Federalism, Integration and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper set out to examine the issue of federalism, integration and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The design for the study was the descriptive analytical tool of analysis. The study reveals that the problem of plurality or heterogeneity is not peculiar with Nigeria. That USA, USSR, China, India, etc also have similar problems. However, while nations like India and China have turned their diversity into homogeneity, the same is not the case in Nigeria. Findings reveal that federalism rather than strengthen integrative processes in Nigeria have rather emphasized high level centralization. The study also reveals that despite myriads of conceptualization of integration no clear indication of what the end product would look like and how one could recognize an integrated polity. What is seen is a state of conceptual confusion in the field. Despite the short-comings noticed in the conceptualization of both federalism and integration, federalism is still reputed to be an effective political cum constitutional design for managing governmental problems usually associated with ethnic and cultural diversity. The study concludes that despite the problem facing Nigeria's federalism, the country is still regarded as a pioneer in the practice of federalism and in the use of power-sharing mechanisms and practices. The study recommend that Nigeria needs to find a solution to the country's crises of unity in fiscal federalism, political restructuring and democratic consolidation. Adopt different philosophy entirely that will guarantee group rights and the acceptance of the heterogeneity of the nation.

Keywords: Federalism, Integration, Democracy, Consolidation, Centralization and Decentralization.

Introduction

Fifty years after 'flag independence', the country (Nigeria) still totters on as a toddler, often pulled down by joint identity and integration crisis. To many, Nigeria's federalism has remained fragile with all signs of impossibility. Many have attributed this development largely due to the successive administration's aversion towards adhering strictly to the concept of true federalism, which ensures equity, fairness and good governance. The country, apart from the foregoing is assailed by a curious and depressing distribution crisis triggered most often by a dubious and unacceptable formula for the sharing of somehow real and somehow elusive national wealth which others prefer to regard it as the "national cake" (Ojo, 2009:6).

Nigeria has over the years witnessed friction and tension among the over 250 ethnic nationalities. As argued by Oladesu (2002:14), the cultivation of national outlook by many has inadvertently given way to a continued lukewarm attitude towards nation-building by the frustrated groups within Nigeria, whose emotions are stirred by the clandestine tribal organizations coordinating the rush in the hot race for relevance within the nation's political and socio-economic equation.

The problematic of all these ensuing drama is that from independence 1960 to the beginning of the Civil War on July 1, 1967, Nigeria had witnessed a low degree of national cohesion. Its diverse ethnic nationalities, to this low level of integration have decided to look inwards to themselves for political succor and survival in an incoherent polity. The Niger-Delta crisis and the recent insecurity facing the country especially the one masterminded by the Boko-Haram activities in parts of the Northern Nigeria are all forms of expression of anger, frustration and incoherent nature of the political integration of Nigeria which is further being undermined by the lack of meaningful and accepted symbols of common heritage and common historical past which could have bound the diverse ethnic nationalities together.

No wonder, everyone would have thought that federalism would be the bedrock of democratic consolidation for a country of Nigeria's size and bewildering diversities. But unlike India, which is also a federal state which has been rightly described as a land of "million mutinies" (Roy, 2002:2), Nigeria is a deeply divided and plural society (Ojo, 2009:384). The polity as it is known to have many ethnic nationalities, which scholars have variously put at different figures (Kirk-Green, 1969:4; Attah, 1987: 309-401; Otite, 1990: 175-185, Suberu, 1993:39, 1998:227). 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 in contemporary Africa.

As recalled by Onwujeogwu (1987; 1995:60-67), at the beginning of the 1960s, there were about 3,000 ethnic groups (tribes) in the world. Of this number, about 1,000 ethnic groups were said to represent the geographical space called Africa and about 445 were represented in the geographical space called Nigeria. Former USSR had about 127 ethnic nationalities in its geographical space; China and India each had more than 40 ethnic nationalities. The USA had less than 50 excluding the Red Indians; England had 4; France 7 and Germany about 15 (Nwajeogwu, 1995; 67).

In that wise, Nigeriacan be said to have a unique problem not experienced by any state in the world past or present. The problem is that of achieving solidarity in action and purpose in the midst of hundreds of ethnic nationalities and exerting both centrifugal and centripetal forces that are always brought to bear on the nation (Ojo, 2002:4-5). This unique nature of the NigerianState has created a "unique problem unknown to the experience of other people in the world…" No Western or Eastern Civilization has ever evolved a political system that can cope with this gigantic problem of hyper-ethnic instability syndrome (Onwujeagwu, 1995: 76).

It is not surprising therefore that the ethnic nationalities are not always in conflict emanating from competition for the scarce resources that abounds within the NigerianState. Indeed, this is not unexpected especially between and among "ethnically defined constituencies" (William, 1980:69). The reason is that, almost every ethnic nationality is always in keen competition for the strategic resources of their respective societies. This is so because ethnic nationalities are socio-cultural entities who 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).

Groups with more effective tactics and strategies normally gain competitive advantage over other groups within their societies (Fried, 1967:71-72). Yet, this process is not without its liability (Elliot, 1975:13). But as argued by Ojo (2009:384), national cohesion is more of a mirage in plural and divided societies than in homogenous ones. It is in recognition of the foregoing that Weiner (Ogunojenite, 1987: 224) avers that, "developing nations' central problem that is often more pressing than economic development is the achievement of integration".

It was in an attempt to weld together her disparate ethno-religious and linguistic entities that Nigeria opted for federalism practice in 1954 (Ojo, 2002:4). The assumption then was that, federalism is "a half-way house between separate independent states and unification" (Beloff, 1958:131). Federalism is a process of seeking unity, without uniformity. More so, where size, cultural and linguistic diversity, historical particularism and considerable decentralization prevails as in the case of Nigeria. However, since 1954, when the foundation for federalism was laid in Nigeria, the system is still convoluting. Nigeria's ethnic make-up still remains what Funival (1948:304), calls "in the strictest sense as medley of people, for they mix but do not combine".

As succinctly argued by Joseph (1991:32-33), despite all these efforts, Nigeria's project still remains questionable after several years of federal practice. It is in recognition of the foregoing that Odion-Akhaine (2002:26) opines that;

> *Nigerians have no common vision of a nation-state called Nigeria, no sense of citizenship. The name and the football team are about the only things that unite them. Even the footballers however, brilliant individual players though they are, do not work as a team. It is the same with the country.*

The above overview of national cohesion, equity and fairness in Nigeria, it is averred that Nigeria needs a true arrangement based on different philosophy rather than the present warped union where there is too much power and resources concentration at the centre.

Conceptual Clarification

The Concept of Federalism

Federalism like any other social science concept defiles precision in terms of definition due to myriads of scholars. In his work on federalism, Wheare (1964:10) states that "by the Federal Principle, I mean the method of dividing powers so that the federal and regional governments are each within, a sphere, coordinate and independent". Wheare's position regarding federalism from the African experience which he might have viewed as been ideal form of federalism, holds that "although the different units within a single national sovereign structure are independent (been themselves intra-sovereign units) are coordinated in one another (Cox, 1970: 317).

Thus, it may be stated categorically that a federal system of government is the coming together of independent or autonomous states (countries) who by agreement, want to stay together as a nation-state. In this coming together, Tingir (2009:2) avers that, power is shared among the central and other tiers.

It may also be defined as an association of independent states that will fully come together to form a country, it may be autonomous independent kingdom, empires and states which exist in one geographical environment forcefully coerced into nation-state such as Nigeria and most other colonial countries of the world.According to Elaigwu (2005:6), federalism is essentially a compromise solution in a multi-national government which guarantees security for all in the nation-state on one hand and the self-determination of component groups to return their individual identities on the other. Freiderich (1968) cited in Elaigwu (2005:6), had earlier on buttressed this view point in a simple manner when he said, "federalism emanates from the desire of people to form a federal union without necessarily losing their identity".

In this way, we can say that federalism is an attempt to reflect the diverse political, social, cultural and economic interest within the broader framework of unity. It therefore attempts to satisfy "the need" for cooperation in some things coupled with right to separate action in orders (Ramphal, 1979: xiii-xv). What we have gained from this definition is that, it is only a federal system of government that satisfies the desire for unity where it goes hand in hand without tempering with and destroying the identity of others. Federalism in its strictest sense de-emphasizes concentration or centralization of people but rather emphasizes deconcentralization or decentralization. Every constituent part has its power and functions clearly spelt out in the constitution.

It is in the realization of the foregoing that Wheare (1964: 12) posit that, "the method of sharing power is such that the central and the regional government are each within the sphere coordinate and independent. In these circumstances, there is more emphasis on inter-dependence among component federal units with lesser autonomy for sub-national tiers" (Tingir, 2009:2). In view of the foregoing, Watts (1970:18) informs that, what distinguishes federalism from a unitary government is that in a unitary government, states subordinate themselves to the central government.

It also differs from confederacy in which the central government is legally subordinated to the state government. Suffice here to state that, in a federal system of government, the structure and their concomitant functions and authority show dual legal sovereignty in areas of jurisdiction between the federal and the sub-national political units. In reality therefore, there is no country in the world that is with the entire federal consensus among scholars; federal systems vary from one country to another. In this way, Elaigwu, (2005:6) opined that, a specific political colour that federal system possess is based on its "political, cultural, social, and economic and the disposition of its people at a particular time".

Federalism as most people argues, was not adopted for Nigeria as a way of realizing the ideal of the model of government but it was adopted to solve some political problems which came up towards the end of the colonial rule in Nigeria. In fact, federalism as a form of government in Nigeria was the result of the social forces at work within the country itself. In the same way, the creation of sub-national units gave rise to the centrifugal and centripetal forces which were at play in Nigeria. In this way, it may be right to say that, the creation of additional regions and the adoption of federalism are all by-products of the same source - colonial rule (Tingir, 2009:3).

The fear of domination of one ethnic group over the other in the competition for the scarce resources was what gave rise to all the forces at play in the post-colonial Nigeria. As Coleman (1959) highlighted before, just as Nigeria was a creation of British colonialism, so also is its problem of disunity, which come about as a result of the amalgamation of 1914. By 1900, the country now called Nigeria was made up of three separate entities all administered by the British colonial regime.

However, these territories were ruled separately, all of them taking orders directly from the Secretary of State for the colonies in London. These colonies were known as Lagos Colony, the Southern and Northern Protectorates.

The Concept of Integration

Like federalism, the literature on integration is replate with different definitions of the term as there are different scholars. According to Morrison et al, (1972:385) integration 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 overtime and the boundaries of sub-system becomes less consequential in affecting behaviour. In this process, members of the social system develop an escalating sequence of contact, cooperation, consensus and community.*

In a similar vein, Duverger (1976:177) defines it as "the process of unifying a society which tends to make it harmonious city, based upon an order its members regard as equitably harmonious". On his part, Jacob and Tenue (1964:9) before now, argues that integration 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 programme". The most remarkable feature of these definitions is the use of the term process. It is on that basis that Ake (1967:3) also implies the word "process" in his definition of an integrated political system thus:

> *To the extent that the minimal units (individual political actors) develop in the course of political interaction a pool of commonly accepted norms regarding political behaviour patterns legitimized by these norms.*

All the above views of integration emphasize process and cooperation as the bedrock of integration. However, Coleman and Rosberg (1964:9) looked at it as "the progressive reduction of cultural and regional tensions and discontinuation in the process of creating a homogenous political community. For Binder (1964: 630), integration involves the creation of a very high degree of comprehensiveness. In talking about a community being cohesive, Etzioni (1965:4) argues that a community is said to be cohesive when;

> *a) It has effective control over the use of the means of violence b) It has a centre of decision making capable of effecting the allocation of resources and rewards c) It is a dominant focus of political identification for a large majority of politically aware citizens.*

As comprehensive as Etzioni's conceptualization is, Weiner (1976:180-182) has gone further to distinguish five different senses in which the term integration can be used thus; territorial, rational, elite mass, value and behaviour.

Be that as it may, these conceptualizations of integration gives no clear indication of what the end product would look like and how one could recognize an integrated polity. How much cohesion and which commonly accepted norms of integration denote an integrated political or social unit? How an observer would identify integration or is it dependent on some other manifestations (such as conflict) to demonstrate a lack of integration? And what institutional form will an integrated unit take? Would it be a centralized organizational entity with free sovereignty or would it be a loosely federal unit?

To offer a better explanation to the above posers by Stephanie Neuman (1967:1), Deutsch (1966:2) had offered a better definition as "the attainment, within a territory of a sense of community and of institutions and practices strong enough and widespread enough to assume for a long time, dependable expectations of peaceful community". Put differently, a security community is a group of people who are integrated. It is on the basis of the foregoing that Deutsch et al (1966) posits that, a "sense of community is a belief on the part of individuals in a group that they have come to agreement on at least one point, that common social problems must and can be resolved through processes of social change. Peaceful change in this context means the resolution of social problems without resort to large scale physical force".

Deriving from the foregoing,it is accurately right to reveal that obvious disparities among definitions of integration illustrate the state of conceptual confusion in the field. Although as noted by Ojo (2009:386), the term 'national cohesion' may be defined in an endless number of ways without violating the standards for scientific investigation, but failure to agree on the common concept of what integration or cohesion connotes makes useful comparison and theory building very difficult. In this wise, it is not the question of rightness or otherwise of a definition but rather a matter of agreeing on a set of sharply defined concepts and submitting them to rigorous testing.

Therefore, in spite of a general inability of integration theorists to clearly define the dependent and independent variables within the framework of integration problematic, most writers concerned with the concept of nation-building in developing countries continue to use the term as though it were a generally understood concept but despite all the wishful thinking on the part of many scholars/researchers, the term remains vague in meaning, what the field has are various definitions that are incomplete or inapplicable and for the most part are at variance with each other. Thus, little purpose would be served on expanding the typology further. However, be that as it may, this writer's conception of national integration is a plural society where component parts are reasonably contended in the polity vis-à-vis equity and justice in resource allocation cum access to equal opportunities.

Theoretical Perspective on Federalism and Integration

Federalism as a way of explaining inter-group relations or plural society is seen as an effective way of achieving and preserving both integration and stability in deeply divided societies. Osaghae (1998:1) reveals that, whenever events seem to demand that comprise be effected between the necessity for unity and cooperation on a wide territorial basis on the 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 and management formula such as federalism". This tendency to see federalism as a magic formula that can channel irreconcilable inter-ethnic hostility into conciliation and federal cooperation was subscribed to by Carnell (1961). He observed that "in tropical areas characterized by extreme cultural and ethnic diversity… federalism comes as something of a panacea". Arguing in a similar vein, Duchacek (1970:255) posits that;

> *The dialect and disparity between the geographical confines of territorial states on the one hand and the boundaries of ethno-territorial communities on the other hand, 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 because as Mazrui point out; federalism is "an institutionalization of compromise relationships.*

According to Mazrui (1971:300) federalism is not only democratic, it is also complete with the institutionalization of most essential ingredients; it is also creative and flexible enough to incorporate several accommodation formulas. In short, it is considered the most appropriate framework for governing multi-ethnic societies. According to Marc and Herand (Glazer, 1997:71), "federalism and ethnicity form a solidarity complex". In fact, it is a known fact that federations today, including those which have been formally abrogated with their federal constitutions like those of Cameroon and Uganda are all multi-ethnic. Glazer further contend that "to couple federalism and ethnicity immediately suggest one similar solution which deals with the problem of a state containing a number of ethnic groups varying in language, culture and religion. He concludes that, ethnic boundaries are a necessary condition for federalism (Glazer, 1997:73).

In his argument, Enloe (1997:146) holds that, "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". The foregoing explains the reason for the arguments that in Nigeria, federalism offered the best option to accommodate the ethno-linguistic and religious diversities, which where for the most part, geographically distributed. An example like this among several other third world countries led Macmalm (Osaghae, 1984:150-152) to conclude that "federalism is a means, in countries where diversity is pronounced of accommodating government to the consent of the governed".

Without mixing word, federalism accommodates diversities while attempting unity in diversity. But as Duchacek (1977:133) rightly puts it, the aim of a federal constitution "is for an institutionalized balance between national unity and sub-national diversity". To this extent, federalism is seen as cure for micro-nationalism (Sawer, 1969:570). In his vivid illustration of federalism, Wheare (1967:35) agrees thus;

> *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 purpose, but wish to remain independent and in particular, to retain their nationality in all their aspects.*

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 most of African states and as a mechanism for national cohesion. Mkandawire (1999:35) in his submission reveals that, one reason among several others for the failure of federalism in Africa is that, Africa, a continent of more than a thousand ethnic groups was to adopt such political postures and institutional arrangements that never took cognizance of such diversity, but simply denied the existence of such diversity.

However, politics being what it is, the public denial of ethnic pluralism did not prevent politicians from mobilizing and manipulating ethnicity as a tool for political competition and allocation of resources. According to Ojo (2009:387), the result of all these, was a schizophrenic polity in which the politics of 'ethnic balance' was and still remain the rule of the day, practiced by people who denied ethnicity. Politicians were nationalist by day and tribalist by night. Deriving from the foregoing therefore, it is imperative to assert that, 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. Nigeria, Malaysia and India are probably the only states in the third world where federalism has survived within 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, 1984:521-31).

Ojo (2009:387) informs that, the general vulnerability of the federal principle in the third world countries suggests the wisdom of identifying the common conditions in the region, which pose threat to federal existence. According to him, the most obvious of these conditions include ethnic cleavage, economic under-development or dependence, a weak sense of nationhood arising from a short period of independent statehood. He opines further that, it is not surprising therefore that until the 1990s, when Ethiopia became an ethnic federation and South Africa began its steady march towards incremental federation, Nigeria and Tanzania, to some extent were the only countries that managed to survive the assault of a one-party state and a military authoritarian rule on post-independence federation.

Uganda and Cameroon which set out as federal systems at independence could not stand the test of time. However, the poor run of federalism on the continent has not completely diminished the perceived utility of the system as evidenced by the clamour in several quarters for the adherent to the so-called true federalism practice in Nigeria. In the same way, the resurrection of the Najimbo and federal debates in Kenya and Uganda respectively, and the acclaimed relevance of the federal solution in war-torn Sudan, is all indications of the viability of the federalism practice in the African continent. In fact, it is suggestive to infer that, the dynamics of the state reconstruction in Africa and the search for how to save the endangered post-colonial state of Africa from disintegration, suggest that despite the poor run of federal system in Africa, federalism is still likely to increase in relevance and utility in Africa.

Ayoade (1982:5), however, argued that experience has shown that federalism has not proved to be a particularly good device for integrating plural societies such as Nigeria. According to him, much of the ordinary optimism of some scholars regarding the ability of federalism to resolve all problems of diversity and disparity in the interests of harmony and unity is equally challenged. This optimism is usually found in the expression that "diversity then federalism". However, Tarlton (1965), in his earlier submission argue that, there is a limit to which diversity and federalism is compatible, especially if the elements of diversity are very strong or if they predominate over those of unity. As he rightly puts it, "the 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".

Charles Tarlton's serious skeptism about the possibility of achieving stability in the face of diversity was subsequently to be acknowledged and shared by other perceptive scholars. One of such scholars is Rotchild (1966: 27-30), who in his vivid analysis of how the application of the federal principle has been made perilously difficult in Africa by the lack of crucial support for the principle of federalism from the key leaders in the continent by the centralizing impression of the process and by the threat, as well as the forces of ethnic intransigence and separation have posed to the continuance of the operation of the federal systems.

In the same way, May (1970:83-86) succinctly posits that, the federal government has not proved to be a very stable form of political organization and that, a survey of federal and near federal experiments suggest that, federalism is inherently unstable.

He proceeded further to mention examples of federal experiments that have disintegrated or been threatened by serious disaggregative tendencies that have had to be maintained by enforced centralization and/or civil wars such as USA, Canada, Switzerland, Australia, Syria etc. Indeed, it is instructive to note that presently, Nigeria remains the oldest and the only surviving federation in the entire continent of Africa (Osuntokun, 1996:11). It is therefore instructive to reason that, federal experiments in the third world are, therefore endangered not only by deep sectional loyalty and due to largely unavoidable but politically explosive inter-segmented inequalities but also by the intensely conflictual nature of third world politics (Suberu, 1990:145-161).

Federalism, Integration and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria

Since the return of democratic rule in Nigeria (1999 to date), it has not been without some obstacles. Most scholars have argued that, from 1954 when Nigeria embraced federalism, the polity has been wallowing from one problem to the other which also affected the practice of democracy and made all efforts at national cohesion a mirage after all. The root causes of these (Koller, 2002:27), is attributed to the highly centralized federal system in its entire ramification. This centralization has placed all resources at the centre thereby making the quest to attain power at the centre a do or die affair. On this problem, Coleman (Peil, 1976:115), observed that, excessive centralization and the state of most developing countries … not only means greater vulnerability as a result of unfulfillment of populist expectations, it also means heightened inefficiency.

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, apart from the foregoing, the factor of persistent military intervention into Nigerian politics has no doubt affected the structure of the Nigerian federation, weakened all integrative structures as well as dampened the very basis of democracy and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. 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, 1998:7).

Several actions later taken by the military have exacerbated this emerging problem and laid the foundation for an unstable democratic practice in Nigeria. No wonder, since the return of democratic governance in the current dispensation, several problems have emerged ranging from failed electoral process, rising insecurity, absence of rule of law, corruption and all forms of impunity abounds in Nigeria. Very worrisome is the fact that local governments have no powers to operate on their own, thereby making them to become appendages of state governors as well as conduit pipes to siphon public funds with impunity in the name of state-local government joint accounts. To resolve some of these contending issues that hamper democratic consolidation, and the practice of true federalism and integration in Nigeria, Elaigwu (1998:7; 2005) argues that;

> *What we need today is a non-centralized federal system in which states governments are politically virile, legislatively strong, financially resilient and indeed, constitutionally self-confident and self assertivecentre of respect by the political loyalty from the citizens they serve and over whom they exercise authority.*

Another travail of Nigeria's federalism, integration and democratic consolidation is the problematic nature of Nigeria's citizenship. This has in no small measure whittle-down the efficacy of Nigeria's federal structure.

According to Ojo (2009:389), unlike India, where there is no duality of citizenship in which case there is only one Indian citizenship, India's federation is like that of Canada. In these country's practice of federalism, the concept of state of origin does not exist (Sangma, 2005:35), whereas, in Nigeria, to pick up a job outside one's ethnic base especially at the state and local government level is really a big task in the sense that such a person will be tagged a "non-indigene" or "settler". Although citizenship conceptualized as one who by birth or nationalization belong to a state is not a problem, when it comes to assigning equal status to citizens both in theory and practice, goes beyond sheer legalism which is problematic.

This sociological component of citizenship which breeds differentiation is one of the greatest problems Nigeria faces in her attempt to achieve national cohesion and democratic consolidation in the present dispensation. Arguing further on this view, Osaghae (1978:63) and Ojo (2009:389) posits that, there is a conscious notion of my 'state' or my 'home' which affects every Nigerian who lives outside his state of origin. This is also one of the reasons why such Nigerians go home to build a house in their ancestral home, marry a wife or register back home to vote. In fact, even the dead are rarely buried outside their states of origin.

The implication of the foregoing problematic is that citizen's allegiance to the federation is truncated because of the states preferential treatment of its citizens. A situation whereby the state cannot effectively tackle the problem of citizenship negates the tenets 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". Ojo (2009) attributes the reason for the problematic character of citizenship in Africa as partly because of the ethnic groups that are bedeviled by enormous conflicts arising from the mosaics of centrifugal forces which defines a citizen, as one whom by birth or nationalization, belong to a state.

Ayoade (1987:184) has also observed that religious bias has also been proved to be another form of poor distribution in Nigerian federalism, national cohesion and democratic consolidation. The predominantly Moslem north is not comfortable with the predominantly Christian south especially when it comes to sharing strategic positions/sector of the economy most especially in the bureaucracy. For instance, the Obasanjo's eight-year rule was tilted mostly towards favouring the South especially South-West for the reasons of ethnic cleavages. In the same vein, the Jonathan administration since its inception has demonstrated its desire to favour those from South-South and South-East geo-political zones of Nigeria.

Also, looking at the manner in which the Jonathan administration is handling the issue of insecurity in parts of Northern Nigeria, especially the Boko-Haram insurgence in the North, one will have no option but to agree with the position of SaniKontagora's view that the North should be killed in order to reduce their numbers in favour of Southern agenda to rule Nigeria *ad infinitum*. A look at the social media and the comments from people of Southern extraction indicates that an opportunity has come for the Northerners to kill themselves, so as to help reduce their numbers in the geo-polity called Nigeria. To them (Southerners) that is the only way their aspirations will be achieved and hence the lack luster attitude of the Jonathan administration in handling the Boko-Haram security challenges in part of Northern Nigeria.

It therefore goes to show that the agitation for one ethnic group dominating the other is a mere smoke-screen to draw attention of the public to a particular person and to enable him gain government patronage. Whichever way one looks at the scenarios playing out in Nigeria, the result is the failure of the federal attempt which has resulted in the failure of all attempts at integration and has equally affected the efforts at democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

It needs to be emphasized that Southern hold on the bureaucracy is not a matter of deliberate manipulation or ploy to marginalize the North. But rather, the educational gulf between both regions simply because of the South's early exposure to Western education. In as much as positions in the public service is a function of skill, the South my tower above the North for some time. Fortunately, the North has progressed educationally and can challenge the South in terms of educational pursuit in any way. They (North) have occupied very sensitive positions in the Nigerian bureaucracy and performed well ahead of their Southern counterparts.

Therefore, the unpalatable effect of the lopsidedness is political instability, ethnic disharmony and threat of disintegration which has characterized the current political dispensation in Nigeria. However, all the afore-mentioned problems are far from being exhaustive of all the absurdities of the Nigerian federalism, thereby hampering democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Despite the problems facing Nigerian federalism, the country is still regarded as a pioneer in the practice of federalism and in the use of power-sharing mechanisms and practices. It is also known to be at the forefront in the promotion of inter-ethnic inclusiveness, or discourage sectional imbalance and bias, in decision-making (Suberu, 1996:71-3). It has also been concluded that the practice of federalism in Nigeria has brought about several integrative measures such as the NYSC scheme, the Federal Character principle, States and local government creation etc. Even though, as laudable as these integrative mechanisms are, the wide gap between intent and actual practices is making it counter-productive.

These policies, especially the federal character principle have been criticized for invading the integrity and standard of the public bureaucracy and such other governmental bodies that normally require safeguards from the ravage of party politics. Another issue arising from the policy is that it has been used to achieve unintended purposes of ethnic-cleansing sort-of. According to Ayoade (1998:13) the policy suffers from a faulty philosophical premise. The policy of state creation has also endangered federal and political instability rather than integration.

Having considered several issues involved in the subject matter here, we conclude that all constitutional inhibitions regarding the practice of true federalism should be removed. This will help reduce ethnic tension, increase harmony and national integration which will be achieved through democratic consolidation. Also from the foregoing, Nigerian's federal system is plagued with several contradictions. A federal system that claims to be secular but presently engulfed in all kinds of religious and other sectarian crises calls for concern and urgent steps to address these crises. This calls for precision and dexterity rather than the randomness and crudity in doing things pertaining to the people. Managing a federal system is delicate if we are to achieve integration and democratic consolidation. This requires flexibility rather than rigidity.

Therefore, the distribution of power, privileges and liabilities must follow commonly agreed principles both in form and 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. The underlying problem inhibiting Nigeria's national integration and democratic consolidation is the absence of a "self-sufficient political/ideological commitment to the primary concept or value of federalism itself" (Frank, 1986:171-3). This is what Osaghae (1984:143) Ayoade (1988:6) calls "commitment to the ideology of federalism", or what Friedrich (1963:175) calls "federal spirit".

ThusNigeria's political practice seems to be antithetical to the principle of federalism. A federal government that is still unable to resolve the problem of finding an acceptable revenue sharing formula is not good enough. Nigerians needs to find a solution to the country's crises of unity in fiscal federalism, political restructuring and democratic consolidation. As argued by Enahoro (2002) a derivative revenue sharing formula and the extensive decentralization of the present warped union where there is too much power and resources concentrated at the centre (Osuntokun 2000; 25) needs to addressed.

This will allow for less political stability in the democratic system in Nigeria. In essenceNigeria needs an entirely different philosophy that will guarantee groups rights by recognizing the polity. "It is not as is often believed, cultural, linguistic or religious heterogeneity that is dangerous for civil peace, it is the refusal to accept this heterogeneity…" (ISS Roundtable 2002:24).

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