

LEADERSHIP AND POWER SHARING IN NIGERIAN FEDERALISM: ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

Federalism is a practical political cum constitutional design for managing complex governmental problems usually associated with ethno-religious and cultural diversity. The abysmal performance of the Nigerian state in the area of development and national integration since independence in 1960 has been attributed mainly to the quality, nature, and character of the nation's leaders. The paper examines the impact of leadership and power-sharing on Nigeria's Federalism, focusing on the issues and perspectives. Exploratory research design, documentary sources, and qualitative descriptive data gathering and analysis methods were adopted. Anchoring our discourse on the Self-Reliance theory, findings amongst others revealed that; the attitudes of Nigeria's political class in their intra-class struggle for political power to consolidate on their primitive accumulation of wealth developed a penchant for aggravating existing cleavages by interpreting politics in terms of survival of ethnic or regional entities. This explains the reasons for the agitation by every region/ethnic group to produce a president or governor at the federal and state levels. The paper recommends, amongst others, that; there should be an emergence of leaders with nationalist appeal who would be more interested in building a nation out of the diverse ethnic and religious nationalities as found presently in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Leadership, Power Sharing, Federalism, Self-Reliance Theory, Governance.*

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1. Introduction

Federalism is a sure process and constitutional arrangement for managing a multi-cultural, multi-religious, and multi-linguistic society. Federalism brings together economically unequal territories under the same political sphere with a promise of mutual participation and respect. It has, however, failed to take firm roots in most African states in general and Nigeria and has also failed as a mechanism for national cohesion. It was to weld together her disparate ethno-religious and linguistic entities that Nigeria opted for Federalism in 1954. The suspicion then was that, with the federal arrangement, the different nationalities that makeup Nigeria's

geographical space would be unified. Thus, different power-sharing modalities and structures have been proposed and implemented since independence as an attempt to guarantee ethnic/regional security. Also, there have been efforts by the various elite groups to engage in power-sharing to achieve their selfish interests within the context of passive distributive politics.

However, over sixty years after flag independence, the country (Nigeria) still totters on as a toddler, often pulled down by joint leadership, identity, power sharing, and integration crises leading many to believe that Nigeria's Federalism has remained fragile with all signs of implosion. Many have equally attributed this development primarily to the successive leaders' aversion to adhering to the principles of true Federalism, which ensures justice, equity, fairness, and good governance for all (Amah, 2017). From the above problems, this paper examines the impact of leadership and power-sharing on Nigeria's Federalism under the following issues and perspectives. This paper is divided into seven sections: introduction, conceptual clarification, theoretical framework, historical overview of Federalism in Nigeria, issues in leadership and power sharing in Nigerian Federalism, and conclusion and recommendation.

2. Conceptual Clarification

2.1. Leadership

Leadership, like other concepts in the social sciences, is a term that does not have a universally accepted definition. Investopedia (2018) sees leadership as the capability of an individual or group of nation administrators to set goals, achieve challenges, take swift and decisive action, and inspire others to perform well and achieve set objectives. Effective leadership shows positiveness and vision and provides optimistic energy and impetus for other citizens to work towards the set goals of the society. From these different definitions, leadership is poised as a process involving an individual or group of individuals who are wielding some level of influence in such a manner as to bring about the accomplishment or fulfillment of specific objectives (Onolememen, 2015).

2.2. Federalism

Federalism is borrowed from the Latin word "foedus," meaning covenant. As a political concept, it involves the bounding together of a group of members by a covenant, with a governing representative head of heads. Federalism, as a system of government, includes a

division of power that is constitutionally specified and that recognizes the vatical and horizontal levels of government - that is, (a) a national or federal government ; (b) a state or regional government. And in some countries like South Africa and Nigeria, a local or municipal government. And An Executive, Legislative and Judicial division, respectively.

From an operational perspective, Ojo (2002), cited in (Majekodunmi, 2015), points out that Federalism is an effective political-cum-constitutional design for managing complex governmental problems usually associated with ethnic, economic, territorial, linguistic, historical, and cultural diversity. one of the important components of a federal system is a relatively rigid constitution that clearly sets out the power competences among the different levels of government.

3. Theoretical Framework

This work is anchored mainly on the Self-reliance Theory as propounded by Lowe John in 1988 and popularised by Ukeje (1992). Self-reliance is a concept within the Cherokee holistic world view where all things come together to form a whole. ("Cherokee Self-Reliance and Word-Use in Stories of Stress") The theory postulates that individuals, communities, institutions, organizations, groups, government organs, and agencies are all endowed with potentials, resources, and capabilities that are harnessed for the survival of the whole (Kalagbor & Deinibiteim, 2020). As Bakari (2017), cited in Kalagbor and Deinibiteim (2020), noted, all the groups are to rise and contribute their quota to ensure collectivity and productivity for self-reliance in all spheres of national integration, nation building, and development. According to Lowe (2012), to achieve nationhood through building unity and integration, groups must be true to themselves and have the drive to be connected. This involves being responsible, disciplined, and confident.

This theory is relevant to our present study and the Nigeria socio-political environment as there are so many challenges as a result of the leadership deficit, which has created a power-sharing arrangement that is skewed and, in turn, has led to agitations by different ethnic groups calling for equity, justice, fairness, resource control, and self-determination, Etc. (Kalagbor & Deinibiteim, 2020).

4. Historical Overview of Federalism in Nigeria

The Amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914 introduced economic, political, and administrative struggles between these two very different territories. These were real and concrete struggles for survival and domination. The constitutional development of Nigeria, beginning with Clifford's constitution, attempted to change this inherited system of struggles, a system that kept administrative and political departments separate. However, the changes only increased the growing conflicts associated with differences in tradition, religion, character, and orientation.

After a new leadership change in 1943, Sir Arthur Richard took over the leadership of Nigeria as Governor General and divided the country into three regions in a federation without necessarily calling it a federation. However, it was in response to this arrangement that Chief Obafemi Awolowo observed that Nigeria could not be said to be a nation but a geographical expression. For him, There are no Nigerians in the same sense as English, Portuguese or French; the word Nigeria is merely a descriptive appellation to distinguish People who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not. (Biose, 2018)

Currently, the Nigerian state is divided into six geopolitical zones. The South-East Zone comprises; Enugu, Anambra, Imo, Abia, and Ebonyi States. The South-South Zone comprises; Rivers, Cross River, Akwa Ibom, Delta, Edo, and Bayelsa States. The South-West Zone comprises; Ogun, Oyo, Ekiti, Lagos, Osun, and Ondo States. The North Central Zones comprise; Federal Capital Territory Abuja (FCT), Plateau, Nassarawa, Niger, Kwara, Kogi, and Benue States. The North-West Zone comprises; Kaduna, Katsina, Jigawa, Sokoto, Kebbi, Kano, and Zamfara States. And the North-East Zone comprises; Bauchi, Gombe, Borno, Taraba, Adamawa, and Yobe States.

Nigeria is the largest country in terms of population in Africa. She has over 200million people, with about 400 diverse ethnic groups and over 250 different languages. Three major ethnic groups—the Igbo in the southeast, the Hausa-Fulani in the North, and the Yoruba in the Southwest—comprise two-thirds of the national population. The country's ethnolinguistic diversity has been a source of communal, regional, and national tensions in modern Nigeria since its independence in 1960. Deep divisions not only permeate socio-political life but also threaten to tear the country apart without a dominant, cohesive influence at the center. Consequently, the search for workable structural arrangements to balance the country's divergent and decentralized interests has preoccupied every successive government (Agbiboa, 2017).

Bello (2016), cited in Ekoh, Nnamani, and Nnedum (2020), identifies the features of Nigerian Federalism to include the sharing of governmental functions between a federal, regional or subordinate government.

- derivation of powers of different levels of governments from the constitution.
- the adoption of a rigid and written constitution.
- the supremacy of a central government.
- the existence of a supreme court for judicial interpretation and review.
- unified police force.
- decentralization of the public service and judiciary.
- the existence of a bicameral legislature at the federal level.
- the principle of federal character, reflected in all national affairs and opportunities and
- Three-tier system of government.

5. Issues and Perspectives in Leadership and Power Sharing in Nigerian Federalism

In this Section, this work examines the various issues that have plagued the practice of Federalism in Nigeria, intending to expose the challenges and proffer solutions.

5.1. Elites and Power Centralization

Nigeria's federal system can be described as having a high tendency to centralize. The centralizing actions which began during the era of military rule are the fundamental oddity characterizing the system. (Babalola & Onapajo, 2019). This occasioned the persistent agitations, conflicts, struggles, and the creation of slogans like "true federalism," "resource control," "self-determination," or "restructuring ."Tussles like this prove that the current federal practice and its structures are prone to many controversies. The Nigerian elite has regularly taken advantage of the imperfections in the federal Structure in Nigeria to negotiate power and ethno-regional relations with the ultimate agenda of increasing their access to state resources and opportunities to acquire power. As a result, elite struggles in Nigeria's federation have come into play in the guise of power rotation, territorial demarcation, and resource distribution (Babalola & Onapajo, 2019).

5.2. Military Influence on Nigerian Federalism

The over thirty years of military rule in Nigeria consistently altered Federal-State relations in favor of the former, gradually transforming Nigeria from a federal to a unitary state. Worse

still, subsequent civilian regimes toed the same intergovernmental relationship structure that favored the federal and put the state in the position of an administrative organ to the federal. Sadly, different regimes and policies that came after have been unable to muster the necessary political will to consolidate the country's Federalism (Awofeso & Obah-Akpowoghaha, 2017). Also, the military adeptly used the process of state and local government creation to reward allies and create legitimacy for their unpopular regimes.

5.3. The Impact of State Creation on Nigerian Federalism

State and local government creation was a significant feature of Nigeria's Federalism during the military era. Initially, state creation was an agitation by minority groups to guarantee their autonomy against historical structures of domination by other groups. This situation degenerated struggles for who grabbed the larger share of the national cake (country's national resources) as well as political influence as it had to do with the strategy to weaken opposition or reward patronage in the circle of the political elite. For example, Suberu points to the creation of the Mid-West region in 1963 as an apparent attempt by the ruling federal coalition of the Northern People's Congress (NPC) and the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) to score a political point against the opposition—the Action Group (AG)—in the Western region, and not for regional recognition, integration, or political consolidation. (Babalola & Onapajo, 2019).

Unlike other federations, state creation in Nigeria seems to suggest that states were not created from existing ones to stabilize ethnic interests but to weaken an opposing elite against a ruling elite. The Yakubu Gowon administration's state creation in 1966 serves as a reference point. They were created as a political and military strategy against the threat of secession by the eastern region. (Awofeso & Obah-Akpowoghaha, 2017).

5.4. The impact of Corruption on Nigerian Federalism

In Nigeria, corruption has placed a massive barrier on the path to individual rights to liberty, equality, justice, and national development. Corruption is argued to be responsible for the increase in unemployment, poverty index, poor infrastructure, and institutional decay of public offices (Lawal & Tobi, 2006). Corruption leaders lack the political will, probity, accountability, and transparency that is needed to promote true federal practice in Nigeria (Achebe, 1988).

Nigeria's centralized political and economic structures tend to make those who control key state posts fabulously wealthy, while 70% of Nigerians fall into abject poverty (Sklar et al., 2006). Again, these leaders have a brazen disregard for the rule of law and disrespect for an independent judiciary and legislature. Corrupt tendencies and failure of good governance also constitute another major factor in Nigeria's wrong appreciation of the federal system. This endemic corruption by political office holders both at federal, state, and local government levels usually denies the citizens opportunities of having the necessities of life. Most often, resources meant for this are diverted to private accounts through contract inflation and other unwholesome practices. In most cases, citizens also focus their searchlight on corrupt practices at the center, whereas the lower levels are equally culpable. The unfortunate situation is that because people look more towards the federal government to provide them with amenities, lower levels of government tend to parade the erroneous view that their inability to engender good governance in their areas is due to failure on the part of the federal government to provide enough resources (Abdulrasheed, 2007).

5.5. Constitution and Constitutional Amendment in Nigeria

Nigeria, like many other federal countries, has a rigid constitution that has institutionalized the practice of Federalism. Amending the constitution requires securing a two-thirds majority in the two houses of the National Assembly and resolution of sub-national legislatures of not less than two-thirds of all the 36 states in the federation. This rigidity is sterner on issues that have to do with the restructuring of the federation and the fundamental rights of citizens. Amending the constitution or amending the Section that stipulates the procedure of altering the constitution requires the approval of a two-thirds majority of all the members of the National Assembly and approval of not less than a two-thirds majority in all sub-national legislatures of the federation.

However, securing such majorities in the national and sub-national legislatures is quite a Herculean task, given Nigeria's divisive politics of Federalism. Compounding this is that the politics of constitutional change in Nigeria vis-à-vis federalism is characterized by competition for control of power and state resources as it is centered on balancing or capitalizing on regional advantages. This difficulty is poignantly demonstrated in the politics of states and local government creation (Okpanachi & Garba, 2010).

5.6. Power Sharing Arrangement in Nigeria

Power sharing ensures that certain elective offices such as the office of the President, governors, and chairman or membership of federal government-owned institutions are evenly distributed and rotated among the geopolitical divisions in the country. In Nigeria, power-sharing takes the form of federal character, which is constitutional, a Quota system which is an unwritten law, an equity-based revenue allocation system, and state creation. Besides including power-sharing clauses in the constitution, there is also the practice of power-sharing in political office distribution, fiscal allocation, and formation of federal units under both military and civilian regimes (Orji, 2008). The political aspect of power-sharing is concerned with political office distribution. Here, power sharing is realized through the duo method of federal character and zoning. The federal character principle, which was first enshrined in the 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and subsequently the 1999 Constitution, as amended, ensures that recruitments into federal agencies as well as public sectors take on the federal character as well as zoning structure. Zoning here refers to a comfortable arrangement in which Nigeria was divided into 6(six) geopolitical Zones to allot responsibilities. This way, top political, security, and administrative offices are shared among Nigeria's ethno-regional elite groups (Orji, 2008). Unfortunately, the principle of federal character has not lived up to expectation, even though it is enshrined in our constitution.

Power sharing has been one of Nigeria's major issues militating against proper federal practice. Also, our leaders' practice of corruption, favoritism, and nepotism has contributed to making the situation worse. (Kutigi, Shat, Saleh & Shigaba, 2017).

5.7. Fiscal Federalism and Revenue Sharing in Nigeria

Since her independence, Nigeria has been struggling with the issue of revenue/ fiscal Federalism. Sharing formula has remained a sensitive area and one of the most contentious in Nigeria's polity. This is because of her Multi-Structural arrangement. This Multi-Structural dimension includes her composition and pluralism vis-à-vis socio-cultural dimensions. Therefore, it is expected that interactions in terms of fiscal relations will be characterized by aggressive survival of the fittest syndrome and competition. It is even worse when it is viewed from the centralized of her federal practice, which is one of the legacies of the long military control of governance. (Arowolo, 2011). This military practice of financial hegemony that was transferred to the federal government and which the federal government enjoys over the states

and local governments in Nigeria has created disaffection in the Nigerian federation. It has promoted federal structures where component units are vulnerable while simultaneously intensifying the pressures for stronger federal economic patronage (Arowolo, 2011).

Revenue allocation has also generated so much conflict between the tiers of government and the center. This is because the formula is a zero-sum game. The states and the Federal Government often disagree on the timing and amount to be disbursed. Nigerian fiscal Federalism is distinguished by the overwhelming concentration of tax jurisdiction and collection at the level of the federal government. The federal government in Nigeria controls all the major sources of government revenue—petroleum profits tax, import duties, excise duties, mining rents and royalties, and the company's income tax. State and local governments have jurisdiction only residual and low-yielding revenue sources, with the exception of personal income tax, which is at the state level, and property tax at the local level.

5.8. The impact of Ethnicity and Religious Intolerance on Nigerian Federalism

One major implication of leadership failure in Nigeria's Federalism is the inter-ethnic and inter-religious rivalry leading to secession threats that shake the country's very foundation. The issues of mistrust and distrust among Nigerians, particularly among the three major ethnic tribes of Hausa/Fulani, Igbo, and Yoruba, have engendered bitter rivalries and conflicts along ethnic and religious lines. Due to this lack of trust, appointments are usually centered around members of the leaders' ethnic groups. For example, a public statement by notable scholars and politicians like Dr. Junaid Mohammed expressing his lack of trust for a particular major ethnic group in Nigeria in a national newspaper. The statement categorically declared the northern suspicion towards the Igbos, especially as it has to do with who becomes the number one citizen in the country. (Oyoyo, 2019). Such a spectacular display of mistrust and distrust of an ethnic group by another is a recipe for disintegration and can never enhance national unity, integration, and nation-building (Kalagbor & Deinibiteim, 2020).

The Nigerian political elites consistently show that they stand more for their ethnic interest than national interest and are ready to foster conflict or division within this sphere. Threat with levity issues of national integration, and national identity in the country (Osifeso 2011), they prefer the politics of ethnicity and religious favoritism above national integration of interest, and they exploited these factors in their bid to capture power at the federal level. As a result, the mobility of power dynamics and the ability to adjust through negotiation was deliberately

done in the interest of power elites...., these political elites manipulated the competitive feature of Federalism, thus inhibiting the sharing of political power by all and sundry that make up the social-political content of the society...the North, for instance, was hell-bent on retaining political control of the center as this is a means to balancing the southern control of organizational and economic power in the country (Kayode, 2015).

5.9. Issues of the Centralisation of the Country's Security Architecture

The constitution orders the control of the security forces and all related security outfits under the federal government's exclusive right. This already betrays the power and influence of the federal government over the state or local government. Nigeria thus is a federation where all the agencies of force are under the power of a single individual- the President. Thus, the head of all the security apparatuses such as the Army, Navy, Air Force, Nigerian Immigration Service, Nigerian Customs Service, Nigerian Correctional Service, Nigerian Civil Defence Corp, Directorate of State Service, Etc., is under one individual who may hire and fire at will. Today this government agencies are headed by Hausa-Fulani from the North, where the President comes from, or Muslims from the southern the religion of the President.

The control of security by northerners implies that the security of Nigeria and Nigerians is exclusively a northern affair, thereby putting the rest of the country at the mercy of the northern elements. Opejobi, (2018). This has also affected the processes of security responses and interventions.

6. Conclusion

The incapability or reluctance of any political leaders in a federal system to unify and evenly develop the country is a "leadership failure ."Undoubtedly, successive administrations have made various efforts at achieving national integration; however, these efforts have not yielded the expected outcomes, essentially due to insincerity and lack of the political will to do so. This has often resulted in agitations for self-determination, struggle for resource control, security threats, demand to restructure, increase in opportunities in government, Etc. Moreover, efforts on federal principles like federal character, quota system, zoning, and so on engendering integration and inclusiveness among the different ethnic, socio-political, and linguistic groups have only increased mutual suspicion and acrimony. Today the cry for marginalization, restructuring of the polity, constitutional review, and secession is even more. Therefore, leaders with federalist appeal should emerge who would be more interested in building a nation out of

Nigeria's diverse ethnic and religious nationalities. Also, power-sharing arrangement should be institutionalized so that no single individual or group can easily alter the arrangement. Again, zoning, rotational presidency and all the processes must be stipulated in the country's constitution as amended. Finally, the vertical fiscal imbalance in Nigeria, should be addressed with formal institutions so that all tiers of government face hard budget constraints within which to decide allocations.

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