

Federalism in Nigeria: Evolution, Development and Practice

Paul Saint Christopher and Osaro Obari

Department of Political and Administrative Studies, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Abstract: *Federalism is a political philosophy in which members of a group are bound together with a governing representative head. The term "federalism" is also used to describe a system of the government in which sovereignty is constitutionally divided between a central governing authority and constituent political units (like states or provinces). The Nigerian federal structural arrangement emerged from her colonization by the former, British Colonial Master, an imposition that eventually came up with a somewhat artificial geopolitical synthesis. Nigeria was put together as a country in 1914 as necessitated by some factors such as the size, cultural and traditional diversity, language, historical particularism as well as economic and political considerations that prevailed. The amalgamation of the colony and protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria, the seed of federalism, were not sowed until 1946, by the Richard constitution. It was this constitution that first divided the country into three major regions under the auspices of "Unitary Colonial State" that was already in place. This marked it as a turning point in the history of Nigerian legislature's unity in diversity towards interaction with one another among legislative councilors in 1947. However, the adoption of federalism in Nigeria was a compromise aimed to fairly distribute authority between the states and the national government. Although, in recent times, there have been growing disagreements and agitations for the Sovereign National Conference, where diverse people come together under one umbrella to discuss common problems affecting them with the intention of finding lasting solutions to the country's problems.*

Keywords: British colony, Nigerian amalgamation, Federalism, Legitimizing State Creation, Intergovernmental Relations

1 Introduction

Etymologically, Nigeria has undergone a long process of restructuring in terms of the number of geo-political administrative units constituting the polity especially when evaluated under the context of what was obtained before now. This process is popularly referred to as "state creation" and/or "reorganization" the process whereby new geo-political units/constituents known as "states" in most federations are created out of existing or old ones. The outcome of this process is usually an increase in the number of states constituting the Nigerian federation.

Therefore, the issue of state creation in Nigeria started as far back as 1963, when the Midwest was carved out of the former Western Region by the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa administration. In 1967 the country was further divided into 12 states by the administration of General Yakubu Gowon. This progressive increase in the number of territorial units continued in 1976 when the Murtala Administration created an additional 7 states, making the total of states 19. Between 1987 and 1991, General Babangida in two separate exercises, created 11 additional states, bringing the total up to 30. And in 1996, the Abacha administration created 6 more states to make the territorial units of the country 36.

Interestingly and in attempting to trace the history and politics of state creation in Nigeria, scholarly opinions vary widely, almost occasioning confusion, with particular reference to the timing of the first exercise. There is the convenient temptation, for example, to take the creation of the defunct Mid-Western Region in 1963 under the government of Alhaji Tafawa Balewa, as the first exercise. There has also been the attempt to tie the inception of state creation in Nigeria's political history to the country's constitutional development.

According to Yaqub (1997:186), for example, state creation in its most significant importance in Nigeria, is primarily a constitutional issue and this is so because of the nature of its entry into the country's political engineering. From this perspective, it would seem that state creation was concomitant to a series of constitutional developments beginning with the 1946 Richard's Constitution through the 1951 and 1954 Constitutions, which involved the creation of the Eastern, Northern, and Western Regions and culminated in the establishment of a federal Nigerian state in 1954 (Nicolson, 1967). In other words, the phenomenon of state creation and constitution making is believed to be co-eval. But this contention must run into problem on three grounds. One, there was a constitution (Lyttleton) before the 1946 Constitution. Two, the 1946 Constitution did not federalize. And three, at best, the period up to 1954, during which no creation or reorganization took place, should be regarded as a period of colonial structural consolidation, a period at which a definite Nigerian political form was yet to emerge. Moreover, all of the territorial gerrymandering at the time was mostly externally determined and mainly in colonial interest and for colonial convenience, not in response to indigenous agitation, even when such agitation was already a political fact in the middle belt, the Calabar, Ogoja and Rivers areas etc.

Up to 1963, all advocacies for multiplicity of constituent units by Dr Nnamdi Azikwe and Chief Obafemi Awolowo in their books, we referred to earlier in this study, had been ignored. The search for the origin of the phenomenon of state creation must therefore, of necessity, dig deeper than mere constitutional history. Thus, the thesis that this paper shall emphasize is the inherent and deep political nature of state creation exercises as well as the resultant politicization of ethnicity or the ethnicization of the politics of state creation that Nigeria has witnessed in recent years. Federalism is a political structure that allows states to unite under

a central government to maintain a measure of independence and interdependence. The reason behind is to create supreme authority centrally while the component states retain a considerable amount of semi autonomy. The Constitution created a federal system of government (federalism) as a compromise. Under this system, power is shared and divided between national and state governments. Both levels have their own agencies and officials that directly affect the people. This arrangement was carried out by the Nigerian founding fathers; at that time they had no other better choice than federalism. In Canada, federalism implies opposition to sovereignty's movements and the same is historically true in the United States. Advocates of a weaker federal government and stronger state governments are those that generally favor confederation nations.

However, In Europe, the word "federalist" is sometimes referred to as those who favor stronger federal government, at a national or supranational level. Furthermore, the term is also used to describe those who favor weaker provincial governments. In the federal nations of Europe, which include countries such as Brazil, Argentina, Australia, Germany, Switzerland among others, considered federalism as label situations where sub-national states may have more power than the national (federal) government; it does not imply a strong central government since membership is voluntary.

Although the word "federalism" is sandwiched in comparative politics, the paradigmatic conceptual analysis of the term boarder on different perspectives and particularly centers on its philosophical underpins in terms of appropriate terminology and classification. Attempts to study federalism constitute a part of comparative politics or political institutions since federalism is not only cross-national but a cross-cultural research. It has been noted by Ayode (1988) that federalism did not begin as a concept of social and political organization evolved by reflective philosophers; rather, it is a political ideology that signifies a division of governmental power between the national government and the constituent units which may well be a state, division, province, and region, among others. It was against this background that we can say federalism could be defined as a functional arrangement between states or more accurately between communities for living and working harmoniously together and preserving a measure of separate identity.

However, the history of federal system in Nigeria could be dated back to the period before the amalgamation in 1914. It was during that period that the nation was observed to have comprised many cultural groups which were in the colonial processes and later metamorphosed into the specie in the genus of multi-ethnic political and social communities called federalism. It was observed that during the British colonial era, the British colonial power deliberately imposed the federal system on Nigeria in order to maintain a post colonial control of the country after political independence. Nigeria was a large country comprising more than 400 ethnic groups combined differently to constitute the major pre-colonial political system. According to Nigerian historians and some political scientists, at that time were the stateless societies in the East, the Hausa state in the North and the centralized power Alafin in the former Oyo Empire in the West.

However, a major difference in the two political organizations was the existence of a formal checks and balances system inherent in the then Oyo Empire and all other kingdoms in the West compared to the caliphate and Emirate System of Administration in the North. While the Oyo Mesi constituted a powerful body to check the excesses of the King, the powerful Emirates in the north were governed absolutely, with only the fear of God as guiding principles as well as the restraining force. There were only very powerful chiefs, groups or individuals that could challenge the authoritarian Emirs. This implies or shows the existence of a small form of democracy and egalitarianism in the West. Furthermore, apart from political ambition, the realization and protection of groups' and individuals' rights and liberty were some of the reasons for the intra and inter-ethnic conflicts and wars particularly so among the Yoruba's. In view of the above statement, today, it pleases a Yoruba person, individual or group to advertise their different Associations and Struggles for Supremacy on the pages of the dailies.

In the Eastern part of Nigeria, generally there was no state organization. The Igbo society was regarded as stateless and the only form of political leadership in their domain appeared in a form of council of elders, where membership was chosen based on age consideration. This prescribed a higher form of democracy and egalitarianism. Attempts by the colonial administrations to create monarchical head similar to what obtained in the North and the West failed. The aim principally was to effect proper colonial administration in line with the policy of indirect rule and as well as system of tax collection; consequently, it led to the 1929 popular Aba Riot. Thus, traditional institutions, though now available in many shapes, were not significant parts of the culture of the Igbo prior to colonial rule. Therefore, these glaring differences in history, politics, culture and even geography were carried into amalgamation.

Similarly, apart from the differences in culture and orientation among the people of Lagos colony, the River protectorate and Niger territories, the different and sometimes conflicting systems of administration employed by the British to govern these areas were not always good and the conflicting issues involved boundary frictions. However, it was the boundary friction and other problems that made the British govern these areas by setting up the Lord Lugard committee to consider the future administration of Nigeria. It was due to the outcome of the report that led to the River protectorate and Niger territories to unite and form southern protectorate in 1900. While, the remaining part of the Niger (for example, Idah) was merged with part of the Northern Nigeria and was ruled by Fredrick Lugard. On the other hand, the south protectorate was ruled and exposed to executive and legislative councils with laid down laws, there was nothing of such in the Northern Nigeria. This became so as all powers were regulated by proclamations and there was no uniform policy for the two protectorates. These were some of the factors that enhanced indirect rule to succeed in the North. Early attempts at interaction between the North and South were resisted by the colonial masters.

The dynamic of federalism rests on a tripod as a legal fact as pointed out by Ogbu, (1996) that as a legal fact, political force and social fact are quite often the turmoil of the socio-political aspect that determines the legal structuring, while the rule of law becomes a guide and socio cultural aspect that has been so strong that politics of federalism is constantly reeling from one crisis to another. He further concluded that the deep rooted problem of federalism in Nigeria is the issue of legitimacy; ethnic loyalties run deeper than national loyalty, leaving the central authority bereft of sustainable legitimacy. As a result, it created a certain irony thereby resulted into nation state, became autonomous force in its growth and also assumed absolute autonomous role making as well as making it an end in itself, exercising an unrestrained power, sovereignty over all domains of life.

2 Conceptual Analysis of Federalism

Nigerian federalism began as a concept of social and political organization evolved by reflective philosophers and political scientists. It is a political ideology that signifies a division of governmental powers between the national government and the constituent units which may well be states of provinces and or regions, as pointed out by Ayode (1988). 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.

While Frederick (2008) believed that federalism is a process, it is not so institutional or a design. He argues that any particular design or pattern of competencies or jurisdiction is merely a phase, a short run view of continually evolving political reality. To him, therefore, if so understood as the process of federalism, it will become apparent that federalism may be operating in both the direction of integration and differentiation. Consequently, federalism should be seen as a process by which unity and diversity are politically organized and these processes include political phenomena, persons, ideas and institutions put differently. This means we understood federalism as general principles of social organization and that the degree of federalism resides in a political system.

In comparison, however, many people do not acceptably define the characteristics of federalism because those existing federal systems do not all embody these criteria and where they do, there are identifiable variations from one federal system to another. For example, it is difficult to classify Switzerland and Canada as federal states but as quasi federal. Besides, there are unitary systems of government where we find some of these institutional attributes. The parliament of United Kingdom is bi-camera. On the other hand, it must however be noted that legislative or institutional approach is not relevant, but within the frame-work provided by a federal arrangement with particular reference to its division or governmental powers, that the federal instruments take to its meaning and significance. Indeed, what the process view successfully adds to our understanding is that it sensitizes us to the dynamic or changing and evolving nature of the federal balance of power and to the fact that inter-governmental cooperation usually cuts across the formal constitutional division of power.

In line with the above, Livingstone (2006) concluded that: The essence of federalism lies not in the institutional or constitutional structure but in the society itself. Federal government is a device by which the federal qualities of the society are articulated and protected. 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.

However, we should not doubt the utility of notion of social diversity as a tool for federating. It was against this development that Livingstone further observed that federalism is not an absolute but a relative term; there is no specific point at which a society ceases to be unified and becomes diversified. The differences are of degree rather than of kind. All countries fall somewhere in a spectrum. One may also note the explanation by Fredrick (2008), that federalism seems the most suitable term by which to designate the process of federalizing a political community. This is to say an order by which a number of separated political organization, be they states or any kind of association enter into agreement or arrangements for working out solutions, adopting joint policies and making decision on joint problems. For example, in the US, it may be a process through which a hitherto unitary political community

becomes differentiated into a number of separate and diverse political community, achieves a new organization in which the differentiated communities now separately organized become capable of working out separately and on their own, those problems may have in common.

In view of the above explanation, we can clearly and categorically see that federalism is a process of aggregation or disintegration. In conclusion, it is drawn as a temporary device holding together units that eventually stay together to aggregate or falls apart disaggregate. Since aggregative federation is one in which previously sovereign states come together in a federation. This situation may arise as a result of external threat or its feelings or for the need of economic viability to redraw colonial boundaries. While disintegration means federations which are also called centrifugal federation grow out of the balkanization or division of a formerly unitary states and this may also be diversified due to size, culture, linguistic and, above all, historical background reaches a level that is in the interest of the continuance of the constituent units.

3 Historical Antecedence of Federalism in Nigeria

The evolution and development of Nigerian federalism could be dated backed to the period of pre-colonial era. According to some political scientists, sociologists and historians, the available literatures show that there were other reasons as pointed out by Erim, O E. (1996) that “the logic of British interest in colonial Nigeria favored a strategy of divide and rule. A strategy, which, he observed, in which the British officers stationed in different parts of Nigeria corroborated and the Nigerian’s primordial features of the indigenous society which the British conquered each kingdom, state, empire, republic, separately and negotiated separate treaties with each made a federal or confederal arrangement inevitable. While each of these has shaped the political history and future of Nigeria as a federal state.

This means that those that were sympathetic to the cause of Nigerian nationalism maintained that it was for the purpose of administrative convenience that the British colonial administration attempted to administer Nigeria based on federal structure so as to protect their interest as well as save cost and problems of personnel. The other reason was to ensure that, if there was any emergence and advocacy for new states, such would forever remain weak, unstable, unrealizable or unachievable. Furthermore, Erim, O.E. (1996) concluded that it was clearly revealed that the British had no long term political programme, and therefore matters were attended based on adhoc manner. In view of this, the British had never faced up with the problems of political unification of the country they had created rather they assumed it somehow it would solve itself with time by a process of natural evolution.

The emergence of Nigeria as a federal system of government came after independence as pointed out by Samuel (2009) that the debate on the source of authority of how Nigeria arrived at a different view of the constitution and of federation. In the analysis, the separated protectorates such as Lagos, defunct southern and northern protectorates became one and independent polity thereafter was entered into agreement to have a general government for certain limited purpose where justification have been deduced for succession, interpositions and state rights. According to Samuel (2009), men who conceived the original design of American federalism worked from the premises of the national theory. The American federalism presupposes their nationalism. The constituent power was one people (the nation). The idea by which a nation would act not only the constituent power but also as to continue controlling and directing the influence in the political life of its citizenry through representation. This postulation had preoccupied the energies of the long struggle and continued to be central to the shaping of the federal structure.

It was against this development that Humphrey N. (1977) posit that: It is neither false nor an exaggeration to postulate that the critical problem of political development in Nigeria lies not in the absence of political authority, but in the existence of several legitimated authorities in the wider society which inhibit the exercise of national political authority. The situation remained like this until 1914, when Lord Lugard succeeded in effecting unification of the southern and northern protectorates now called Nigeria. Some of the reasons that informed the amalgamation were, among others, not only the needed financial assistance from the south and the British to the North but also the intention of granting the south the administrative features that were lacking but were so much perfected in the North. However, beyond the reasons for the unification was the intention of granting the southern Nigeria the administrative features that had since been perfected by the North.

According to Okafor (1981), Lugard only had very little experience limited to the north from 1900-1912; Nigeria-south and North drastically changed administrative style and purpose. Furthermore, he also stated and observed disapprovingly that the educated Elite observed since the arrival of Lugard in Nigeria in 1912; Lugard made it categorically clear that the social and political situation in Nigeria must be made to confirm to northern Nigeria interest. Nigeria was divided into three areas, which were the colony and the northern and southern provinces. This would have been an excellent arrangement if the principle was also laid down that each division shall be autonomous (free). Furthermore, each area shall have within it a perfect machine for effective government, subject nevertheless to a central control. Therefore, this central authority should have the power of dealing with matters peculiar to each. This would have thereby become a federate state in which the governor-general would be, as it were.

After the unification in 1914, the new Nigerian state and the issue of its continuous survival dominated the constitutional evaluation of Nigeria beginning with Clifford's attempt to change the system he inherited, which made administrative and political departments to remain separate. As a result, there were growing conflicts due to differences in tradition, character and orientation. It was in response to this that: The late sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto in his book entitled “My Life” opined that the 1914 amalgamation of Southern and Northern Nigeria was a mistake and that the north could have been allowed to go on their own way.

In spite of this, Clifford still attempted to unify the country through destroying the myth of separate development of the North and South which was resisted by the British colonial officers. After a new change of leadership in 1943, Sir Arthur Richard took over the leadership of Nigeria as Governor General and divided the country into three regions in a federation without necessarily calling it a federation. However, it was in response to this arrangement that Chief Obafemi Awolowo observed and stated that: Nigeria is not a nation; it is a mere geographical expression. There are no Nigerians in the same sense as there English, Portuguese or French; the word Nigeria is merely a descriptive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not.

According to Awolowo, for the sake of smooth and speedy progress, steps must be taken then to develop the various ethnical groups in the country along this line. He therefore subscribed to the creation of as many provinces as there are ethnic groups, with each being independent and autonomous in regard to its internal affairs and each must have its own regional house of assembly. In line what Obafemi Awolowo said, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa concluded that Nigeria existed as a country only on paper as it was still far away from being united. Nigeria was only a British intention for the country. Similarly, Namdi Azikiwe also advocated for the same form of federalism.

To this end, by 1947 to 1955, a federal constitution was adopted in Nigeria and took over the mantle of leadership from the colonial masters, thus continuing the struggle between North/South for separate development as well as control of resources in the centre. In view of this, the political battle between such till today is yet to be resolved and currently costing the country political instability as directly responsible for the setting up of present National Constitutional Conference which has been agitated for by some quotas.

4 Federalism and Emergence of States

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 meager 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 who came to power through coup. Another instruments of legitimizing the state is through diversifying the right of kings as mode operandi 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".

This is a direct appeal to harsh physical reality and to the logic of the battle field. In fact, whoever has the authority to rule (to take over government) also legitimately has power to rule. For example, the attempt to seize power in proper perspectives is in any way a claim to counter human rights in a system which, in the first place, was created by force. Similarly, there is also social doctrine called social contract theory popularly Husbberian human nature that is so brutal and aggressive. According to John (2009), because men are rational, they cannot be trusted to pursue their self-interest without infringing on the equal rights enjoyed by their fellow citizens. Therefore, because this is inherent rationally, citizens can therefore be trusted to judge the legitimacy of governments they legislate, administer as well as adjudicate the state laws. Although, in Nigeria, there is assumable freedom to associate and organize based on the social conventions whereby people are expected to obey government laws and respect citizen's right. Furthermore, government is to provide security of lives and property. In return, they should forfeit their freedom and right. However, when government fails in her responsibilities, due to self-interest, people would react as currently obtained as pointed (Ake, 1980).

5 Relationship between the three Tiers of Governments in Nigeria

The concept of intergovernmental relations has been misunderstood by many scholars and researchers alike. Some people have tended to understand intergovernmental relations as the relationship between two sovereign nations. Whereas this conceptualization may not be completely wrong, especially at global analysis of the government, it tends to paint a nebulous picture of the scope of the subject matter by creating an impression that intergovernmental relations relate purely with international reactions or matters. The political reality of Nigeria is that there are many cultural groups which were in the colonial process, but later welded into a nation state. It was first called amalgamation by those who performed the feat. Later it metamorphosed into specie in the genus of political communities known as federalism, as observed by Ogbu (1996). The Nigerian federal system allows people living in the six geopolitical zones or states with different needs and different interests to set policies suited to the people in their state, yet still come together with other states as one nation.

5 State Creation and National unity and Integration in Nigeria

Another reason usually advanced for creation of state is political integration or unity among the various groups within the country. The argument is that, for the nation to survive there should be a federation with a strong centre. The logic here is that, if the centre is weak and its constituent units very strong, there may arise secession threats to the federal arrangement. This perhaps was the reason behind the reorganization of 1967 carried out by the Gowon administration, breaking the existing four regions into twelve to weaken the Eastern Region that attempted to secede from the Nigerian Federation.

Supporting this thesis, Oyovbaire (1985: 23) observes that the twelve-state structure would provide each state with an environment of competition and cooperation on more equal terms with the eleven other partners of the federation. This argument was also advanced by Panter-Brick (1980: 117-137) who posited that "the process of bringing government nearer to the people" would ensure that states would have direct access to resources, thereby lessening the contentiousness of resource allocation and the intensity of hostility among the various ethnic sub-nationalities. The argument that multiplicity of states may bring about integration may not be valid after all, as proliferation of states may result in disintegration rather than aggregation. It could even lead to ethnic particularism, as creation of more states, especially based on ethnicity, could engender further demands for state creation. And as long as states are created based on expression of ethnic sentiments, attachment to primordial sentiments will be continually rewarded and reinforced with dangerous portents for the integration and unity of the country.

Arguing from the angle of the "demilitarization and democratization" projects of the past military regimes, Adejumbi (2000: 12) observes that often times, some structural adjustments are made in the federal structure of the country through the creation of new states and local governments out of the existing ones. Adejumbi (2000, 12) describes this development as "apparent contradictions in the focus and process of the demilitarized project and the demand for democratization". From the political economy point of view, it is generally believed that agitation for creation of states has become "a veritable source of socioeconomic opportunities and political patronage for sectional elites and communities" (Suberu, 1994: 67-82) and Gana (1987: 12-23) are of the view that behind most of the agitation for creation of additional states, "looms largely (sic) class interests of ethnic warlords who wish to transform into effective competitors" in order to expand their material base.

The struggle over creation of states in Nigeria can also be discussed and analyzed within the conceptual scaffold of Joseph's (1983: 3; 1987; 1997: 90). *Prebendal politics* According to him, *Prebendalism* refers to patterns of political behaviour which rationalizes the belief that the state institutions and offices are the structures to be competed for and subsequently captured used for personal benefits of the occupants and those of their communal groups. This notion re-echoed in Reno's (1998:67) comment that "corruption in Nigeria is widely linked to the close association of elite networks and official's use of office for private gain." Or how do we explain the stupendous wealth of public officials or political appointees who before their appointments were poor? Also, the communal group whose member exploited public office for personal gain is always ready to defend, protect, and support such member in the event that such person was caught and sanctioned. Two vivid examples are illustrative here. One is Chief Alamesiegha, the impeached and convicted governor of oil-rich Bayelsa state and the other, Chief James Onanefe Ibori, the erstwhile governor of Delta state. Both, members of Nigerian elite from the Niger-Delta region of the country enjoyed massive and high degree of support from their communal groups when they were to be arrested. This is conceptually captured in Ekeh's (1975, 91-122) seminal work, "Two Publics." To him, individuals in Africa and Nigeria in particular, function within two diametrically opposed publics namely *primordial and civil*. Operationalizing the concept, Ekeh ascribes societal morality and privacy to the primordial public while the civil public is characterized by amorality and does not operate within good behaviour or good conduct. To this extent, public offices are seen as a means of perpetrating egoistic graft and solidaristic consolidation.

The entire scenario we have been describing above is captured in Joseph's observation. To him, the grid of Nigerian political society is an intricate and ever expanding network of patron-client ties. Expatiating on this, he avers that the clientelistic networks link individuals at different levels while the exchange of various kinds of patronage, assistance, support and loyalty is crucial and central to the relationship. To this extent, clientelistic relations promote ethnic clustering as individuals provide the conduit for transmission of resources from their own patrons downwards while ensuring in return, the support of a reliable base or constituency. While the state institutions have failed in their roles as impartial and nonpartisan arbiter in the process of authoritative allocation and distribution of state resources, competition for access to national resources in the country has always taken place predominantly between ethnically defined constituencies just as these institutions are hijacked by the elite for personal gains (Joseph, 1997).

The Nigerian political system has the reputation of throwing up corrupt leaders who presided over her politics and economy from independence up till now. A longitudinal survey and analysis of the political economy of the country would reveal a pattern, a pattern of elite struggle for state resources through the manipulation of state institutions for primitive accumulation and using same to protect such loots. Reno's observation is both illuminating and illustrative here. Commenting on the Babangida administration's ploy to widen distribution of national resources and patronage as a strategy for regime legitimacy and perpetuation through the state reorganization exercise of 1991, Reno (1998: 67) posits that; Babangida's creation of nine new states increases the number of entry points for elite desiring access to privatizations and government export promotion programs as well as traditional opportunities to provide contract services to state agencies...against official rhetoric...portraying state creation as an effort to make regional government more accessible to all Nigerians.

Consequent upon the above, it is doubtful if a strong, viable and sustainable private sector-driven economy can emerge in the country, outside the public sector, in the face of the preponderance of state institutions in its political economy. In essence, public offices in the country have been turned to factors and means of production. "class of Nigerians has been the principal beneficiary of the proliferation of states (Reno, 1998: 67). Viewed from a comparative perspective, Nigeria's state creation experiences have been quite dramatic. In the first place, unlike in most other federations where reorganizations of state boundaries have usually been followed by a period of fairly stable consensus on the state structure (Dean, 1986), Nigeria's state creation exercises have tended to be cyclical and self-perpetuating, with each reorganization merely provoking pressures for further reforms (Suberu, 1995).

Secondly, while new states in most of the classical federations have emerged largely from the incorporation of external units to an initial core (Daniel, 1989), the Nigerian states evolved through a strategy of internal fragmentation or deflation, rather than through a process of outward expansion or aggregation (Suberu, 1999: 57-58). Regrettably, however, the Nigeria situation is such a system without in-built mechanisms for redressing historic wrongs and ensuring fairness without recourse to organized divisions and deliberate bouts of pulling apart. Undoubtedly, it was elite selfishness, and not national interest, which has propelled the state creation movement till this decade (Suberu, 1999: 58). Nevertheless, as earlier enunciated, the initial historical rationale for the movement for new states in Nigeria involved the quest by ethnic minority groups for autonomy from the regional stranglehold of the majority ethnic formations. The minorities' quest for "statehood" status did not, however, receive a sympathetic consideration or endorsement from the Sir Henry Willink Commission established in 1957 to inquire into the alleged fears of minorities and the means of allaying them. Rather, the commission argued that the grievances of the minorities could be redressed through administrative changes, greater federal and regional attention to the needs of depressed areas and entrenched guarantees of fundamental human rights (Willink, 1957).

6 Conclusion

In conclusion therefore, the history of federal system in Nigeria was traced back to the period before the amalgamation in 1914. It was during that time that the nation was deemed to be full of many cultural groups which were in the colonial processes and later metamorphosed into the specie in the genus of multi-ethnic political and social communities called federalism. It was observed that during the British colonial era, the British colonial power deliberately imposed the federal system in Nigeria in order to maintain a post-colonial control of the country after political independence. The Nigerian federal structural political arrangement emerged out of her colonization by the British colonial Master which put Nigeria together as a country in 1914, a move that was necessitated by some factors such as the size, cultural and traditional diversity, language, historical particularism as well as economic and political considerations that prevailed at that time. As a result, the 1947 Richard Constitution that created three regions which the Nigerian federal system of government (federalism) later adopted as a compromise. Under this system, power was shared and divided between the national and state governments developed.

References

- Adebayo, M. O. (2003). *Structure and Conflict in Nigeria 2000-2008*. Heinemann
- Attahiru, M. J. (1996). *The political Economy of Nigerian Federalism: Foundation of Nigerian Federalism 1960-1995*; Vol. 3 National Council on Intergovernmental Relations Abuja
- Ayoade, J. A. A. (1996). *The changing structure of Nigerian federalism: Foundation of Nigerian Federalism 1960-1995*; Vol. 3 National Council on Intergovernmental Relations Abuja
- Ayode, J. A. A. (1988). *Federalism in Nigeria: The Problem with the Solution*. Heinemann
- Bamidele, S. A. (1980). *Federal State Relationship: The Nigerian Intergovernmental System*. What should be *Journal of Administration* Vol. XIV.No.2
- Claude, A. (1985). *Political Economy for Africa*; London: Longman
- Daniel, E. T. (n.d.). *The land of Federalism; Theory and Practice*: Praeger Publishing House. New York
- Dele, M. O. (2009). *Pluralism in Nigeria: The way forward*. Heinemann, Ibadan
- Dele, O.; Bamidele, A. (1996). *The Machinery for intergovernmental cooperation in Nigeria: Foundation of Nigerian Federalism 1960-1995*; vol 3 National Council on Intergovernmental Relations Abuja
- Fredrick, C. (2008) *Federalism is a process: Trends of Federalism; A Theory of Federal Political Arrangement*. Public Education Paper No.7 Centre for the Study of Federalism in Canada

- Hamza, Y. (2009). *The State in Post-Colonial Societies*: Ibadan University Press. Lagos <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federalism>. Retrieved 12/05/2014 Ibadan
- James, O. A. (1993). *The Federal Solution*: Political Studies Vol. 3. 1993
- John, S. (2006). *The Unsteady State: Review of African Political Economy*. Heinemann Ibadan
- Kenneth, W. (2003). *Federal Government*: New York. Oxford University Press
- Livingston, D. M. (2006). *The Advantages of Federalism*: Political Studies Quarterly Vol. 10. January
- Obafemi, A. (1947). *Path to Nigerian Freedom*: London. Faser and Faber
- Ogbu, U. K. (1996). *Federalism, State and Religion: Foundation of Nigerian Federalism 1960- 1995*; Vol. 3 National Council on Intergovernmental Relations Abuja Review Vol. 88.
- Samuel, B. (2008). *Imperialism and Democracy in America: The American Political Science*