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# Parasitic Federalism and Skewed Development: Implications for the Niger Delta, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *Federalism in political discourse is guided by principles that address issues of diversities, power sharing accommodation despite heterogeneous differences and mutual development but this has not been the case in Nigeria. In Nigeria, the acclaimed federal system seems to have a very unequal distribution of power, with the central government wielding too much power at the detriment of the other levels. Furthermore, the Niger Delta being the economic nerve center of the Nigerian State happen to be at the receiving end of this anomaly, as the states of the Niger Delta are deprived the expected development benefits from the exploitation of oil and gas in their domain because of the parasitic nature of Nigeria's federal system that cares less about the infrastructural dearth in the Delta and negative impact of these economic activities on the people. The paper examined Nigeria's federal arrangement by looking at the relationship between the central government and the units particularly the Niger Delta areas. Data for the study was derived secondarily and analyzed qualitatively. It used the Political economy approach and found that there is a parasitic relationship between the Nigerian State and the Niger delta areas which it has maintained using coercive force mainly a central police. This has led to skewed development, environmental degradation and various forms of criminality in the Niger Delta. The paper recommends structural reforms and constitutional amendment to address these lapses.*

**Keywords:** Federalism, Parasitic Federalism, State police, Development, Niger Delta

## 1. Background to the Study

Many scholars like K.C. Wheare (1963), Eme Awa (1976), Amuwo and Suberu. ed (2000) have variously conceived the subject matter of federalism as a political system. It has undergone diverse changes and has attained an advanced stage, although lacking a universally agreed meaning as a concept (Law, 2013). The above notwithstanding, a truly federal system among other things makes room for some measure of autonomy and interdependence amongst the central and component units. As is the case in most federal arrangements across the globe, power is shared between the central government and the component units, and clearly spelt out by the law. Thus, as argued by Tella, Doho & Aliyu (2014) the various federating units in the federal arrangement have their respective institutions of government that are responsible to the people in various ways.

*In a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria, the federal system may arguably rank as one of the best systems that should ordinarily fit-in greatly, considering the dynamics of the Nigerian state. However, Nigeria's federal system has over the years shown that it does exist to be federal merely on papers, as the basic tenets of a federal system are obviously missing in Nigeria's federal system. Nigeria's federal reality is such that powers are shared in an awfully lopsided manner. The federal (central) government seriously dominates the other units of government, as too much is exclusively reserved for her, at the detriment of the federating units.*

Whereas, scholars maintain Nigeria's federal system is derived from the American model, which many claim is an ideal model. The federal practice of the Nigerian state however, is an aberration of the American practice. For instance, the states are structured in such a way that rather than be competitive, they depend largely on the central government; and the local government which ordinarily ought to be the third tier of the country's federal system is not so, as they are a

creation of the state, according to the position of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999).

Also, the very contentious issue of resource control and the fiscal nature of our federal system is indeed a departure from what a federal system should entail. A major problem with Nigerian federalism is that it is a process of under developing some political groups to develop others, but in its proper sense federalism involves power sharing amongst the levels of government (Obomanu, 2020).

As a result of the existing nature of Nigeria's federal arrangement, the Niger Delta States, and indeed those of other parts of the country struggle to develop. This is because while the people of the area suffer the brunt of the activities of oil and gas exploration and exploitation, they are deprived from controlling their resources, or even having quality returns from the petrodollar business that affects them in diverse ways. The thrust of this paper therefore, is to examine how Nigeria's federal system affects the component States particularly the Niger delta areas and the consequences of this relationship to their development. The paper also evaluates the impact of Nigeria's federal system not only on the overall development of the Niger Delta, but also on how the parasitic nature of Nigeria's federal system has brought about a gap in development in the Niger Delta

## 2. Conceptual Clarification

The concepts of federalism, parasitic federalism and development need clarifications and contextualization where necessary for the purpose of uncomplicated appreciation of the study.

### 2.1 Federalism

Studies on federalism focus mainly on political organisations with the aim of power sharing and other benefits associated with such unions for their mutual interest in defined terms. As a point of departure, Wheare (1946:11) held that “by the principle of federalism I mean the method of dividing powers so that the general and regional governments are each, within a sphere, co-ordinate and independent” (Law, 2013:93). The above position has attracted an array of criticisms among scholars. Based on this, Arowolo (2011) argues that power is distributed between a central government and component units like the State and the local governments, thus bringing about the formation of a federation. He further points out that the federal system is indeed different and dynamic from one place to another (Ewetan, 2012). It therefore means that the various tiers of government should be autonomous and coordinate in their defined spheres of authority. On his part, Bataveljic (2012) added value on the federalism discourse when he observed that it is

A political organization principle that pursues the purpose to connect the existence and independence of political unities, with a connection of these unities to a higher whole. Federal facilities are to be regarded as political multi-level systems in which the political existence of the whole is based upon the political entities which are members of the federation. As a result, federalism is the freedom of narrower and personal entities within the scope of a whole. Federalism serves the creation of unity in diversity; it operates towards an integration of what is different in the common

A quick look at the above position would leave one with so much more than can be imagined. Whereas, Nigeria claims to be a practitioner of the federal system of government, the existing realities of the Nigerian State is very far from what should be expected. Whereas, a federal system ought to unite a diverse society, Nigeria a country where tribal, religious, cultural and other forms of differences exist is far from this ideal. The manner in which the Nigerian State had practiced her federal system has been such that the various diversities have become tools in the hands of those who have managed the affairs of State since her flag independence.

Igwe (2007) in his *Politics and Globe Dictionary* argues that the federal system distributes powers between the various levels of government, as in simple terms a compromise by component units in their desire to achieve self-determination. He however pointed out that it is the structural basis of the doctrine of unity in diversity, and that serious problems would arise in any federal system when a component unit of the federation or a few of them have capacity to determine issues unilaterally, and when the revenue system and the responsibility system are inconsistent. The argument of Igwe (2007) above is true of a model federal system, and explains the flaws of the Nigerian federal arrangement.

Similarly, Bulmer (2017) argues that in a federal arrangement, power is shared between the various levels of government. Thus, the units of government enjoy some level of autonomy. Thus in relation to the position of Elazar (1987) it combines some degree of self-government and certain degree of shared government. Bulmer (2017) further argues that federal systems are more associated with large and diverse societies. In a similar manner, Anyebe (2015) had argued that it is the panacea for a culturally diverse society like Nigeria.

Federalism has over the years emerged as a model for managing the issues of diversity in multi-ethnic societies. But as opined by Eliagwu (1994:148), federalism is

A compromise in a multinational state between two types of self-determination- the determination to maintain a supranational framework of government which guarantees security for all in the state, nation or nation-state on the one hand, and the self-determination of component groups to retain their individual identities on the other hand (Eliagwu, 1994:148, in Mgba, 2018:108).

Going by the above argument, it becomes obvious that what Nigeria practices does not seem to guarantee either of the above self-determinations. Rather, what is operationalized in the Nigerian state tends to guarantee the security of the central government, particularly, as it concerns

drawing economic benefits from the Niger Delta, at the detriment of its peoples culture degradation of the environment and a lot of other socio-economic lapses. As far as the federal arrangement in Nigeria is concerned, it is nothing more than an inequitable, parasitic relationship, in which there is a resource transfer from the minority to the majority backed by State power.

Whereas scholars believe that federalism (if truly practiced) should provide the right path for governance in plural societies like Nigeria. However, it is imperative to pinpoint that there is no universal standard practice of the federal system, as its practice differs from society to society, and this is so as a result of a specific society's environmental concerns. Watts argues thus :

There is no single ideal form. Many variations are possible in the application of the federal ideal in general or even within the more specific category of full-fledged federation... Ultimately, federalism is a pragmatic, prudential technique whose applicability may depend upon the particular form in which it is adopted or adapted or even upon the development new innovations in its applications (Watts, 2000:10-11, in Mgba, 2018:108-109)

On their part, Awotayo, Sakiru, Ilelah & Olutokunbo (2013:101) stated that the features of a truly federal system are

separateness and independent existence of each unit of government; mutual non interference between governments in exercising their own person/property within the area of constitutional competence; relative autonomous decision-making power and apparatus for conducting i.e. legislature, executive and judiciary; legal equality among government in status-though not so great to be preponderant or reduce one or the other to relative importance; supremacy of the constitution over all government and their actions; and, the power to amend the constitution must not be reposed on either but both

## 2.2 Parasitic Federalism

Writing about Nigeria's federalism, Nwaeze (2017) referred to it as "feeding bottle federalism" in relation to the character of the Nigerian State, particularly, as it concerns revenue sharing, which has led to States being beggarly rather than being viable, thus making them beg for money at the end of every month. On his part, Ukaogo (2009) refers to the Nigerian federal situation as 'strangled federalism', as it has created room for contradiction, as it has brought about wars between the State and other tiers of government, oil producing States in the Niger Delta against non-oil producing States, the minorities, in opposition to the federal government, and of course the oil producing communities and the multinational corporations, among others. Similarly, Awotayo, Sakiru, Ilelah & Olutokunbo (2013) inferred that Nigeria's federalism is a 'unitary federalism' because it was superimposed on the Nigerian people and lacks the basic tenets of a federal system.

Put differently, from the biological sciences, "parasites are organisms which live in or on another organism, drawing sustenance from the host and causing it harm" (Lucius & Poulin, 2017:2). Similarly, Nigeria's economy is such that derives her sustenance mainly from the oil and gas sector, which is exploited predominantly in the Niger Delta. Nigeria's federalism has been patterned in a way that the country is sustained at the expense of the Niger Delta that is responsible for the economic life of the Nigerian State. It is such that the environment and economy of the oil-producing communities are at the expense of the entire Nigerian State. It is this dearth in infrastructure and other critical indices of development, and the structured impossibility of the Niger Delta to attain meaningful development by the Nigerian State that is here referred to as parasitic federalism.

## 2.3 Development

The discourse on development has attracted various contributions from scholars, as well as, national, regional and international organizations. The discourse has taken diverse shapes over the past decades meant more than it used to be previously. For instance, whereas, Seers looked at it in relation to three cardinal issues of poverty, inequality and unemployment, particularly as it concerns any two or all three, going downwards (Ibodje, 2009), Sen perceives it in relation to freedom (Ukiwo, 2010). Development, though

a universal concept, is lacking in a universally accepted definition. However, there is the seeming emergence of universally accepted elements that constitutes it (Omotola, 2010). For Omotola (2010) it is a process and as such not static; hence, exists in a multi-dimensional way. He therefore avers that "it is a multi-dimensional process that transcends the borderlines of economic variables to include political, economic, social and environmental concerns (p.21). On her part, Sen (1999) discusses development in relation to freedoms and these freedoms are seen as both the end and means to development (Ukiwo, 2010)

Rodney discussed development at the human level as increased skills, capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being (Kalagbor, 2001). On his part, Kalagbor (2001) argues that it concerns man taking control of his environment to increase the productivity of his needs, in order to guarantee qualitative life. In corroborating the above, the Report of the South Commission (1993:11) stated:

But a nation is its people. Development has, therefore, to be an effort of, by, and for the people. True development has to be people oriented. It has to be directed at the fulfilment of human potentials and the improvement of the social and economic wellbeing of the people. And it has to be designed to secure what the people themselves perceive to be their social and economic interests. Its first objective must be to end poverty, provide productive employment and satisfy the basic needs of the people... this implies that basic goods and services such as food and shelter, basic education and health facilities and clean water must be accessible (Kalagbor, 2001:204).

Man is the focus of development (Omotola, 2010; Nwoargu, 2006; Kalagbor, 2001) hence the dominance of human development in the literature. Human development on its part is measured by certain indices, prominent among which are; life expectancy, adult literacy, access to the various levels of education, and people's average income (World Bank, 2001 in Omotola, 2010)

As the discourse on development has undergone huge changes, and is at present being viewed in relation to its sustainability. Thus, the World Commission for Economic Development (WCED) states that sustainable development is the "development that meets the need of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Omotola, 2010:22; Redclift, 2008:279). The above notwithstanding, there has arisen the contention among scholars as it regards 'needs', particularly considering the fact that needs have capacity to change over time, as history has shown that the needs of one generation may not necessarily be the need of another (Redclift, 2008).

**3.1 The Nexus between Nigeria's Fiscal Federalism, Oil Politics and Resource Controls** Some scholars such as Robert Dahl have variously established that, federalism is a political instrument employed to show the acknowledgment of diversities in plural societies. The likes of Arend Lijphart examines from the angle of elite bargaining in what is called consociational democracy. As a result therefore, among its cardinal principles is that of power sharing among the various levels of government, which is operationalized in every federal or acclaimed federal

system globally. But how much of these powers are shared to the respective units of each system has been a point of contestation among several federal arrangements.

Fiscal federalism surfaced because of the need for some sort of financial distribution within the federal system. It is a product of federalism that requires some form of constitutional monetary transactions between and among the various tiers of government; it deals with monetary allocation to the respective tiers of government, for the purpose of performing governmental functions. As conceived by Tanzi, it "exists when sub-national governments have powers given to them by the constitution or by particular laws, to raise (some) taxes and carry out spending activities within clearly established legal criteria" (Omotola, 2012:256). The above situation does infer that specific responsibilities are assigned to the different tiers of government, which these tiers should aim at achieving from the revenue accrued (allocated) them over time. Thus, Babalola (2015) argues that the sharing of revenue between the central government and the constituent units is only genuine if the division corresponds with the provision of the constitution pertaining to such functions.

In Nigeria, what is in operation is a fiscal system whereby the federal or central government makes allowances to the States, and the States replicate the same to the local governments (Babalola, 2015). Currently the States in Nigeria have more or less swallowed up the Local governments. They Receive allocations from the centre on behalf of the Local government and appoint sole administrators rather than allow elections to be held. However, this is a grave departure from the practice of some advanced federal States that are seen to be 'models'. Understanding the disparity that could exist between the various parts of States of a country, the fiscal system seems to have provided some level of solution rather than the debacle practiced in Nigeria. A system in which crude oil in the soil of some States are not in their jurisdiction to

manage is anything else but federal. What has been distributed amongst the federating units are proceeds from oil and gas exploited from the Niger Delta, whereas, other natural resources in other parts of the country are being exploited illegally. A Good example is the fact that gold in Zamfara State are mined by individuals and corporate organizations without remitting tax to the common pool. with little or no attention from the Nigerian state. Whereas the State has given an insignificant percentage of oil revenue to oil producing States, this is still not enough, as there are still genuine grievances by the Niger Delta people.

**Table 1: Oil Revenue Sharing Formula (1958-2001)**

Year	Federal	State	Local	Special Projects	Derivation Formula
1958	40%	60%	0%	0%	50%
1968	80%	20%	0%	0%	10%
1977	75%	22%	3%	0%	10%
1982	55%	32.5%	10%	2.5%	10%
1989	50%	24%	15%	11%	10%
1995	48.5%	24%	20%	7.5%	13%
2001	48.5%	24%	20%	7.5%	13%

**Source:** Revenue Mobilization and Fiscal Commission (2002) in Egbe (2013).

Furthermore, prior to the discovery of crude oil in the Niger Delta, agriculture was the major revenue earner for the Nigerian state and the revenue accrued did not spread across as is the case today. Nigeria's claim of being a federal state has since been on the test with the politics of oil and indeed the unequivocal demand for the Niger Delta people to have control of the resources in their domain. This call has attracted the brutal character of the Nigerian State on the Niger Delta people, as witnessed in genocides in Ogoni, Odi, Gbaramatu and indeed several other Niger Delta communities. It was as a result of this repressive nature of the Nigerian State that various youth groups took up arms against the Nigerian State in what has created a lot of militant groups.

The State of Nigeria's skewed federal arrangement is manifest in the allocation of revenue, which is structured to favour the major ethnic nationalities that make up the Nigerian state (Ibaba, 2017). He further argues that at independence, a necessary condition for which revenue was allocated was on the basis of derivation, which as much as 50%, but decades later, it was reduced to as much as 1.5%, with landmass, population and the politics of local government being conditions for allocation, thus, leaving the Niger Delta States and Environment at the mercy of major ethnic nations of Nigeria. Table 2 explains the above better.

**Table 2: Criteria for Revenue Allocation and Unequal Resource Allocation**

State	Population (2006)	Landmass (km <sup>2</sup> )	Revenue (NGN)	No. of LGA	State	Population (2006)	Landmass (km <sup>2</sup> )	Revenue (NGN)	No. of LGA
Abia	2,845,376	6,320	2,128,975,514.86	17	Kano	9,401,288	20,131	5,910,391,768.67	44
Adama wa	3,178,950	36,917	2,743,982.02	21	Katsina	5,801,584	24,192	4,312,014,305.42	34
Akwa-Ibom	3,178,950	7,081	3,629,634.13	31	Kebbi	3,256,541	36,800	2,684,172,064.02	20

Anambra	4,177,88	4,844	2,782,850.86	21	Kogi	3,314,043	29,833	2,782,056,389.38	21
Bauchi	4,653,066	45,837	3,087,848,276.82	20	Kwara	2,365,353	36,825	2,136,548,708.49	16
Bayelsa	1,704,515	10,773	1,160,989,753.11	8	Lagos	9,113,605	3,345	3,513,442,190.30	20
Benue	4,253,641	34,059	3,203,321,156.27	23	Nassarawa	1,869,377	27,117	1,709,697,255.13	13
Borno	4,171,104	70,898	3,677,618,942.33	27	Niger	3,954,772	76,363	3,464,631,562.59	25
Cross River	2,882,988	20,156	2,291,364,886.88	18	Ogun	3,751,104	16,762	2,563,759,046.75	20
Delta	4,112,445	17,698	3,928,585,122.93	25	Ondo	3,751,104	15,500	2,366,483,561.33	18
Ebonyi	2,176,947	5,670	1,832,441,786.52	13	Osun	3,416,959	9,251	3,225,091,599.43	30
Edo	3,233,366	17,802	2,284,067,779.97	18	Oyo	5,580,894	28,454	4,124,042,989.41	33
Ekiti	2,398,357	6,353	1,865,574,040.95	16	Plateau	3,206,531	30,913	2,360,658,514.72	17
Enugu	3,267,837	7,161	2,210,350,655.01	17	Rivers	5,198,716	11,077	3,091,165,515.97	23
Gombe	2,365,040	18,768	1,803,124,054.74	12	Sokoto	3,702,676	25,973	2,963,194,998.35	23
Imo	3,927,563	5,100	3,123,949,818.41	27	Taraba	2,294,800	54,473	2,258,733,501.90	16
Jigawa	4,361,002	23,154	3,357,736,999.99	27	Yobe	2,321,339	45,502	2,287,418,594.04	17
Kaduna	6,113,503	46,053	3,601,394,768.23	23	Zamfara	3,278,873	39,762	2,147,478,485.32	14
					FCT	1,405,201	7,315	923,876,789.94	5

Source: Ibaba (2017:50)

- September 2011 revenue to LGAs

Following the attendant issues of Nigeria's parasitic federal system, the calls for restructuring of the nation's federal system, for it to accommodate the control of resources by the local people of the Niger Delta and indeed in every part of Nigeria has been accentuated by the various ethnic minorities and indeed opposition political elites who are taking advantage of the people for cheap political gains.

Furthermore, the character of the Nigerian State before, during and at post-amnesty Niger Delta period has shown that the process of amnesty and the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) Programme were not targeted at ameliorating the pains suffered by the Niger Delta people, rather it was towards unhindered access to the oil deposits in the delta area. As a result of the distorted federal arrangement practiced in Nigeria, “the Niger Delta is best known for three things: oil, poverty and conflict” (Aaron & George, 2010:3). The position of Aaron & George (2010) above was the true position of things in the pre-amnesty Niger Delta, and unfortunately, is still the true reality of the Niger Delta after the granting of amnesty by the Federal government.

### 3.2 Nigeria’s Skewed Federal System and State Police: the Arguments

Although Nigeria’s federalism like others is a process, there are too many things wrong with the federal system. Nigeria’s federal constitution from 1976 to the fourth republic has been written by the dictatorial military regimes, and passed on to the civilian administrations. So, as it is found in the constitution of truly democratic and federal societies, the military dictators also forcefully decreed the phrase “we the people...” which begins the preamble of most constitutions of the world into the Nigerian constitution. However, that phrase was anything but true, because the people made no input into that document. With such foundation, the constitution was bound to have huge flaws. The Nigerian State found itself in a situation whereby dictators gave the people a federal system, and monopolized an important institution like the police under the sole control of the federal government. In section 214(1), the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) states that

There shall be a police for Nigeria, which is known as the Nigeria police force and subject to the provisions of this section no other police force shall be established for the federation or any part thereof (Agwanwo, 2014:168).

*The above provision in the constitution therefore makes State police illegal in Nigeria’s federal arrangement.* However, considering the quantum of Nigeria’s population, and the aggregate number of men of the Nigerian Police, it becomes clear that the population of the country has outgrown the policing capacity of the Nigerian Police Force. And this issue of under-policing probably might not have occurred where State police was legal, as the efforts of the various State governments would have complimented the efforts of the central government.

Suffice to say that although there are no two exact federal systems in the world; Nigeria is the only acclaimed federal structure that doesn’t have a State police, whereas, some unitary States have opened up for State police, Awotayo, Sakiru, Ielah & Olutokunbo (2013). Corroborating this situation is the reality of the obvious under-policing phenomenon suffered in the country. Ugwu, Ngige & Ugwuanyi (2013) argue that several African States are doing quite well with their policing capacity, following the United Nations’ international rating of 300 police officers per 100,000 citizens of member States; with countries like Botswana showing well over 418 officers per 100,000 Batswana, Zimbabwe, with 401 officers per 100,000 Zimbabweans, Swaziland, boasting of over 351 policemen per 100,000 people, whereas, Nigeria is with 205 police officers for 100,000 Nigerians. From the above, it is evident that the Nigerian police has had problems meeting up with the policing needs of the country because of the failure of the State recruiting more men into the force. Of course, this challenge could have been handled, had States had legal rights to have their own police.

Scholars, security experts, politicians and the general public tend to be divided on the issue of State police in Nigeria. Eme & Anyadike (2012:212) in their attempted support for State police

observed that “each State has its own peculiar security challenge which can only be better managed by the officers who are familiar with the terrain, culture and way of life of a particular people in a given locality.” In this regard, the security situation in Nigeria differs from one part of the country to the other. For instance, Northern Nigeria has security issues relating to religious fundamentalism, kidnapping, cattle rustling, among others. Southern Nigeria on the other hand is plagued with kidnapping, secessionist movements, pipeline vandalism, among others.

It is imperative to point out that even when a particular trend of crime appears to cut across, it takes diverse dimensions. For instance, kidnapping is a crime happening in both the North and South. In the Niger Delta for instance, most hostages are taken into the creeks, hence, the best people to go in search of these victims or their kidnappers are those familiar with the terrain, and not those who know little or nothing about the environment. In a similar manner, Agwanwo (2014) argues that crimes happen in every community and its perpetrators are most often people within its environment, hence it is very important for locals to be employed and posted to their local environment for the purpose of proactively fishing out the criminal elements within their area.

On his part, Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi, the one time Chairman of the Nigerian Governors’ Forum read the communiqué of the forum after her meeting on the 25th of June, 2012. In the communiqué, the Governors made calls for the amendment of the 1999 Constitution for the inclusion of State police (Agwanwo, 2014). However, to the surprise of many, the Northern Governors’ Forum, a splinter group of the forum reacted almost immediately that the Northern Governors were not in support of the creation

of State police, but that they will prevail on the federal government to embark on the reform of the police. This situation is a true reflection of

the suspicious character of the various zones and ethnic groups that make up the Nigerian State (Awotayo, Sakiru, Ielah & Olutokunbo, 2013).

Juxtaposing the facts that no society can achieve development without peace, and that the Niger Delta is indeed confronted with issues of insecurity suffices the need for complementary security from the respective Niger Delta States. This is indeed vital, following the inability of the Nigerian Police to effectively police the Niger Delta, as a result of inadequate manpower, weaponry and indeed the uniqueness of the terrain. Hence, *the time for the Nigerian State to give room for State police is now.*

### 3.3 Parasitic Federalism and the Challenge of Development in the Niger Delta

It is ideal for a State to adopt the federal system for the purpose of stretching its hand to accommodate existing diversities, and promoting even developments among its units fairly besides other reasons. However, the above is contestable in Nigeria, as the federal arrangement has not brought about the developmental yearnings of Nigerians, and indeed the States and people of the Niger Delta people in particular, owing to its parasitic nature. The Nigerian State in her federal arrangement claim to run a system that is close to the people, with the States and local governments as federating units, yet they (the people) have become farther from the State at the centre (Ekekwe, 2015).

An integral element of the federal system is the issue of equality of the various federating units of a federation. As rightly put forward by Mill (cited in Ibaba, 2017:44):

There should not be any one State so much more powerful than the rest as to be capable of vying in strength with many of them combined. If there be such a one, it will be on being the master of the joint deliberation, if there are two, they will be irresistible when they argue and whenever they differ, everything will be decided by a struggle for ascendancy between rivals.

In another vein, Ibaba (2017) argues that in Nigeria’s federal system the above is not the reality as the colonial State assisted in instituting a system whereby one section of the constituent units dominated and still dominates the others. This character of the colonial State has found its way into the post-colonial Nigerian state. This situation is visible in the pattern of representation in the National Assembly, in which minority groups are represented inadequately.

**Table 3: Constituencies in Nigeria**

State	Population	No. of Constituencies		State	Population	No. of Federal of Constituencies	
		Senatorial Districts	Federal Constituencies			Senatorial Districts	Federal Constituencies
Abia	2,845,376	3	8	Kano	9,401,288	3	24
Adamawa	3,178,950	3	8	Katsina	5,801,584	3	15
Akwa-Ibom	3,178,950	3	10	Kebbi	3,256,541	3	8
Anambra	4,177,828	3	11	Kogi	3,314,043	3	9
Bauchi	4,653,066	3	12	Kwara	2,365,353	3	6
Bayelsa	1,704,515	3	5	Lagos	9,113,605	3	24
Benue	4,253,641	3	11	Nassarawa	1,869,377	3	5



Borno	4,171,104	3	10	Niger	3,954,772	3	10
Cross River	2,882,988	3	8	Ogun	3,751,104	3	9
Delta	4,112,445	3	10	Ondo	3,751,104	3	9
Ebonyi	2,176,947	3	6	Osun	3,416,959	3	9
Edo	3,233,366	3	9	Oyo	5,580,894	3	14
Ekiti	2,398,357	3	6	Plateau	3,206,531	3	8
Enugu	3,267,837	3	8	Rivers	5,198,716	3	13
Gombe	2,365,040	3	6	Sokoto	3,702,676	3	11
Imo	3,927,563	3	10	Taraba	2,294,800	3	6
Jigawa	4,361,002	3	11	Yobe	2,321,339	3	6
Kaduna	6,113,503	3	16	Zamfara	3,278,873	3	7

Source: Ibaba (2017:47).

From the above table, it is evident that the Northern part of the country is structured to dominate the South. So, while there is equal representation per State in the Senate, the North still enjoys

the majority, and as such determines what happens. The House of Representatives on the other hand, has uneven distribution of federal constituencies. While Bayelsa boasts of a paltry number of five representatives, Kano and Lagos States on the other hand have 24 members representing them each, therefore, implying that a motion from a Bayelsa State Representative in the House of Representatives is bound to suffer if it does not go down well with his counterpart from Kano, because for every one vote from Bayelsa, there are about five votes waiting to counter it. In a similar manner, the Niger Delta States have merely 82 Representatives out of the 360 Representatives in the House of Representatives, and as such can do little in influencing the bills and motions that should trigger development in the delta, because the skewed federal system is already structured in favour of a part, and at the detriment of others.

A quick look at the availability of energy in the region reveals that despite having huge energy reserves, less than 10% of the region's energy need is met (Stakeholder Democracy Network, 2018), as most homes are left with the option of providing energy for themselves. This poverty of energy is responsible for a number of issues; for instance, it is responsible for the massive conversion of the region's forest into alternative energy (Felix & Akintola, 2014), as well as, unemployment and insecurity (SDN, 2018).

Showing how much of a parasite the Nigerian federal system is, the laws of Nigeria declares that the exploitation of natural resources from the soil is exclusive for the federal government, hence the Nigerian State confronts the Niger Delta people who are directly or indirectly involved in illegal refining of oil with the coercive force of State. However, that appears not to be the attitude of the State towards those involved in illegal mining of gold and other minerals found in Northern Nigeria. This unfortunate situation reveals the character of the Nigerian State in treating equals unequally.

To buttress this point, the Report of the South Commission (1993:11) stated that:

But a nation is its people. Development has, therefore, to be an effort of, by, and for the people. True development has to be people oriented. It has to be directed at the fulfilment of human potentials and the improvement of the social and economic wellbeing of the people. And it has to be designed to secure what

the people themselves perceive to be their social and economic interests. Its first objective must be to end poverty, provide productive employment and satisfy the basic needs of the people... this implies that basic goods and services such as food and shelter, basic education and health facilities and clean water must be accessible (Kalagbor, 2001:204).

A federal system that frustrates or stocks the development of any unit is parasitic. And this is the reality of Nigeria's federal arrangement, as the Niger Delta which is an important economic zone in the Nigerian State, particularly as it concerns oil and gas is starved of development. Whereas, oil and gas worth billions of dollars are being exploited from the Niger Delta soil, the Niger Delta people are relegated to poverty, environmental degradation and indeed conflict.

#### 4. Conclusion

Reviewing the extant laws of the Nigerian State is imperative in the face of the looming situation that has plagued the Niger Delta, because the principles of a truly federal State must be adopted to curb the situation whereby the State is a parasite towards itself (its parts). Furthermore, Nigeria's parasitic federal system is structured in such a way that development in the Niger Delta might only be a thing to be yearned for, yet almost impossible to achieve, because of the institutionalized anti-federalist manner in which the ship of State is steered. It is of essence that common laws be administered across the entire nation -State with the same level of commitments and not differently, however the case here has the Niger Delta at the receiving end. The Niger Delta has remained a paradox of what it ought not to be; it has become the den of cultism and insecurity, poverty and indeed, a terrorized environment. The State must therefore

rise up to addressing the valid issues arising from the Niger Delta struggle, because the Niger Delta has become a scar on the Nigerian State.

We recommend constitutional amendment, greater control of resources by the federating units and equity in power sharing equation.

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