

Federalism and Sustainable Development in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects

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Federalism simply suggests a federal system of government which allows for division of powers and jurisdictions among the levels of government that made up the federation. There have been a lot of lapses in the Nigerian federal system. Nigeria is a country that is in need of development. This paper looks at the concept of federalism in relationship with the attainment of development in Nigeria. It examined the problems and also prospects of development in a federal system practicing Nigeria. The sources of data used for the study was purely secondary by means of qualitative data. The creation of states and further creation of more states was to facilitate faster development in a federal system Nigeria. Unfortunately, this has not been achieved. The paper revealed that some of the challenges facing Nigerian federalism are; revenue sharing formula among the tiers, state creation, resource control and power sharing. This all have cumulated in placing the democratic rule in the country at a disadvantaged position. The paper adopted the structural-functionalist theory. The paper also discovered that federalism other than ensuring development has on the other end hindered it. It is on the bases of this some recommendations were made.

Keywords: Federalism, Sustainable, Development, prospects, Nigeria

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Introduction

Nigeria came into existence following the coming into effect of the Nigeria Council with the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorate in 1914. The British government rule over Nigeria territory ended on 1st October 1960 when Nigeria was declared an independent country. Nigeria went through series of constitutional developments down to the federal constitution in 1963. The constitution provided for Nigeria, a federal state with limited and specific powers allocated to the federal government and the rest either shared by the central and regional or allocated to the regional government entirely (Obingene&Ujam, 2018). The duties assigned to central government included among others defence, external relations, foreign trade, Central Court of Justice, etc. Among the powers to be shared included higher education, industrial development, power, insurance, etc.

The principle of Needs and National Interest that were previously part of principles of revenue allocation under the Macpherson Constitution of 1951 was jettisoned for derivation principle.

There was also a Federal Executive Council composed of military and civilian commissioners/ministers. The states were practically reduced to administrative units of the federal government as the military head of state had powers not only to create states but also to appoint the military administrators. From 12 states created by General Gowon, Nigeria now has 36 states and 774 Local Government Areas and all of them were created by military administrators.

The pattern of revenue allocation also changed drastically in favour of the central government. Revenue allocation has evolved over the years to the detriments of federating units, economic prosperity and development. From the 50% that accrued to the region with mineral resources in 1960 constitution to the present one as contained in 1999 constitution where only 13% accrued to the state where mineral resources are derived. This has affected Nigeria's prosperity as the incentive for states to mobilise resources in order to attract more allocation from the federation is virtually dead. The healthy economic rivalry between the states is also dead. Nigeria which used to be among the top exporter of palm oil with most of it being produced in Eastern Region now imports palm oil from Malaysia, a country whose citizens came to Nigeria in 1960s to buy palm kernels to experiment in their country. The central government also became involved in some matters that were purely regional affairs. Some services like local policing, primary health care, secondary school (in case of unity schools), housing, agriculture became concern of the federal government and the country bleeds.

Concept of Federalism

According to Watts (1990), three terms are distinguishable in the explanation of federal system of government- these are, federalism, federal political systems and federations. Federalism is basically not a descriptive but a normative term and refers to the advocacy of multi-tiered government combining elements of shared-rule and regional self-rule. It is based on the presumed value and validity of combining unity and diversity and of accommodating, preserving and promoting distinct identities within a larger political union. The essence of federalism as a normative principle is the perpetuation of both union and non-centralization at the same time”.

Follesdal (2018) defines federalism as “the theory or advocacy of federal principles for dividing powers between member units and common institutions.

Frenkel (2007) states that a political system is federalist “if it is an entity composed of territorially defined groups each of which enjoys relatively high autonomy and which, together, participate in an ordered and permanent way in the formation of the central entity's will”.

Concept of Development

There are numerous definitions of development. One's opinion of development might not necessarily be the same with that of another. In fact, there are numerous perspectives as to what the concept of development is all about. There is the perspective that sees it from the economic perspectives, while others see it as a concept that is multidimensional, meaning that development is beyond the economic domain. According to Meier, (1988), development is the act of raising to the highest

value the Gross National Product through the process of accumulating capital and industrialization. Development can also be viewed as the capacity of a nation to increase its static economy to a level where it can generate and sustain an annual increase in its Gross National Product (GNP). Additionally, he further stated that development is not limited to just the process of acquiring industries, but encompasses such processes as modernization, productivity, social and economic equalization, modern technical know-how, improved institutions, and attitudes as well as rationally coordinated policy apparatus (Meier, 1988). In the same light, Oghator & Okobo (2000) pointed out that development goes beyond the increase in per-capita income or economic growth, but also includes sustainable improvements in the living standard of the people, which is guaranteed through the provision of gainful employment, coupled with the presence and availability of social and economic infrastructures.

For Todaro, (1985), buttressing on the multi-dimensional nature of the concept of development opines that it is the re-organization and re-orientation of the entire economic and social system. Ajagun, (2003), corroborates that development is a state of advancement which makes life more meaningful in its various aspects, including the economic, administrative, political, social, cultural and religious aspects. This implies that development is not about a particular aspect but it is encompassing, better still multi-dimensional depending on the point of contention.

According to Onah, (2005), development is not static but is a continuous improvement in the capacity of the individual and society to control and manipulate the forces of nature for the enhancement of the living standard of the people in a society. This definition introduces another dimension to the meaning of development, it analyses the human aspect of development, that is, the individuals who resides in a given state. Ahmed, (2007), also noted that development is concerned with the general upliftment in the material, social and psychological conditions of a given human society.

Federalism in Nigeria

In Nigeria, the issue of federalism came when it was discovered that there was too much power concentrated in the hands of a central government leading to despotism. Also, people in different parts of the country would have different needs and different values, so it makes sense by decentralization of power, which is a good thing for the people. Another perspective of the origin of state and of the principles that legitimized its power is contained in thinking about politics separate from religious beliefs and also where men and women are not preoccupied with the problems of political stability. Other reasons are that Nigerians would be able to adopt their own policies. Furthermore, by allowing each state to develop its own policies, experimentation is encouraged. As each state develops its own solutions to problems, the country gets the opportunity to see which policies work well and which ones do not. Finally, state governments and local governments are closer to their people than the federal government. As such, leaving issues for the

states to decide is more democratic than leaving everything for the central government to decide. State evolves when two or more people live together permanently bounded by language, religion, culture and tradition, among others. Importantly, it could be evolved when the continued survival of the groups depends on findings and distributing natural resources and by extension, when food resources are scarce, it may make people to establish a state. Therefore, state may also evolve within a group; if there is a conflict between different social groups over the distribution of scanty resources. In fact, the desires of the separate individuals who make up the group may be significant to the level of forming a state when such desires must eventually be transformed into a group will.

Thus, when creating a state, it must be followed by instrument of legitimizing the state as a means of developing the statehood. Furthermore, the state must be legitimized, otherwise it will not exist and that is why it takes a new military government long time to consolidate itself in office that came to power through coup. Another instrument of legitimizing the state is through diversifying the right of kings as a mode operando for state to exist. This is the longest lived doctrine of politics with its skeletal remnant in the world today where there is kingship; it also acts as a major instrument of legitimizing the state which is also contained in the acrimony "might makes right".

Problems of Federalism and Development in Nigeria

Studies have shown that there are numerous problems facing federalism and development in Nigeria. For Makinde, (2005), he maintains the following challenges; i. The imposition of policies on citizens of a nation; ii. Lack of adequate human resources or capital to implement these plans/policies; iii. Corruption and lack of credible leadership.

Most national development problems in Nigeria arise as a result of poor implementation of policies and subsequently lack of adequate and reliable human resources. Makinde, (2005), further maintained that most policies of developing nations are imposed on the masses. The policies are made by the government without considering the target population, as such the masses are not given the opportunity to contribute in the formulation of policies that concern their wellbeing. In addition, there are no human resources or capital to implement these plans as a result of the low quality of human development in the country. Records from United Nations Development Programme 2014 report reveals that Nigeria ranked number 152 out of 187 countries in Human development, which is average quality of life and standard of living.

In addition, the improper assessment of policies implemented also serves as a challenge to development (Itah, 2012). Most policy makers fail to access the goal-achievement gap factor, implying that policy makers often times fail to access the level of achievements of certain implemented public policies. The reason for this is because most leaders present policies which are too cumbersome and difficult to achieve within the short period spent in office. As such, most plans for national development are usually abandoned at the end of such tenures and subsequent governments also fail to continue on the plans which were left uncompleted.

Theoretical Framework

A theory is an explanation of a particular social phenomenon. The structural-functional theory otherwise known as “functionalism” is one of sociological theories that studies society as a system with different parts working together to unify the whole system (society). It sees contemporary society such as Nigeria as a system with all parts working together to meet the needs of Nigerian society. Every society is made up of sub-systems: economic, political, family, cultural systems, education and religion. Each sub-system functions to maintain a healthy society. Functionalist theory is based on the “organic analogy.” This is the idea that society is like the human body. Just as the body is made up of various parts that need to function together and properly for it to be healthy, so is society. Each part needs to be in a state of equilibrium, or balance. Just as the human body has evolved over time, so has society. A cogent objective of this work is to understand where Nigeria is heading to with regard to how functionalists see Nigerian contemporary society as being unified by inter-relationships and interdependency of the sub-systems mostly religious sub-system, we need to understand the religious dynamics in Nigeria. Skitka and Wisneski (2003) stated that social systems cannot function without some degree of agreement on the norms and principles that regulate relationships among individuals. Kendall (2012) opined that a functionalist might argue, for instance, that every society will have a religion, because religious institutions have certain functions that contribute to the survival of the social system as a whole, just as the organs of the body have functions that are necessary for the body's survival. Social systems work to maintain equilibrium.

Emile Durkheim is generally associated with the work on functionalist theories of sociology. Elwell (2010) has it that much of Durkheim's work is concerned with functional analysis, with seeking to understand the functions of social systems. He assumes that society has certain functional prerequisites, the most important of which is the need for 'social order' Oluwaseun (2012) argued that the federal government of Nigeria seems weak in maintaining law and order in Nigeria and lacks a viable strategy to contain the Islamic sect from carrying out its atrocities.

Prospects of Federalism towards Sustainable National Development in Nigeria

Nigeria dysfunctional federalism has caused a lot of socio-economic and political turmoil in Nigeria and needs to be readjusted in such a way that every part of the federation will have a sense of belonging and that no part is taking advantage of the other. The core Niger Delta area of Nigeria that comprises the three states of Bayelsa, Rivers and Delta has witnessed severe militant activities which have threatened not only Nigeria economy but Nigeria continued existence as a nation. These militant groups embarked on series of terrorist activities against the Nigeria state.

The effects of these militants' activities on Nigeria economy and peaceful coexistence are staggering. According to Dialoke and Edeja (2017), citing Vanguard (August, 2016), Nigeria lost 643 million litres of crude oil or N51.28 billion as a result of 3,000 incidences of pipeline

vandalization in 2015. The report also states that between 2010- 2015, Nigeria recorded 18,000 incidences of pipeline vandalization while the figure for January to May, 2016 shows that no fewer than 1,447 incidents leading to loss of 109 million of litres of petroleum products and 560,000 barrels of crude oil to refineries were recorded.

All these threats to nationhood are clear indication that Nigeria is ripe for readjustment. Any delay in readjusting the country heightens tension and threatens the peace and development in Nigeria as Chimaroke Nnamani, the former governor of Enugu state rightly stated that "the raging agitation in the Niger Delta as well as other parts of the country were compelling indication that resource control and restructuring had become imperative in order to resolve the turning issues of Nigeria's continued nationhood" ("Political Restructuring" groveachive.com).

Conclusion

Generally speaking, state restructuring refers to the reorganization of the existing state structure of any given country to achieve certain objectives. The purpose of state restructuring is multi-faceted. In most instances, restructuring is pursued to create a more logical organization in which the state can perform its mandate and fulfill its responsibilities more efficiently and effectively. It can also be a pursued to reconfigure the relationship between the state, the society and its people or to reconcile the changing dynamics between them. It has been used to resolve internal conflict, ethnic or otherwise, including civil war or as part of a post-colonial independence process.

Recommendations

- i. The defective structure of Nigerian federalism have resulted from long time competition and discouraging diversification of the Nigerian economy as every component units (states) of the federation have refused to engage in productive businesses in boosting their revenue base. That is every component units want to draw from the central government's federation account. This research work therefore recommends that Nigeria should restructure her political system so as to have a true federal system practiced which will aid economic growth and fight against the idea of secession or dissolution of the federation.
- ii. There should be devolution of powers to the component units that is the states of the federation because their day to day activities have cumbersome impacts on national development, most especially with the fuel subsidy removal.
- iii. Nigerian federalism should be based on fiscal federalism whereby the component units have control over resources that are found in their regions and then pay dues to the central government. This will encourage economic diversification and make the two tiers of government independent and coordinate as specified be the tenets of true federalism.
- iv. For the purpose of fairness, states government should have equal and the same representation in the executive, legislative and judicial arm of the central government.

- v. The federal character principle should be seriously followed in the appointment and location of projects, amenities and businesses of government in all component units of the Nigerian federation.

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