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## Anomalies of the Nigerian Federalism

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### Abstract

The focus of this paper is to highlight the irregularities inherent in the Nigerian Federalism right from the time of its formation that have made it extremely difficult to function properly. Nigeria's Federalism is a classical case of federalism from above. It was a direct British imposition. Unfortunately, some of the most outstanding political leaders involved in the independence struggle, representing their ethnic groups, were against it. Also, the various ethnic groups in Nigeria represent different stages of culture and possess some deep rooted cultural differences as well as sentiments which make it an uphill task to perceive things from the same angle. In fact, there seems to be some kind of stiff competition among them. Resultantly, it will be natural to allow them or even encourage them to develop at their own pace and pattern. It is thus apposite that if the stability of Nigeria's Federalism is desired, then certain drastic measures must be taken so as to restructure it. The methodology of this paper is a critical analysis and conceptual clarification of the trends of political events in Nigeria from the amalgamation in 1914 to the contemporary period.

**Key words:** Federating units; Cultural differences; Rivalry; National conference; Regional autonomy

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### INTRODUCTION

At the evolution of Federalism in Nigeria, most of the political leaders did not hide their reservations. It was clear that to some of them the Nigerian state existed merely on paper. Although most of the ingredients required for a sound federation to come into existence were present, the desire to form a union was almost completely absent. Most certainly, if the colonial masters had administered the different regions separately, the Nigerian Federation would never have come into being. Also, most of the political leaders would have opted for separation of their areas of individual influence, if the British people had consulted them. The colonial masters further compounded the problem through the uneven manner they divided the federation. It is also note worthy that right from the amalgamation in 1914 up to 1954 the Nigerian state had a unitary' government. The provinces and later regions were created initially as mere administrative units. As a corollary, and contrary to what it ought to be, the impetus to federate derived from the desire to draw apart rather than to unite.

### PRE-COLONIAL ERA

It has been stated that the entity called Nigeria has over 400 ethnic groups (Kirk-Green, 1967, p.4, sighted in Osuntokun 1979, p.91) These people operated different administrative systems before colonialism. For instance, the three largest linguistic groups – the Igbo, the Yoruba-Benin, and the Hausa-Fulani operated divergent and completely incompatible modes of administration. While the Igbo people were predominantly republicans without kings, the Yoruba-Benin and the Hausa-Fulani had Obas and Emirs respectively. But, while the Yoruba-Benin Oba was a traditional derivation, the Hausa-Fulani Emir was a theocratic derivation. Comparatively, the Emir had more powers than the Oba and collected tax from his people. Tax was extremely rare in the entire South.

## GENESIS OF FEDERALISM IN NIGERIA

Nigeria came into being in 1914 with the amalgamation of the Southern protectorate and the Northern protectorate. The process of colonizing the entire area started in 1861 with the annexation of Lagos as a British Crown Colony and the subsequent formation of the Lagos Legislative Council. The amalgamation brought about the establishment of the Nigerian Council. Both Councils were, however, abolished with the introduction of the Clifford Constitution in 1922, which established a legislative council for the colony of Lagos and the Southern protectorate. However, the colonial Governor ruled the North through proclamation.

Prior to the time of amalgamation the two protectorates were administered separately by the colonial officers. During this period the development of colonial social and political institutions also diverged. By way of example, in the South, Christian Missionaries were allowed and even encouraged to operate and a professional western educated class was emerging in the South faster than the North. Colonial officials viewed and treated the two protectorates differently.

The decision by the British to amalgamate the two protectorates was prompted by certain factors. First, the South had enormous wealth and was not only self-supporting but usually produced surplus, while the North was impoverished and so was sustained by grants and aids from Britain. Amalgamation, therefore, meant a stoppage of such grants and aids as the wealth of the South would be used to support the North. Second, both the North and the South were colonized by the British. A good number of the ethnic groups had been doing business together, intermingling, interacting, and intermarrying. There were also no serious geographical barriers to communication and interaction of the peoples, irrespective of the large land mass. So amalgamation of the two protectorates connoted an easier administration for the British.

After the amalgamation, Lord Lugard, who was, hitherto, the High Commissioner of the Northern protectorate became the Governor of Nigeria and decided to introduce his indirect rule system, which had worked so well in the North, to the South. Unfortunately, certain features of the Hausa-Fulani Emirates were completely lacking in the South. For instance, the idea of taxation was uncommon to Southerners. Where monarchs existed in the South they were usually sustained by tributes. Also, the monarchs in the South did not possess the tremendous powers of the emirs; worse still, some places had no monarchs. Difficulties suffered by indirect rule in the Middle-Belt (a section of the North without emirs) should have made Lugard forecast the likely outcome of indirect rule in the South if he had been thoughtful enough. Furthermore, the Sokoto Caliphate was a very large empire with a very high degree of decentralization of powers. The emirs of the various emirates owed

allegiance to the Sultan of Sokoto. This meant that any agreement with the Sultan would be effective in most parts of the North.

## FEATURES OF FEDERALISM

Federalism is a difficult concept to define. This is because the most famous federal union, the United States of America, did not come into being as the handiwork of political philosophers or other theorists, but was invented as a practical solution, by American leaders, to the problem which faced them in 1787. It ought, however, to be stated in clear terms that the different federal unions in existence are not and cannot be completely identical, as they were warranted by different circumstances. Granting the above, it may be difficult to justify the view that the Nigerian federal union is anomalous

It is noteworthy that federal unions are usually efforts directed at finding lasting solutions to the centripetal and centrifugal forces of the federating units. K. C. Wheare (1963, p.10) states that, "by the federal principle, I mean the method of dividing powers so that the general and regional governments are each, within a sphere, coordinate and independent". S. S. Ramphal (1979, p. XIV) held a similar view when he said that, "federalism in its broadest conception is a process of unifying power within the cluster of states and decentralizing power within the unified State".

Federalism is usually facilitated, if not necessitated, by certain factors. These include:

- (i) Desire to form a union
- (ii) Common historical experience under a colonial administration
- (iii) Colonial policy
- (iv) Desire to increase the military might of the federating units,
- (v) The size of the country
- (vi) To allay the fears of minority groups
- (vii) Nearness of the federating units
- (viii) Geographical features (barriers)
- (ix) Cultural diversity
- (x) Economic reasons

In as much as all these factors do not need to be present to ensure the establishment of federalism and the presence of all of them does not necessarily warrant a union, one particular factor, to wit, the desire to form a union in a sine qua non. Another crucial factor is colonial policy. What makes this factor crucial is that it can impose a federal union on a people who do not have such a desire, albeit a union thus formed might be unstable. Federalism from colonial policy should, nonetheless, not be confused with that from common historical experience as a consequence of the same colonial government. The latter can still be a derivation of the people's desire. As was the case of the United States of America, it can, in fact, be formed in order to throw off the colonial yoke.

It is important at this stage to differentiate between two types of federal unions, namely; federation from below and federation from above. The desire to form a union is the bedrock of federation from below just as the colonial policy constitutes the source of federation from above. It bears emphasizing “that all classic federations were built from below” (Akinyemi, et al, 1973, p.3).

It should be noted that for the desire to form a union to succeed, it must be guided and be nurtured by political leaders who are truly committed to the operation of the union. K. C. Wheare (1963, pp.39–40) writes:

These factors had been present for a long time and had failed to produce much more than a desire to be loosely associated in a confederation. What was needed also was leadership and that came from Washington, from Hamilton, Jay and Madison, from Benjamin Franklin and James Wilson. In the same way the desire for a union in Canada was made effective by the leadership of such men as John A Macdonald, Alexander Galt and George Etienne Cartier; in South Africa of Smuts, de Villiers, Merriman and Botha; in Austria of Parkes, Barton and Deakin; in Germany of Bismarck; in Italy of Victor Emmanuel, Garibaldi, Cavour and Ricasoli; in Great Britain of Godolphin on the English side and Queensberry, Argyle and Seafield on the Scottish. This factor of leadership, of skill in negotiation and propaganda can make all the difference between stagnation and an active desire for union.

Thus, it is clear that the absence of the right caliber of men or lack of commitment is dangerous to the formation of any federal union.

Among the factors facilitating the formation of a federal union is the effort to allay the fears of minority groups. Thus, it is important that in deciding the boundaries of the federating units, conscious efforts must be made to see that minority groups are not placed at any disadvantage.

Although cultural diversity in the form of differences in language, religion, political institutions, etc may indicate dissimilarities among the federating entities, federations are usually formed not because of, but in spite of differences. That is to say the different linguistic groups would prefer to come together irrespective of their differences for their own mutual benefits. In other words, the regions must develop the “sense of a new common nationality over and above, but not instead of their sense of separate nationality”. (Wheare, 1963, p.50).

A democratic government is also crucial for the proper functioning of a federation. This is the only way there can be true allegiance to both the centre and the region. If the people at the helm of affairs at the regions are appointed by the person at the centre, then most certainly they would show more loyalty to him than to the regions they are supposed to serve, and vice versa. In the end, either a unitary government with highly decentralized powers or a confederation would be the result.

The stability of a federal union also requires that no component unit or component units must be so large as to overpower others. If this were to happen, power would revolve around it or them. A great political philosopher, J. S. Mill, states that:

“In a federation, there should not be any one state so much more powerful than the rest as to be capable of vying in strength with many of them combined. If there be such a one and only one, it will insist on being master of the joint deliberations, if there be two, they will be irresistible when they agree, and whenever they differ, everything will be decided by a struggle for ascendancy between the rivals”. sighted in Ijalaye, 1979, pp.141-154)

When people desire a union, it is usually for a common purpose. Thus, a common ideology is usually essential for the thriving of a federal union. It may be necessary to modify existing social and political institutions both for the realization of the common ideology and the survival of the union. Nevertheless, this must be those institutions which are necessary for the realization of set objectives. If this were not the case, unnecessary distortions may be created which do not enhance the federal union.

## EVALUATING NIGERIA'S FEDERALISM

Having enumerated and explained some of the factors promotive of federalism, it will be helpful to examine how they operated with the Nigerian federation since its formation in 1954.

The Nigerian federalism was a direct British imposition. For this reason, the desire to form a union was almost completely absent. Not only this, most of the political leaders were against it. This clearly shows that the Nigerian federalism was from above. If the British had not intervened in the political development of the different linguistic entities, it was most unlikely that they would evolve into the Nigerian federation. Sir, Arthur Richards, one of the colonial Governors, illustrated this point when he said:

...it is only the accident of British suzerainty which has made Nigeria one country. It is still far from being one country or one nation socially or even economically... socially and politically there are deep differences between the major tribal groups. They do not speak the same language and they have divergent customs and ways of life and they represent different stages of culture (Richards, 1948).

This clearly shows that the colonial masters were aware of this problem. More importantly, some of the federating units were against the union. Thus, the views held by some leading political figures were not different from that of Sir Arthur Richards. For instance, Chief Obafemi Awolowo (1947, pp.47–48) stated that:

Nigeria is not a nation: it is a mere geographical expression. There are no ‘Nigerians’ in the same sense as, there are ‘English’ or ‘Welsh’ or ‘French’: the word ‘Nigeria’ is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not.

The man who was to become Nigeria's first Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (1947, p.208) corroborated this view when he declared that:

Since the amalgamation of Southern and Northern provinces in 1914, Nigeria has existed as one country only on paper, it is still far from being united – Nigerian unity is only a British intention for the country.

Even the man who was destined to become Nigeria's first executive president many years later wrote an article during this period calling for the separation of the North from the South.

Due to the fact that the component units did not believe in the union, secession was often threatened whenever any region felt aggrieved. A few instances will suffice here. The North threatened to secede if 50% representation was not granted her in the central legislator, and also threatened to secede as a result of the misunderstanding which ensued from the motion of Mr. Anthony Enahoro that Nigeria be granted self-government in 1956. The West made the same threat over the question of Lagos and later suggested that secession should be enshrined in the Independence constitution. The drama which ensued between Chief Awolowo and the British Secretary for the Colonies, Mr. Oliver Lyttleton, clearly indicated how determined the colonial masters were to impose the federal union. Chief Awolowo in his telegram to the colonial Secretary stated among other things:

... I challenge you to deny that the people of the Western Region have the right to self-determination and are free to decide whether or not they will remain in the proposed Nigerian Federation. (Awolowo, Telegram to the Colonial Secretary cited in Ezera, 1964, pp. 187-188).

Mr. Oliver Lyttleton, the colonial secretary, replied stating in clear terms that the colonial authorities would use force to bring back any Region which attempted to secede. So against the wishes of most of the component units:

"The British had to put an end to this separatist tendency which manifested itself not only in riots, abusive songs, demonstrations, but also in debates over revenue allocation, on the principle of point of derivation and regionalization of the judiciary and the civil service" (Ezera, p.190).

It is clear from the discussion thus far that majority of the political leaders would have preferred separation to amalgamation. If it were realized that from the time of the amalgamation in 1914 to the formation of the federation in 1954 that the country had been administered by a unitary system of government, it would then be accepted that the Nigerian federalism came as an attempt to draw apart rather than unite. Because of the separatist tendencies of the people, except for the British insistence, they were not loyal to the federation so formed.

It has also been argued that in the formation of a federal union it will be dangerous if one of the federating units is too large compared to others; this was the case with the Nigerian Federation when it was formed in

1954. The Northern Region was bigger than the Western Region and Eastern Region put together both in land area and purported population. From the beginning, the other Regions expressed the fear of being dominated by the Northern Region because of its size. This trend was only worsened by the creation of the mid-Western Region, thus in 1967 the 312 seats of the Federal House of Representatives were distributed among the four regions and Federal Capital Territory in this manner; the Northern Region 167, the Eastern Region 70, the Western Region 57, the Mid -Western Region 14, and Lagos, the Federal Capital Territory 4. This meant that the Northern Region alone had 22 seats more than the other three regions and the Federal Capital Territory put together. In fact, the situation has not changed because the North is still a powerful political block under aegis of the Northern States Governor's Forum (NSGF) which has 19 members out of the 36 governors of the federation. On the other hand, we have the South West and South South Governors' Forum with six members respectively as well as the South East Governors' Forum with five members. This shows that aside from the fact that there are more governors in the North than the South, the Southern governors, unlike their Northern counterparts, do not constitute a single power block.

This lopsidedness cannot be explained for the following reasons: the Kwara people are culturally closer to the Yoruba people, while the Benue people are culturally closer to the Igbo people. Also, after the amalgamation in 1914, unnecessary and unwarranted boundary adjustments were made by the colonial administration to favour the North. Thus a substantial part of the territory which lay in the Southern part was added to the Northern Nigerian Province. At inception, the protectorate of Southern Nigerian covered all the Southern states and extended as far as present-day Niger state. Even the suggestion of G. J. Lethem that the country be divided into four regions; the East, the West, the North and the Middle Belt was not considered. Given the nature and cultural development of the various peoples, Nigeria ought to have been divided into six regions: the North West, i.e. the area of influence of the Sokoto caliphate; the North East, i.e. the area of influence of the Kanem-Bornu empire which is occupied by the Kanuri people; the Middle Belt; the South West occupied by Yoruba people; the South East occupied by Igbo people; and finally the area occupied by the various Southern minorities formed into a region. Alternatively, there should have been only two regions, namely; the Northern region and the Southern region. Either way a stable federal union would have been created. This lopsidedness prompted the Emir of Zaria to demand at the constitutional conference held at Ibadan in 1950 that 50% representation be granted to the North on the proposed central legislature or the North should be separated from the South. He was supported by the Emir of Katsina. Their request was granted.

The problem of this inequality arose again when Mr. Anthony Enahoro moved a notion in 1953 that Nigeria be granted self-government status in 1956. This was opposed by the Northern delegates. Resultantly, members of the NCNC and the AG formed a temporary coalition during recess and decided to walk out if the Northern delegation used her 50% majority to kill the motion. Subsequent developments annoyed the Saruwa of Sokoto who was the leader of the NPC. This eventually culminated into a threat of secession by the North.

Also, after the 1954 general elections, the NCNC was victorious in the Western and the Eastern Regions while the NPC was victorious in the Northern Region, but for the fact that not less than one-half of the seats in the Central Legislature went to the North, the NPC had more seats in the House of Representatives. The problem then was which party should nominate the central ministers. The impasse was overcome when the NCNC and the NPC decided to form a coalition government. It is important to appreciate that the NPC which eventually produced the first Nigerian Head of Government in the person of Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa, advocated and stood for a confederation, instead of a federation. (See Chief S. A. Tinubu, 2001, p.26).

This ugly situation was further complicated because the North did not have the same number of Western educated people as it was in the South. This made Northerners become apprehensive as this level of education placed Southerners at an advantage, socially and economically. Although educated Northerners could hold their own with their Southern counterparts, the problem was their smallness in number. So while the South feared the North because of its size, the North feared the South because of its intellectual sophistication and competence. This implied a mutual fear – a terribly bad situation for the smooth running of any federation.

It was clearly pointed out that conscious and appreciable efforts must be made to see that minority groups are not marginalized. When the federal constitution was established in 1954, the minorities were placed in the three big regions where it was apparent that they would hardly have their say, not to talk of having their way on any issue that concerned them. As independence approached, more political parties and associations with cultural origins emerged. Examples are the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) and the Calabar, Ogoja, Rivers (COR) Movement. These mounted pressure on the colonial administration to look into the fears expressed by the minorities. Thus, the commission headed by Sir Henry Willink was set up. At the end, however, the commission did not see the need for new states or regions to be created. This was mainly because the British were concerned with their own interests rather than the workability of the Nigerian Federal Union. As a result of the improper handling of the problem of minorities

there occurred the Okirika and the Tiv riots shortly after independence. This was to be the genesis of the Niger Delta crises much later.

As a country, Nigeria has been politically independent for more five decades. The civilian politicians have ruled for about 24 years while the military have been in control for the remaining part of the period. The military first intervened in January 15, 1966. Events which brought about this are traceable to the Action Group crises of 1962. This led to the dismissal of the Premier of the West, Chief S. L. Akintola, from the AG. He initially formed the United Progressive Party (UPP). When the alliance between the UPP and the NCNC in the West collapsed, Akintola formed the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) that formed alliance with the NPC. Events in the Western Region continued until the military took over the government of the country.

The first military government headed by Major General J. T. U. Aguyi-Ironsi abolished the Federal Constitution and made Nigeria a Unitary State. The reason for this was the belief that the regional centrifugal forces were pulling the country apart. When Ironsi was assassinated and his government overthrown, the man who took over the helm of affairs, Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon, abolished the unitary structure and reintroduced federalism. Gowon was the person who divided the country into twelve states. Prima facie this was aimed at reducing the strength of the regions while at the same time strengthening the federal government. The idea of weakening the regions by creating twelve states was wrong in principle. The newly created states were economic weaklings. This made them dependent on the Federal Government for subvention, and this has remained so till the present day, making it an uphill task to realise a genuine fiscal federalism in Nigeria. Strictly speaking, the division was calculated to frustrate the secession being carried out by the Eastern Region. It could still be said that the purpose was negative since it was aimed at instigating people from the same geographical location against each other. Subsequent military administrations divided the country into 19, 21, 30 and 36 states. In fact, it is difficult to determine whether Nigeria is a federal government or a highly decentralized unitary government, wrongly labeled a federal government. The truth is that since 1966 the government of Nigeria has been more unitary than federal.

This position is further compounded by the fact that there has been military government much of the time. During such a period it is the Head of State who usually appointed the governors of the states and could also remove them from office. In this set up governors were told to regard their appointments as military postings. This clearly shows that their loyalty would be to the Armed Forces and to the man who put them in office. J. I. Elaigwu (1979, p.157) writes:

In the military hierarchy of authority, the Head of the Federal Military Government appoints all state governors who are

responsible to him. This neglects the traditional principle of federalism and fits into Apter's model of mobilization with hierarchical chain of command and minimum "accountability" to the people.

In fact, it is extremely difficult to have a federal union in a non-democratic set up. If those at the helm of affairs at the centre are agents of strong forces at the region, it would be very difficult for them to show equal loyalty to both the centre and the region. This was part of the problem of Nigeria's first Republic where the Prime Minister was subordinate to a Regional Premier at the party level. In the same vein, if those at the helm of affairs at the region are appointed by a person at the centre there cannot be equal loyalty to the people at the local level and the appointing power at the centre. So there exists a major flaw whenever there is a military government in any country with a federal structure. In this regard, K. C. Wheare (1963, p.47) stated that:

Federalism demands forms of government, which have the characteristics usually associated with democracy or free government. There is a wide variety in the forms which such government may take, but the main essentials are free election and a party system, with its guarantee of a responsible opposition.

With the return of civilian administration in the country, the problem still remains. President O. Obasanjo was always meddling with the positions of governors, always attempting to remove them from office. Clear instances are J. Dariye of Plateau State, R. Ladoja of Oyo State, D. S. P. Alamiesegha of Bayelsa State, and C. Ngige of Anambra States.

Since it is an uphill task for federalism to operate without democratic institutions, it is thus not proper to strengthen monarchical institutions as is the case with Nigeria. The 1976 local government reforms carried out by the Obasanjo military regime strengthened existing monarchies and created new one where they were hitherto non-existent. In Igbo land, where republicanism was predominant<sup>1</sup>, the children of colonial paramount chiefs, warrant chiefs, members of the Eastern Nigeria House of chiefs, in many cases, aspired to become kings. In several other cases, however, a lot of people without these antecedents, particularly the *nouveau-riche* endeavored also to become monarchs. This brought confusion in the areas affected. In some cases, traditional communities were divided as a result of 'ezeship' tuzzle. A case in point is the traditional community of Obube which had to become two autonomous communities, Ulakwo and Obube, in 1980 due to ezeship tuzzle. In fact, the existence of those so-called traditional rulers' contributed immensely to the destruction of the people's real tradition. Achebe (1985, p.48) put in lucidly thus:

The bankrupt state of Igbo leadership is best illustrated in the alacrity with which they have jettisoned their traditional republicanism in favour of mushroom kingships. From having no kings in their recent past the Igbo swung round to set an all-time record of four hundred 'kings' in Imo and four hundred in Anambra!<sup>2</sup> And most of them are traders in their stalls by day and monarchs at nights; city dwellers five days a week and traditional village rulers on Saturdays and Sundays. They adopt 'traditional' robes from every land, including, I am told, the ceremonial regalia of the Lord Mayo of London.

It may be insisted that this is not abnormal since the harmonization of social and political institutions enhance, rather than hinder, the performance of federations. What bears emphasizing is that the social and political institutions that should be harmonized are those which are both democratic and relevant to the improved performances of the federation. That is to say the institutions to be harmonized must be those that are found on democratic and liberal principles. By way of example, the issue of slavery was a bone of contention among the American states; while the South supported slavery the North rejected it. This led to the civil war which nearly broke the American union. To address this contentious issue and bring harmony, slavery was abolished. Certainly, it would not have been reasonable if, rather than abolishing slavery, it had been liberalized in all the states for the purpose of harmonizing social institutions.

One amusing thing about this development is that inspite of the unitary manner of the country, the different peoples are still as divided as before. In these early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) is still raising issues which border on self-determination. Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASOB) is still active. The Oodua People's Congress is waxing strong in the South-West working for what her members believe to be the Yoruba interest. There are many militia groups in the Niger Delta Region fighting what they perceive to be injustice. Examples are the Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) led by Alhaji Mujahid Dokubo-Asari and Mr. Henry Okah respectively. (See Nigerian Tribune, Monday, June 18, 2007, p.3). It seems that neither of them and perhaps their followers accepted the olive branch extended to the Niger Delta militants in the form of amnesty by late President Umaru Yar'Adua. Okah was jailed recently by a South African court for 34 years for his involvement at bombings in Warri (March 2010), Abuja (October 1, 2010) and for threatening the South Africa. The bombings attracted a sentence of 12 years each, while the threat is 10 years. However, he is to spend a total 24 years in jail as the last two sentences are to run concurrently. (See *The Nation*, March 27, 2013; pp.1, 4,

<sup>1</sup>Onitsha people and Igbo people West of the Niger had kings before the colonial era.

<sup>2</sup>The area previously known as Imo and Anambra covers five states at present, to wit; Abia, Ebony, Enugu, Anambra and Imo.

61). Due to the above MEND is said to have resumed hostilities in the Niger Delta.

At present, Nigeria is not faced with any external threat, but it is greatly threatened internally and may subsequently implode unless some drastic measures are taken. As Jiddere (2013, p.29) noted: "... the security situation of a country is determined by both internal and external factors ... the internal dimension ... is usually the most (sic) primary and largely the determinant of the external dimension". Although the petro-dollar has contributed to making the central government more powerful than the states, not all those from areas which have petroleum resources are pleased with the way the money is being spent. In the creation of states, members of the Armed Forces were also known to have been involved in some boundary manipulations. They also influenced the locations of state capitals. It is a truism that the different ethnic groups still perceive national issues differently. A clear case in point was the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election. Although the annulment of an election considered free, fair and peaceful was initially condemned generally, it latter, almost became a Southern affair with the most vociferous critics from the South West. It ought not to be so. (See Vanguard Wednesday June 12, 1993 p. 4). Also, at a point the Northern Elite expressed the view that rather than reverse the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election power should be return to Alhaji Shehu Shagari who was overthrown via a military corp d'état in 1983. (Ojukwu, et al, 2013 , pp.110-111)

It is important to note that if the Nigerian federal union must survive, then concrete efforts must be made to re-structure it. Second, all the linguistic groups must come to the drawing board to fashion out a union that would appeal to, at least, majority of the peoples. It would be preferable if people are allowed or even encouraged to pursue the line of self determination if they so desired. Alternatively, regional autonomies should be granted.

## TRENDS, PERSPECTIVES, EVALUATION AND SOLUTION

Unless these factors militating against the Nigerian Federal Union are properly tackled by a National Conference, it would be most difficult for the union to make progress. Such a round table talk would avail the opportunity to discuss the nature and terms of the Nigerian Federation. (See *The Rock*, vol. 2 No. 2, Feb 2005, p. 1).

Pressing issues to handle include the sharing of political powers (offices), revenue derivation and allocation formula, the nature and constitution of the armed forces and the police as well as other security agencies, among others. The lopsided nature of these various aspects of government agencies and institutions has consistently favoured some parts of the country over the others. As

a consequence, there were calls by the Afenifere, Prof. Biobaku, and Chief Abraham Adesanya that regional armies should be allowed. As Adesanya explained, the Nigerian Army is not a Federal, but a Northern Army. This is because it is neither federal in structure nor in command. For example, it has been reported that soldiers are leaking secret information to the Boko Haram . (See *National Mirror* Thursday, May 23, 2013, p.1) Also the Egbe Omo Yoruba – Yoruba people in the U. S. A., Canada and Europe-had demanded regional autonomy as the only basis for remaining in the Nigerian Federation (*The Punch*, front page, August 5, 1998). This was before Obasanjo became civilian president of Nigeria in 1999.

There is no gainsaying the fact that any federal union which disregards some of its component parts, as is the case with Nigeria, in the distribution of political offices, beneficial and equitable revenue allocation, and sharing of economic and social amenities is bound to encounter problems, Pierre Trudeau, the former Canadian Prime Minister, captured the fact thus:

It is ..., obvious that a national consensus will be developed... only if the nationalism is emotionally accepted to all important groups within the nation. Only blind men could expect a consensus to be lasting if the national flag or the national image is merely the reflection of one part of the nation, if the sum of values to be protected is not defined so as to include the language or the cultural heritage of some very large or tightly knit minority, if the identity to be arrived at is shattered by a color bar. The advantage as well as the peril of federalism is that it permits the development of regional consensus based on regional values; so federalism is ultimately bound to fail if the nationalism it cultivates is unable to generate a national image which has immensely more appeal than the regional ones. (Trudeau quoted by Ramphal 1979, pp. xxi-xxii).

In line with the foregoing Akin Ajose-Adeogun captures the mood of many individuals and groups in the country when he noted that:

Foremost among the ... issues ... is the question of redefining the terms under which the numerous (and all too frequently antagonistic) ethnic nationalities that constitute the Nigerian Union can most beneficially associate. It is the failure to define generally acceptable terms of association that has more than any other factor, produced the long standing problems of political hegemony, economic exploitation, inept leadership, arbitrary government, ethnic hatred and violence, social injustice, political instability and thus impeded the national development. (*The Guardian, Wednesday, July 15, 1998, p.7*)

This is a recurring decimal. One hard fact we must all face today is that whatever may be our ideological leaning and pretences we must either deal with this problem of national question or every other thing may eventually fall apart.

The Nigerian union is endangered because the nationalism it cultivates does not generate adequate national image which supersedes the regional consensus. In fact, Nigerians, particularly the political leaders do not possess any Nigeria consciousness. For example, in 2003 the leaders of Alliance for Democracy, who were the chief opponents of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo in 1999,

adopted him as their presidential candidate. The main consideration being that he is their kinsman.

In 2011, the North insisted that it was their turn to produce the president of the country: they threatened fire and brimstone if a Northerner did not emerge as the president of the country. They said they would make the country ungovernable if a Northerner did not win. (See *Vanguard*, Monday, May 13, 2013; pp.16, 31, 52, 53). A good case in point is the statement attributed to former Head of State, Gen. M. Buhari (rtd) that: "There may be no Nigeria. I draw parallel with Somalia so many times (Somalisation of Nigeria)" (See *Vanguard*, Monday May, 13. p.53). Given the above violence broke out in 12 of the 19 states in Northern Nigeria. These are Bauchi, Zamfara, Niger, Jigawa, Katsina, Kano, Adamawa, Borno, Yobe, Nasarawa, Gombe and Kaduna States. In the course of disbursing funds to some of the affected states, a politician of Northern extraction, Vice President Namadi Sambo, "expressed regret that after the transparent efforts that produced the election that was universally acknowledged as being highly successful, it was marred by sporadic acts of violence and civil disobedience in some parts of the country". (*National Mirror*, Friday, May 17, 2013. p.5) The Northerners are still threatening. Among other Northerners, it is reported that Lawal Kaita stated as follows:

A Northerner must emerge in 2015 or Nigeria will divide. We hear rumours all over that Jonathan is planning to contest in 2015. Well, the North is going to be prepared if the country remains one. That is if the country remains one, we are going to fight for it. If not, everybody can go his way. (See *Vanguard*, Monday, May 13, 2013, p.53).

Perhaps reacting to these numerous threats by Northerners, Alhaji Mujahid Asari-Dokubo, alleging a gang up against President Goodluck Jonathan, stated that if Dr. Jonathan is not re-elected in 2015 there will be no peace both in the Niger Delta and other parts of the country. It has also been alleged, that Hon. Kingley Kuku, Special Adviser to the President on Niger Delta, while in the United States of America said that the relative peace being enjoyed in the Niger Delta cannot be guaranteed if Dr. Goodluck Jonathan is not re-elected. These comments have warranted reactions from Dr. Babangida Aliyu, Governor of Niger State and the Chairman of Northern States Governors' Forum (NSGF) as well as the Federal House of Representatives, led by Rt. Hon. Aminu Tambuwal, a Northerner. This is very interesting since the numerous seditious and inflammatory comments from several Northern leaders did not elicit the same reaction. In response to the above, the Ijaw National Congress (INC) issued a press release, while Chief (Dr.) E. K. Clark wrote an open letter to the Speaker and the Federal House of Representatives. (See *Saturday Vanguard*, May 11, 2013; pp.10-12; *Vanguard*, Monday, May 13, 2013, pp.31; 52-53).

Aside from the violence which broke out in 2011 because the election was won by a Southern Christian and which claimed the lives of many innocent people, including National Youth Service Corp members, who were serving as ad hoc electoral officials, the Boko Haram, "officially known as *Jamaatu Ahlissunnglidda awatiwal-jihad*, meaning Group committed to propagating the Prophet's teachings and Jihad" (Ngunan, 2013, p.134) has been causing enormous damages to human lives and properties. Members of this fundamentalist Islamic sect are said to be against Western Education. Probably they are fighting cultural imperialism. But while perceptive Southerners see Western education as a means of acquisition of power, wealth, influence, and general upward social mobility, the Northerners perceive it as a means of destroying the cultural basis of their society. Westernization is perceived by them as an extension of Christianity, and thus viewed with utmost suspicion. This same sentiment led to the butchering of some health workers in Kano in the recent past.

While Northern leaders of thought like Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, the Governor of Central Bank, aver that what propels insurgency in the North East is poverty, the leaders of the Boko Haram sect assert that they have a pact with Allah to Islamise the whole country. Not long ago, Abubakar Shekau, the leader of the sect cited the Glorious Qur'an Surah ix: 111 as the source of their impetus. He made it clear that they have a duty to kill Christians and other "unbelievers" as well a muslims who report them to the security agencies. In the same vein, Kabiru Umar, a. k. a.; Kabiru Sokoto had stated that his "sect believes that it is lawful to rob Christians and dispossess them of their belongings". (See *Saturday Vanguard*, May 11, 2013, p.7). One wonders which law he is referring to: To be sure, it is not the Nigerian law.

The above shows clearly that the Boko Haram insurgency is a complex matter. The solution to it can neither be via heavy military bombardment nor amnesty. Either or both of them can be adopted as a temporary measure, but neither each of them nor both of them can solve the problem. What is needed is dialogue "so as to understand or appreciate the interests, wants, needs, and fears of the members" (Nwaorgu, 2013, p.151).

People who are suggesting amnesty tend to compare the Boko Haram insurgency with the Niger Delta militancy, but they are mistaken for the activities are worlds apart. The Niger Delta militancy was a socio-economic struggle, the Boko Haram insurgency is a religious/ideological war. For the Niger Delta militancy it was an internal struggle. But the Boko Haram have been said to have links with al Qaeda in the Islamic maghreb, sponsors from Saudi Arabia, Algeria and Libya, and that some of their members are not even Nigerians. For Example, Kabiru Umar (Sokoto) stated that their sponsors are based in Algeria. (*Daily Sun*, Tuesday,



May 14, 2013, p.5). It has also been reported that the insurgents are fighting with sophisticated weapons from Libya. (Vanguard, Wednesday, May 22, 2013, pp.1, 5, 8). Furthermore, members of the security agencies such as the Army are involved in leaking secrets to the Boko Haram. (*National Mirror*, Thursday, May 23, 2013, pp.1, 2, 5).

Given the nature of the Niger Delta problem it was assumed that empowering the militants economically would solve the problem. However, that activities of the Henry Okah led MEND and the utterances of Dokubo-Asari have shown this assumption to be wrong. Just as amnesty could not solve the Niger Delta problem, it will not also solve the Boko Haram insurgency which is more complex. In fact, it is likely to complicate it further because it may amount to empowering the insurgents for their struggles.

## CONCLUSION

An analysis of the anomalous Nigerian Federalism was carried out in this paper. It was clearly pointed that the nature of the Nigerian Federation contravened many crucial features of a true federation. The most important being the lack of the desire to come together. It was a federalism designed by the British and forced on the people by the British. But rather than cry over spilt milk, Nigerians should take their destiny into their hands and work out for themselves a federalism which will take into consideration the Nigerian circumstances.

This is the only way the country can realize her dreams, which late President Umaru Yar'Adua admitted had not been realised since independence (See *Business Day*; Thursday October 01, 2009, p.1). For example, the idea of zoning adopted by the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) can be appropriated and entrenched in the constitution with proper details worked out to handle cases of removal from office and death of people elected into sensitive political positions.

It is also suggested that more powers should be devolved to the states. The country should be re-structured so as to have the present six geo-political zones with some adjustments, as the federating units. All the revenues collected from the federating units should be controlled by them with a certain percentage which must not exceed 30% paid to the central government. The percentage of revenue payable to the central government from the federating units must be uniform. Also the federating units should be in charge of all natural resources in their domain. The federating units should have enormous powers. All issues pertaining to local government creation, administration and financing should be a regional affair.

The sharing of political offices and powers among the federating units, at the national level must be clearly defined and stipulated in the constitution. The offices and powers should be rotated among the federating units and the arrangements properly specified. This will

greatly minimize accusations and counter accusations of dominance and marginalization.

Re-structuring in this manner will also allow each of the federating units to develop and appropriate the cultural values they consider best for themselves. For example, traditional social institutions such as religion and education are of overwhelming importance and must never be toyed with or imposed on people. All issues pertaining to education and religious must be regional affairs. Policies and relevant curricula will be developed to suit the respective region's sentiments and beliefs. The central government can only be involved at the supervisory level to make sure such policies are not aimed at deliberate disaffection to any other region. The central government must never be involved in the administration of educational institutions as well as the financing of education and any sort of religious activities.

At this stage, a dialogue in the form of a National Conference becomes essential so as to have certain things properly understood and clearly defined. By way of instance, to most Southerners, particularly non-Muslims, the activities of the Boko Haram sect are meaningless. They find it difficult to comprehend that in this modern age any group of people could be against "Western" education despite its obvious advantages; or that a rational person could consider it proper to impose a given religion on other people. But to most Northern Muslims, who perceive them as people of the *Jamaa*, their activities are meaningful. What is being referred to here is not support but understanding. Situations of this nature make a National Dialogue inevitable.

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