

Federalism and the Search for National Security in Nigeria: the Quest for Good Governance

¹Joseph K. Ukwai & ²Bassey Anam

¹*Department of Sociology, University of Calabar*

²*Institute of Public Policy & Administration, University of Calabar*

Abstract

The concept of National Security goes beyond safeguarding the state from external and internal threats. It also involves improving the socio-economic, health, environmental, physical, food and political security of the people, protecting the dominant values, ideology, and way of life of the state from threats and forestalling any form of socio-economic, political and environmental assault on the state. The objective of the paper is to examine the role of good governance and improvement in the standard of living of the citizens as basic requirements for national security. Data are generated mainly from secondary sources, as such adopted qualitative descriptive method of data analysis. The relative deprivation model of frustration-aggression theory forms the premise for assessment. Literature reviewed shows that the failure of governance is core to the socio-economic and political development challenges confronting Nigeria and the spate of violence that threatens national security. It revealed further that governance that enhances the delivery of public goods and improved standard of living for the people has the capacity to guarantee improved security of lives and properties and minimise potential risks to national security. It is recommended that key elements of governance: accountability, transparency, openness, answerability, enforcement and responsiveness must be enthroned in governance.

Keywords: *Federalism, National Security, Responsiveness, Governance.*

Corresponding Author: Joseph K. Ukwai

Background to the Study

Federalism can be seen as a system of government in which governmental powers that exist in a country are shared between central government and other component unit's i.e. state and local government (Adekanye, 2007). Federalism is, therefore, an arrangement whereby powers within a multi-national country are shared between a central authority and a number of regionalized governments in such a way that each unit, including this central authority, exist as a government separately and independently from the others. Federalism in Nigeria is incomplete without its origin (Ake, 1967).

Historical facts show that the structure of Nigeria federalism is traced to 1914 when the Northern and Southern protectorates were amalgamated though with the unitary form of administration (Ake, 1967). Since then, the governmental power that existed in Nigeria started to be shared between the central government headed by the Governor-General and the governments of Northern and Southern protectorates headed by the lieutenant Governors. Therefore, with the existence and recognition of the two autonomous parts of Northern and Southern provinces, the administrative system of Nigeria wore a somehow outlook of a federation (Awolowo, 1947).

In 1939, the country was further divided into three provinces (northern, western, and eastern province) by Governor Bernard Bourdillion. Governor Bourdillion suggested the replacement of the provinces by regions which Arthur Richard later introduced in 1946. The Macpherson constitution of 1951 gave further concrete support in the sense that, the constitution appointed lieutenant Governors to head these three regions and granted legislative power to the legislative and executive councils that were established. The Lyttleton constitution of 1954 removed the final shade of a unitary system of government from Nigeria by establishing a true federal state in the sense that it shared powers between the central and the regional governments (Ake, 1967).

Anderson (1983) noted that to avoid constitutional conflicts that might arise between the central and regional governments, a supreme court was established to handle such conflict. After independence, Nigeria constitution has continued to retain the federal system imposed by the departed colonialist but with some minor modification.

Professor K. C. Whare (1967) had established that maintained that "the fundamental and distinguishes characteristics of a federal system is that neither the central nor the regional governments are subordinate to each other, but rather the two are coordinate and independent". Each government exists, not as an appendage of another government but as an autonomous entity in the sense of being able to exercise its own will in the conduct of its affairs free from direction by any government. Thus, the federal government on one hand and the state governments, on the other hand, are autonomous in their respective spheres. However, this autonomous entity has never being found in Nigeria federalism and this has continued to hamper political, social and economic stability in the country. This remains a core fundamental in Nigeria, which must be addressed.

Osifeso (2010) had argued that federalism offers an approach that unifies diverse peoples into nations. It also retains the elements that can lead to national disunity. Indeed, the federal solution was embraced as a solution to the problematic 'Nigerian question' for it ensures unity in diversity. A properly constructed federal architecture would, in the words of the doyen of

constitutional propriety, Dicey, engender "a spirit of genuine loyalty" to the union. Devolution has, surreptitiously, has become the professed choice of most would-be reformers of the Nigerian project.

Elsewhere, while the federal structure benefits most western countries, the reverse is the case for Nigeria considering the high level of political instability, ethnic crisis, and ethnic/religious crisis among others. The reason is not far fetch; Nigeria is operating a federal system in an awkward manner and this has made frictions and clashes possible which are currently posing a threat to her political development. And to correct this abnormally, the government must seek the part of good governance, which will among other things improve the standard of living of citizens. These concerns form the focus of this paper.

Objective of the Study

The paper is to examine the role of good governance and improvement in the standard of living of the citizens as basic requirements for national security.

Methodology

This paper adopted the historical, descriptive analytical approach as its method of study. The paper, to all intent and purpose, is qualitative in nature. It highlighted the problems that pose the security threat to Nigeria's federalism and further identifies key elements of good governance that are significant in promoting and sustaining the confidence of Nigerians in the Federal structure. Finally, the study relied extensively on the secondary sources of information, such as journals, textbooks, the internet, and newspaper.

The Deprivation theory of frustration-aggression theory

The deprivation theory advanced by Ted (1970) explains why people engage in violence (riots, rebellion, coups, criminal activities etc.). The theory examines psychological causes involving frustration and aggression as the primary source of human capacity for violence. Ted maintained that frustration is neither necessary nor sufficiently leads to violence but greed may drive to violence. Frustration is a much stronger motivating force and prolonged frustration may cause greater probability for aggression. Relative deprivation is the discrepancy between what people think they deserve and what they actually think they can get (Ted, 1970). He noted that people engage in violence because there is a feeling that their expectation cannot be met if the current status quo is maintained (Roach, 2012).

By using the deprivation theory proposed by Ted Gurr, this study explores the proximate and ultimate causes of ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. The major question, deprivation, extreme poverty, and exclusion are the major inclusive imbalance that causes ethnic unrest and aggression in the country (Alger, 2002). The history of human conflicts shows clearly that wars often begin from minor personal, sectional, economic, political, social and even religious disagreements. No part of Nigeria can consider itself safe when other parts are burning. The threat of anarchy in any part of the country is the threat of anarchy in the entire nation. All across Nigeria there is an ever-lengthening thread of ethnic violence: Ife/Modakeke, Ogoni, and Andonis, Sagamu, Kano, Zango-Kataf, Jukuns/Tivs, etc. These are not isolated events but are interconnected. Powerful social and economic factors gave rise to them (Paden, 2008).

Nigeria's federalism is threatened. There are deep divisions which cause major political issues to be vigorously and violently contested along the lines of intricate ethnic, religious and regional divisions (Rotberg, 2002). Opposing and contending assemblages have a tendency to assume an exclusionary winner-take-all approach. These issues include the control of state power, allocation of resources and citizenship. As a result, states with such divisions are disposed to be delicate and unstable because almost by definition, they have very little in common with regard to convergence and harmony which are necessary to reduce the centrifugal forces that rip them apart (Osaghae and Suberu 2005).

Again, poverty and injustice caused by corruption weaken any sense of mutual tolerance, social solidarity or coexistence, while reawakening social hatred, radicalism, and violence (Anderson, 2010). For this reason, corruption is seen as one of the most important issues that have to be resolved in order to cope with ethno religious conflicts in Nigeria (Adefemi, 2003). The lack of responsible governance is partly to blame for the ethnic and communal conflicts witnessed in Nigeria today.

Federalism and the search for national unity in Nigeria

Classical scholars such as Jean Bodin, Olto, Cosmanus among others, viewed federalism as a voluntary form of political union of independent authorities. The union either temporary or permanent, was based on the need for special common purposes like defense, trade, communications and other reasons that would benefit the parties involved. Contemporary writers on the concept of federalism such as Livingstone, Macmahon, and Riker among others viewed federalism as mutual interactions between and direct contact with, at least two levels of government. These scholars take their root from the 1787 American constitution. The definition of federalism by these scholars rest on the fundamental principle that, federalism is a form of governmental and institutional structure, deliberately designed by political "architects", to cope with the twin but difficult task of maintaining unity while also preserving diversity (Irabor, 2011).

Wheare (1967) talked about "federal principle" i.e. "the method of dividing powers so that general and regional governments are each, within a sphere, co-ordinate and independent of one another". Thus, Wheare's proposition posits that the federal principle essentially entails a legal division of powers and functions among levels of government with a written constitution guaranteeing and reflecting the division. Wheare's formulation of federalism is been drawn correctly from the United States of America which is regarded by him as the archetype of the federal government. Since other formulations of federalism from other scholars are variations of his work, the basic tenets or elements of federalism according to Wheare (1967) will be used as a templates to determines Nigerian federalism and the extent to which Nigeria has fulfilled the basic tenets of federalism. The basic tenets according to him are:

1. There must be at least two levels of governments and there must be the constitutional division of powers among the levels of governments.
2. Each level of government must be co-ordinated and independent.
3. Each level of government must be financially independent. He argued that this will afford each level of government the opportunity of performing their functions without depending or appealing to the others for financial assistance.

4. There must be Supreme Court of the independent judiciary. He argued that in terms of power sharing, there is likely to be conflict hence, there must be an independent judiciary to resolve the case.
5. In terms of the amendment of the constitution, no levels of government should have undue power over the amendment process. He maintained that, once a country is able to satisfy these conditions, such country is said to practice federalism (Irabor, 2011).

Like most African countries, Nigeria was a birth of colonial administration. Political development in Nigeria owes its structure to its colonial masters, which in this case is Britain. Historical facts show that, among several things, the federal structure was a British creation and this has remained this date. However, Otite (1990) disclosed that there has been the interruption in the administrative structure of the nation. He said political development in Nigeria, over the years, was presided over by a centralized unitary system of government. A unitary tradition, therefore, became part of the national ideology. This tradition, of course, was embedded in the mindset of not only the colonialist but also the military juntas that ruled the country for the most part of its sovereign existence (i.e. from 1966 to 1979, 1983 to 1999) (Osifeso, 2010).

Within this period, political authority and fiscal prerogative were vested in the central government. Such arrangements were sustained by a false sense of national ideology (Otite, 1990). These arrangements were, indeed, embedded, over time, in a composite national unity and spurred a mindset whereby political elites were assimilated into the national political culture. The unitary state was the formal embodiment of this process of nation-building. Put differently, the ensuring state structure masked a disparate identity which superseded the divergent cultural identity. Needless to say, this idea was seriously challenged by Nigerian nationalists, but at the outset without much impact until 1954 when Nigeria had a federal constitution (Osifeso, 2010).

Akinterinwa (2010) maintained that even though Nigeria opted for a federal constitution in 1954, since then, Nigeria's federal system has been over centralized to the extent that it reflects more of a unitary than a federal one. There is a quirk of irony here, too. Both the colonialists and the military juntas perceived federalism as a threat to the constitution of a new heterogeneous Nigerian national identity. But proponents of federalism, however, believed that unity could be achieved only by acknowledging the reality of the diverse ethnic mosaic of the society. Of importance, two forces are usually employed in bringing entities together. They are the centripetal and centrifugal forces. According to Mahajan (2006), "a federation comes into being as a result of centripetal forces when independent states agree to join hands and thereby create a new state". That was the case in the United States of America and Australia. Sometimes, a unitary government is transformed into a federal government as a result of centrifugal forces. The units, in practice, demand a large measure of autonomy which can be provided only in a federal structure (Osifeso, 2010).

Structurally, Osifeso (2010) stated that the 1954 constitution turned out to be the springboard from which was to be launched much of future constitutional and political development in Nigeria. Since then, regrettably, though, the Nigerian project remains questionable despite many years of federal practice. Nigerian's ethnic make-up, indeed, still remains what Furnival (1948: 304) calls 'in the strict sense a medley (of peoples) for the mix but do not contribute'.

Obafemi Awolowo, easily one of the foremost Nigerian statesmen, provided an accurate interpretation of the significance of the 1914 amalgamation which he rightly dubbed as a 'geographical mistake'. In his oft-quoted statement, Awolowo (1947: 47-48), said that: "Nigeria is not a nation, it is a geographical expression, there is no Nigerian in the same sense as there are 'English' or 'Welsh' or 'French'".

The word 'Nigeria' is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish who live within the boundaries from those who don't. Almost overnight, the phrase 'geographical mistake' captured an enormous amount of public attention. This cataphrase soon became a synonym of whatever has gone wrong, politically, in the country since Nigeria became independent in 1960. Even the Economist (London) latched on the phrase when it wrote that:

Nigerian was put together in 1960 for the convenience of its people and was governed for 60 years on the principle of 'indirect rule' which did not do much for national unity. Only seven years after independence, the Biafra war showed that a substantial part of the then Eastern region was prepared to fight for independence. The talk is not so much of separation as of confederation or some other funny name for weakening the authority of the central government.

The federal bargain struck by the departing colonial masters and the nationalists during the halcyon years of independence was by its very nature an asymmetrical arrangement. It had ensured differential centrifugal political relations among the constituent regions (or states) and between them as a group and the national government (Akinterinwa, 2010). The uneven development- and relations- in the Nigerian state indicates that even in the heydays of colonialism, the Nigerian project was a deliberate endeavor constructed by political elites ostensibly to fashion political unity out of disparate ethnic and cultural diversities. Its outcome was by no means manifest destiny, the natural consequence of mature political development as implied by the unitary narrative (Osifeso, 2010).

There are specific issues that confront the Nigerian nation state. These issues further pose security challenges to the continuous existence of the federal structure that currently keeps Nigeria as one. There are,

1. Inter-ethnic rivalry: Nigeria is made up of a diverse group of people with different ethnic groups, and the rivalry among Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo has become a serious issue over time. From time to time, these ethnic groups agitate for power which sometimes leads to disagreements and ethnic conflicts among the parties involved. The major reason for ethnic rivalry in Nigeria is lack of cohesion and the inability of the parties involved to concede the defeat in order to promote national peace and unity
2. Power sharing formula: Power sharing has been one of the major issues militating against federalism in Nigeria. This basically ensures that certain elective offices such as the office of the president, governors, and chairman are rotated among several geopolitical divisions in the country.

3. Revenue allocation: The issue of revenue allocation is another issue confronting federalism in Nigeria. Revenue allocation refers to the sharing formula of the country's financial resources among the different tiers of government in the country, with the main objective of enhancing economic growth and development, reducing inter-governmental tensions and promoting national unity. Political elites, especially at the federal level has seen revenue allocation as a tool to satisfy their un-quenching taste for money and this leaves the country in continuous turmoil.
4. Minority issue and the creation of states: As a result of the nature of the multi-ethnicity of Nigeria, it has brought about the issue of minorities which has constituted to one of the major problems militating against the development of the nation.
5. The issue of secession: The inter-ethnic rivalry in Nigeria has constantly disrupted development in the country. Common among the groups is the current issue of the NDA (Niger-delta avengers) who are clamoring to secede from Nigeria and form their own republic. This has resulted to violent, the bombing of pipelines and vandalizing government properties.

Good governance and the sustenance of Nigeria federalism

Good governance is defined by key elements of accountability, transparency, openness, answerability, enforcement and responsiveness must be enthroned in governance. Effective representation by the elect is an important democratic value that must be enthroned. Representation is a fundamental principle of democracy but must, however, be back up with responsiveness on the part of the elect. It is responsiveness that makes the elect accountable to the electorate. Accountability is impossible without transparent responsibility. Therefore, it is claimed that authority decentralization improves accountability because citizens are more likely to see the effects of government action at the local level and respond accordingly in exercising their franchise.

One thing is clear in a federal system of government, the tiers of government ought to share political power as expressly spelled out in the constitution. Akinterinwa (2010) reiterated that unfortunately, the current foundation and principles on which Nigerian constitution is operated over the years particularly since the advent of democracy has not in any way reflected a true federalism in its practical sense.

Presently, Nigeria has a strong center and weak states. The states have become administrative units of the federal government. The relationship between the center and the states still reflects the military command structure, an unwelcome legacy of the military administration. The states are so weak that none of them enjoys fiscal independence from the center (Ojo, 2006). The federal government pays the piper and is happily dictating the tune to the states. The states are so weak and so generally impoverished that they have no capacity even to negotiate meaningfully with the center. None of the states as it is now can generate enough internal revenue to prosecute any appreciable social and economic development. Instead of pillars, the states have become a burden on the federation.

It is a fundamental reality that, Nigeria cannot have a strong and united federation unless and until the constituent parts are sufficiently empowered by enabling practices that conform to the principles of federalism. Good governance defined by key elements of governance:

accountability, transparency, openness, answerability, enforcement and responsiveness must be enthroned in governance (Ojo, 2009). Thus, this paper suggests the following as relevant in addressing the security challenges that threatens federalism in Nigeria. Adetola (2016) is credited for supporting these propositions.

1. Promotion of national integration and stability: The federal government should ensure that there's cohesion among the people; which will in turn foster stability and unity among her citizens. Integration is very important in nation building, as it examines the problem of diversity and inter-ethnic rivalry and brings about peace and unity among the people.
2. Fairness among ethnic groups: Government should apply less stringent measures among ethnic groups and embrace fairness in order to eliminate the issue of favoritism in Nigeria. A good example of this is the government of the late president Umaru Musa Yar'adua, who was able to solve the problem of killings and pipeline vandalism by proposing amnesty programmes for militants in the Niger-delta. What this has to teach us the day is that; government should not always result in the use of violence to settle conflicts; instead, they should embrace dialogue.
3. Removal of indigene and non-indigene dichotomy: In 2012, Governor Aliyu Babangida of Niger state called for the removal of indigene and non-indigene dichotomy from the constitution in order to foster unity and national integration. He, however, stated that " the indigene and non-indigene dichotomy has caused the nation more problem than what it was initially planned to achieve". The federal government should remove the indigene and non-indigene dichotomy from the Nigerian constitution in order to foster peace and unity.
4. Economic stability: Federalism if properly practiced will bring about economic stability in Nigeria. The idea behind the creation of federalism in Nigeria was to bring about economic development and establish an effective administration. Federalism will bring about stability in the economy and would eliminate any form of crisis which could emanate from the ethnic rivalry.
5. Political stability: The motive behind federalism was to promote unity and to bring the government closer to the people. Federalism was born out of the idea of a peaceful coexistence among citizens where the government is brought closer to the people, stability and cohesion in order to promote national integration.
6. National integration: The significance of national integration in the development of the economy cannot be underestimated. However, federalism promotes national integration and brings about cohesion, peace, and unity among citizens of a country. National integration would eliminate the issue of secession, ethnic rivalry, and the fear of domination by minorities.
7. Eliminate the problem of uneven distribution of government allocations: Federalism will address the problem of uneven distribution of budgetary allocation by the federal government by ensuring that allocation of revenues to different regions is not politicized (Adetola, 2016).

Conclusion

The study examined the role of good governance and improvement in the standard of living of the citizens as basic requirements for national security. From the outlook, it concludes that the success of Nigerian federation hinges on widespread confidence in its safeguards. The ability and commitment of the safeguards to uphold the boundaries of authority must be beyond question. No single force – whether constitutionally derived or tyrannical – should be able to dictate the boundaries of federal and state authority or force other governments to work for it. Each government should remain relevant, responsible, accountable and responsive to the needs of citizens. With a well-functioning system, major violations are punished, upholding compliance; minor transgressions, when allowed promote exploration of the policy space and adaptation of the rules; and the multiple safeguards, each judging governmental actions independently, means that the system is not vulnerable to the failings of one component.

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