing a given polity, especially Nigeria, which reflects in restructuring debate. This has been the situation in Nigeria where well articulated agricultural proposals to end hunger have failed to be implemented or have been poorly implemented. This explains why the contemporary Nigerian ruling elites cannot drive the sustainable development goals, Agenda 2: zero hunger. Africa's post-colonial states have great number of ailments. Literally, they have the lowest access to technological development and application, high famine rates and generally at the bottom of the globe when it comes, to sustainable development (Mann, 2012).

Nigeria is, one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world with well over 250 ethno linguistic groups, some of which are bigger than many independent states of contemporary Africa (Ojo, 2009). The Nigerian federalism is a creation of the British. Before the arrival of British colonialists, the area now known as Nigeria was inhabited by peoples who belonged to different empires, kingdoms and societies,

which were traditionally administered. The relationship between these various entities was characterized by much conflict and little cooperation.

Furthermore, such vices as cannibalism, ritual murder and the killing of twins were rampant among some of the people. The arrival of British and other European explorers, merchants and religious missionaries tempered and eventually reduced these vices to the barest minimum. After a series of efforts at pacification and conquest, effective British occupation of the area took place from the Royal Niger Company, whose charter was revoked in that year. Consequent upon this, three separate territories emerged. These are Lagos, the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria and the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria (Wikipedia, 2010). The choice of federalism as the preferred system of government for Nigeria was not accidental. The eventual transformation of Nigeria into a federal state started in 1954 as a result of the 1953 Lyttleton constitution conference.

In a federal structure, adequate autonomy is given to each level of government to enable it perform its responsibility without frustration. As a device for the containment of intra societal pluralism, federalism offers good prospect for achieving political stability of especially heterogeneous societies. In describing the popularity of the federal idea in the post 1945 period,

Watts (2000) aptly captured the compromises that greeted the adoption of the federal system in many countries. In this, Nigeria is not an exception. According to Watts (2000),

...the creators of the new states approaching independence found themselves faced with simultaneous conflicting demands for territorial integration and balkanization. They had to reconcile the need, on the one hand, for relatively large economic and political units...with the desire, on the other hand, to retain authority of the smaller political units with traditional allegiances representing racial, linguistic, ethnic and religious communities. In such situations, where the forces for integration and separation were at odds with each other, political leaders of nationalist independence movements and colonial administrators alike found in the "federal solution" a popular formula, providing a common ground for centralizers and provincialists.

Given this background, it could be reasoned that Nigeria's adoption of the federal system was not as a strategy to manage problems of pre independence period but more importantly as an enduring strategy that would help detonate a major source of threat to the future political stability of an independent Nigeria. In Nigeria, adoption of this governmental arrangement dated back to 1954 when it emerged a federation of three regions defined by the three major ethnic groups. However, in theory, Nigeria is said to be practicing Federalism since 1954. In fact, evidence on ground points to the opposite direction. That is that the government is tending progressively toward a unitary state. This is especially so in the area of sharing of functions and resources available in the country between the central government and the component units on the one hand and between the government and citizens on the other (Ajagun, 2006). Like all federal systems, Nigeria's federalism since its adoption in 1954 has been operating in both fiscal and political contexts. The fiscal context consists of the mode of expropriation and distribution of resources while the political context relates to putting in place appropriate structures that would facilitate the self realization of component units. One basic fact is that the operation of federalism in both contexts must be designed in such a way as to avoid marked inequality among the component units in power and resource matrix. Indeed, it has been noted that financial subordination of units or marked inequality between them in terms of wealth, population and land mass constitute potent destabilizing factors in federations and may make an end of federalism (Wheare, 1963; Awa, 1976). In the fiscal context, there is no doubt that profound conflict exist among the component units of the Nigerian federation. At inception of the system, there was a large devolution of powers to the regions. Equally, each region enjoys considerable autonomy over its internal affairs in addition to having a regional police force and civil service. In terms of resource distribution, the principle of derivation occupied a significant place in the distribution formula.

This followed recommendations of the Louis Chick Commission of 1953 which was set up to 'assess the effect, on the public expenditure of Nigeria as whole, of the reallocation of functions between the centre and the regions' (Diamond, 1983). Thus, derivation remained a major emphasis in federal revenue

allocation between 1954 and 1966 when the military took over headship of the country, albeit some other commissions were set up whose recommendations led to some minor modifications in the revenue sharing arrangement. The pre-military federal system that Nigeria operated in the period now known as the First Republic was fundamentally different from the post-military federal structure. In the former, the three and later four regions, were fully autonomous federating units. Each region, with a premier as head of government, operated its own laws and constitution. Each of them had native authority police while the federal government maintained the Nigeria police. Each region was allowed to have its representatives in some foreign countries. They were designated agents, not ambassadors although they functioned practically in that capacity. Each region also had the symbol of its own authority. None of them was totally or near totally dependent on the centre for its fiscal and other needs. Each region was strong enough and rich enough to take care of itself. The main criticism of this arrangement was that the regions were too powerful and the centre was too weak for a meaningful federal system and national unity. The regions, given the degree of their autonomy, tended to treat the federal government with disdain. The federal government could not impose its will on the federating units. It was generally felt that if this continued, things would eventually fall apart. (Yaqub,2016).

The 1960 and 1963 Constitutions devolved tremendous powers to the regions, which unto themselves, became fulcrums of political power. Regionalism was nurtured or realized to the extent that the equilibrium between centrifugal and centripetal political forces, which true federalism addresses, became much more academic than real. This continues today. With the advent of the military in 1966, federalism suffered in Nigeria. The independence of the regions was compromised as a hierarchical command structure emerged. A very powerful central government came into being and the states which succeeded the regions became mere appendages to the central government. Interestingly, the military arrived the scene when oil was gaining prominence over cocoa, groundnut and palm oil. Even more interesting was the fact that the oil deposits were found in states controlled by minority ethnic groups with very little say in the administration of the nation. It is therefore beyond coincidence that the principle of derivation was cancelled, and the rights and control of the natural endowments of the Niger Delta were transferred to the federal government.

As succinctly pointed out by Obianyo (2005:175) *“One major reoccurring decimal in the Nigerian federal system is the effort of the central government to clip the wings of the state from flying at all, in the bid to have them completely consumed by the flaming power of the center”*.

Asobie (2001:125-151) had earlier expressed concern over what he described as the “centralizing trend in Nigerian federalism”. This centralizing trend in Nigerian federalism according to Asobie (2001:128), has manifested in three ways:

First, the federal government has, beginning from 1963, but especially since 1967, demonstrated increased capacity to alter unilaterally and in its favour, the existing distribution of power between it and the regional government... Second, there has been an increasing accretion to the federal government of functions previously allocated to the regional (or states) governments. Third, the resources- coercive, bureaucratic, ideological and financial directly available to the component units (regions or states) for carrying out their constitutional functions have steadily diminished in range and quantum while those at the disposal of the federal government have increased.

What events in the historical evolution of Nigerian federalism led to this centralizing trend? The answer to this question would require a historical look at the evolution of Nigerian federalism. According to Eleazu (1987:72) “the roots of federalism in Nigeria must be sought partly in the administrative structure of colonialism that was set up and partly in the varying responses of Nigerians to both the process and structure of colonialism”. Similarly, Coleman (1958:323) states that “it is clear that British policy was being directed toward the development of a federal system based upon the region as constituent units”. The amalgamation of the Southern and Northern protectorates in 1914 by the British colonial administration gave birth to Nigeria. This amalgamation brought together the diverse peoples and cultures

of a vast land under one policy. What is unique about the Nigerian federations is that unlike the American and Canadian federations, it was a force brotherhood and sisterhood which has been the subject of continual tinkering, panel beating and even attempted dissolution (Ayoade, 1998:101). No wonder one of the founding fathers of Nigerian Chief Awolowo (1947:47) described Nigerian Federalism as a mere geographical expression, therefore an artificial creation. Similarly, Ahmadu Bello (1962:133) described the making of Nigerian federalism as “mistake of 1914”. It is obvious from the above that Nigeria does not have a history of an orderly maturation of federalism from small beginnings as was the experience of other federations, rather, we had a situation where in the early 1950s certain pressures from the Nigerian nationalists forced a change of orientation on the part of the colonial government (Tamuno, 1998:15). As El-Rufai (2017:2) succinctly puts it “as the winds of change unleashed by the outcome of the second world war and the independence of India spurred agitations for self-government, Nigerians debated, under British tutelage, the political structure of a future free Nigeria”. Advocates of federalism prevailed against a vocal minority that wanted a unitary Nigeria. The Richard’s constitution of 1946 which regionalized Nigeria marked the beginning of the trend towards federalism in Nigeria. The constitution provided for three regions- The Northern, Eastern and Western regions.

Were Nigeria to uphold the principles of true federalism, the present call for resource control would be non-existent. This is because true federalism guarantees resource control. True federalism protects the fundamental rights of both the individual and the federating states. It affords states the benefit of deploying their resources for their own development. As Davidson (1992) notes that Nigeria is currently operating a defective and fallible federalism because the Nigerian federal system has consistently undermined one of the most cardinal philosophical principles of federalism. He says the relative autonomy, independence and self-determination of these units must be appreciated and guaranteed in clear terms. It should be noted that all things being equal, federalism offers an ideal model of government for a plural society. And Nigeria, with at least 374 ethnic groups certainly qualifies for federalism should we find the political will to embrace the philosophy. Nonetheless, some argue that federalism was an imposition by the British government and perhaps not without some sinister motives – a hidden agenda to plant discord and disunity after independence so as to succeed in its policy of “Divide and Rule”.

One of the first victims of military coup against a democratically elected government is the Constitution. The military on the takeover of government in 1966 suspended the constitution and this meant the sidelining of constitutionally provided powers of the regional and federal government and its replacement by military decrees and edicts. The counter-coup of July 1966, was followed by widespread violence unleashed on the Igbos in the North, the creation of 12 states out of the four defunct regions, the threat of secession and a civil war. One of the implications of the dismemberment of the four regions and the federal capital Lagos into a 12-state structure of the Nigerian federation is that the states became powerless and none could muster financial and military resources to confront the federal government.

In an attempt to raise the resources for prosecuting the civil war which began in 1967, the taxation powers of the former regions were changed in favour of the federal government, further, strengthening the center at the expense of the twelve states (El-Rufai, 2017:3). Military rule in Nigeria witnessed a massive federal take-over of educational institutions, social services, and economic activities to an excessive degree of federal involvement in almost all facets of national life (Anam-Ndu, 2003 and Orluwene, 2018:78). This did not anger well for federalism as the states lost their sense of initiative and independence of action. Therefore, as states became many and less financially independent, a power center emerged in a federal government that appropriates so much powers and responsibilities, took the biggest chunk of national revenues (now about 53 percent) but did very little (El-Rufai, 2017:3).

By the time the Military handed over to democratically elected government for the second time in 1999 (the first handover in 1979 was terminated by the military coup spearheaded by General Muhammadu Buhari in 1984), the unitarist takeover was completed. As El-Rufai (2017:3) rightly pointed out, by the time power returned to a democratically elected government in 1999, “a new generation of citizens grew up knowing only the command-and-control system of the soldiers”. It is obvious from the discussions above that the series of measures taken by the military dictatorship in Nigeria, no doubt, had far-reaching consequences for the nature, content, and direction of federalism in Nigeria. The many pathologies of

Nigerian federalism were laid during the long years of military dictatorship. With the return to a democratically elected government in 1999 and the resultant widening of political space and guarantee of fundamental human rights, many political groups, civil society organizations and political actors began agitating for a restructuring of Nigerian federalism.

The nationalist leaders opted for the federal system of government as the mechanism for managing the country's plurality and to foster integration. Regrettably, after 58 years of political independence, the high hopes and aspirations which propelled its adoption seem not to have been realized as evidenced in the series of agitations by various groups and individuals in Nigeria for the socio-economic and political restructuring of the Nigerian federation. The key contentious issues that have consistently featured in virtually all the debates on Nigerian federalism are as follows:

- One of the key issues consistently raised by critics of Nigerian federalism is the structural imbalance in the federation. As a condition for stability in a federal system, students of federalism, as well as operators and manager of inter-governmental relations in the federal experiment, have drawn attention to the importance of, and the necessity for structural balance within the system. Regrettably, the Nigerian system is, indeed, far from being balanced. An important dimension of the notion of structural balance is the comparative size and wealth of the territorially structured component units actors within the system.
- Also, one of the greatest challenges of Nigerian federalism that has attractive extensive public debates or discourse is the problem of the asymmetric power relationship between and among the disparate components units in the federation. This has generated mutual accusations and counter-accusations of domination and marginalization by the southern part of the country, particularly, the South-East and the South-South. The presidential position is largely a northern affair since political independence in 1960 till date. As clearly shown in table I, the North has produced 10 out of the 15 presidential slots since Nigeria's Political independence in 1960. The South East states have produced 1, the south-south 1, and the South-West 3. Within the North, the North West has Produced 6, out of the 10 slots filled by the North.
- The issue of Fiscal federalism has remained on the front burner of national debates/discourses on Nigerian Federalism. The demand for resource control by the oil producing states is an evidence of dissatisfaction with the present inter-governmental fiscal relations in Nigeria. At the centre of the national discourse on fiscal federalism is the issue of revenue allocation. This is because of the fact that the manner of revenue generation and distribution in a federal structure is critical to the sustenance of such relationship.
- Another contentious issue in Nigeria federalism is the constitutional interpretation of citizenship or indigeneship question. The concept of indigeneship is constitutionally defined in terms of genealogy rather than residency. According to section 318 of the 1999 constitution as amended, a Nigerian can claim to "belong to" a constituent state of the federation if either of his or her "parents or grandparents was a member of a community indigenous to that state". This provision has encouraged indigenes to exclude non-indigenes (Nigerians resident in states in which they have no direct genealogical communal root) from valued opportunities (employment, political appointments, educational admissions, lands and related resources) that are controlled by, or channeled through the states.

The constitutional conception of citizenship or indigeneship in terms of genealogy is a major cause of indigene and non-indigene/settler conflicts that have claimed many lives and led to destruction of valuable properties in many parts of Nigerian.

- There is a consensus among scholars on federalism that the Nigerian federalism has, since 1960, but, especially since military incursion in Nigerian politics in 1966, been characterized by a general tendency towards centralization. It is obvious from the preceding discussions that imperfections in the Nigerian federation have triggered agitations from various groups and individuals especially from the Southern part of Nigerian for restructuring.

- As a result of the above deficiencies of Nigerian federalism, there have been agitations by a wide spectrum of the Nigerian society for socioeconomic and political restructuring of the Nigerian federation.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper examined the nature and dynamics of Nigerian federalism and the resultant agitations for restructuring of the polity. The paper revealed that the present federal system of government operating in Nigeria is full of imperfections such as asymmetric power relations among the federating units, centralized structure, inequality of federating units, imbalance in intergovernmental fiscal relations, et cetera. In view of this, the imperfections in the Nigerian federalism, for managing the country's diversities and foster integration must be restructured. The paper recommends restructuring also is essential because it will help our democracy achieve better governance. The periodic rituals of elections have not necessarily improved governance. There are two ways this will happen. One, restructuring will bring greater accountability and transparency to governance because power and responsibility will devolve closer to the people. This will help evolve a better culture and quality of leadership, and will also foster competitive development between the regions. Nigeria today is far more physically integrated than it was in the 1960s, and the six zones structure will prevent the extreme ethnic chauvinism that afflicted the First Republic. Restructuring ought as well to accomplish a reduction in the costs of governance at both the center and the regions. In other words, restructuring should go *paripasu* with good governance. Anything to the contrary will not achieve the desired goals or objectives.

In conclusion, social forces really do want a nation in which everyone is essentially a happy camper on the basis of collective interest, not one in which some groups feel they are held 'captive'.

REFERENCES

- Adibe, J. (2013) "Beyond a sovereign National Conference", [Http://www.hollerafrica.com](http://www.hollerafrica.com). Accessed: 2017/01/2014
- Ajagun, S.O. (2006). *Federalism: Problems of Power Distribution in Nigeria* Being A Seminar
- Akande, B. (2017a, July 25). *Replace 1999 Constitution with 1963 Republican Constitution*. *The Punch Newspapers*. Retrieved from <http://punchng.com/replace-1999-constitution-with-1963-republican-constitution>
- Ake, 1985, 'The State in Contemporary Africa', in Claude Ake(ed.). *A Political Economy of Nigeria*, London: Longman.
- Ake, C. 1981, 'Presidential Address to the 1981 Conference of the Nigerian Political Science Association', *West Africa*, 25 May, P. 162.
- Akindele, R.A 2001 "Nigeria In the Global Market of Experiments in Federalism", in Elaigwu, J.I and R.A Akindle. (eds) *Foundations of Nigerian Federalism*, Jos: Institute of Governance and Social Research.
- Alavi, H. 1972, "The State in Post Colonial Societies: Pakistan and Bangladesh, *Newleft Review*, 74, (July / August).
- Alavi, H. 1979, 'The State in Post-Colonial Societies: Pakistan and Bangladesh', in Harry Coulbourne (ed.) *Politics and State in the Third World*, London: Macmillan.
- Amadi, O.S. Echem, M.O., Nwoki, M.C.O. and Inyikalum, D 2017," *Federalism and Political Restructuring in Nigeria: Analysis of the Rationale and Challenges: International Journal for Social Studies*, Vol. 3 No.12.
- Amuwo, K. Agbaje, A, Suberu, R & Haurault, G. (eds), 1998, *Federalism and Political Restructuring in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Spectrum Book Ltd.
- Asobie, A. (1998). *Centralisation Trends in Nigerian Federalism" in Reinventing Federalism in Nigeria: Issues and Perspectives*. Babawale, I. et al (eds). Lagos, Malthouse Press Limited. AVL Publishing
- Awa, E (1976) *Issues in Federalism*. Benin city: Ethiopian Publishing House.

- Ayoade, J.A.A. (1996) "Federalism in Nigeria: The Problem with the solution", Faculty lecture delivered at the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.
- Awolowo, O. 1947, *Paths to Nigerian Freedom*, London: Faber and Faber.
- Bello, A. 1962, *My Life*, London: Cambridge University Press
- Coleman, J.S. 1958, Nigeria: Background to Nationalism, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Dare, L.O. 1979 "Perspectives on Federalism", in A.B. Akinyemi et al (eds) *Readings on Federalism*. Lagos: Nigerian Institute of International affairs.
- Diamond, L. (1983), 'Class, Ethnicity, and the Democratic State: Nigeria, 1950-1966', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* ' 25, 3 July, p. 457.
- Elazar, D.J, 1972, *American Federalism: A View from the States, Second Edition*, New York: Thomas Crowell.
- Elazar, D.J, 1969, *Cooperation & Conflict*, Itchaca: Peacock
- Eleazu, U. O. 1987, *Federalism and Nation-Building: The Nigerian Experience 1954-1964*, Dewon, UK: Arthur Stockwell.
- El-Rufai, N. 2012, Challenges associated with IGR collection. Retrieved from OX13UQ.UK.iig.enquiries@economics.ox.ac.uk. 10/27/2015.
- Ezeani, E.O., 2018, "CONTENTIOUS ISSUES IN NIGERIAN FEDERALISM AND THE CLAMOUR FOR RESTRUCTURING OF THE POLITY", Lecture delivered at "Kalu Ezera Annual Lecture", organized by the Nigerian Political Science Association, South East Zone, held at the Princess Alexandria Auditorium, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, on 30th October, 2018.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria 1960, *The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*, Lagos: Federal Government Press.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria 1963, *The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*, Lagos: Federal Government Press.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, *The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*, Lagos: Federal Government Press.
- Friedrich, C.J. 1968, *Trends of Federalism in Theory & Practice*, New York: Praeger
- Ifesinachi, K. 2007, "The Concept and Practice of Federalism" in J. Onuoha and C.J. Nwanegbo (eds) *Theory and Practice of Inter-governmental Relations in Nigeria*. Enugu: Quintagon Publishers. *Journal of Economics and Finance (IOSR-JWF)*. 6, (4). I (Jul-Aug.2015) PP 21-26.
- Itodo, S, 2017, The Restructuring Debate: Serving Nigerian Elite Interest, *Premium Times*, October 31, 2017.
- King, M. 1968, *Federalism and Federation*, London: Helon.
- King, M. 1983, 'Towards a Theory of Power and Political Instability in Latin America', in R. Bendix (ed.), *State and Society: A Reader in Comparative Political Sociology*, Berkeley: University of California Press
- Jinadu, A. 1982, "The Constitutional Situation of the Nigeria States "Publius". *The J. Federalism*, 12(1) Winter.Pp1-12
- Jinadu, A. 1987, "Federalism the Consociation State and the Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria". *Publius Journal Federalism*. Vol. 15 (2) Pp. 16-24.
- Livingston, W.S, 1956, *Federalism & Constitutional change*, Oxford: Clarendon Press
- Miliband, R. (1969), *The State in Capitalist Society*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicoison.
- Miliband, R. (1977), *Marxism and Politics*, England: Oxford University Press.
- Oarhe, O. and Aghedo, I. 2010, "The open sore of Nation: Corruption complex and internal security in Nigeria." *African Security*, Vol. 3, No. 3:127-147.
- Obiano, N.C. 2005, "Federalism, Constitutionalism and Local Government System in Nigeria: The Need for Constitutional Amendment", in Alli W.O. (ed) *Political Reform Conference, Federalism and the National Question in Nigeria*, Enugu: The Nigerian Political Science Association.

- Ojo, E.O. (2005) "Federalism and National Question", In Onwudiwe et al (eds) *Nigerian Federalism in Crisis: Critical Perspectives and Political Options*. Ibadan: Programme in Ethnic and Federal Studies (PEFS)
- Onuigbo, R.A, Aloh, R and Eme I. O, 2017, Challenges of "Feeding Bottle Federalism" in Nigeria," *International Digital Organization for Scientific Research Journal of Current Issues in Arts and Humanities*, 2(1): 34-52.
- Shankar S. 2015, *Post-colonial Development Complex in Africa*. The Leadership Review.
- Sklar, R.L. (1979), 'The Nature of Class Domination in Africa', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 17, 4 Pp. 536-537.
- Rimmer, D. (1970), 'Elements of the Political Economy' in Kaith Panter-Prick (ed.), *Soldiers and Oil: The Political Transformation of Nigeria*, London: Zed
- Suberu, R. 2001. *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria*, Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press.
- Watts R.L. 1970, *Administration in Federal System*. Hutchinson: Educational Ltd.
- Wheare K.C. 1963, *Federal Government*. (4th Edition). West Port Connecticut: Greenwood Press Publishers.
- Wheare, K.C. 1964, *Federal Government*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Yaqub, N. (2016) "What is restructuring in the Era of Change in Nigerian Politics" Proceedings of IASTEM International Conference, Damman, Saudi Arabia
- Yarbrough, J. 1976:43, "Federalism in the Foundation and Preservation of the American Republic", *Publius: the Journal of Federalism*, Vol.6.No.3.
- Wikipedia (2010): http://wiki.answers.com/national_development
- Zint, M. and Montgomery, N. 2007, *Purposeful Sample*. London: Sage Publication.