



## True Federalism or no Federalism? Interrogating Nigerian Federal Question

**ABEGUNDE, Ola & NWAGURU, John Udochi**

<sup>1 & 2</sup> Department of Political Science, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria

*Corresponding Author's Email: ola.abegunde@eksu.edu.ng*

### Abstract

Majority of multiple societies like Nigeria, support federalism as a political system because it allows for the coexistence of people with different cultural and ethical backgrounds while still fostering competitive development. The degree to which federal systems are able to handle the inherent changes that more often than not arise in the operations and functioning of the system, however, determines the continued existence and survival of federal systems. Federal systems, however, always face some internal challenges that are inevitable but are frequently addressed within the system through certain mechanisms that are likewise dynamic and changing. The debate over federalism in Nigeria is a contentious national issue. In contrast to Nigeria, where federalism is practiced, the West promotes independence and coordination among the federating entities. Nigerian federalism is a fraud since it is an anomaly compared to other countries. Therefore, this study looked at the history that led to the misconception connected with Nigeria's federalism by providing an outline of the country's military experiment with federalism and, consequently, shading a light on the unification decree. This study's theoretical explanation was anchored on the K.C Wheare's legal institutional theory of federalism. This study's methodology is qualitative since it relied on secondary sources to produce data that are pertinent to the investigation. The federal character principle, the concentration of fiscal power, and ethnic domination—all of which have an impact on Nigeria's federalism and existence as a nation—were three major issues related to the country's federalism that have historically received little attention. The literature review of these issues was also conducted in this paper. The conclusion of this paper discussed how to move forward with resolving the federalism issue in order to achieve and solidify Nigerian progress.

**Keyword: Federalism, Fiscal federalism, Revenue Allocation, Centralization**

**Citation of article: ABEGUNDE, O. & NWAGURU, J. U. (2024).** True Federalism or no Federalism? Interrogating Nigerian Federal Question, *African Journal of Politics and Administrative Studies, AJPAS*, 17(2):722-738

**Date submitted: 14/06/2024 Date Accepted: 24/08/2024 Date Published: December, 2024**



## Introduction

Majority of multiple societies like Nigeria, support federalism as a political system because it allows for the coexistence of people with different cultural and ethical backgrounds while still fostering competitive development. The degree to which federal systems are able to handle the inherent changes that more often than not arise in the operations and functioning of the system, however, determines the continued existence and survival of federal systems. Federal systems, however, always face some internal challenges that are inevitable but are frequently addressed within the system through certain mechanisms that are likewise dynamic and changing. Put differently, conversations between two Nigerians about the skewed and imbalanced character of her federalism will inevitably revolve around this sensitive national issue. This is because the political debate in Nigeria is about federalism, partially as a result of federalism's practice not adhering to the truths. Over the years, the Nigerian federation has been mired in conflicts, paradoxes, debates, and crises. These are encapsulated in the national question, and social groups with disparate ideological orientations come together around the main concerns. These are associated with the unity of the country, the autonomy and self-determination of local communities, and the just allocation of resources, opportunities, and power. They also include the observation and implementation of fundamental human rights, among which are the rights of franchise and empowerment, and socio-economic rights to basic needs' satisfaction, sustainable environment and life (Anifowose and Seteolu, 2004 cited in Nwaguru, 2023).

The remnants of what constitutes a federal nation are absent within Nigerian federalism. According to Aniche (2009), there is an expected and prescribed system of governance in place for federal states, including how resources are distributed among the three tiers of government and how income is structured. Put another way, federalism is a political and economic system that grants power to the individual units that comprise a federation, with the exclusive goal of fostering an environment in which the federating units are autonomous and coordinated. Any federalist state grants its constituent parts complete autonomy, including the only authority to impose taxes on its constituent parts, create public policy, and write unique constitutions for each federating unit. The federal or central government does not have the power to dictate to any one of the federating units. The sole purpose of the central government's regulation of



component unit operations is to prevent any abuse of power by the units, which would jeopardize the unity of the federating units as a whole. But this does not grant the national government the power to control what takes place in the constituent nations. This political and economic structure illustrates how federalism allows for the centre to be strengthened and the federating entities to flourish mutually and comparably. The federating units create, exploit, and have complete control over the resources necessary to keep the federation going. In exchange for a certain amount of taxes, these units pay the central government. This however, gives credence to the notion of Sagay (2001 cited in Nwaguru, 2018) that “ideal federalism”. Emphasis on an ideal federalism as seen and practiced in all parts of the world is placed on the need for rapid development of the federating units. Notable of the states that have this political arrangement is the United States of America. This is seen in the motto of the United States of America “*e pluribus unum*”, meaning “federalism is aimed at unity with diversity”.

Succinctly, based on the discussion thus far, federalism is predicated on the following points: power and authority are decentralized rather than centralized, federating units control the resources within their jurisdictions, each federating unit works to maximize the resources within its borders, and the ideal form of federalism serves as a benchmark for assessing the level of political-economic development in various nations. Further developed, federalism is concerned with the process of revenue generation rather than the revenue sharing itself, as cake bakers are free to sell to anybody who is ready to purchase it and simply have to pay a set rent to the cake's owner. Federalism thus implies that everyone can be content by skillfully balancing the interests of the nation and its constituent units within an intricate system of checks and balances between the national government and the regional authorities. This idea aims to explain a way to set up territorial governance that accommodates federation diversity while avoiding the severe decentralization of confederations and the alleged over centralization of unitary systems.

Nigerian federalism is a fraud, an abuse of the theories put forward by theorists of the past and of what is actually done in the authentic federalist nations. It is absurd that Nigeria, a nation that calls itself federal and so abides by the federal constitution's rules, is only scratching the surface of what federalism truly means. What is possible in the nation refutes the global



practice of true federalism. According to Anakoba (2019), despite the fact that both military and civilian regimes have professed to be federalist in character and to uphold its principles, it appears that every advancement is followed by ten steps backwards. The country has had multiple military regimes throughout the years, leading some academics to argue that this (military incursion in Nigeria's politics) created the foundation for the current centralized-federalist system. This study is quick to point out that the military governments in Nigeria from 1966 to 1999 designed the form of federalism as it exists now. The drafting and enforcement of the supporting constitution was also done by the military. Yet, it is expected that the civilian administrations in Nigeria from 1999 to the present will examine the militaristic federal system; yet, no concrete steps have been taken to rectify the uneven nature of the forced federalism. Therefore, this study is quick to point out that, since the Fourth Republic of Nigeria's re-democratization phase, a change in government has not been possible; instead, a move from "khaki to agbada" is achievable. This is an aspect which this paper addresses.

The growing demand for true federalism has not received enough attention because many do not realize that while Nigeria is federalist in theory, in reality, it is not a true federalist nation. In Nigeria, as mentioned by Easton referenced in Omotoso (2010), politics is the authoritative distribution of values that is binding on the society. The central government manages the federating units and decides what belongs to each state. The central government is implied to be in charge of and in charge of the values that are derived from the units. The federal government has the authority to decide what gets to whom, when, and how. The president of Nigeria, who heads the federal government, is so strong that the only authority he cannot wield is the ability to transform a man into a woman. In the past, the federal republic of Nigeria's president (under Olusegun Obasanjo) has used his vast authority to deny some states (Lagos State under Bola Tinubu) their monthly federal allocation. As the nation's chief security officer, the president has the authority to issue orders that security forces must follow without question. This kind of situation is inevitable because of underdevelopment, authoritarian federalist decrees from the national centre, aggressive agitation by units to own and control their resources, unfair federalist practices nationwide, and the creation of obnoxious laws that reduce the units to mere extensions of the national centre. Examples of such laws include the



Land Use Act and the onshore/offshore dichotomy, which, among other things, weaken the units and cut them off from their resources. Federalism in Nigeria has long been seen as a significant political force in the nation, regardless of the kind and severity of flaws that may exist in both theory and reality. This is due to the fact that Nigerian federalism allows for the implementation of "Feeding Bottle," "forced federalism," and "unitary federalism (Nwaguru, 2023)." In the Niger Delta, there has been a regime of armed and violent resistance by militant groups; in the Southeast and Southwest, there have been secessionist agitations mostly in response to a skewed budgetary system and the demand for regional autonomy, resource control, restructuring, among other things. This paper explores Nigerian federalism in an exploratory manner, focusing on how true it is, how it fosters revenue sharing federalism as opposed to marginalizing revenue generation, how powerful the federal government is and how it pushes out component units, how it fosters a culture of dependency on the centre against the very essence of federalism, and how it ignores what is possible in other federalist nations.

For the purpose of achieving the central objective of this study, the work is organized into five sections. Section one is the introduction, giving general background information of the study and stating the problems. Section two focuses on the discourse of the concepts and context. Section three is the theoretical background of the study. The fourth section presents methodology employed in this paper. The fifth section attempts at delving into the main issue of discourse in this paper, as well as the effects on development on the Nigerian state. Section six concludes the study and presents a set of recommendations for this study.

### **Conceptual Review**

This section of this paper reviews conceptual concerns related to revenue allocation, derivation, fiscal federalism, and federalism.

### **Federalism**

The decentralization of power and authority between the federal government and the constituent or federating units that comprise a federation is known as federalism. According to Hague and Harrop (2001, cited in Reason, 2017), one of federalism's key characteristics is the shared legal sovereignty of the federal government and its member states. They continued by saying that a federal constitution establishes several tiers of government, each with distinct



responsibilities. The essence of federalism, according to Hague and Harrop (2001 cited in Reason, 2017), is the interaction between the federal and state governments. Oshewolo (2011:23) made the observation that: "... federalism is reputed to be an effective and efficient political-cum-constitutional design for managing complex governmental problems..." As captured by Mazrui (1971 cited in Aniche, 2009), federalism is the institutionalization of a compromise relationship. Not only is it democratic, with the majority of necessary components institutionalized, but it is also imaginative and adaptable enough to include a variety of accommodation arrangements.

The abundance of definitions above makes it evident that federalism permits federating entities to maintain their individuality and self-governance while simultaneously granting the federal government some degree of political and economic authority. The only way to accomplish this is to include a legal framework that clearly defines each government's jurisdiction. The statement that "federalism is a formal legal set of relationships aimed at the distribution of power between central and peripheral units of government" made by Gamble and Payne (1996, referenced in Aniche, 2009) lends support to this. This distribution may take place across two or more governmental tiers. This clarifies the purpose of intergovernmental relations, which is to analyze the policies that each level of government can assign without causing disputes within the federation. Federalism is a system that functions within a legislative framework that establishes the levels of interaction between and among the various levels of government, as well as the powers of the federal government and the federating entities.

### **Fiscal Federalism**

According to Ajibola (2008), an intergovernmental fiscal relationship defines the roles and duties of the several governmental tiers as well as the financial resources needed to accomplish stated goals. It's a word for a form of government where the different branches of a nation's government are responsible for handling its finances. For example, in Nigeria, revenue generation and expenditure are shared by the federal, state, and local governments in order to fulfill their respective duties. Therefore, the distribution of tax revenue and operational duties among the several levels of government in a federal state is associated with fiscal federalism. Wheare (1964 cited in Omotoso, 2010) feels that state authorities are no longer in coordination



with the federal government but rather under its authority if they discover, for example, that the services provided to them under the federal system are too costly to carry out and if they ask the federal government for grants and subsidies to assist them. In actuality, federalism ends in financial subjugation, regardless of how meticulously the formal forms are maintained. Therefore, each state and federal authority in a federation must have the authority specified in the constitution, have access to power, be in charge of its own finances, and be able to levy taxes and issue bonds to pay for its own services. Giving credence to the assertion above, Onwe (2011) argued that the adoption of the above cogent analysis not only as one of major classical principles upon which true and balanced federalism ought to rest, but also as standard concept and definition of fiscal federalism. It is neither the federal nor the state or local government in a true federation should be dependent upon each other in performing the statutory duties and functions devolved upon it in a federal constitution.

Okoli (2004) argued that the concept of fiscal autonomy and fiscal integrity is a need for the survival and continuous existence of a truly federal system of government, taking into account the fundamental requirements of fiscal federalism. She argued that in order for any level of government—federal, state, or local—to fulfill its constitutional obligations, it is imperative that it have at least one independent revenue source and complete control over those sources. In actuality, the federal system's foundation is strengthened by the degree of fiscal independence among the constituent states as determined by internally generated revenue. More importantly, the higher the likelihood that the federation will survive and continue to exist, every federation unit of government must, therefore, not only have clearly defined independent sources of funding, but these sources should also, in the main, offer a stable foundation for the unit's revenue requirements and economic potential, allowing it to fulfill its fundamental constitutional duties to its constituents.

### **Revenue Sharing/Allocation**

The technique and procedure by which one level of government transfers a portion of the tax income it collects to another level of government—typically a lower one—is known as revenue allocation (Onwe, 2011 cited in Reason, 2017). Stated differently, it refers to the legislative framework that permits the federal government to provide funding to state and municipal



governments without imposing restrictions on how the funds must be used. Federal allocation to state and local government is the term used to describe the procedure. It marks the start of the decentralization of government authority and the reestablishment of a more equitable distribution of power between local councils and the federal and state governments.

The primary goals of revenue allocation are to guarantee that each federation's level of government receives a sufficient portion of the federal government's available revenue to enable the other levels of government to carry out their constitutionally mandated duties. The functions of the federal, state, and local government councils are outlined in the constitution of a federal political structure. The amount of funds allocated is determined by the amount of available funds as well as the amount and degree of responsibility that the constitution places on each level of government. However, the assignment of functions and responsibilities, and the authority to exercise power by the different tiers does not necessarily imply the exercise of such by the tier (Adebayor, 1993 cited in Anihe, 2009).

However, it is appropriate therefore that the principle of revenue allocation be critically identified thus: Principle of National interest, Principle of derivation, Principle of population, Principles of NEEDS, Principles of Minimum National Standards, Principles of Even Development, Principles of Equality of State, Principle of Independent Revenue, Principle of Continuity of Government Services, etc. these principles seek to provide preferential treatment to all component units.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework which this work anchored is K.C Wheare's legal institutional theory of federalism. Kenneth Clinton Wheare an Anglo-Saxon scholar and writer, is regarded as dean and doyen of classical federalism having elevated the status of federalism to theory. In other words, discussion on contemporary federalism usually starts with K.C Wheare's postulations on the concept (Amani, Lechem and Nwoko, 2017). The major assumption of this theory is that a federal government is an "association of states, which has been formed for certain common purposes but in which the member states retain large measure of their original independence" (Wheare, 1953 cited in Law, 2015). The theory took a step further by identifying the desire of nations as a necessary condition before a federal can be formed.





Wheare said: “It would seem that federal government is appropriate for a group of state or communities if, at one and the same time, they desire to be united under a single independent general government for some purpose and to be organized under independent regional governments for others. Or, to put it shortly, they must desire, to be united, but not unitary (Wheare, 1953 cited in Law, 2015).

Federalism means establishing national order without sacrificing the freedom of the component part. If the system do not allow the component units to operate, two important things may happen, first is that there might be instability and the second is that there might be discontent amongst the citizenry as presently witnessed. The two are intertwined. It is therefore very useful to realize the relevance of K. C Wheare’s theory of federalism in the handling of Nigeria for good governance. Therefore, failure to treat the components tiers as such could send frustration through their veins, disenchantment and inability to perform and hence dissatisfaction amongst the populace.

### **Methodology**

The method used in this paper is content analysis, it is principally a careful review of scholars’ views and positions on federalism, fiscal federalism in Nigeria and elsewhere, in this prelude journals articles, textbooks documentary materials and internet documents has been used in gathering the required data and information.

### **A Retrospective cursor into Military and Federalism in Nigeria**

It is imperative to examine the military's role in Nigerian federalism in the past in order to fully comprehend the concerns raised by this study and to determine where the key lies. In academic literature, there has been much discussion on Nigerian federalism and military involvement in politics. Let's just sum up by saying that one important point that has to be brought up in this piece is that the military does not adhere to the idea of federalism. This is because, in Wheare's (1985 cited in Omotoso, 2010) opinion, the decentralised ideas of federalism are undermined by the centralized authority associated with the military. Thus, it becomes a misnomer to associate the military with federalism. Supported further is from the speech of the first military Head of State, Gen. Aguiyi Ironsi which state thus “...that there shall be a Military Governor in each region of the Federation, who shall be directly responsible



to the Federal Military Government for the good government of the region... (Ironsi, 1966 cited in Omotoso, 2010)” In his submission, Asika (2011:31-32) contends “that was the death of federalism and by extension the suspension of the powers of regional governments” (Unification Decree No. 34 of 1966). So it becomes apt to classify the military with federalist structure since 1999.

The exclusive, residual, and concurrent lists for the various tiers of government were created by the 1954 constitution as a result of a federalist decentralization of power that existed prior to the military coup that brought the military to power in 1966. The idea behind these lists was that federal law would take precedence in the event of a conflict between the three tiers. Because the strategy was intended to be accommodating, the central government and its component entities were granted equal and coordinated standing. The constituent parts developed independence, autonomy, and coordination. Corroborating this, Omotoso (2010) asserts that the federalism that developed in the 1950s was bottom heavy, meaning that while the regions retained significant economic and political power, and they also gave up some degree of control to the federal government. Due to this system, the three areas (Northern, Eastern, and Western) and later the newly formed Mid-Western region were able to implement democratic values among their citizens, such as granting women the right to vote in the South (Omotoso, 2010).

With independence, the federalist structure established by the colonial authorities was altered. The center's dominance over the regions took on a dominant role. As a result, the political landscape of the nation shifted, with nearly everything being controlled by whoever or whichever region retains power of the centre. It appears that the North was the dominant force in the nation's political affairs, taking advantage of the region's enormous size, population, and demographic makeup, which combined elements of the East and West regions. Because the status quo benefits their area, the Northern elites perceive it as necessary to preserve it, and as a result, they will continue to have sway over the country's political and economic spheres.

Federalism was destroyed and unitary governance was established with the 1966 coup that brought forth the first military administration. Ironically, as mentioned above in Unification Decree No. 34 of 1966, the military gave it a federal appearance. According to Omotoso



(2003), authority was consolidated under the standard military command structure, particularly in the context of Nigeria. However, the nation was purportedly federal. The nature and structure of Nigeria's federalism were impacted by the numerous military regime changes. By the time of the fourth wave of democracy in 1999, the federalism enshrined in the military turned democratic constitution became centralized, strengthening the federal government and making the states and local governments mere appendages and dependent on the federal for their own survival. As Omotoso (2010) put thus; the strain and stress that has been brought to bear on the nation as a result of this dysfunctional structural arrangement, has no doubt, impacted significantly on the nature of politics and governance in Nigeria.

### **Skewed or Distressed Federalism: Interrogating the Federalism Question in Nigeria**

However, this study found that the issue with Nigerian federalism, as described by Suberu (2001), stemmed from the various regions' disregard for resource control, which was in place in 1946 and 1954 prior to the military's abrupt dissolution of the true foundations of federalism. The ongoing calls to question the country's practice of federalism are due to the state of Nigeria's failure to preserve the ideas of federalism from the military era and the 23 years of democratic government. Davidson, (1992) notes that Because the Nigerian federal system has continuously weakened one of the most fundamental philosophical tenets of federalism—the independence of the federating units—Nigeria is today run under a flawed, fallible, and quack federal system. The struggle for control of the federal government has historically been ruthless, corrupt, politically and ethnically volatile, due to the concentration of resources and real authority at the core (Omotoso, 2010). Due to military participation in the nation's democratic process and the imposition of unitary edict by previous military regimes, Nigeria's federalism is imbalanced. A portion of the nation benefited from the imposition more than the other federating units. Here are some of the problems and difficulties that are covered:

#### **Centralization of Fiscal Power**

“Whoever controls the political/governmental power at the centre, automatically capriciously allocates authoritatively the scarce resources across the component units in any federal state” (Nwaguru, 2023). This is the fundamental point of contention in Nigeria's federalism debate. The Federal Government now has consolidated control over fiscal power and is able to allocate



resources, grant favours, and impose penalties as it sees fit. Given that the states and local governments in Nigeria are only extensions of the federal government and cannot function without federal funding, this feature obviously refutes the ideas of independence and coordination among the federating units.

Omotoso (2019) argues succinctly that since 1999, the political-economic military federal structure has been turned over to civilian administrations, subjecting federalism to a beggar-federalist situation in which state governors must travel to Abuja each month for their monthly allocation, killing creative ideas to improve the IGR in their states, the federal government's control over resources, their fiscal authority, and their security powers. One may argue that the federal government in Abuja regulates everything that occurs in the 36 states. The relationship between the subordinate units' ability to raise money and their authority to make expenditures has been severed due to the centralised nature of revenue sharing. The result is hurting the growth of the diversity of political and economic power, which is a hallmark of democratic federalism (Omotoso, 2010). The revenue sharing formula has always been skewed to favour the central government over the regions (56.68% for federal, 26.72% for states, 20.60% for local governments) (Ogbe, et al., 2011). In summary, instances exist where former President Olusegun Obasanjo single-handedly delayed the allocation of Lagos state due to the centralized character of federalism in the nation. Such an act violates the federalism of the country.

However, Barkan, et al. (2001 cited in Nwaguru, 2023) state that the discussion over the distribution of federal funds is fierce and ongoing because, at its core, it is a dispute over the relative amounts of power that will be held by the various levels of the federal government.

It is the submission of this study that the militancy attacks in the Niger Delta are partially a result of the calls for a review and restructuring of the federalist structure and character. This rests on the premise and argument made by Ibaba (2017) that a small number of Nigerian political elites profit from the resources (crude oil) extracted from their community and that the money obtained from it is lavished and looted by these elites who, acting in the capacity of representatives (including senators, members of the Federal House of Representatives, ministers of petroleum, community leaders, and occasionally officials from oil companies), have used the money to enrich their families at the expense of the communities that provide the



majority of the nation's revenue sources. Corroborating this, O'Neil (2007 cited in Ogbe, et al., 2011) posits that The most heartbreaking irony is that despite fifty years of oil exploitation in the delta, people's quality of life has not improved. Rather, they are less wealthy and do not have access to the necessities of life. It is significant to highlight that the littoral states' demands for resource management and compensation for environmental harm caused by oil exploration seem to be the biggest obstacles to Nigeria's recent progress towards peace and nation-building. Furthermore, according to Omotoso (2010, 2019), because of Nigeria's diversity, the country's economic and political centralization has led to a great deal of resentment, cynicism, and apathy among its diverse ethnic groups and communities. These feelings have served as the catalyst for violent conflicts and clashes. It should be unequivocally stated that these challenges has posed a great question to the authenticity of federalism in Nigeria and questions the merit of her development in the comity of democratic nations.

### **Ethnic Domination**

One of the main problems with Nigerian federalism is this. According to Jinadu (1979, cited in Nwaguru, 2023), the issue is how to construct the federation so as to prevent one state or a combination of states, or one ethnic group or a combination of ethnic groups, from continuously dominating and forcing their will on other ethnic groups. A segment of the country's dominance over other sections was facilitated by the legal framework and foundation established by the military-imposed constitution. Omotoso (2019) contended that Nigeria is a nation that prioritizes ethnicity. One may argue that the average Nigerian is more devoted to his ethnic group than to the country. It should be mentioned that facilitating development was the main goal of state creation. Unfortunately, the country's demand for statehood can be attributed to two main factors: elites' access to power and the distribution of the national cake. Under the guise of state creation, some avaricious politicians and ethnic group leaders have taken advantage of the situation to further their own political agendas. As a result, ethnic identities have become increasingly important to their aspirations for development, even though most ethnic groups have outperformed their minority counterparts in this area. Pressure is currently being applied to the national assembly to expand the nation's current thirty-six (36) states. Some of which include; Okura out of Kogi; Aba from Abia; Njaba and Orashi out of



Imo; Adada from Enugu State; Toru-Ebe from Delta, Hadejia out of Jigawa and Katagum from Bauchi State. Similarly, there have been requests for the creation of Tiga out of Kano State; Karadua and Kafur from Katsina State; Lagoon from Lagos State; Oke-Ogun out of Oyo State; Kwara from Taraba and Amana out of Borno. Some people have also solicited the creation of Adamawa, Taraba and Savannah states out of the current Adamawa State; Edu, Gurara, Kainji and Borgu from Niger; Apa from Benue, New Delta from Delta and Oduduwa out of Osun, among others. (Vanguard, 2013).

However, this study found that the primary driver behind calls for the establishment of more states is the ongoing dominance of one ethnic group over another. This is demonstrated by the country's revenue allocation principles, which take population into account. The core of their agitation for the creation of a state is their need for access to the federation account for personal benefits at the expense of other ethnic nationalities. State creation has undoubtedly been beneficial in certain ways, but there are so many drawbacks that as more states are formed, more minority groups will arise. In Nigeria, there are many unique situations in the South-South, South-East, and central belt regions (today called North-Central). It must be stated at this point in this study that the quest for more states, which is borne out of demands for equal rights, equal representation and development still remain a big challenge to Nigeria's federal state.

### **Federal Character Principle**

Van and Akindele (2002) largely acknowledge the plurality of the nation in terms of recruitment, the allocation of political and administrative authority and offices, and the nation's resources in their contribution. In hindsight, the 1979 Constitution's central clause on the federal character served as a means of reducing ethnic tensions and a desire for national identities. It was implied that the purpose of the constitution was to promote unity among diversity and provide equitable representation for all federating units in governmental bodies. Unfortunately, when it comes to Nigerian federalism, the modern application of the federal character has been a point of disagreement. This is because it has been brought about by the National Assembly members' mediocre and self-centered attitude. There is ample evidence that applicants to federal ministries, departments, and agencies must obtain the agreement of



members of the national assembly through introduction letters, among other means. Thanks to this statute, national lawmakers can now nominate applicants for jobs at ministries, agencies, and government parastatals without worrying about the candidates' qualifications. As a result, mediocrity has become more and more standardized, and meritocracy has been marginalized. It has implied that the federal character is a facade and that the federalism of the nation is not functioning properly. Furthermore, this has undermined the principle's initial intent, which was to avoid group imbalance in public affairs and institutions. The power and importance of the federal character principle in a genuine and cohesive federal form of government have been diminished by its politicization.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

When devising a plan to escape Nigeria's current state of federalism, it is critical to emphasize that the only thing that can replace the nation's ongoing agitation and federalist question is a productive, accountable, equitable, and restructured economic and political framework. There is a need to review the 1954 constitution and implement the policies of other federalist nations that the United States of America is one of the most notable examples of. Doing so will foster the development of good governance and development principles never before seen in the nation's federalist history. The fundamental, true idea of federalism is to provide each state in a federation a great deal of autonomy over how it runs its business. Because they had financial independence and resource management, the first republic's regions were highly developed and powerful. Unlike the opinions of some people in the nation, which suggest that the federation's oil-producing states would be the only ones to benefit from a restructure of the country's political and economic structure. This is due to the fact that every region of the nation is wonderfully endowed with an abundance of natural resources just waiting to be discovered and used. As a result, these states will have sole authority over the natural resources found in their particular states or regions. A practice of this is governance with the expression of recognition of federalism.

Nonetheless, the survival of federalism in Nigeria depends on the federating units having a respectable amount of autonomy. Nigeria is endowed with a wealth of natural resources and a human population that, with proper management, could propel the nation into the top 10 in the



world. Additionally, rather than the current structure and style of cake sharing among the leaders of the nation, the leadership style and structure should be geared towards offering opportunities and services that would make life comfortable for the citizens.

## References

- Ajibola, R. (2008). *Public Finance: Principles and Practice*. Lagos: AVL Publishing.
- Anakoba, M.A. (2019). Fiscal Federalism and Resource Control in Nigeria. *Zamfara Journal of Politics and Development Vol 4 /No 1*.
- Aniche, E.T. (2009). *A Modern Introduction to Political Science*. Onitsha: Desvic Publisher.
- Asika, O. (2011). *Nigeria must restructure or break up: Fiscal Federalism as the way out*. Exclusive interview on Channels TV, Sunday, 23 March.
- Awa, E. (2014). *Issues in Federalism*. Benin, Ethiope Publishing.
- Barkan, J.D. et al. (2001). *State and Local Government Creation*. Programme of public sector and capacity building, African Region. The World Bank.
- Davidson, M. (1992). *Nigeria during the Golden Days of Resource Control*. London: Croom Helm.
- Gamble, A. and Payne, A. (1996). *The New Regionalism*. Basingstocke: Macmillan.
- Hague, R. and Harrop, M. (2001). *Comparative Government and Politics*. Hampshire: Macmillan.
- Ibaba, S.I. (2017). *Mopping the Wet floor while overlooking the leaking roof; Rethinking Peace-Building in the Niger Delta*. 28<sup>th</sup> Inaugural Lecture at the Niger Delta University. 16<sup>th</sup> August.
- Jinadu, L.A. (1979). A Note on the Theory of Federalism. In Akinyemi, A.B., et al. (eds) *Reading on Federalism*, Lagos: NIIA.
- Mazrui, A. (1971). Pluralism and National Integration. In Kuper, L and Smith, M. G (eds) *Pluralism in Africa*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Nwaguru, J.U. (2018). *Resource Control Agitations and Resurgence of Militancy in the Post-Amnesty Niger Delta*. A thesis submitted to the Department of Political Science, Federal University, Otuoke, Bayelsa State.





- Nwaguru, J.U. (2023). *The Nigerian State and Conflict Management in the Niger Delta Region: A Study of the Amnesty Programme, 2015-2021*. A thesis submitted to the Department of Political Science, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State.
- Ogbe O., Max M., Shija M.D and Zever A.T. (2011) The Need For Reform of Fiscal Federalism in Nigeria, Benue State. *National Journal of Human Resource Development Vol.1 No. 1*.
- Okoli, M.U. (2004). *Intergovernmental Relations: Theories and Practice*. Awka: Fountain Publishers.
- Omotoso, O.F. (2019). *Politics of Power and Power of Politics: The Anatomy of Nigerian Government and Politics*. 56<sup>th</sup> Inaugural Lecture of the Ekiti State University, September 10.
- Omotoso, O.F. (2010). *Federalism, Politics and Governance in Nigeria, in Governance, Politics and Policies in Nigeria*. An Essay in honour of Prof. Dipo Kolawole. Sonou d’Afrique (ESAF); Porto Novo, Benin Republic.
- Omotoso, O.F. (2011). The Nigerian State and the Problem of State Creation. In A.A Agagu & R.F Ola (eds) *Development Agenda of the Nigerian State*. Akure Lord Keynes Publishing Company.
- Onwe, S.O. (2011). *Politics of Revenue Allocation*. Abakaliki: Unpublished Lecture Series. Ebonyi State University.
- Oshewolo, M. (2001). 1999 Constitution in Nigeria: A Fiscal Problem or Solution in Nigeria, *African Affairs*, Vol. 100
- Reason, O. (2017). *Fiscal Federalism and Political Violence in the Niger Delta*. Abuja: Tabith Publishers.
- Van, O. and Akindele, S.T. (2002). Fiscal Federalism and Political Instability in Nigeria”. In *Fiscal Federalism and Nigeria’s Economic Development, Selected Papers of Nigerian Economic Society (NES Annual Conference)*.
- Vanguard, (2013) “*The imperatives of state creation*”. Friday, May 17. Retrieved May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020 from [www.vanguardngr.com/2013/05/the-imperatives-of-state](http://www.vanguardngr.com/2013/05/the-imperatives-of-state).
- Wheare, K. C. (1964). *Federal Government*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.