ETHNICITY AND THE POLITICS OF STATE CREATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Political competitions and access to power, in plural societies like Nigeria, takes different forms and dimensions. Ethnic pluralism in Nigeria has more often than not been characterized by contestations and struggles for access to power and the resources of the Nation-State. Nigeria has therefore become a 'cake' to be shared among the various nationalities, while nobody cares about the baking of the cake. The ethnic factor which initially ignited the demands for States creation has continued to torment the country. Thus, ethno-regional interests are usually mobilized to campaign for States creation and development and these agitations have been persistent and seemingly endless. This aim of this paper is to argue that the logic of continued States creation in Nigeria, purportedly to bring government closer to the people and achieve national development is a failed strategy. Again,the history and nature of States creation in Nigeria has failed to assuage the very forces that instigate the demands for new States. The prospects for national development and integration as well as local autonomy depend on the emergence of a purposeful, courageous, visionary and national leadership. Besides the leadership question, Nigeria needs a repositioned and strengthened local government system, an orientation to enable Nigerians on the need for peaceful co-existence and constitutional amendments to ensuring a true Federal system where the other levels of government will control a substantial amount of their resources.

Keywords: Ethnic Group, Ethnicity, Politics, Power

1.0 Introduction

Nigeria is a plural society with different cleavages – ethnic, religious, cultural, linguistic, as well as geo-political, social and economic development – but ethnic heterogeneity is inarguably, the most pervasive of them all. The problem ethnicity poses is that political competition and access to power is overtly drawn along ethnic lines. Again, since Nigerian Federalism is based on ethnic and not geographical diversities, it has tended to exacerbate centrifugal forces in the country. Therefore, the struggle for acquisition and access to power in Nigeria has been patterned largely along ethnic lines. This becomes more problematic because the State is not a neutral force in mediating political conflict. It can be captured and used to further the interests of the leadership of an ethnic group or a combination of such groups.

The development of Nigerian Federalism as a dynamic process can best be understood with reference to the ethnic configuration in Nigeria. Over the years, the process has involved the creation of more States to reduce political domination at the Federal level by the Hausa-Fulani. It has also involved the attempt by minority ethnic groups to challenge the hegemony of the three largest ethnic groups: Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo in the political, social and economic life of the country, each of which like some of the other ethnic groups, is also made up of a number of sub-ethnic groups.[1]

Thus, there seems to be no limit to the demands for States creation in Nigeria, for as long as ethnic chauvinists and political merchants keep agitating for State creation in order to solve the alleged marginalization of their people. It seems irrelevant to these professional agitators and political opportunists whether or not their prospective States posses the capacity to survive. To worsen matters, each ethnic group has continuously come to think of itself as a distinct entity with interests and demands. Again, "there has been unabated clamour and agitations for the creation of more States to satisfy ethnic nationalism. While ethnic or separatist nationalism grow to the detriment of Nigerian nationalism, there has been a growing attitude of antagonisms and lack of trust among Nigerians."[2]

This paper seeks to explore the roots and nature of ethnic politics in Nigeria, especially as it relates to the agitation and the actual creation of States to satisfy ethnic sentiments. The paper argues that as a Nigerian people, the various ethnic nationalities need to learn to live together rather than clamouring for more States. This is because the creation of more States will multiply the existing problems – ethnic minority issues, lack of development, corruption, the bankruptcy of the States and a unitarist federation, therefore, adversely affecting the overall growth, development and national integration of the country.

2.0 Conceptual and Theoretical Issues

2.1 Ethnic Group

An ethnic group has been defined as "consisting of interacting members who define themselves as belonging to a name or labeled social group with whose interest they identify and which manifests certain aspects of a unique culture, while constituting a part of a wider society".[3] Again, Okwudiba Nnoli defines ethnic groups as "social formations distinguished by the communal character of their boundaries".[4] The relevant communal factor may be language, culture or both. He also emphasized that as social formations, ethnic groups are not necessarily homogeneous entities, both linguistically and culturally. This implies that there can be minor linguistic and cultural differences within groups forming the basis for the delineation of sub-ethnic systems. Furthermore, ethnic groups may be defined as "categories of people characterized by language, value system and normative behavior, and whose members are anchored in a particular part of a new State territory".[5]

The above definitions have tended to emphasis on common interests, common identity, common language and sentiments, certain general core values, which tend and distinguish members of one ethnic group from other groups in the society. These groups co-operate and compete with one another in economic, political and social fronts, sometimes under well organized group context with leaders playing prominent roles and at other times, under less defined organization in which the sense of group is sustained by common interest and territoriality.

2.2 Ethnicity

There have been numerous efforts[6] in defining what ethnicity is all about. In Eghosa Osaghae's view, ethnicity involves "the employment and or mobilization of ethnic identity or difference to gain advantage in situations of competition, conflict or cooperation."[7] Similarly, Okwudiba Nnoli argues that "ethnicity arises when relations between groups are competitive rather than co-operative.   It is characterized by cultural prejudice and political discrimination."[8]   The foregoing definitions imply that ethnicity is neither natural nor accidental, but it is the product of a conscious effort by social actors. It is also evident that ethnicity is not only manifest in conflictive or competitive relations, but also in the contexts of cooperation.

It therefore follows as Eghosa Osaghae submits that, "ethnic conflicts ensue from situations in which people from different ethnic groups decide to employ their ethnic differences in pursuing competing interests."[9]   In a similar vein, Okwudiba Nnoli sees

ethnicity as arising from the desire of individuals to organize themselves in ways to enhance their competitive efficiency in a situation where they perceive each other as competing for resources and positions.[10]   Thus, political offices and appointments are seen as battle fields among the various ethnic groups, where the battles are fought with all available weaponry a group can muster.

2.3 Politics

Politics is a pervasive human endeavour that prevails in all spheres of life that is as old as human history. Given the nature and character of politics, it has witness a plethora of definitions. Politics has however been defined by Harold Lasswell as an empirical science that studies the shaping and sharing of power about "who gets what, when and how."[11] This implies that politics extend beyond the realm of State affairs. It therefore bothers on whether power - the main object of politics – is obtained as an end in itself to ensure binding decisions or as a means to an end. Another Political theorist, David Easton, defines politics as the persistent pattern of human interaction in a society mainly oriented towards "authoritative allocation of values."[12]   This indicates that politics has to do with authoritative or binding decisions concerning the distribution of State's resources. Easton's definition suggests that once a decision is made, it conveys the idea of legitimacy and binding compulsion.   This covers the realm of public politics because resolutions are authoritative within the structures of government.

In a nutshell, politics can be said to refer to all the issues and events that involve the struggle for acquisition and use of power and all the benefits and resources it confers. Politics, therefore deal with the State and the political society – that is, a people organized for law within a definite territory.

2.4 Power

Since the time of the Greek City-States, political philosophers have focused on 'power' as the key aspect of the political situation. Despite the omnipresence of power in political life, political theorists have not reached a widespread agreement on its meaning. Political power has, however been defined "as the capacity to affect another's behavior by some form of sanctions."[13]   These sanctions can be in the form of carrot or stick. In other words, the sanctions can be in form of inducement or coercion. It is a carrot or inducement when compliance comes with promises of wealth or honour by leaders to their supporters and threat of denial of such rewards to their opponents. It is coercive when people are compelled

to take certain courses of action for fear of application of sanctions or threat. Power, in this sense therefore, implies the ability to compel compliance. Similarly, the Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics sees power as the ability to make people (or things) do what they would not otherwise have done. The dictionary sees power to be concerned with which groups or individuals denominate, get their way or are best able to pursue their interests in societies.[14]

We can therefore define power as the use of resources – assets and capabilities – to secure compliance or conforming conduct of others. Power is primarily a relationship, for the power wielder exercises control over some other persons and resources. There are several dimensions in any power situation. These include *the goals*, *the means* by which resources are used and *the outcomes*. The type of goals pursued and a society's common values will affect the outcome of the power situation. Generally, political power can be regarded as the ability to make or carry out binding decisions affecting the whole or large society. This implies that the various ethnic and interest groups clamouring for the creation of new States may intend to use that means and the outcomes to be in a position to making binding decisions, affecting people and resources.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

The theory that best captures and explains the ethnic politics and the politics of States creation in Nigeria is the Modern Conflict Theory as propounded by Wright Mills, who is called the founder of modern conflict theory.[15] Conflict theory generally is based on the writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.   The theory, as propounded by Wright Mills argues that society is not best understood as a complex system striving for equilibrium but rather for competition. It further maintains that society is made up of individuals and groups for limited resources, for instance, money, leisure, opposite partners, etc. Again, broader social structures and organizations, like religious, governments etc, reflect the competition for resources in their inherent inequalities; some people, groups and organizations have more resources – power and influence – and use those resources to maintain their positions of power in society.

Conflict theory was developed to illustrate the limitations of structural – functionalism. The structural-functionalist approach argued that society tends towards equilibrium, focusing on stability at the expense of social change. This is contrasted with the conflict approach which argues that society is constantly in conflict over resources.[16]
The main assumptions of the conflict theory are that, first; competition over scare resources is at the heart of all social relationships. Competition, rather than consensus is characteristic of

human relationships. Secondly, the theory assumes that inequality in power and reward are built into all social structures. Individuals and groups that benefits from any particular structure strive to see it maintained. Thirdly and lastly, the theory assumes that change occurs as a result of conflict between competing interests rather than through adaptation. It insists that change is often abrupt and revolutionary rather than evolutionary.[17]

A heuristic devise to help us think about society from a conflict perspective is to ask, "Who benefits from this element of society"?   Using the same example, we can ask, "Who are the main beneficiaries of States creation in Nigeria"? Who are the actors that campaign against ethnic injustice and what are their interests?

3.0 History and Assumptions of States Creation in Nigeria.

There has been a unanimous view by scholars[18] that the manipulation of ethnicity by the Nigerian elite has its roots in colonialism. As Godwin Hembe submits, "the British Colonial Administration in Nigeria was based on policies which tended to encourage ethnic consciousness and exclusiveness."[19] According to him, the local administration, which was based on indirect rule system, depended on the utilization of pre-colonial institutions, which were modified to suit the purposes of colonial ideology. Similarly, until 1947 Nigerians of Northern and Southern regions never had the opportunity to interact as one people. The regionalism of the Richards' Constitution was reinforced by the McPherson Constitution of 1951, and the stage was set for ethno-regional politics. Consequently, all the political parties - National Council of Nigerians and Cameroon (NCNC) in 1944, the Northern People's Congress (NPC) in 1951 and Action Group (AG) in 1951, formed to contest power had clearly defined tribal and ethnic bases.[20] Giving this background, ethnicity and regionalism became the Nigerian political way of life and manipulation of same sentiments, the major preoccupation of politicians and the avenue to political power. It was this development that led to minority agitations for self-determination in all the regions during the terminal phase of colonial rule.[21]

Given this background, Nigerian politics is primarily ethnic politics and certain primordial identities inevitably determine political affiliations and inter group relations. There has therefore, been inter-ethnic rivalry to secure the domination of government by one ethnic group or combination of ethnic groups to the exclusion others.[22]

Ethnicity has therefore, been a re-occurring factor, overtly and even covertly, in the State creation exercises in Nigeria. Thus, Obafemi Awolowo, had opined that "ethnicity is the major factor to be considered as a criterion in creating any State in a federation so that

minority groups in the midst of majority groups who differ in language, culture and historical background will not feel inferior."[23] In a similar vein, Nnamdi Azikiwe also recommended a number of criteria for State creation based on ethnicity of which both the Federal and State governments must be regrouped into various ethnic groups.[24]

It is important to reiterate that the adoption of Federalism as a form of government was the result of social forces at work within the country. As Isawa Elaigwu opines, "it was a compromise solution of some of the political problems, which emerged in the terminal period of colonial rule."[25] Although Nigeria became a Federal State with 3 regions – Northern, Western and Eastern regions, the creation of additional federating units was the result of centrifugal and centripetal forces in the country.

It follows therefore that between 1954 and 1960, the issue of the minorities and their place in the emerging new Nigeria dominated the series of Constitutional Conferences that were held before independence in 1960. Thus, Sir Henry Willink Commission was instituted in 1957 to enquire into the fears of the minorities and suggest the means of allaying them. While the Commission found evidence of discrimination and other problems alleged by the minorities and acknowledged the genuineness of their fears and anxieties, it rejected the creation of additional States particularly because of the difficulty in drawing a clean boundary which "does not create fresh minority", among others.[26] The Commission believed that the solution to the problem of minorities lay in the political process, rather than the creation of separate States for them.[27] What the minorities got at Independence in 1960 was a guarantee of their rights, especially as enshrined in the Independence Constitution.

In 1963, during the First Republic, the Mid-Western Region was created out of the Western Region. It has been argued that the creation of that Region, which was the excision of the non-Yoruba, partly Igbo from the Western region did not arise from a genuine concern by the nation's leaders for the predicament of the minorities. The reorganization was part of vindictive campaign by the ruling Federal coalition parties – the NPC and the NCNC, to destroy the main Federal opposition party, the AG, while resolutely resisting the Statehood aspirations of the minorities in their respective home regions.[28]

Furthermore, with the secession bid by the Easterners which followed the apprehension and fears of the Igbo after the counter-coups d'état of July 29 1966, the creation on 27th May, 1967 of 12 States from the existing four regions by the Gowon regime was, indeed, an attempt to nip the secession bid in the bud.[29] As submitted by Osaghae, "the 12 States structure went a long way to allay two principal fears: Minorities' fear of oppression in the old regions and Southern fears of Northern domination."[30] Thus, by splitting up the old

Northern region and creating an equal number of States from the North and South (six each), the exercise dealt in one fell swoop with the basic structural flaw which created so much tension in the federation. Moreso, the minorities' fears which historically revolved around alleged domination and oppression by the majority groups in the regions were allayed. The States were Lagos, Western, Mid- Western, South- Eastern, East-Central, Rivers, Kwara, Benue-Plateau, North-Eastern, North-Western, North-Central and Kano.

This exercise generated more questions than the answers it provided. For instance, the advocates for the majority groups saw the minorities as the main beneficiaries of the exercise and questioned the implicit attempt to make minorities equal to majorities. They, accordingly, demanded more States for the majorities to reflect the population differences.[31]   Another problem was the appearance of new minorities and fears of domination. Moreso, Hembe posits that the North-Eastern State alone accounted for about 1/3 of the total land area of Nigeria, leaving the remaining 2/3 to the other eleven States.[32] In view of these and other complaints and problems, Gowon promised that he would review the whole issue of State creation after the war.[33] This promise heightened the tempo of demands for new States, but no concrete effort was taken to review the exercise until he was overthrown in 1975.

When General Murtala Mohammed overthrew General Gowon, he quickly set up the Justice Ayo Irikefe Panel to look into the issue of State creation in the country. The panel received about 32 demands for new States. It was based on the memoranda submitted to the government by the Panel that the number of States was raised to 19, on 3rd February, 1976. The nineteen States were Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Oyo, Bendel, Cross-River, Anambra, Imo, Rivers, Kwara, Benue, Plateau, Borno, Bauchi, Gongola, Sokoto, Niger, Kano and Kaduna.

The 1976 exercise was implemented in the wake of a phenomenal growth in Federal petroleum exports revenue allocation arrangements that enthroned inter-State equality as the preeminent standard of financial devolution. An important feature of this exercise was the explicit transformation of the rationale for State creation from its original role as a sop for ethnic minority fears into a scheme for the dissemination of Central revenue. Thus, in addition to being a vehicle for extending political and economic self-governance to distinct ethnic communities, States creation became an administrative strategy for the devolution of Federal largesse to an amorphous array of territorial communities and coalitions.[34]

Again, this State creation exercise diluted the viability criterion which had kept down the number of States in the past and ensured a measure of fiscal autonomy for existing ones.[35] This therefore gave rise to a phenomenal increase in the demand for new States as various ethnic groups and elites struggled to maximize their shares of the 'national cake'.

Consequently, the Igbo people argued later that a situation where they had only two States (Anambra and Imo) from the 1976 exercise while the Yoruba and Hausa/Fulani, the other two majority groups, had about five each, was unjust and unacceptable. Thus, agitation for States creation in the country became a contest among majority ethnic groups, struggling to square up, more than the struggle of the minorities for self-determination.

The agitation for more States went unabated during the Second Republic (1979-1983) and the demands for new States were so volatile that none was eventually created till the collapse of the Republic. As it is well documented,[36] the attempts to create new States during this period were stymied by Constitutional complexities, partisan acrimonies, economic uncertainties and unfettered sectional recrimination and suspicion.

When General Ibrahim Babangida took over power in 1985, the clamour for States creation was loud. He therefore set up the Political Bureau, headed by Dr. S.J. Cookey to look into the demands by the people for the creation of more States in. It was based on the recommendations of the Bureau that the Federal Government in September 1987 created two more States – Akwa-Ibom and Katsina – thus, increasing the number of States in the country to 21. The Bureau recommended the creation of six new States – Akwa-Ibom, Delta, Katsina, Kogi, Sarduana and Wawa.[37] In creating the two States, General Babangida announced that the demands for new States will no longer be tolerated. However, in August, 1991, the regime back-paddled and created nine new States to bring the number of States to thirty (30). The nine States were Abia, Enugu, Delta, Jigawa, Kebbi, Osun, Kogi, Taraba and Yobe.

Although the regime justified the creation of more States as the need for balanced federation, bringing government nearer to the people, even development, etc, "the 1991 exercise was largely intended to galvanize support for the regime, whose strength was ebbing and to compensate close allies."[38] Again, the demand by the Constituent Assembly for the creation of new States; the abortive coup of 1990 which had marginalization of the Middle-Belt and Southern minorities as a major issue; and the vigorous campaigns for ethnic justice in States creation[39] also contributed.

The agitations for States creation seemed to have doubled when General Sani Abacha came to power in 1993. Thus, following the recommendations of the National Constitutional Conference (NCC) on the need to create more States, General Abacha set up a Committee for States creation, Local Government and boundary adjustment, headed by Arthur Mbanefo. The Committee received a total of 85 requests for new States.[40] Thus, on the occasion of the Country's 36th Independence Anniversary on 1st October, 1996, General Abacha announced the creation of six new States. The new States retained the old principle of North and South

divide and were spread equally across the six geo- political zones into which the country was divided for the purpose of rotational presidency. The States were Bayelsa, Ebonyi, Ekiti, Gombe, Nasarawa and Zamfara.

The last exercise brought the number of constituents units in the Nigerian Federation to 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory, and 774 Local Government Areas. Yet, there are more agitations for new States in Nigeria. The question remains whether the continuous balkanization of Nigeria into smaller, weaker and unviable units has actually brought government, or power as well as development closer to the people.

4.0 The Politics of more States in Nigeria

There have been continuous calls for more States in Nigeria, as the National Assembly prepares to amend the 1999 Constitution. The agitators for more States argue that States creation will bring development closer to the door-steps of many Nigerians. Emeka Esogbue maintains that "creation of more States has brought development economically to the door steps of many towns and cities, many of which have been labeled, as capital cities or headquarters.[41] He submits further that with the creation of more States the scope of political development will be widened to accommodate 36 Governors, 36 Houses of Assembly, more legislators, more State High Courts, more police officers, etc. He also assert that more States will also see to the siting of the headquarters of several Parastatals, Ministries, Federal and State Universities as well as other modern developmental structures like Airports, Banks etc.

The agitators for States creation also maintain that such an exercise will create an opportunity for the marginalized people or ethnic groups to have access to power. In their argument, the Federal Executive Council is rested on the number of States in existence, and that most times decisions are democratically reached by the body through votes. This will therefore give some regions or ethnic groups more weight in their bargain for the allocation of values. They also maintain that by creating new bureaucracies, it will give mass employment to youths and other qualified graduates. Since the inception of his tenure as the Senate President of the National Assembly in 2007, Senator David Mark has not left anyone in doubt about his desire to increase the number of States in the country through the creation of more States.[42] This has no doubt renewed the hope of agitators for creation of new States.

The agitations for new States in the present democratic dispensation (1999 till date) reached a crescendo in 2005 during the inconclusive National Political Reform Forum convened by the administration of former President Olusegun Obasanjo (1999 – 2007). In that Conference, the Igbo delegates from the South East who feel short-changed by the

present structure in the country had gone to the Conference with the creation of an additional State for the zone as its main agenda.[43] In their argument, the South-East has only five States against six States in the South-West, South-South, North-Central, North-East and North-West, which has seven. Although this dream did not materialize in that Conference, it has not doused the demand of the zone for at least one additional State in the spirit of fair play and equity.

Today, it is not only the South-East that wants more States. At a Conference in Lagos recently, the Deputy Senate President, Senator Ike Ekweremadu hinted that, the demands for additional States now stands at forty-five. He also pointed that "ethnic minority fears, search for equity and speedy developments as well as quest for political empires and influence by the elite are key factors determining the clamour for more States". According the Deputy Senate President the country would become a federation of 81 States, should all the requests be granted.[44]

Furthermore, the creation of States has always being influenced by political rather than developmental considerations. For instance, the creation of the Mid-Western State in 1963 was done out of the conspiracy by the coalition government of NPC/NCNC to divide the opposition AG's stronghold. The creation of 12 States by Gowon was also believed to have been motivated by the desire to whittle the influence of the then Governor of Eastern Region, Chukwuemeka Ojukwu at the height of hostilities between the Region and the Federal Government. In the subsequent exercises, the struggle for access to the 'national cake' has been the main consideration in the creation of States. In many cases, champions push for creation of new States for their people, not because the people are in support of such moves, but because they want political freedom for themselves or they want to prove a point to their political opponents.[45]

Although the National Assembly has been inundated with demands for more States, it is important to reiterate here that there is no evidence in Nigeria to suggest any correlation between States creation and economic, infrastructure and human capital development. What we have is increased looting of the nation's treasury.[46] The implication of additional States is therefore that more Governors, Commissioners, Special Advisers, Permanent Secretaries will be created, all feeding fat on the national treasury. Besides, government bureaucracy will thus have to be created in the new States with attendant costs.

Besides, State creation in Nigeria remains entirely an elite affair. It is an enterprise controlled, prosecuted and employed by the elite for the satisfaction of elite desire for power and relevance and all the appurtenances that go with that.[47] This is why since 1963; States

creation has not been a basis for resolving the national question and the attendant problem of mass alienation from the political and economic processes of the nation. What has aggravated this arrant lack of effectiveness is that there does not exist an objective set of criteria for State creation in Nigeria. Besides, "State creation has become an instrument of political patronage and one designed to enhance the competitive edge of particular tendencies or regimes that become dominant at different points in the historical trajectory."[48] Thus, the absence of a clearly defined criteria States for creation has left the door open for a continuous clamour for creation of new States.

Furthermore, States creation has not only failed to solve the problem of ethnic minorities or even the ethnic majorities, but it has also become a veritable tool with which a string of unitarist leaders have dealt a fatal blow to the Nigerian Federalism.[49] In other words, successive Nigerian leaders, driven by the desire to privatize political power with the attendant primitive accumulative tendencies, have systematically undetermined the structure of the Nigerian Federal system by creating States in an exercise designed as it were to weaken the so- called federating units, vis-a-vis the central government. Again, "with State creation assuming the role of the panacea for the solution of virtually all socio-economic and political problems in Nigeria, it would be expected that there would be a rapid increase in the demands for States creation with dangerous consequences or implications for Nigerian Federalism."[50]

It is the concern and worry of many Nigerians that most of the present 36 States in Nigeria are economically unviable. As the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Malam Sanusi Lamido Sanusi revealed at a public function in Benin recently, most of the States are spending about 96% of their revenue in paying civil servants' wage bills.[51] He lamented that "we have created States and other structures that are economically unviable and the result is that we do not have funding for infrastructure, education, health and so on. The unviable status of the extant States has therefore vitiated the argument for more States. Almost all States depend on the federation Account to survive, and this dependent nature of States makes them subordinate to the Federal centre and negates the Federal principle of local autonomy.

Again, Williams Ehwarieme[52] notes that because of the large number of sharing units and the lack of independent sources of revenue, the dependence of these units on the Federal government has not only virtually impinged on their autonomy but it has hindered their capacity to carry out independent development. Moreover, reduction in land space is by implication, a drastic reduction in the economic power and activities of the States. Similarly,

addressing the effect of incessant State creation on the autonomy of the State and true fiscal Federalism in Nigeria, former Vice President Alex Ekwueme observes that, "the increase in the number of States has tended to reduce the States to a level where they have virtually ceased to function as component, autonomous and cognate units in a Federal polity".

It is the opinion of many critics that Nigeria does not need more States. There are many federations with higher populations, larger land mass, ethnic and other diversities, higher (GDP) and higher internally generated revenue by the federating units, yet, have less States than Nigeria. This can be seen in the table below.

Table 4: Characteristics of some Federations in Comparison with Nigeria

Country	Land Mass (sq KM)	Population	Number of States	GDP in million $
USA	9,826,630	308,724,650	50	14,657,800
INDIA	3,156,596	1,147,995,900	28	1,729,010
CHINA	9,571,300	1,330,044,600	22	5,878,629
CANADA	9,984,670	33,679,263	13	1,574,052
AUSTRALIA	7,682,300	20,600,856	8	924,843
RUSSIA	17,075,200	140,702,090	86	1,479,819
NIGERIA	923,768	162,471,000	36	193,669
BRAZIL	8,547,404	191,908,600	26	2,051,412

SOURCE: Encarta, 2009; and World Development Database, World Bank, 2011.

If Nigeria were a federating unit in the United States of America, she (Nigeria) would have been the 25th State, in the ranking of the US States by their GDP after Louisiana, whose GDP is $ 213,600, while Nigeria's own as a country is $193,669. Nigeria's GDP is less than 5% of the US national GDP.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Ethnicity among other socio-political issues has a lot of implications for the Nigerian project. The struggle among ethnic groups to have access and control resources in Nigeria nearly delayed the country's independence due to the fear of domination expressed by the different ethnic groups. It is this struggle among the various ethnic groups that led to the struggle for States creation in Nigeria. The struggle which began before independence has

continued unabated, despite the balkanization of the country into thirty- six (36) States from the initial three (3) regions.

The creation of States to satisfy parochial and patrimonial needs will not move the country forward. States creation is not, in the least, a solution to the myriad of problems the country is facing. Previous exercises have never been done from the perspective of bringing government and development closer to the people. Rather, it has been to score some political goals and satisfy particular interests. Again, experience has shown that States creation in Nigeria over the years has not brought about the desired or expected effects. There has been no sustainable development in the States, the structures are unviable, dependent on the Federal Government and have become dens of corruption and underdevelopment. What the country needs is a transformational, visionary and courageous leadership. It is evident that the creation of new States is an uncreative means of dealing with the aspects of national development. The creation of States is therefore not a solution to the problems of development and democracy in Nigeria. Rather, the exercise will create opportunities and developments which will liberate new forces and threw up more challenges.

The present Federal structure in the country is unitarist. Nigeria runs a system of government that grants near absolute power to the Federal Executive. We therefore recommend a Constitutional amendment and efforts that will ensure true Federalism, rather than creating unviable and dependent States. Again, the States should be allowed to control up to 50% of their resources. This will reduce the number of agitations for new States because many of the proposed new States have no economic basis to sustain themselves, except their dependence of Federal revenue. It will also encourage States to look inward for internally generated revenue by diversifying the economy.

Again, the continued agitations for the creation of more States are simply an easiest way of having access to power and wealth. To actually get the government and development to the people, there is need to reposition the Local Government, which is the closest tier of government to the grassroots. For now, the Local Governments are operating under the strangulating control of State Governors. They are centers of corruption and mediocrity. The powers and functions of the Local Government system should be enshrined in the Constitution and their finances ensured.

One of the reasons for an endless clamour for more States is the cry of marginalization by some purported minorities. Yet Nigerian is a heterogeneous State of more than 374 ethnic groupings. If every dominated and/or marginalized group wants a State of its own as a solution to its problems, how many States will Nigerian have? The State and

Federal Government authorities should therefore create structures and make provisions for peaceful co-existence among the various groupings in the country.   There should be Constitutional arrangements which will guarantee the rights of all nationalities, especially, the rotation of elective offices among the various nationalities.

Endnotes:

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