

## Resource Control: a Necessary Element for True Federalism in Nigeria

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**R**esource control and true federalism have remained two contentious and destabilizing factors in the Nigerian body polity. They have been in the front burner of the national discourse since the return to democracy in Nigeria. Most parts of the country especially oil producing states have been agitating for resource control to reflect true federalism globally. This will enable states take charge of resources within their borders and make agreed contributions towards the maintenance of common services of Federal Government. This paper therefore seeks to examine the contentious issue of resource control in Nigerian federalism with a view towards proffering relevant solution for our emerging democracy. The paper adopts a historical/descriptive research designs and generated data largely from secondary sources like journals, internet, and books. A comprehensive content analysis of the variables was done and data was analyzed qualitatively. Findings revealed that Nigeria is practicing centralised-federalism and not true federalism with respect to resource control like in other climes. The paper recommends among others, quick constitutional reforms so as to resolve those problems inherent in the operation of true federalism in Nigeria as it affects resource control.

**Keywords:**

Federalism, True Federalism, Resource control, Agitation

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## **Background to the Study**

The survival and the ultimate success of any federal system depends on an acceptable controlling of resources and functions among the three levels of government so that efficiency in the use of scarce resources is encouraged, while reducing inequality in the treatment of individuals and among different states (Lambert, 2006). It is obvious that the present resource control mechanism is not only controversial, but also patently skewed in favour of the centre even when the centre has not shown better way of investing the huge allocations it gets from controlling our Nigerian. The problem becomes even more acute due to the political dimension the issue had assumed; with tempers flaring along geo-political lines over perceived injustices in the way the country's resources is being controlled.

To our Northerners brothers, resource control is a selfish agitation and demonstration of excessive greed on the part of the South-South governors. Whereas, to the Niger-Delta region, it is a just struggle for their natural right (Beacheni, 2001). It becomes more contentious and worrisome especially to the Niger-Deltans when one recalls that historically the North has benefited more from resource control and derivation formula since the inception to the embarrassment of other parts of the country. One would expect that since the North was favoured by the derivation formula before attention was ceded to oil, the agitation of the oil producing states should not elicit any discordant tunes in the country (Ibodje, 2008:94). The issue of resource control has however created a gulf of suspicion between the North and the South, hence, the continuous search for the best and acceptable formula for controlling resources in our federation.

The declaration of May 29, 1999 as Democracy Day by the federal government became a turning point in resource control agitation in Nigeria owing to the fact that democracy permitted the freedom of expression, contrary to the repressive nature of military rule that bedeviled the country for decades. Consequently, the Niger-Delta states became more united in the struggle to control the wealth naturally situated in their lands (Kasim, 2000). This paper therefore seeks to examine the contentious issue of resource control in Nigerian federalism with a view towards proffering relevant solution for our emerging democracy. The paper is structured in the following format: Abstract, Introduction, Theoretical framework, the nexus between resource control and true federalism in Nigeria, conceptual clarification, Cons and Pros of resource control in Nigeria Federalism, agitation and innovation for resources in Nigeria, summary, conclusion and recommendations.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The Relative-Deprivation-Frustration and Aggression Theory was adopted in this paper to explain the cause of serious agitation and violence among Nigerians, especially Niger Delta people on resource control. Gurr (1970) cited by Falehi (2000) is a leading exponent of this economic theory. The central tenet of this theory is that relative aggression is always the result of frustration and, accordingly, when a group of people feel prevented in their attempts to get what they want, they are likely to become angry and when they become angry the most satisfying response is to strike out at the source of their frustration (Verna, 2006). The theory therefore explains how frustration leads to hostile behavior against some groups. Anifowose (1989) adopted the theory to explain political violence among the Tivs and Yoruba people. Azelama (1997) also adopted this theory to explain the causes of violence in Nigeria. In the

same vein, Isumonah (1997) adopted a similar proposition tagged threshold theory to explain Oil and Minority Ethnic Nationalism in Nigeria. The theory is most appropriate for this paper because the south-south states, based on their difficult experience of being deprived of their natural resources, have become disenchanted with Nigeria federalism. The spontaneity of violence and aggression exhibited is a consequence of frustration and dissatisfaction they perceived against their zone. Thus, resource control as an issue has incited aggression following the frustration of the efforts of the oil producing states to secure a favorable formula for resource control.

### **Conceptual Explication**

#### **Resource Control**

Scholars disagree as par the exact meaning of Resource Control. Roberts and Oladeji (2005), pointed out that, while one group conceives it as the total takeover of the resources located in the resource producing states by the people of those states, others understand it to mean that the stakeholders in the resource-bearing area should manage greater proportions of the resources harnessed in those areas. This implies that scholars and even agitators define the concept largely from different and individualistic perspectives. Ifedayo (2010, cited in Dickson and Asua, 2016) affirm that resource control involves the access of communities and State governments to natural resources located within their boundaries and the freedom to develop and utilize these resources without reference from the federal government.

Henryik (2009) defined resource control as the control and management of resources by State or Local Governments from whose jurisdiction the resources are extracted. The State or Local Governments would manage the resources from their territories under federal guidelines (especially, environmental ones), and then remit prescribed percentage to the federal centre. Ofeimum (2005, cited in Dickson and Asua, 2016) further opined that resource control is the principle that every federating unit must be empowered to be self-governing. It amounts to an expression of self-determination by the zone which places a collaborative duty on other parts of the country to assist the zone in the realization of their objectives.

Afoyemi (2013, cited in Dickson and Asua, 2016) asserts that resource control is the way and manner the government revenue is shared among the various tiers of government - the Federal, State and Local Governments, as well as how resources available are harnessed and determined. For Ya'u, (2001, cited in Dickson and Asua, 2016), resource control may be taken to mean the substantive power for the community to collect monetary and other benefits accruing from the exploration, exploitation and use of resources in their domain and deploy same to its developmental purposes. He seventeen Southern Governors Forum as cited in Dafinone (2001), explicitly defined resource control as the practiced of true federalism and natural law in which the federating units express their rights to primarily control the natural resources within their borders and make agreed contribution towards the maintenance of the common services of the government at the center.

From the aforementioned definitions, it is obvious that resources producing areas ought to have control over resources located in their areas, with minimal intervention from the federal government, as it is the practice in the United States of America, Canada, and Switzerland amongst others.

### **Conceptual Nature of Nigeria's Federalism**

The concept of federalism defers a universally accepted definition. Wheare(1953), an exponent on contemporary federalism discuss, saw federalism as:

*a constitutional arrangement which divides the lawmaking powers and functions between two levels of government in such a way that each within its respective spheres of jurisdiction and competence is independent and coordinate. This constitutional form is brought about by circumstances, where people are prepared to give up only certain limited powers and wish to retain other limited powers to be exercised by coordinated authorities. He observed that coordinate supremacy of all the levels of government with regard to their respective functions remains a cardinal principle of federalism.*

This means that federalism has emerged as a particular kind of functional arrangement between states for living and working together nationally, while presenting a measure of separate identity (Wheare:1953).

Kapur (1986) averred that federalism is a dual government where powers are divided and distributed by the constitution between a central government and regional or state governments. Such powers are original and derived. The component units i.e. the regional or state governments are coordinate independent authorities within their allotted sphere of jurisdiction. These component units must also be left with adequate economic resources to run their administrations and perform the functions assigned to them satisfactorily without being dependent on the peanuts that come from the national government.

Babawale (1998), defines a federal state as:

*one in which there is an explicit and constitutional demarcation of powers and functions among national and sub-national units. Moreover, the powers and responsibilities are distributed in such a manner as to protect the existence of authority of both levels of polity each of which is independent within its own sphere ... federalism refers to the doctrine which advocates and promotes the form of organization of a state in which power is dispersed or decentralized by contract as a means of safeguarding local identities and individual liberties*

He further states that federalism describes not only the structure of a state; it also designates its political culture and political process. An important characteristic, which distinguishes federal system from non-federal systems, is non-centralization of power. For in a federal polity, there is division of power between the central and component units. It is pertinent to note that in Nigeria's federal experience, the reasoning propounded by Wheare (1953), Babawale (1958) and kapur(1986) does not hold in practice. This is because the Federal Government has usurped virtually all the powers, which were formerly exercised by the state governments. Corroborating this line of thought, Akindele and Bassey (2001) defines a federal

state as a political entity or country where powers and indispensable decisions are exercised and made at two or multilateral levels of government in accordance with the strict mutually agreed constitutional provisions of the country concerned. Eggebulem (2011) argued that these positions formed the basis of the claim that federalism is anchored on considerable tolerance of diversity and willingness to take political action through conciliation even when the power to act unilaterally is available.

Wheare (1953) adopts United State of America as the model federal state. Following his preferences for American style federalism, he chose to call other constitutions that do not make the component units autonomous as quasi-federal states. For example, Wheare's concept of federalism regarding the pre-1966 Nigerian constitution as quasi-federal because section 66 allowed the Federal Government to declare a state of emergency on any region and to take over the running of the government of that region for a specific period of time. Ekpo and Enamidem (2003) equally observed that protagonists of resource control began to push forward the argument that the country cannot be said to be a federation when the elements of federalism are lacking – elements such as – state police, control of natural resources by the federating unit. Although, Nigeria is supposed to be a federation, nothing in its structure and administration lends credence to this claim. Ekpo and Enamidem (2003) further assert that the manifestation semblance of a federation in Nigeria is merely the 36 states – otherwise the country is to all intents and purposes – a unitary state. The government at the centre is stronger than the states, with latter depending mostly on allocations from the former for survival

From Wheare's (1953), Kapur's (1986), Babalawe's (1988) and Akindele (1995) definitions and analysis, it could be concluded that in any true federalism, the regions or states have the constitutional right to control their resources without much interference from the central government. They have also established that the basic principles of true federalism given by Nwabueze (1982) which include: separateness and independence of each government; mutual non-interference of inter-governmental immunities; equality between the region or state governments; ascertaining the number of regional or state governments which a Federal Government can meaningfully co-exists; mode for the division of powers and the supremacy of the constitution are glaringly lacking in Nigerian federalism.

According to Ndu (2003) cited by Eggebulem (2011), there are two key reasons for the erosion of true federalism which characterized the Nigerian state in the first republic before the intervention of the military in 1966. One of the reasons he gave was the collapse of the First Republic when the military intervened in January 1966. That intervention by the military marked the end of true federalism in Nigeria. He asserts that unfortunately, that visionary development of federalism specifically from 1954 to 1965 abruptly ended with the mutiny of January 15, 1966, which not only eliminated some of the founding fathers of federalism in Nigeria, but also killed the essence of federalism itself. The federal form which survived that military onslaught and on the basis of which the country precariously persisted as an entity has never regained its true essence.

Two interconnected developments accounted for that demise, Ndu (2003). First, the coup and the eventual threat to the unity of the country following secession and the civil war were traumatic events that called for centralized authority capable of pulling things back into one fold. Secondly, there was, and still has always been the professional practice of unified command with which soldiers are familiar. He sees the centralized federalism in Nigeria today as one of the disruptive heritage of military rule in Nigeria.

The second reason he advanced for wearing away of true federalism was because most states in Nigeria are feeble, particularly in their extractive capability and, consequently can hardly perform as federating units. Ndu and other protagonist of true federalism have argued that states are feeble not because they lack the resources and manpower that would make them strong economically and administratively, but the fiscal and legislative relationships between them and the federal government render them feeble (Ndu, cited in Nwogwugwu et al, 2015).

Nwabueze (1982), cited in Egbebullem (2011) further pointed out that the erosion of Federalism is due to lack of proper understanding of the concept among the leaders and the general public of the nature of federal relationship as manifested between the federal and state governments. He noted that the autonomy of each tier of government in Nigeria is misconstrued to mean competition and confrontation with each trying to frustrate the other, whereas, the conception underlying is that the federal and the state government are mutually complementary part of a governance mechanism.

Revenue allocation is another challenge to our federalism. The reason being that states totally depend on the federal government as the main stay of their sustenance and survival. The faulty origin of Nigeria's federalism from the colonial masters, through unitary system of government given to us by the military also promoted this challenge and is responsible for the poor condition of the states. If states in Nigeria were independent, and came together to form a federation, they would have been stronger.

### **The Nexus Between Resource Control and True Federalism**

There exist a significant relationship between resource control and true federalism. These two concepts mutually complement each other. A true federal state practices resource control, while resource control functions vibrantly in a true federal state. Put together, resource control is an indication of the practice of true federalism (Odje (2000)

Azaiki (2003) opined that one key trait of the Nigerian union which was to persist for many years was that the three regions of the North, West and East retained control of their natural resources. This was one positive aspect to the practice of federalism in Nigeria. Azaiki went further to say that while resource control is a basic economic theory grounded in the fact that land (rent), labour (wages), capital (interest) and entrepreneurship (profit) are factors of production within the context of federation, it implies that the component states within a federation have a right to primarily control the natural resources within their borders, and to make an agreed contribution towards the maintenance of common services at the centre. This was the case with Nigeria until the military struck in 1966. With the advent of the military in 1966, federalism suffered in Nigeria. The independence of the regions was compromised as a

hierarchical command structure emerged. A very powerful central government came into being and it only encourages, promotes and sustains subservience and domination of the component strata by the center

The failure of Nigerian state to uphold the principles of true federalism is responsible for the persistent call for resource control. This is because true federalism guarantees resource control. True federalism protects the fundamental rights of both the individual and the federating states. It affords states the benefit of deploying their resources for their own development. Davidson (1992), notes that Nigeria is currently operating a defective and fallible federalism because the Nigerian federal system has consistently undermined one of the most cardinal philosophical principles of federalism. He says the relative autonomy, independence and self-determination of these units must be appreciated and guaranteed in clear terms. Advocates for resource control have argued that in any true federalism, powers are shared between the federating units and the central government in such a way that each government has its own apparatus for the conduct of its own affairs. They stress that in any true federalism, the oil, gas or any other mineral found in any state belongs to that state. They maintained that the fact that the areas that provide the national wealth are the poorest in the country is provocative. The condition of these areas like the Niger Delta States and their people is aptly captured by O'Neill (2007) who posits that the cruelest twist is that half a century of oil extraction in the Delta has failed to make the lives of the people better. Instead, they are poorer and lack basic infrastructure and amenities of life.

Okumagba (2002) pointed out that resource control transcends the narrow confines of crude oil to include coal, hides and skin, tin, limestone, groundnut, rubber, cotton, palm oil and solid minerals on earth. Consequently any state that is endowed with any of these resources will be empowered to control and manage same upon payment of taxes to the federal government. Above all, he says that resource control will stimulate the healthy competition among the states and eventually lead to even development of the country. New barriers will be broken, more resources will be discovered and managed for the benefit of the Nigerian federation. The fact is that resource control will lead to diversification and revamping of solid minerals sector which has been neglected. To this end, the belief is that the practice of resource control will improve the pace of economic development of the whole country in general and particularly make the respective states to identify their comparative advantages which best serves the country. The overdependence on oil has resulted in the abandonment of the solid mineral sector, thus illegal miners, in collaboration with some unscrupulous businessmen, are now having unhindered access to these minerals and exploiting same illegally.

However, as concise as the facts raised by the advocates for resources control, mostly the elites from the South-South geo-political zone of the country, their northern counterparts have consistently kicked against the agitation, saying any attempt to allow states to control their own resources is a recipe for disintegration. Alhaji Umar Tukur Dangaladima presenting the Northern elites position in the Punch Newspaper (2001), dismissed the demand for resource control as unrealistic, adding that the people of oil bearing states only migrated to settle in their present abode and that they met the land and everything there and therefore, cannot claim the resources to be their own. Also, Alhaji Tanko Yakassi expressing the Northern

posture against resource control issue in the Guardian Newspaper (2001) noted that all the constitutions that had been operational in Nigeria from the colonial dispensation to date have placed the control of natural resources in the hand and control of the federal government. He also argued that all over the world, things like oil mineral deposits and so on are naturally controlled by the central government and wonders why Nigeria should deviate from such acceptable standard. He reminded the Niger Delta states that when the defunct Biafran Republic was declared over the area in 1967 by Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu, the entire people of Nigeria sacrificed to liberate them. To this end, he creates a justification that other Nigerians deserve to share from the resources derivable from the Niger Delta area. The 19 Northern state governor's communiqué (2001) issued at the end of their meeting in Kaduna strongly rejected the true federalism stance of the Southern governors, insisting that the actualization of such demand would have accompanying grave implications for the country.

### **The Cons and Pros of Resource Control in Nigerian Federalism**

Fiscal federalism debate that dominated public discourse in a couple of years was two dimensions namely: the centripetal forces and the centrifugal forces. Advocates of centripetal forces were of the opinion that the Federal Government should be in control of all mineral resources throughout the country based on the following premises. That shortly after the amalgamation in 1914, the next thing that followed was the enactment of the mineral ordinance of 1914 which vested all minerals in Nigeria crown, not in Nigeria for Nigerians (Akinjide, 2001). What it means is that the British government simply handed over the control of all these minerals to the Federal Government of Nigeria. It should be noted that self-government had earlier been given to the regions; West in 1957, East in 1958 and North in 1959. These self-governments never had power over the minerals located in their areas of jurisdiction. These were resources generated within the regions through the efforts of the residents in these regions. Even then, tariffs were paid to the Federal Government, with little references to the regional governments. Hence, these broad ranges of taxes, levies and duties were under the absolute control of the Federal Government. Then it was convenient for these regions to emphasis derivation, hence its inclusion in the 1960-63 Constitution (Sagay, 2001).

The second premise was that the 36 states and the 774 Local governments throughout the country and Federal Capital Territory are a creation of the Federal Government rather than being seen as independent nation-states like what obtains in the United States of America (Okunade, 2008).

Thirdly, that the resources to which each of the states, council and or the towns in Nigeria can lay claim should exist within such respective defined boundaries, bearing in mind the existing land use decree enacted by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 1979. Thus, not only do the minerals and the lands belong to the federal government, the resources have been developed and their values enhanced by the investment of funds of the whole country over a long period of time since 1914 (Aluko, 2001).

The final argument in support of federal control of resources was that the nation needed to be able to make financial grants to poor states to ensure a level of living condition for every Nigerian below a national minimum considered desirable by the Federal Government as in the case in Australian Federation (Aluko, 2001). These ways, the proponents of centripetal

fiscal federalism believe that the federation would be strengthened, national unity properly upheld and the individuality of the country inviolable. To this end, they recommended that what the states should rather clamor for is revenue control rather than the resources control.

In spite of its advantages however, resource control poses a dose of negative repercussions for the Nigerian polity. For instance, since resources are not evenly distributed by nature among the various communities in the states, it may create ethnic rivalry, which may disrupt peace in the state. It may also result in a situation where the centre would be too weak to dispense its functions as the superior tier of government, which is contrary to the ideals of federalism. It could affect some states that are poor in terms of natural endowments. This might lead to internal insecurity in such states (Idahosa & Aghahowa, 1995).

Arguments in favour of resource control include the following: The granting to states the control of resources within their boundaries would spark up in the state governments the volition to develop the resources in their states, thereby de-emphasizing oil as the main foreign income earner. In this regard, states that are not endowed with oil would concentrate on agriculture, which has the potential to make Nigeria self-sufficient in food production. It would also secure a better society since it would result in peace as against the militancy that characterizes the Niger Delta region (Hassan, 2006).

Centrifugal forces contend that ownership of resources should rather be the major determinant of who gets what, when and how in the fiscal federalism. This position was illustrated and grounded in economic principle that land, labour, capital and entrepreneurship are factors of production. According to this school of thought, owners derive rent on royalty, and from labour, wages, from capital, interest and from entrepreneurship, profit. The posit therefore that reward for landowners for exploitation or exploration of the land is an inalienable right that no government can abrogate. The only thing they felt the government could do is to impose tax to be used for the welfare of the community (Djebah and Aderibigbe, 2001.) This position is under-pinned by, first, that under the original Nigerian federal dispensation 1960-1966, all resources were under the control of the states. Secondly, that as a result of such control, the states were able to develop at a rate that is no longer tenable under the present system of resource control. Not only have the colonial laws and the successive indigenous government laws made mineral the property of the Federal Government of Nigeria, the Land Use Act of 1979, has also effectively placed all lands in the country in the care of the Federal and State governments ( Omoruyi, 2001).

### **Agitation and Innovations for Resource Control in Nigeria**

The history of the area now known as Nigeria is characterized by agitation for resource control. First, after the abolition of slave trade in 1807, local traders engaged in resource control struggles to participate actively in the trade of palm oil (Ako and Okonmah, 2009). Similarly, resource control was one of the highlights of the Ijaws' representation to the Willink Commission. Thus, it should be emphasized from the outset that in Nigeria, States, majority as well as minority groups have on one occasion or the other in history agitated for resource control. However, the demand for resource control reached its crescendo as soon as the Military Government of General Yakubu Gowon created a twelve-State federal structure on May 27, 1967 from the former four regions. On the one hand, some of the States that were

created e.g., the oil-rich Rivers and Eastern States as well as Lagos immediately demanded for the control of the natural resources located and extracted from their areas. On the other hand, major areas that were not granted statehood, but were economically viable equally demanded for resource control out of frustration (Ekwuruke, 2005). Before this time, however, the struggles for the control of the nation's resources have also, to some extent, been based on the regional cleavages. This, entwined with political conflict, has sometimes led to political manipulations and delineations with the aim of influencing wealth allocation. Therefore, agitation by these regions, States as well as ethnic groups in the country had been recurrent events.

Resource control became a prominent issue in Federal-State relations in Obasanjo's Nigeria, with the littoral states (AkwaIbom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Ogun, Ondo and Rivers) claiming that the natural resources located offshore ought to be treated or regarded as located within their respective states. The claim by the littoral states was more so accentuated by Decree No. 106(1992) which abrogated the onshore/offshore dichotomy for the purpose of calculating the amount of revenue accruing directly from any natural resources derived from any state pursuant to Section 162(2) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999. It is also important to observe that Section 162(2) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended) states that: (a) the natural resources located within the boundaries of any State are deemed to be derived from that State; (b) the seaward boundary of each of the littoral States is the low water mark of the land surface thereof or inland waters within the States; (c) the natural resources located within the territorial waters of Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory are deemed to be derived from the federation and not from any State; and that (d) the natural resources located within the Exclusive Economic Zone and the Continental Shelf of Nigeria are subject to the provisions of any treaty or other written agreement between Nigeria and any neighbouring littoral foreign State, derived from the federal and not from the State.

Flowing from the above, it could be argued that the agitations for resource control by both the Federal and State governments must have been pursuant to the proviso to the sections of the constitution highlighted above. In recent times, States and some sections of the Nigerian State have on one occasion or the other agitated for resource control for a number of reasons. For instance, the continued agitation for resource control by the Niger Delta region is, perceived as one of the manifestations of the struggles to redress perceived injustices and inequalities in fiscal relations among ethnic nationalities, regions and political units within the Nigerian federation. It is also perceived as a necessary fall-out of the degradation of their environment and the neglect of their conditions by the central government, which is seen as advancing the interests of the ethnic majorities to the detriment of the minorities.

Despite these, the Niger Delta people suffered untold deprivation and disinheritance, leading to agitation for resource control. It is important to point out that the agitations by the minority group in the Niger Delta, over the control of oil revenue, compensation for environmental degradation arising from oil exploration appear to be the greatest challenge to nation-building and national stability in Nigeria in recent times. Advocates of resource control have argued that in any true federalism, powers are shared between the federating units and the central government in such a way that each government has its own apparatus for the conduct

of its own affairs. It is argued in any true federalism, the oil, gas or any other mineral found in state belongs to the state. They maintained that the fact that the areas where the national wealth is extracted are the poorest in the country is unfair. The conditions of these areas and their people is aptly captured by Duru (1999), when he observed that, although the bulk of crude oil, the county's main source of revenue is derived from their land, they belong to the ranks of the most marginalized groups in the country. Another is that several years of exploration and hazards of spillage and gas flaring which accompany it have degraded their environment and left the communities desolate. Not only have farming and fishing, the major occupations of these mostly riverine minorities been decimated, their territories have continuously lacked basic infrastructure and amenities like electricity, roads, schools, hospitals, portable water ..." (Duru, 1999: 54).

The fact is that resource control is meant for the diversification and revamping of the solid minerals sector which has been neglected over the years. To this end, the belief is that the practice of resource control will improve the pace of economic development of the whole country in general and particularly make the respective states to identify their comparative advantages which best serves the country. The overdependence on oil has resulted in the abandonment of the solid mineral sector by promoting the activities of illegal miners. However, as succinct as the points raised by the advocates for resources control, mostly from the south, their northern counterparts have on the other hand consistently seem to be working against this agitation. The contemporary notions of resource control have been characterized by both peaceful and violent activities. While the period when the Ogoni's were at the forefront of the struggle was largely peaceful, the recent shift of focus to the Ijaw's witnessed an escalation in military and violence. The response of the federal government has typically included the creation of development boards, state creation, pacifications (Ukeje, 2011) and more recently, the amnesty initiative. The relative peace in the region and consequent increase in oil production figures is touted as evidence of the success of the amnesty initiative by the Federal Government. Basking in the euphoria of allegedly curbing the consequences of the malaise, the federal government has neglected to resolve the underlying issues that instigated and or exacerbated the agitation for resource control and resultant restiveness in the region. Thus, while the government is spending billions of naira in stipend payments as well as educational and vocational training for (ex) militants, it has not vested any meaningful resources to remedy the root causes of the agitation for resource control. In a sense, the agitation for resource control has not recorded any meaningful success; therefore, Niger Delta agitation would not stop without true federalism.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has critically examined the crucial issues of resource control and true federalism in Nigeria. The basic truth for true federalism is to allow each state in a federation a significant measure of autonomy to manage its affairs. The federalist debate in Nigeria centers on the need to understand the basis of the contract of the federalism and resource control. This debate is longstanding, passionate, destabilizing and inconclusive. Niger Delta agitations remain a case study for the enthronement of true federalism and resource control in the country and therefore deserve our commendation. The regions in the First Republic were very strong because they enjoyed resource control and were financially autonomous. Contrary to the views expressed from the Northern part of the country that resource control would benefit

only the oil producing states, it will definitely benefit all states in the federation. This is because all parts of the country are richly endowed with abundant natural resources waiting to be explored and exploited. These states will therefore exercise exclusive jurisdiction over the natural resources in their respective regions.

The quest for resource control therefore according to Dafinone (2015) remains a basic political theory grounded on the fact that land, labour and entrepreneurship are factors of production owned by individuals and should therefore be controlled by them. It is clear from the above literature that when resource control becomes operational in Nigeria, it will trigger healthy competition and development endeavours which will generally benefit the entire country and state maximally.

### **Recommendations**

The following Recommendations were therefore proffered to address the contentious issues of resource control in Nigerian federalism.

1. A quick constitutional reform is imperative so as to resolve certain problems inherent in the operation of the federal constitution in Nigeria.
2. The agitators for resource control should continue to employ better conflict resolution mechanism and superior argument instead of violence and armed struggle to demand for their legitimate rights.
3. An agreed percentage of royalty should be paid by the states to the central government, and all resource producing states should be allowed to participate in the exploitation and exploration of resources in their states.
4. All traits of unitary system of government should be expunged from Nigeria's federalism and states should be given the degree of freedom and autonomy consistent with federalism.
5. Nigeria urgently needs to return to true federalism as it was before independence.

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