

NIGERIA'S FEDERALISM AND STATE REORGANIZATION AND RESTRUCTURING: ATTEMPTS AT NATIONAL INTEGRATION THROUGH FRAGMENTATION

Dele Adetoye, PhD

Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti, NIGERIA

ABSTRACT

This study examines the notion that federalism, additional creation of states and adoption of the federal character principle in sharing national resources (at the federal, state and local government levels) among the various peoples that constitute the country, would or could engender unity, covariance and integration among the disparate Nigerian population. The study finds out that in spite of the fact that Nigeria has assumed a 36 state structure, from a 3 region structure in 1960 at independence, further agitations and demands for creation of additional states have not abated, so also is ethnic attachment and primordial sentiments among the lingua-cultural groups in the country. This is evidenced in the various ethno-religious conflicts that pervade the "nation".

Keywords: Federalism, State Creation, Ethnicity, National Integration, Federal Character.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO STATE CREATION IN NIGERIA

Introduction

Nigeria has undergone a long process of restructuring in terms of the number of geo-political administrative units constituting the polity. 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.

Historically speaking, 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.

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, State creation and National Integration

State creation like federal character, quota system, etc. is one of the devices built into the federal constitution of Nigeria as a means of achieving unity in diversity. The creation of administrative political units in the country for ethnic or communal groups is viewed as sure way for achieving local self-rule, autonomy, integration and even development in the polity. To this extent, it is not possible to discuss state creation in Nigeria without locating it within the broader context of federalism. It is necessary that the term "state creation" be operationalized.

State creation has been the front burner in the cluster of issues in Nigerian government and politics since the amalgamation of Southern and Northern protectorates. In the wake of the setting up of the Willink Commission (1956), there were agitations for creation of additional states. For instance, there were agitations for creation of a state/region in each of the then existing regions: viz, from the North, there was the demand for the creation of the Middle-Belt region/state; from the East, a Calabar-Ogoja-Rivers (COR) state and from the West, apart from the demand by the Region's minorities for the creation of the Mid-West, there was also demands for new states from among the majority ethnic group itself-the Yorubas. I refer to the demands for a Central Yoruba state, which would cover the Provinces of Oyo and Ibadan, and for an Ondo Central state, which would cover the Ondo province only. Although each of these provinces contained at least 85 percent Yoruba, they contained also the main strength among the Yorubas of the NCNC opposition to the Action Group (Willink, 1956)

Despite these agitations, no states were created before independence. Hence since 1960, the question of state creation in the Nigerian federation has been very volatile and contentious.

State creation, as a term in the country's political lexicon, entails territorial reorganization. It involves using boundaries and administrative units to give smaller groups greater protection in order to minimize inter and intra-group conflict. This approach involves the revision or alteration of existing regional or local administrative boundaries, and sometimes the creation of entirely new units at the regional or local level. Those regions or states are then either granted varying degrees or levels of autonomy or self administration, or simply continue functioning like those existing units from which they have been excised (Lincoln, 1999). Originally, state creation in Nigeria was conceived as a device to allay the fears of ethnic minority groups who alleged domination and marginalization. So earlier state creation exercises (up till 1967) were carried out to protect the minorities but subsequent reorganizations (1976 through 1996) had reversed the trend (Akinyele, 1996). The implication of this is that there is a shift from fear of domination to complaints of developmental marginalization among sub-groups in the country, thus making state creation assume ethnic in character and a strategy for competing for benefits distributed by the central government.

Agitations for creation of additional states as well as the debate on the desirability of the exercise are as old as the country. The debate dated back as far as 1942-1943 when Nnamdi Azikiwe published a series of articles in *West African Pilot* which were subsequently revised and published as a booklet. In the articles, Azikiwe (1980) suggested that the country's twenty five provinces be regrouped into eight states. Similarly, Chief Obafemi Awolowo (1947) argued for a federal constitution based on the ethnic factor, in which each ethnic group, irrespective of size, is autonomous in regard to its internal affairs (Awolowo, 1947). The Nigerian federation which emerged with a 3 region structure at independence in 1960 has assumed a 36-state structure within 36 years, that is, 1996 when the last exercise was carried out. In spite of this, separatist agitation and the attendant request for creation of more states in the country has not abated. As a matter of fact, the development appears to have vindicated Awolowo's position on the issue of state creation on the one hand and failure of the country's quest for integration on the other.

What are the factors responsible for this endless agitation? Is further agitation for creation of more states not symptomatic of the failure of past reorganizations? What are the rationales or guiding principles for state creation in the country? What do agitators stand to benefit from the exercise? In proffering answers to these questions, scholars of different persuasions, particularly, both historians and political scientists seem to have paid more attentions than others to the subject. According to Nnoli (1978: 256), the central motivating force of those who support the creation of states is the desire to ameliorate, if not eliminate, inter-ethnic tension which undermines national unity. But with the creation of several states, requests for further reorganization of the entity have not ebbed as sections of the country that have not benefited from the largesse continue to agitate.

Suberu (1994), in his own contribution to the debate submitted that the distributive imperatives and advantages of new states, and the sheer multiplicity and inexhaustibility of ethnic and sub-ethnic grounds for legitimizing statehood aspirations or claims, have combined to make the establishment of new states a persistent, strident and pervasive theme of Nigeria's national politics. To this extent, state creation in the country's political process has become vulnerable to the manipulation of elite both at national (those who benefit by organizing) and state/local (those who benefit by being reorganized) levels. Evidences from the Nigerian case have shown that national elites, both military and civilian use state creation as a strategy for regime legitimacy, shore up and realign regional and local support, punish,

decimate or weaken oppositions, patronize and reward allies and clients. The exercise is also employed in weakening the existing political units at the periphery by balkanizing them along sub-ethnic lines, thereby reducing their revenue and rendering them impotent. Also, state restructuring has also been used to perpetuate regime, achieve balancing and regime stability through engineering competition, rivalry and mutual distrust and suspicion among groups in the country.

Suberu's thesis is also useful in state or regional level analysis. At the state level, state creation presents an opportunity for the elite who may have been excluded from primitive accumulation traditionally associated with the state institutions in Nigeria to carve out spheres of accumulation for themselves (Suberu, 1994.). State creation has, therefore, become an avenue for personal enrichment to functionaries at that level. It increases the chances of members of the elite who could not compete favourably for political offices and appointments with others in the old state. The list of available positions is long. They are Governorship, Deputy Governorship, House of Assembly, House of Representative, Senate, Board membership, Permanent Secretaryship, Judges, First class traditional status, Vice Chancellorship, Professorial chairs, contractors and businessmen. Meanwhile, the masses whose supports were mobilized during the struggle for the state, who had been assured of socio-economic transformation and development, are left in the lurch.

Alapiki (2005, 49-65), contributing to the debate on the nexus between state creation and national integration in his article titled, "State Creation in Nigeria: Failed Approaches to National Integration and Local Autonomy" demonstrates how the fissiparous tendencies bearing on the Nigerian national polity make the policy of using state creation to achieve national integration a failed strategy. The paper shows how the outcomes of state creation exercises in Nigeria have failed to assuage the very forces that instigate new state demands. It contends that the prospects for national integration and local autonomy depend on the emergence of a purposeful national leadership and proper political restructuring of the federation designed to generate a national image that has more appeal than the regional ones.

Explaining why groups in Nigeria prefer the territorial approach, Lincoln posits that the territorial approach is preferred over constitutional safeguard by the ethnic groups in the country as a solution to exploitation, uneven development, subjugation and deprivation among geographically mixed groups. It is believed that possession or control of territory at a regional or local level is more palpable and less fickle a benefit than abstract (in their perception and opinion) legal or constitutional provision made by the central government constituted by groups and institution that could presumably reverse, ignore or operate them at convenience (Lincoln, 2000). This may have informed Adesina's (2004:4) observation that;

The Nigerian peoples may have shared the fundamental ideals that make their notions of their federal identity largely confined to mere constitutional provisions. Contemporary inter-group relations in the country had consistently shied away from respect for human rights, dignity, and fundamental freedoms and mutual respect embedded in successive federal constitutions, all which tried to strengthen and promote the federal principles as integrative mechanisms.

The above is true in view of the fact that the constitution is, most of the time, flagrantly ignored or undermined by operators in developing social formations especially if that section of the constitution threatens personal or group interests of status quo rulers. Also, the incessant military interventions in the politics of the country had rendered the constitution

prostrate and stunted political development. Therefore, statutory physical demarcation of territories into autonomous administrative units among ethnic and communal groups looked a better, surer and trusted option by state agitators. This belief is also strengthened because of the central role the state in Nigeria plays in the distribution of national resources among the competing groups that constitute the Nigerian federation.

In contrast to the position canvassed above, the majority or national groups view the territorial approach with skepticism because it, allegedly, reduces and diminishes their sphere of influence and accruing benefits. This, in their estimation, could lead to loss of control and access to resources (Lincoln, 1999). It stands to reason, therefore, to suggest that if the territorial approach or state system had previously been embraced and encouraged by a single “national” group, that group is also likely to resist the dismemberment or balkanization of the state like it happened in the first republic between the West dominated Yoruba and the Hausa North. The Action Group did not support the excision of the Mid-Western region from the West while the Northern Peoples’ Congress refused its domain from being broken for the fear of losing control of their sphere of influence and resources.

Theoretically, a relatively conflict free federation is possible, with larger number of smaller states than smaller number of larger states because the latter prevents the emergence of permanent majorities and minorities. It, therefore, follows that when medium or small ethnic groups control a state of their own, they are shielded or protected from permanent exclusion and subjugation in another state dominated and controlled by larger groups (Lincoln, 1999). The likelihood of secession to occur, in this typical scenario, becomes very remote and stability of the polity guaranteed.

Another rationale for creating additional states in Nigeria was to integrate the diverse populations constituting the country. Just like the adoption of federalism as a social engineering device for the purpose of achieving co-variance, state creation was intended to assuage the frayed nerves of agitative minorities and the disadvantaged majority ethnic groups in the country. It was expected that integration could be achieved through this means. It was assumed that if administrative political units were created for discernible communal or ethnic groups in the country inter and intra-ethnic tensions would be eliminated. For the purpose of conceptual clarification, it is important to define “integration.”

Integration, in whatever form, political, national or international, presupposes plurality. It is the combination of parts into a whole. A union is a whole resulting from the combination of parts or numbers. Thus integration is the process of reaching the state of union. Integration is understood here as a process by which discrimination existing along national or ethnic borders is progressively removed between two or more ethnic nationalities. Defining integration from the international angle, Haas (1968:16) said:

Integration is a process whereby actors in distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations, and activities toward a new centre whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over pre-existing national states.

Reduced to the national level, what one can deduce from the definition above, is that integration requires the willingness and readiness on the part of national actors to transfer loyalty from primordial setting to a supra-communal or national one. Generally, integration means “unification or bringing together of diversified components either at national, international, regional, sub-regional, state or local community levels.”(Ojo, 2009: 16-17). It is

a process, to the extent that mechanisms are deliberately put in place that could facilitate the psychological mobilization of peoples who were hitherto separated along cultural, religious and linguistic lines to make themselves ready to acquire and imbibe new traits and identity that are broader than former ones. Integration is equally an end because the process ends in peaceful, harmonious and nationalistic feelings among hitherto antagonistic and distinctive groups within a polity.

In its bid to achieve unity among its diverse population, Nigeria had experimented with a number of devices in form of policies like quota system, geo-political zoning of political offices and other appointments, federal character, unity schools, NYSC, MAMSER/NOA etc. The question now is: has the country achieved the desired integration?

Contributing to this debate, Ayoade (1997: 7-9; 2009: iv) opines that apart from attempting to redress North-South regional imbalance, creation of states has resulted in weakening the South against the North. He argues that the resultant North-South asymmetrical balance of power became the justification for other methods for the promotion of a sense of belonging in the country especially by eliminating or minimizing domination resulting from imbalance in appointments. But from experience, events have shown that the national and regional leaders may have united especially in the area of distribution of national resources. The elites, in spite of this, leave their communal groups divided and ready for use as an instrument of negotiation for patronage and positions or how do we explain the harmony that exists among the various communal groups in the market where the forces of demand and supply determine relationships; where the Naira does not wear tribal marks and where buyers and sellers transact business without recourse to primordial dictates? Therefore, while the elite who constitute the Nigerian state mouth integration, their hearts speak and act separation and fragmentation as strategy for competing for national resources.

Contrary to the suggestions and recommendations of the pundits of multiplication of states according to the number of communal groups in the country, state creation exercises in Nigeria have been quite dramatic. State reorganizations in the country have tended to be cyclical and self-perpetuating with each exercise merely provoking agitation for further creation. This is ironical because a process that was meant to engender stability and mitigate conflicts has become one of the most explosive and challenging issues in Nigerian government and politics. The several cases of intra-ethnic conflicts, (Modakeke-Ife, Andoni-Ogoni, Aguleri-Umuleri, Itsekiri-Ijaw etc.) and agitations from sections within communal groups that hitherto united and struggled for their own state, minority agitation from the south-south people in the Niger-Delta, the non-Hausa-Fulani peoples of southern Zaria and the incessant hostilities between indigenes and settlers in Plateau State can be linked to an elucidation of the broader structural dimensions and integration aspirations of the Nigerian federation. As a matter of fact, these cases render the integrative power of state creation exercise a nullity.

Can state creation foster unity and integration?

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, Adejumobi (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. Adejumobi (2000, 12) describes this development as "apparent contradictions in the focus and process of the demilitarized project and the demand for democratization". However, the only acceptable reason for creation of more states during Babangida's military transition programme, according to Adejumobi, would be the urgent need to resolve the $12^{2/3}$ imbroglio that nearly destroyed the presidential election of 1979. Adejumobi believes that Babangida's creation of 21 and 30 state structures in 1987 and 1991 seems to have put an end to the predicament of the uncanny $12^{2/3}$ constitutional requirement and ensured the avoidance of what Suberu (1991: 499-522) describes as

the re-enactment of the infamous controversy in 1979 over the constitutional requirement for appreciable electoral support for a successful presidential candidate in "two-thirds" of the states in the federation.

Emphasizing the importance and analytical value of intra-ethnic conflict to development and national cohesion, Adesina (2004: 1) argues that intra-ethnic rivalry repudiates the legitimacy of larger group interest or vision. He posits that a larger group would maintain its cohesiveness to the extent that sub-ethnic groups within the larger one do not feel excluded or disadvantaged. He further asserts that in a situation where they feel marginalized, especially in the distribution of resources, sub-ethnic groups are likely to disregard identification with a larger interest they perceive as unfair and unjust. Consequently, renewed loyalty and allegiance to "home town/village" and withdrawal from the larger group becomes inevitable. The implication of this development is that unity and integration among the disparate groups that make up the Nigerian nation becomes problematic. To this extent, the argument is valid that intra-ethnic conflicts, more than cross-ethnic hostility, are more likely to impact negatively on national cohesion. This is evident in such cases as Ife/Modakeke of the Yoruba stock, Tiv-Idoma in Benue, Urhobo-Itsekiri in Delta, Kutebs versus Jukun in Taraba, Kanuri-Shuwa, Hausa/Kataf in Kaduna and recently the bloody conflict between settlers and indigenes in Plateau state. These conflicts point to

one fact. And it is that intra-ethnic conflicts are more virulent, more violent and pose a lot of danger to the unity of the country.

Writing under the title *Migration, Land Tenure, Citizenship and Communal Conflicts*, Isumonah looks at inter-communal conflict from the perspective of settler-indigene. He observes that the various violent communal conflicts in the country can be explained in terms of quest for political autonomy by subjugated groups and as consequences of competition for scarce resources or state economy adjustment programmes, and struggle over land between settlers and indigenes (Isumonah, 2003: 3-5).

In his analysis of the Nigerian society, Otite (1976: 7) did a categorization of major ethnic groups in Nigeria, which espoused other sub-groups, for example, Yoruba, Ibo Hausa etc. he explains that the various unit forming one ethnic group share many social sub-system, particularly in the religious, familial and economic spheres and are wrapped together in many ways through the use of one common intelligible language. According to him, it is within these smaller groups usually indigenous state or kingdom but often referred to as tribal units; that will normally have the highest degree of cohesiveness. It states further that this cohesiveness is not a permanent feature between the major groups and among the constituent sub-groups. He posits that the theory of segmentary opposition can be used to explain alliances and relationships between social groups in Nigeria.

The theory of segmentary opposition, according to him, states that when ethnic groups A and B are in conflict and each one threatens the existence or the core areas of livelihood of the other, all the constituent units in each ethnic group ignore or underplay their differences in order to send a united front against the external threat. He states further that as long as this situation subsists; each group maintains its internal cohesion. But once this external common enemy is removed, it will be found that the social component of each ethnic group will assert their socio-cultural symbols to maintain their separate identity.

This is exactly the scenario when some groups which hitherto united and struggled together for the creation of their own state in Nigeria, turn around to deny shared affinities and start to agitate for the creation of new state. It was the case in western state, consisting of Oyo, Egba, Ijebu, Ijesha, Akoko, Ekiti and Ondo, all of them Yoruba sub-groups that agitated for separate states of Ogun, Oyo, and Ondo. These states, except Ogun have been broken into further states of Osun and Ekiti. There are still further agitations from within these states. For instance, Oke Ogun people are agitating for separate state to be excised from Oyo, Ibadan state from Oyo, Ijebu state from Ogun state and Ijesha from Osun state. This identity politics or better still, intra-ethnic politics is further illumined by Osaghae's framework of analysis in identity politics (Osaghae. 1995).

State creation and the elite

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. This class analysis has proven that

"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).

In the case of Ekiti State creation in 1996, several of these perspectives highlighted above are relevant. For instance, Suberu (1990:21) argues that in the Yoruba State of Ondo, bitter sub-ethnic recriminations over the distribution of amenities and provisions between the Ekiti and non Ekiti groups led to the demand for a new Ondo State by the latter. The Ekiti which apparently was the majority group complained of deprivation and marginalization and therefore demanded its own state, to enhance its opportunity of direct access to resources from the centre.

It is pertinent to note here that Ekiti's is a phenomenal case. This conception arises from the fact that the Ekiti sub-ethnic group was numerically dominant in the old Ondo State. Also, the area of landmass covered by the Ekiti was bigger in size than that of any of the other groups. The Ekiti group was dominant in the state's civil service. They were "better regarded as the majority which the other sub-ethnic groups feared its domination" (Suberu, 1990: 115).

That the Ekiti agitated for and got its own state, therefore, opens a new vista in intra-ethnic politics and the politics of state creation. The relevant explanation for this development can be discussed with reference to Nnoli's submission of the class character of Nigerian ethnicity (Nnoli, 1978: 145). It is our submission here that agitation for more states, as long as the exercise is based on ethnic sentiments, will continue *ad infinitum*, until democratic allocation of resources and good governance are entrenched in the Nigerian political system.

REFERENCES

- Adejumobi, S. 2000. Demilitarization and democratic reorientation in Nigeria; Issues, problems and prospects. *Africa, Asia, Latin America 33, Jahrgang – 1 Quartal 2000*.
- Adesina, O. 2004. Sub ethnic identities and the crises of development in contemporary Nigeria: Perspectives from the Ile Ife-Modakeke conflict. *African Studies Review*. No 1. Vol. 3. Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko.
- Akinyele, R. T. 1996. "States creation in Nigeria: the Willink report in retrospect." *African Studies Review* 39, September 1996, No.2.
- Alapiki, H. E. 2005. State Creation in Nigeria: Failed Approaches to National Integration and Local Autonomy. *African Studies Review*. Vol. 48. No. 3.
- Awolowo, O. 1947. *Path to Nigerian freedom*. London: Faber & Faber Press.
- Ayoade, J. A. A. 1997. Nigeria and the squandering of hope. An Inaugural Lecture Delivered at the University of Ibadan, Ibadan. Vantage Publishers.
- _____. 1999. The federal character principle and the search for national integration *Federalism and political restructuring in Nigeria*. K. Amuwo et al. eds. Ibadan: Spectrum books and IFRA.
- _____. 2009. FOREWORD. Ojo, E. O. Mechanisms of National integration in a multi-ethnic federal state. Ibadan: John Archers.
- Ekeh, P. 1975. Colonialism and the two republics in Africa: A theoretical statement. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17, No. 1.
- _____, 1986. Political minorities and historically dominant minorities in Nigerian history and politics. *Governance and development in Nigeria*. O. Oyediran. ed. Ibadan: Oyediran Consult.
- _____, 2007. Nigerian political history and the foundation of Nigerian federalism. *The management of the national question in Nigeria*. E.E Osaghae and E. Onwudiwe. eds. Okada: Igbinedon University Press
- Gana, A. T. 1987. The politics and economics of state creation in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Politics and Strategy*. Vol. 11 No. 1 Kuru: NIPSS.
- Haas, E.B. 1961. "International integration: The European and the universal process." *International Organization*, xv
- Ikporukpo, C. 2007. The myths and realities of majority groups in Nigeria. *The management of the national question*. E. Osaghae & E. Onwudiwe. eds .Okada. Igbinedon University.
- Isumonah, V. I. 2003. Migration, land tenure, citizenship and communal conflicts in Nigeria *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*. Vol. 9 Spring..
- Joseph, R.1983. "Class, state and prebendal politics in Nigeria." *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 21.
- _____, 1987. *Democracy and prebendal politics in Nigeria: The rise and fall of the second republic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lincoln, J. 2000. "The effect of federalism on inter-group relations in multi-ethnic states: evidences from Nigeria and Ethiopia" Thesis. History, Fletcher school of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University.
- Nnoli, O. 1978. *Ethnic politics in Nigeria*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publisher.
- Ojo, E. O. 2009. *Mechanisms of National integration in a multi-ethnic federal state*. Ibadan. John Archers.
- Osaghae, E. 1985. Political parties: The creation of minority state and federal stability in Nigeria. *Political development in Nigeria*. Atanda & Aliyu. eds. Gaskia Press.

- Osaghae, E. E. 2005. FOREWORD: *Nigerian federalism-A project in crisis. Nigerian federalism in crisis: Critical perspectives and political options.* E.Onwudiwe and R.T. Suberu. eds. Ibadan: John Archers Publishers
- Otite, O. 1976. On the concept of a Nigerian society. *Ethnic relations in Nigeria.* A. O. Sanda. ed. Ibadan: Caxton press.
- Oyovbaire, S. E. 1985. *Federalism in Nigeria.* London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd.
- Panter-Brick, S. K. 1980. Nigeria and the uncertainties of pluralism. *Three faces of pluralism.* S. Ehrlich & G. Woolton. eds. Gover; Farnborough
- Suberu, R. T. 1991. The struggle for new states in Nigeria; 1976-1990. *African Affairs.*
- _____ 1994. Recent demands for new states in Nigeria. *The Nigerian Journal of Federalism* Vol. 1.
- _____ 1995. The politics of state creation. *The political economy of Nigeria under military rule 1984-1993.* S. Adejumobi & A. Momoh. eds. Harare: Supes Books.
- _____ 1999. States creation and the political economy of Nigeria. *Federalism and Political restructuring in Nigeria.* K. Amuwo et al.eds. Ibadan: Spectrum Books.
- Reno, W. 1998. "Old brigades, money bags, new breeds and the irony of reforms in Nigeria." *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, Spring. 67.
- Yaqub, N. O. 1997. State creation and the federal principle. *Constitution and Federalism.* Lagos: Friedrich Ebert Foundation. University Press.
- Willink Commission Report 1958 on the fears of minority and the measures of solving them, London, Her Majesty's Stationary office.