

# Fiscal Federalism and National Integration in Nigeria: The Restructuring Question

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**Abstract:** *The paper seeks to examine the nexus between federalism and national integration in Nigeria. The Nigerian state today has remained the most enduring hangover of the British colonialism. Before the 1914 amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates, each of the over 250 ethnic groups that make up the Nigerian State existed to some extent independently and distinctively in culture and tradition, however interacting with one another in favourable terms. The 1914 northern and southern unification was reminiscence of a marriage, which may not be so pleasant but cannot be easily divorced. Consequently, the British displayed their political craft by introducing federalism. Still, the 1914 exercise has not brought about the desired integration and cordial inter-group relations. This study examines the extent federalism enhanced inter-ethnic relations in Nigeria. Based on the foregoing, the study utilized secondary sources of data collection for the necessary information while the systems theory was adopted as the framework for analysis. The study found out that notwithstanding the nomenclature and the disposition of federalism in Nigeria, it has not enhanced inter-ethnic relations. The study recommends the need for restructuring of the Nigerian State so as to address the varied clamour for self determination from various ethnic make-ups in the country. Similarly, there is an urgent need for constitutional review so as to give more powers and functions, including the corresponding revenue base, to the states, without weakening the national government.*

**Keywords:** Federalism, Federal Character, National Integration, Ethnicity, Restructuring

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The entity regarded as Nigeria today have continued to remain the most enduring hangover of the British colonialism. Before the 1914 popular amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates, each of the over 250 ethnic groups that make up the Nigerian State existed to some extent independently and distinctively in culture and tradition, but not that they were not interacting with one another in favourable term.

What happened in the 1914 episode of the northern and southern unification was reminiscence of a marriage, which may not be so pleasant but cannot be easily divorced. Consequently, the British displayed their political craft by introducing federalism. Still, the 1914 exercise it did not bring to bear the desired integration and inter-group relations. Arising from the problems inherent with federalism or federal arrangement, Federal Character Principle was introduced as a therapy which was inadvertently built on a faulty foundation while at the same time kick started on a wrong footing. Nigeria is and has continued to exist as a deeply divided and pluralistic society, with little or no feature of unity there in. 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.

It is not surprising therefore that these ethnic groups are always in conflict and competition for scarce resources. Indeed, this is not unexpected especially between and among “ethnically defined constituencies” (William, 1980:69). The reason is that almost by definition, ethnic groups are in keen competition for the strategic resources of their respective societies. This is the case in Nigeria and other plural and segmented polities. This is so because ethnic groups are socio-cultural entities, consider themselves culturally, linguistically or socially distinct from each other, and most often view their relations in actual or potentially antagonistic terms (Cox, 1970:317).

The emergence and resurgence of ethnic, religious and minority tensions and conflicts as well as cries of marginalisation in all sections of the country are clear indications that the issues of national integration is not yet resolved in Nigerian State. There has always been cases of cultivation of national outlook which has inadvertently given way to a continued lukewarm attitude to nation-building by the frustrated ‘nations’ whose emotions are stirred by the clandestine tribal organizations coordinating the races in the

hot race for relevance within the polity (Oladesu, 2002:14). From independence in 1960 to the beginning of the civil war on July 1, 1967, Nigeria had a very low degree of national cohesion; its diverse ethnic nationalities are looking inwards to themselves for political succor and survival in an incoherent polity. Socio-political integration was further undermined by the lack of meaningful universal symbols (common heritage and common historical past), for example that could have bound the Nigerian polity together (Faseun, 2002:8).

The Nigerian government is aware of the country's fragility due to the system it adopted more particularly because of opt of secession.

They believed that self-determination, decentralization and constitutionally guaranteeing the right to secession is the only means to remain the state intact. However, the persistence and continuations of ethnic conflicts indicate that federalism has not in its real sense promoted national integration instead it has continually bred ethnic tensions. The very purpose of the federalism in Nigeria was aimed at finding a means for managing ethnic conflicts though it led to the changing of arenas of conflicts by decentralizing them and also generated new localized inter-ethnic conflicts. These conflicts could be inter-regional conflicts over the boundaries of different ethno-linguistically formed regions, and even there are distinct forms of conflicts emanating from resource and power sharing from local to regional and federal levels. Politics in Nigeria becomes heavily centralized on ethnicity rather than on shared concerns such as democracy, development, justice, human rights, etc. This calculation in turn led to ethnic disputes. Moreover, no one benefits from this disintegration than those who are interested in maintaining the status quo, mainly the ruling class. Theoretically, federalism in Nigeria was adopted to ensure equitable distribution of power and resources among regional states. But in reality, the system is devised to maintain political dominance at the hands of minority ethnic groups.

In fact, linguistic, ethnic, religious and regional differences are constantly getting louder voices against national issues. To reduce these issues of national existence, federalism has been adopted as a compromising formula. Still, the very foundation and structure including the operation of Nigerian federalism promotes mutual fears and suspicion that have endangered inter-group relations among the diverse group. Arising from this background it has been constantly advocated that Nigeria's federal structure need a radical retouch or restructuring to guarantee

Nigerian Federal project and address the national question as may be called. One of the measures put in place and constitutionally allows as a tool for achieving and promoting national integration and inter-group relations is the federal character doctrine. Decades after its introduction and application, it seems its very essence cannot be justified at the moment. It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks

to ascertain the influence of federalism towards national integration.

## **2. CONCEPTUAL EXPLICATIONS**

Federalism can be said to mean a method of dividing powers so that the central and regional governments are each within a sphere, coordinate, and independent.

Conversely, federalism as a system of government emanates from the desire of a people to form a union without necessarily losing their various identities. It is an attempt to reflect the various diverse, social, political, cultural, and economic interests within the frame work of a broader national unity. While federalism to Junaidu (2007), is an ambiguous term which has no clear or universally acceptable meaning apart from its philosophical terminology, including its diversified approaches. The word federalism to him is used to make useful a useless situation defined by its diversified operation in the world and which has found classification in such terms as quasi federalism, cooperative federalism, organic federalism dual federalism or even decentralization. However, be that as it may, to Daniel (2007), it means several varieties of political arrangement in Nigeria to which the term federalism has properly been applied. In spite of this confusion, we can still conceptualize federalism. For instance, federalism is a form of governmental and institutional structure designed to cope with the dual but equally difficult task of maintaining unity while preserving its diversity. Hence, the need for unity and the simultaneous preservation of diversity are central to federal arrangement.

Furthermore, Kenneth (2003) provided a cogent conceptualization of federalism; the federal principle, to him, is the method of dividing powers so that general and regional governments are each within a sphere, coordinate and independent. This definition is classic in the sense that it tries to stress formal institutional requirement such as constitutional delimitation of powers, bi-cameral legislature, independent electoral system for both levels of government, multi-party but preferably a two party system, a supreme court, etc. it is essentially because these variables are presented in such a way as to constitute the defining characteristics of federalism, which is not even accepted scholarly, that elements of weakness of these types are found in such definitions.

Livingstone (2006, summarizes the meaning as well as real essence of federalism as thus:

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. This means territorial demarcation of

diversities is an important distinguishing characteristic of federal government. In fact, the diversity may be distributed in such a fashion that certain attitudes are found in particular territorial areas. For example, in Northern Nigeria, they may be scattered widely throughout the whole of the society, which is peculiar to Yoruba speaking people and Igbos scattered all round Nigeria.

This shows that if people are grouped territorially or geographically, then the result may be a society that is federal. This shows that the notion of federalizing process is unhelpful if it is taken that there is a degree of federalism in all political systems. On the other hand, national integration presupposes the existence of unity and conformity between and amongst the various ethnic as well as religious makes up of the country. To Duverger (1976:177), it is “the process of unifying a society which tends to make it harmonious city, based upon an order its members regard as equitably harmonious”. Jacob & Tenue (1964:9), sees 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”.

Morrison et al. (1972:385), says it is:

A process by which members of a social System (citizen for our purpose) develop linkages and location so that the boundaries of the system persist over time 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.

### 3. THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

This study is anchored on the systems theory. Systems theory or general systems theory or systemic is an interdisciplinary field which studies systems as a whole. Systems theory was developed by [Ludwig von Bertalanffy](#), [William Ross Ashby](#) and others between the 1940s and the 1970s on principles from physics, biology and engineering and later grew into numerous fields including philosophy, sociology, organizational theory, management, psychotherapy (within family systems therapy) and economics among others. The major thesis of the general systems theory is on the complexity and interdependence of various components that makes up a system. A system is composed of regularly interacting or interdependent groups of activities/parts that form whole. Part of systems theory, system dynamics is a method for understanding the dynamic behavior of complex systems. In the field of political science the credit for pioneering the application of systems approach to the analysis of political process goes to David Easton in 1973. According to him the political system is a system of interactions in any society through which binding or authoritative decisions are made and implemented (Nwokoye, 2008) in Nwankwo (2008).

He considers the political system as existing within an environment of other systems-physical, biological, social psychological etc which affect it and are in turn affected by the political system through continuous transactions and exchanges. Using the input-conversion-output-feedback model in his analysis of political system, Easton divided the political system into four, namely: input, conversion, output and feedback. According to him, input represents the demands made on the political system by the citizenry, which may include the provision of infrastructure such as water, electricity, wage increase etc. however, he argues that since the political system alone cannot meet all these demands, it is accompanied by support. He submits also that there must be gatekeepers who should not allow political systems to be overloaded, such as the civil servants and bureaucrats who control what goes into the political system.

The conversion is done by the political system by a processing of the various demands from the citizenry, as allowed into it by the gate keepers whose role is to ensure that the system is not overloaded at any point in time. The output, he contends refers to what comes out of the political system, which have been converted to decisions and policies in the form of exacting taxes, and so on. As a matter of fact, the political process or system cannot respond positively to all demands made on it because of the available limited resources, hence what is left undone is also communicated to it via the demand and support, ie. Input. The feedback in Easton’s analysis is what goes back to the political system through the same gatekeepers. This is a way of letting the political system realize that it was yet to meet all the demands of the citizenry made on it.

#### 4. THE RELEVANCE OF THE THEORY

The relevance of the general systems theory to this study is viewed from the perspective of the steady interactions which exists among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria which is solely for the harmonious existence of the Nigerian state. According to the systems theory, a system is composed of regularly interacting or interdependent groups of activities/parts that form whole. As part of systems theory, system dynamics is a method for understanding the dynamic behavior of complex systems. It is imperative to note therefore that for federalism in Nigeria is only a resultant effect of the steady interactions which exists between the various ethnic nationalities that make up Nigeria, hence, the inter-ethnic relations.

The various ethnic groups in Nigeria are the sub-systems in Nigeria as a whole system and in the analysis of this study, these sub-systems (ethnic groups) are constantly relating with each other for either the progression or the regression of the Nigerian state as a whole system.

The perceived relationship is either positive or negative, this, according to the systems theory analysis by David Easton, there is the input-conversion-output-feedback model which suggests here that the negativity or positivity of inter-ethnic relations in Nigeria are always allowed to pass through this process. This therefore shows that the feedback of strife amongst ethnic groups in Nigeria shows there is a negative relationship, while the feedback of cordiality, promotion of national integration shows that there is a positive inter-ethnic relationship and thus suggests that federalism in Nigeria is true.

#### 5. FEDERALISM AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN NIGERIA

A country with diverse ethnic nationalities like Nigeria desire true and undiluted federalism for the provision of an achievable agenda which is apt for promoting stable, peaceful, and democratic dividends. A true federalism could be the real panacea to the hindrances of national building process in Nigeria. Federalism could be used as an instrument for creating balance and harmony in divided societies such as in Nigeria. To observe militarism and force is not a good option to be adopted rather a power sharing approach where justice will be done with all identities and segments of society (Ugwuoju, 2012:11).

The problem of acrimonious existence among the diverse groups and interests in the federation of Nigeria leading to mutual distrust and inter-community conflicts has become perennial and endemic in the nation's body politics and has militated against the political stability of the country since independence. The fear of domination of one ethnic group or section of the country by another; and national question of who gets what and how the national cake should be shared constitute a major factor of this problem. This situation

seriously hampers efforts at national integration as it applies to the building of a nation-state out of the disparate ethnic, geographic, social, economic, and religious elements in the country. The doctrine of federal character was formulated and put into use by the government to address and hopefully mitigate this problem so as to ensure a peaceful and integrated Nigeria (Ihonvbere, 1994).

Sherif (2008), argues that there are instances of inter-ethnic relations each time people act or interact individually or collectively, inter-group relations has been offered varieties of conception. Afigbo (2009), cited Okpeh (2004), opines that 'inter-ethnic relations presupposes contacts and interaction between group each of which has an identity to make some inputs into the relationship, in short, each of which has some scope and area of autonomous action'.

This conception shows that the phenomenon is a social one as it deals with human beings a logical consequence of human contact predicated on their behaviour and contributions. Nwabueze (2003), frame the phenomenon thus:

...the simple or complex, conflicting or accommodating, cooperating, consensus, peaceful or acrimonious, intense, dense or indifferent way that one group is connected or associated with another in the course of their interaction with each other.

Inter-ethnic relations as a study focuses essentially on the series of methods, strategies or approaches to the understanding of separate ethnic groups and creating or building bridges across potential or actual conflict relationships, or directly promoting harmony. It may also be repackaged curriculum for conflict management and containment based on scientific understanding of group characteristics and a more accurate capacity to predict the patterns of prejudices, preferences, and statements among and between ethnic groups in interaction with one another.

The working of federalism undermines and repudiates the very and various definitions of inter-ethnic relations and national integration. While both phenomenon stands for positive interactions that cut across social, economic, political and cultural layers of the society, cooling tensions and leading to homogenous setting, federalism is based on the adoration of ethnic dichotomy. As a matter of fact, the ideology of federalism, ethnic cum tribal attachments of Nigerians. This development informs and forms the root of disaffection that has hindered interaction among various Nigerian groups. Federalism and its principle of Federal

Character equation and formula have not arrived at the answer to the problem of minorities especially where there is minorities in the minority.

From all that have being said so far, as long as the application of the doctrine of federalism perpetually discriminates against one group at the detriment of the other, national integration is seriously hampered.

Its application equally contravenes the principle of distributive justice, as it stands confused on the issue of arithmetical equality and proportional equality. States are not equal on two main grounds; population and the number of eligible candidates for appointment. Its applicators or operators fail to note this and therefore, apply simple arithmetic equality where the equality of all states is concerned. Nevertheless, it is significant to stress here that the highest level of inequality is the equal treatment of unequal. Proportional equality seems more just than arithmetical equality, which is discriminatory and fundamentally militates against inter-ethnic relations and national integration.

## **6. FEDERALISM AND INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONS IN NIGERIA**

Studies on inter-ethnic groups or plural societies, considered federalism an effective way of achieving and preserving both integration and stability in deeply divided societies. Whenever events seemed to demand that a compromise is affected between the necessity for unity and co-operation on a wide territorial basis on one hand and the need to accommodate the legitimate claims of sub-national groups for self-rule on the other hand, “the temptation is to proffer catch all management formula, such as federalism” (Osaghae, 1998:1). These tendencies to see federalism as a magic formula that can channel irreconcilable inter ethnic hostility into conciliation and federal co-operations” was subscribed to by Carnell in his 1961 essay thus: “in tropical areas characterized by extreme cultural and ethnic diversity... federalism comes as something of a political panacea”. Duchacek (1977:133, equally posits that: “the dialectic and disparity between the geographic confines of territorial states on the one hand, and the boundaries of ethno-territorial communities on the other, seem to invite a federal solution”. In federalism, we find a system of government that has been referred to as ‘the magic formula’ for solving the governmental problems of multi-ethnic societies.

It is not only democratic, complete with the institutionalization of most essential ingredients; it is creative and flexible enough to incorporate several accommodation formulas’ (Mazrui, 1971:300). In short, it is considered the most appropriate frame-work for governing multi-ethnic societies. Accordingly, “federalism and ethnicity form a solidarity couple” (Glazer, 1997:71). It is a mark of the truth of this assertion that all known federations today, including those, which have formally abrogated their federal constitutions like Cameroon and Uganda are multi-ethnic. Glazer (1997), opines that, “to couple federalism and

ethnicity immediately suggests one similar solution to the problem of a state containing a number of ethnic groups varying in language, culture and religion. From Glazer, the conclusion one can reach is that ethnic boundaries are a necessary condition for federalism. For Enloe (1977:146) too, “federalism, when and if it is considered by political elite is taken up as a lively alternative at a certain point in the polity’s historical evolution and in the evolution of each of the various ethnic groups.”

It is against this background that in Nigeria, federalism offered the best option to accommodate the ethno-linguistic and religious diversities, which were, for the most part, geographically distributed. An example like this among several other third world countries prompted (Osaghae, 1984:150-151), to conclude that “federalism is a means, in countries where diversity is pronounced, of accommodating government to the consent of the governed.”

In reality, federalism, accommodate diversities while attempting unity in diversity. As Duchacek (1977:13), puts it, the aim of federal constitution “is an institutionalized balance between national unity and sub-national diversity”. To this extent, federalism is “a cure for micro-nationalism” (Sawer, 1969:570.) For Wheare (1967:35), federalism is an appropriate form of government to offer to communities or states of distinct, differing nationality who wish to form a common government and to behave as one people for some purposes, but wish to remain independent and, in particular, to retain their nationality in all other aspects. ” (Wheare, 1967) though from the foregoing, federalism is reputed to be an effective political-cum-constitutional design for managing complex governmental problems usually associated with ethnic and cultural diversity, it has however failed to take firm roots in Africa as mechanism for national cohesion. One reason among others is that Africa, a continent of more than a thousand ethnic groups, was to adopt political postures and institutional arrangements that simply denied the existence of such diversity (Mkandawire, 1999:35). Politics being what it is, the public denial of ethnic pluralism did not prevent politicians from mobilizing and manipulating ethnicity. The result was a schizophrenic polity in which the politics of ‘ethnic balance’ was the rule of the day, practiced by people who denied ethnicity. Politicians were nationalist by day and tribalist by night (Mkandawire, 1999:35). Therefore, federal experiments in the third world generally, and not just in Nigeria, have been very vulnerable to decay, disruption and disintegration. These experiments have moved typically either towards unification and greater centralization, or towards disintegration and secession of their component parts. Malaysia, India and Nigeria are probably the only states in the third world where federation has survived the first few years of independence in any recognizable form. In all the three countries however, the federal principle has invariably assumed a highly centralized form (Mawhood, 1984:521-531). The general vulnerability of the federal principle in the third world suggests the wisdom of identifying the common conditions in the region,

which pose a threat to federal existence. The most obvious of these conditions include ethnic cleavage, economic underdevelopment or dependence, a weak sense of nationhood arriving from a short period of independent statehood.

It is not surprising therefore that until the early 1990s when Ethiopia became an ethnic federation and South Africa began its steady march to incremental federalism, Nigeria and Tanzania, to some extent were the only countries that managed to survive the assault of one-party and military authoritarian rule on post-independence federalism. Uganda and Cameroon, which set out as federal systems at independence could not stand the test of time. But the poor run of federalism on the continent has not diminished the perceived utility of the system as evidenced by the clamour for so-called true federalism in Nigeria, the resurrection of the Majimbo and federal debates in Kenya and Uganda respectively, and the acclaimed relevance of the federal solution in Sudan.

Indeed, the dynamics of state restructuring and the search for how to save the endangered post-colonial state from disintegration, suggest that federalism is likely to increase in relevance and utility in Africa. However, beyond the afore-stated reasons for the poor performance of federalism in third world countries, at least as regards national cohesion and conflict management, it is imperative to inquire whether federalism is capable of performing the expected 'magic' or put differently, in the words of Ayoade (1998:5), whether 'to expect federalism to produce a seamless unity is to expect too much from that system. Many federalists expect from federalism what it is not designed to give'. Ayoade (1998), noted further that, "experience has shown that it has not proved to be a particularly good device for integrating plural societies into a single political system" (Ayoade, 1998:5). He has equally challenged much of the ordinary optimism as some other scholars have done regarding the ability of federalism to resolve problems of diversity and disparity in the interests of harmony and unity. But to Tarlton (1965), there is a limit beyond which diversity and federalism are compatible in that a federal arrangement can be rendered impossible or unworkable if the elements of diversity are very strong or if they predominate over those of unity. As he puts it, "component units of a federal system must, if that system is to function at an optimum level of harmony, predominate over existing elements of diversity..."

Ayoade (1998:5-6), went further to disagree with other scholars who see federalism as having the ability to promote national, integration and stability in multi-ethnic states. In his words "... to - expect federalism to produce a seamless unity is to expect too much from that system. Many federalists" expect from federalism what is not designed to give". He goes further to say that "experience has shown that it has not proved to be a particular good device for integrating plural societies into a single political system".

Talton's (1965), serious scepticism about the possibility of achieving stability in the face of diversity was subsequently

to be acknowledged and shared by other perceptive scholars. One of them is Rotchild (1966:27-28), who analyzed how the application of the federal principle had been made perilously difficult in Africa by the lack of crucial support for the principle from the key leaders in the continent by the centralizing imperative of the modernization process and by the threat, the forces of ethnic intransigence and separation have posed to the continuance of the federal ties.

In the same vein, but in a more comparative study, May (2009:83-86) argued, that federal government has not proved to be a very stable form of political organization and that in fact, a survey of federal and near federal experiments suggest that federalism is inherently unstable. May, proceeded further to cite examples of federal experiments that have disintegrated or been threatened by serious disaggregative tendencies and have had to be maintained by enforced centralization and/or civil war, such as USA , Switzerland, Australia, Canada, Syria, etc. (Suberu, 1990:145-161). Indeed, it is instructive to note that Nigeria presently remain the oldest and the only surviving federation in the entire continent of Africa (Osuntokun, 1996:11). Federal experiments in the third world are, therefore, endangered not only by deep sectional loyalties and largely unavoidable but politically explosive, inter-segmental inequalities, but also by the intensely conflictual nature of third world politics, (Suberu, 1990).

## **7. THE PROBLEMS OF FEDERALISM IN NIGERIA**

From 1954 when Nigeria first embraced federalism, the polity has been wallowing from one problem to the other, thereby making national cohesion a mirage after all. Unlike Switzerland, despite being a very small country, one of the most decentralized countries in the world as noted by Arnold Koller (2002:27), Nigeria's federal system is highly centralized in all its ramifications. On this problem, Coleman (Peil, 1976:115) observed that "excessive centralization and statism of most developing countries... not only means greater vulnerability as a result of unfulfilment of populist expectation, it also means heightened inefficiency".

Above all, it also means the absence of critically important supportive capacity in the society at large because the public cannot respond to direct, or restrain a polity which is so far removed from it as a centralized government tends to be (Peil, 1976:115).

It need be emphasized that the persistent military rule over the years has no doubt affected the structure of Nigerian federalism. In line with the military's command structure, Nigeria's federal system has been over-centralized to the extent that it reflects more of a unitary arrangement than a federal one (Elaigwu, 1998:6-7). Though, before the military intervention in 1966, Nigeria began with a formal federal constitution in 1954, which was decentralized to accommodate the diverse ethnic groups, 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 started acquiring more powers to the detriment of the constituent federating units. The first military “interregnum” in 1966, abolished regional police forces. The creation of twelve states on the eve of the civil war in 1967, though it brought government closer to the people, entailed considerable loss of power by the federating units. The Murtala/Obasanjo military junta in their bid to reduce ‘divisive tendencies’ in the nation, abolished state 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 (see Policy Briefs, October, 1999).

The federal military government took over assets owned by states or group of states like television stations, sports stadia and newspapers, thereby strengthening the federal government at the expense of the states in terms of assets ownership. This made the contest for political power at the federal level a lot more intense among the different federating units and laid the foundation for many years of crisis and instability (Policy Briefs, October, 1999). Many actions later taken by the military exacerbated this emerging problem. Very worrisome is the fact that local governments have no legislative power over any major tax revenue source although they have administrative and collective jurisdiction on two sources. This negative trend must have made Akindele (1997), to canvas the argument that: what we need today is a non-centralized federal system in which state governments are politically virile, legislatively strong, financially resilient, and indeed, constituted self-confident and self-assertive centres of respect by the political loyalty from the citizens they serve and over whom they exercise authority (Elaiwu, 1998:7). Nonetheless, the problematic nature of Nigeria’s citizenship is travail of Nigeria’s federalism, which has in no small measure whittle-down the efficacy of Nigeria’s federal structure. Unlike India where there is no duality of citizenship in which case there is only one Indian citizenship, Indian federalism is like that of Canada. The concept of state of origin does not exist (Sangma, 2002:35), whereas, in Nigeria to pick-up a job outside one’s ethnic base at state government level is really a big risk in the sense that such person will be tagged a ‘non-indigene’. Though, citizenship conceptualized as one who by birth or nationalization belongs to a state is not problematic, but when it comes to assigning equal status to citizens both in theory and practice that goes beyond sheer legalism that is problematic. This sociological component of citizenship which breeds differentiation is one of the greatest problems the new states including Nigeria face in their search for national cohesion (Osaghae, 1978:63).

There is a conscious notion of my ‘state’ or my ‘home’ which afflicts every Nigerian who lives outside his state of origin and makes him go ‘home’ to build a home marry a wife or vote. Even the dead are rarely buried outside their

states of origin. The implication of this is that citizens’ allegiance to the federation is truncated because of the state’s preferential treatment of its citizens (Ojo, 2001:8-9). A system whereby the state cannot effectively tackle the problem of citizenship negates the tenet of federalism. Laski’s (1982:89) view is apt here “a state must give to men their dues as men before it can demand, at least with justice, their loyalty”. The reason for the problematic character of citizenship in Africa is partly because of the ethnic groups that are bedeviled by enormous conflicts arising from the mosaics of centrifugal forces which define a citizen, as one who by birth or nationalization, belong to a state.

In Nigeria a ‘non-indigene’ can best secure a contract appointment even with the government with constant reminder that the person is far away from his home. The most frustrating thing is with federal government owned institutions which in several cases are ‘captured’ by the host community treating workers from other parts of the country as aliens both in attitude and conduct. Interestingly, citizens that discriminated against pay taxes and perform other duties in their states of residence. As Laski (1982), succinctly posits:

... a state, which refuses one of the things it, declared essential to the well beings of another is making one less a citizen. It is denying that which its power invest with moral authority. It is admitting that its claim upon one is built not upon its ethics, but its strength (Laski, 1982:92).

Another form of challenge or a problematic to Nigeria’s federalism is the issue of structural imbalance. If Mill’s law of federal instability is anything to go by that “a federation is morbid if one part of the federation is bigger than the sum of the other parts” (Ayoade, 1988:6 and 1987:9), the system is indeed far from being valence. It will be recalled that the 1951 Macpherson Constitution created central legislature which had 136 elected representatives and of which the Northern region alone had 68 members, thereby, making it possible for the North to swallow other regions put together or hold them into ransom (Awolowo, 1986:36-51). This problem is not unconnected with the pragmatic nature of the origins of the federal structure, which has created problems of permanent dimensions. First, the division of the country into three turned the federation into an asymmetric territorial association in which one part (North), was equal to the sum of the other two parts, that is, the West and East. It is true that there are federal systems in the world in which the constituent states or regions are even or nearly equal in size, population, political power, administrative skills, economic development or relative geographical location (Frenkel,

1986:65), but wherever the disparity is as great as to make one constituent state permanently dominating collective decisions, it results in unitary centralism rather than federalism, which is the case in Nigeria. Indeed, from all indications, according to Elaigwu (1977:147);

this structural imbalance generated fear of domination among various groups in the country, most especially the minority ones. In terms of landmass, Northern region then had 77.0% Eastern Region 8.3%, Western region 8.5% and the Midwestern region 4.2%. With the 1963 census figures, the northern region accounted for 53.5% of the total population of Nigeria, the Eastern Nigeria 22.3%, the Western Region 18.4% and the Mid-Western region 4.6%. Thus, for three Southern regions, the federal structure as existed made it virtually impossible for the South to control political power at the centre, given the ethno-regional politics in the country. The South thus feared Northern political domination by population and landmass, while the North is equally afraid of southern edge in skills it got through Western education acquired earlier than the North (Elaigwu, 1977:147).

In fact, contemporary development, in terms of states' and local governments' creation exercises cum recruitment into public Nigerian offices has lent credence to the lopsided nature of the structure of the federation.

## 8. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that though Nigeria is seen as the best federal state in Africa, it remains to be proven if federalism in Nigeria really promotes inter-ethnic relations in Nigeria. This is true because of the varied principles of federalism which Nigeria has adopted in the past like the creation of states and local government and the introduction of federal character principle in Nigeria to accommodate the differences in ethnic as well as religious make-ups of the Nigerian State.

Consequently, the study concludes that the nature on Nigerian federalism does not promote national integration. A country that is plagued by various ethnic strife and conflicts is bound to continue to remain apart instead of being together, hence the doubt of national integration. Federalism is supposed to be a system of government that takes into

cognizance the differentiations in tribe and religion thereby the creation of various states and local government to accommodate these difference, but due to the politics of state and local government creation in Nigeria, it has raised eyebrows on the achievement of goal of national integration which federalism sets out to achieve.

## 9. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends thus;

The urgent need for restructuring of the country to give room for self management by the various ethnic groups that make up Nigeria in a bid to actualize national integration which will be germane for all round development in Nigeria. The distribution of power, privileges and liabilities must follow commonly agreed principles both in form and in intent. Indeed, no federal system can survive on an ad hoc basis neither can one function effectively where the spirit of its operating principles are consistently abused. Equally, it is known that the underlying problem inhibiting Nigeria's national integration is the absence of "a self-sufficient political/ideological commitment to the primary concept or value of federalism itself" (Frank, 1986:171-173). This is what Ayoade (Osahae, 1984:143) calls "commitment to the ideology of federalism", or what Friedrich (1963:175) calls "federal spirit". Thus, there is the need for Nigeria's political practice to be enmeshed in the principle of federalism.

Furthermore, the 1999 Constitution should be reviewed to give more powers and functions, including the corresponding revenue base, to the states, without weakening the national government. This can be done by drastically reducing the exclusive federal list to cover principally defence, foreign affairs, currency, national security and inter-state commerce. Most of the items on the exclusive federal list can then be subsumed as residual, making it a state exclusive list. As a result of this, the revenue allocation formula should be revised in such a way as to match the financial resources at the disposal of the state with their enhanced functions.

The principle of derivation should be extended and applied, such that the greater proportion of revenues collected from dutiable consumer products and services in a state should revert to that state but with allowance made for equalization transfers to assist less poorly endowed states and for even development.

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