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THE NIGERIAN STATE AND UNENDING PROBLEM OF AGITATIONS FOR STATE CREATION

DR. FATILE, Jacob Olufemi
ADEJUWON, Kehinde David

ABSTRACT

The paper examines the unending problem of agitations for state creation in Nigeria. The paper observes that one of the most intriguing problems of a multi-tribal community such as we have in Nigeria is the problem of minority and that minority elements are clamouring for an effective say in the management of their own affairs through agitations for states creation, which will give them added leverage for a more equitable share of national resources. It argues that the military has become the pre-eminent culprit in the saga of state proliferation in Nigeria. The paper also observes that though various attempts to create new states under the civilian regimes were stymied by constitutional complexity, partisan acrimony, economic uncertainty and unfettered sectional recrimination and suspicion, yet it resurfaced as the most prominent and volatile issue under the present democratic dispensation. The paper therefore concludes that the attended proliferation of states in Nigeria has added a pathological and cyclical dimension to what has been characterized as the deepening crisis of Nigerian federalism.

Introduction

Much have been written about Nigeria, her people and the culture, economy and politics, that sheds light on the tremendous potential of this African Giant. However, little has been written about the unending problem of agitation for state creation. The question of creation of states has been perhaps the most sensitive and precarious single issue that has faced Nigeria since she came into being as a distinct national entity. The origin of the problem can be traced to the earliest stages in the political history of the country when the external boundaries of what subsequently became Nigeria were determined by the colonial powers at the Berlin West Africa Conference of 1884 – 1885. These boundary lines have been described as arbitrary and artificial; but the fact remains that they were drawn in response to existing historical circumstances, and must be accepted as practical reality (Ellah, 1983:3). The agitation for state creation in Nigeria has dated as far back as 1942 when Nnamdi Asikwe suggested that the country's provinces be re-grouped into eight states. While Awolowo (1947) argued for a federal constitution based on ethnic factor in which each ethnic group, irrespective of size, is autonomous in regard to its internal affairs; Nnoli (1978) claimed that in the same year (i.e 1947) that the NCNC, led by Azikwe, launched the Freedom Charter that suited the creation of ethnic – linguistic states in the country as a means of allaying fears of minority cultural-linguistic groups. Again in 1953, Awolowo suggested the creation of nine states as recognition of the ethnic factor. Ever since then, these two leaders of the nationalist movements have advocated the creation of states as a means of ensuring national unity and stability. Nnoli stated further that, as a result of their arguments and those of many others who share similar views on the subject, the impression that has been fostered and is daily been reinforced is that the creation of state is indispensable for the unity and good government of Nigeria.

The issue of state creation had centred on the demands by the various ethnic groups in Nigeria for increased political participation. Odetola (2002) argued that civilian politicians bargained tacitly among themselves over the problems of minority groups in the areas which their respective political parties controlled. In other words they were not genuinely motivated to create states. While Ade-Ajayi (1985) believed that the creation of states, which opened the avenue for additional states later, was a major step in political engineering and reform to which Nigerians can now attest. The numerous demands for more states are indications of the impact of this exercise done at the peak of Nigeria's crises.

Since the return to civil rule, there have been some fresh calls for state creation but these have proven to be a remote possibility. Even the efforts by some state governments to create additional local governments have been effectively stalled by the elaborate constitutional and inter-governmental processes involved. The controversies and conflicts that have trailed state creation have been generated by the political and economic consequences of such exercises for individual and communities as actors in the politics of distributive federalism in Nigeria (Suberu, 2004). For instance, the demand for the creation of states was people's reaction against the conditions of continued neglect and underdevelopment into which successive Nigerian development plan programmes had left them.

Statement of Problem

States creation exercise almost acquired a life of its own in Nigeria. True, military – inspired political engineering in the form of creation of the new states was characterized by arbitrariness and lack of adequate consultations, aside from the massive reduction in their political stature and constitutional responsibilities. Apart from the exercise undertaken by the Gowon regime to meet the exigencies of the civil war, subsequent exercises have been characterized by undue arbitrariness. For the military, creation of new states became a strategy in the construction of patron-client networks, or rewarding loyalists, central to the survival of military dictators. In some instances, states have been created outside of the recommendations of government appointed panels, or administrative headquarters determine by executive fiat (Egwu, 2005).

The efforts to create States in Nigeria is undoubtedly due to the fact that those involved in the negotiations for delimitation of boundaries viz, the electors and politicians, are the people who gained through the delimitations. Human nature being what it is, vested interest and consequent dissension are inevitable, unless there is absolute objectivity and impartiality. Elah, (1983) pointed out:

In fact, there are respectable Marxists who see the problem of states proliferation mainly as the result of economic competition and class formation under capitalism. In other words, they consider that the greatest agitators for states creation are mainly the elite who hope to gain high positions and other benefits thereby. But it appears that these aspects are of secondary significance in Nigeria since the new states so far created have been created through administrative fiat signed by individuals in supreme positions of power.

The geo-political distribution of the state has also generated some strictures. Critics contend that the present thirty six states in Nigeria should have been distributed equally among the six geopolitical zones. However, there are only five states in the South Eastern zone, against seven in the North-West, and six in each of the remaining four zones. The inter-regional distribution of the thirty-six states has also been criticized; there are nineteen states plus the Federal Capital Territory, in the North, while the South has seventeen states (Suberu, 2004). He observes further that the creation of new sub-national units no longer carries the prospect of any real, mass-based benefits beyond the enrichment or advancement of bourgeois elites. Hence, the popular demands for new states in Nigeria have degenerated into increasingly vicious inter-communal struggles for the headquarters of such states. Far from solving the nation's socio-economic and political problems, the creation of states is more likely to reinforce, and aggravate them, or at best encapsulate them, preventing them from being solved in the near future.

The character of the Nigerian state tends to make agitation for creation of states attractive. Apart from the general belief that development is horizontally induced, issues of corruption, political instability, the rentier nature of the Nigerian economy, the politicization of ethnicity and the behavioural pattern of the elite in the use, misuse and abuse of public office have aggregated to make the demand for the fractionalization of the nation inevitable. Despite the fact that the

country has been so far restructured six times, pressure for the creation of new states has persisted and intensified. No wonder, Omotoso (2004) further argued that "the experience in Nigeria has shown that the creation of any new states will merely open up fresh tension and problems for these new units and the older ones".

Another identified problem is that immediately states are created, they are caught up in daunting administrative challenges and problems such as poor infrastructural facilities, excessively high wage bills, low level of internally generated revenue, dwindling budgets, allocation of scarce resources to unproductive capital projects, massive corruption as wastage through inflated contracts, outright theft of public money and a acrimonious battles over assets sharing. Yet, no hope of a stop to the desire for "own states" by the ethnic minorities.

The Military and States Creation in Nigeria – Historical Antecedents

Nigeria witnessed an increase in the number of states as constituent units of her federation under the military. The military took over governance of Nigeria with only four regions; Northern, Western, Eastern, and mid-West regions. Nwolise (2005) observes that although agitations for more regions began even before independence, only one new region (Mid-West) was created between 1960 and 1966. However, by the time military handed over power to democratic elected government in May, 1999, Nigeria had become a 36 state Federal structure. So far, of the 36 states created out of the original three regions of the country at independence, only the defunct Mid-Western region created in 1963 was done under constitutional rule. Because of this balkanization, many states today depend on federal grants to survive to the tune of 90 percent or more of their total resources. Arguably, without military rule, the creation of more regions would have proceeded more slowly according to constitutional procedures, with the country ending up with about 6 viable and vibrant regions instead of 36 weak states as we presently have in the country today.

Osaghae (1985) observed that in creating the new states, Gowon seems to have made a conscious effort to balance the North and South which he argued was a deliberate one aimed at correcting the anomalies in the Federal structure. The ad-hoc conference on constitutional proposals for Nigeria, set up by Gowon, met on September 12, 1966 to consider the issue of the creation of additional regions. At the conference, most of the delegates who were former politicians, had come out with proposals, which could have amounted to a break-up of the federation (Abia, 2008). Due to the failure of constitutional conference and the aborted attempt to create additional states through negotiations the issue of constitutionalism was put on the sideline as Gowon announced on May 27, 1976, the creation of twelve states by the promulgation of a decree. Though the crucial factor of "serious national emergency" was given as the main reason for the creation of the new states by decree, a quasi-federalism, that is, a form of government having some resemblance to federalism under military rule emerged, reflecting the organizational ethos of the military and ultimately the principle of the federal supremacy in the federalism (Osadolor, 2005). With the creation of twelve states, a statement by the then Mid-West state government reads:

With the creation of twelve states in Nigeria, the fundamental problem which threatened to desolve a political association of over fifty years has been solved. It is clear that the states represent a successful attempt to reconcile conflicting interests of the ethnic communities with their desire to participate in the federal process as one people. The new structure of states will provide the basis for wielding together the heterogeneous communities of Nigeria into a nation... The internal structure of the new states will curb the excesses of any ethnic group and ensure peace and stability... (quoted from Osaghae, 1985:514)

At the end of civil war in 1970, Gowon had indeed promised to review the issue of creating more states after four years, considering that Nigeria is a dynamic society and noting that it was in the

overall interest that more states be created. Between 1970 – 1974, various demands for more states were made, and leading statesmen like Azikwe, Enahoro and Ali Munguno joined on the advocacy for more states. Osaghae (1985:515) stated further that even though, Gowon reiterated his promise to review the issue of states creation, no new state was created until he was ousted in July, 1975.

With the overthrow of the Gowon regime in July, 1975, the new Head of state, General Murtala Mohammed, on October 1, 1975 announced his political programme whose first item was the settlement of the question of creation of additional states. Earlier on, a committee on state under the chairmanship of Justice Ayo Irekefe had been inaugurated on August 7, 1975 with only a four month mandate to submit its report (Abia, 2008). Unlike the Gowon government, which procrastinated on the issues of democratization and state creation, the Murtala - Obasanjo regime saw the prompt resolution of the State issue and the disengagement of the military from politics, as essential to its image and legitimacy as a connective government. However, the Murtala - Obasanjo government created additional seven states, bringing the total number of states to nineteen.

In the second republic of Nigeria, agitation for state creation was prominent. No wonder Suberu (2004) observes that:

perhaps the most prominent and volatile issue in the second Republic (1979 – 83). As it is well known, however, the attempts to create new states during this period were stymied by constitutional complexity, partisan acrimony, economic uncertainty, and unfettered sectional recrimination and suspicion.

In 1987, Babangida created two more states, bringing the number of states in the federation to twenty one (21), thus reorganization was to make the number of states in the federation exactly divisible by three in order to avoid a re-run in the proposed Third Republic of the unfortunate constitutional-cum-electoral controversy in 1979 over what constituted two thirds of the states in the federation (Dudley, 1982:169 - 170). Later demand which reached a crescendo in mid-1991 reflected the fears that unless such demand were satisfied by the military administration, it would be much more difficult, if not impossible to satisfy them under the in-coming civilian administration. In August, 1991 Babangida created additional more states. The creation of nine new states, and the accompanying reorganizations of the localities, were done in a precipitate and prejudiced manner. Consequently, the re-organizations provoked an unprecedented orgy of protests, demonstrations and arson involving tens of fatalities (Suberu, 2004). The decision to create new states was, therefore, a response to political pressures for a more ethnically balanced federation.

On the occasion of the country's thirty-six anniversary on October 1, 1996, General Abacha announced the creation of six new states, the creation of the six states according to him, was guided by the need to ensure a fair spread and balancing within the geopolitical zones of the country, applying such criteria as population and land mass, among others.

From the foregoing historical analysis, it is obvious that the country's internal composition has been altered at about six different times, starting from the time the Mid-Western State was created under the civilian administration in the first Republic to the time when the Abacha junta created six new states in 1996 which increased the component units of Nigeria federation to thirty- six. It is however important to emphasize as Suberu (2004) argued that far from receding or diminishing, the agitations for territorial changes have tended to increase and intensify with each round of re-organisation.

Rationale and Effects of State Creation in Nigeria

Early political history of Nigeria indicates clearly the factors which were taken into consideration by the colonial authorities in demarcating internal boundaries in Nigeria over a number of

decades. The major difference is that the early demarcations were only intended to mark ordinary administrative boundaries, not to delimitate separate governments in a federal set up. States are intended to provide different traditional groups or tribes with the opportunities they need for self-determination, self-realisation and self-fulfilment. This must be regarded as one most important criterion for state creation.

Watts (1999) stated thus:

But the creators of these new states ... have had to reconcile the need, on the one hand, for relatively large economic and political units (in order to facilitate rapid economic development and to sustain genuine political independence), with the desire on the other hand, to retain the authority of the smaller political units"

Kolawole (1996) also makes a pertinent observation as regards the creation of state. He stated that:

One major reason for agitation for state in this country is that it enhances development. So, in a way, the state created and the one from which it is created stand to benefit from the exercise. But state creation is not to serve as a platform to manifest bottled-up anger, bias and prejudice real or imagined, against the state created. A state creation ordinarily should not be analogous to a marriage annulled because of irreconcilable differences rather it ought to be a case of mutual separation where the union remains, in a way, permanent because of the children of the marriage.

Thus, state creation should be seen as a step towards further development in the old and new states.

Okwudiba (1978) on his own part identified four major *rationale* for state creation, these according to him include:

First, there is the argument that a very strong movement existed which demanded the creation of States, and, therefore, that political stability cannot be guaranteed without it. Second, it is argued that the creation of states allows for the greatest possible diffusion of economic and political power which, in itself, guarantees the maintenance of the freedom of the individual; therefore it is the only alternatives to the development of an arbitrary despotism. Third, another argument suggests that the creation of states brings the government nearer to the people by making it more democratic and more efficient, thereby providing a permanent infeasible devolution of State affairs. Lastly, it is also argued that creation of states quickens the pace of development. No wonder Justice Ayo Irikefe led commission of 1976 noted that "... the basic motivation in the demand for more states is rapid economic development. All other reasons adduced by state agitators are to a large extent mere rationalisation to achieve the basic purpose of development (FRN, 1976:10)

The general bases for more states in the country according to Adejuyibe (1979) are of two types, which are:

Firstly the official rationale and, secondly, pressure by the people who want a reorganisation of states even though their own particular areas may not benefit from such exercise. General suggestions for more states in the country as a whole or any part of it are usually justified on one or more of three groups:

- (a) the need for government to be nearer for people;
- (b) the need for unity in the country;
- (c) the need to minimize conflict between states and within states, i.e. inter-state and intra-state conflicts.

Of these three, the last point is relevant to our discussion here. That is one of the general rationale for the creation of states is the need to minimize or eliminate conflict between different

states or regions and also conflict within each state or region. This is because a major feature of the old regions and states was the actual or potential development of conflict within many of them and also between two or more of them. The main intra state conflict arose because some ethnic nations complained of being dominated within the states. The main inter-states conflicts were connected with demands for the transfer of sections of one region or state to another.

On the effects of state creation in Nigeria, the creation of states has had its destructive impact on the public service to the extent that it destroys whatever degree of institutionalization achieved. This is due mainly to the fact that each time new states are created, the existing bureaucratic apparatus is disbanded, and a new one is set up, involving transfer of personnel and office location. The new service, though borrowing from existing rules and regulations, will have to establish its own patterns. For this reason, all the public services in the federation are relatively new (Ogunna, 1985). While Omotoso (2004) argued thus:

State creation simply leads to the unplanned movement and transfer of the indigenes of the new states in the public service of the old states to the new states. No doubt this results into unplanned and unbudgeted expenditure in the new states, as well as frustration, hardship and agony on the part of the migrating staff. The migrating public servants are almost turned to refugees in the new state capitals because both office and residential accommodation is usually not readily available. They are forced to operate under tree shades and inside their cars This created frustration, agony and despair among the personnel because neither residential nor office accommodations will be provided

On the part of government, one noticeable thing is that unplanned movement of personnel leads to a decline in productivity. In fact, government business usually suffers; nobody can be queried or punished. The period of staff movement to the new states is always riotous and lawless. To make the matter worse, the meagre resources of most state governments do not allow them to compensate workers for the inconveniences suffered as occasioned by the movement.

Adamolekun (1985) pointed out that immediately after the creation of additional seven states in 1976, though employment opportunities increased at the state level. Many civil servants were promoted prematurely and state administration suffered because of lack of experienced personnel to provide leadership. Apart from this, the older states suddenly become short-staffed and their officers are given, undeserved accelerated promotion just to fill the vacancies created by the departing officers. In most cases most of the officers so promoted are not ripe for such responsibility. The resultant effect of this is that, with state creation, both the new and old states are under-administered (Omotosho, 2004).

Shagari (1996) stated the negative implication of any further state creation in Nigeria, when he asserted that:

... it is hard to see what contribution the creation of yet more states will make to our recovery and progress ... Civil Servants will earn rapid promotion and businessmen and women a fresh wave of contracts for more prestigious buildings and projects. That will be it No new resources are likely to be generated either from taxes, production or services. Dependent on federal hand-outs and ill-equipped to perform their functions, the new states will simply be a drain on already limited resources ... That is not developed. It is absurdity.

States creation leads to over dependence on statutory allocation from federation account and low internally generated revenue and this cannot promote development. Thus, apart from the fact that state creation exercises tend to bring government nearer to the people as well as engender further development in the old and new states, it has aggravated rather than reduce intra-state and inter-

state wranglings among the component units of the Nigerian state. State creation has no doubt increased the number of disputes over territorial boundaries among states and local government across the country. In addition, there is the problem of equitable sharing of men, materials and other resources among the affected states.

Ethnic Minority and Unending Agitation for Creation of States in Nigeria

The original impetus for state agitation and creation in Nigeria according to Suberu (2004) was derived from ethnic minority opposition to the British Instituted three-region federal structure which secured autonomy and hegemony for the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo majority nationalities in the Northern, Western and Eastern regions respectively. This ethnic minority ferment according to Diamond (1983) had important distributive dimensions;

Ethnic minority fears and grievances centred around obtaining a fair share of the rewards and resources of an expanding economy and state: contract, loans, scholarship, processing plants, water supplies, street lights, schools, hydro-electric projects. Minority demands for separate states were based on the belief, actively promoted by their leaders, that minorities were being cheated in the distribution of these resources by the majority dominated regional governments.

When Nigeria became a full fledged federation in 1954, demands for the creation of more states were made by minority groups within the three regions. The demand for the creation of more states in the country was so strong that it became a constitutional issue. During the several constitutional conferences before Nigeria's independence in 1960, numerous claims for separate states were made by minority groups.

According to Duchacek (1977), the matter of ethnic minority received some attention during the 1957 constitutional conference when the delegates representing some minority interests at the conference pressed for the entrenchment of provisions in the constitution that would protect minority interests. And to meet these fears, the British secretary of state for the colonies appointed a minorities commission under Sir Henry Willink as Chairman to "inquire into the fears of minorities and the means of allaying them" and it was "if and only if no other solution was possible to meet the fears ... should as a last resort detailed recommendation be made for the creation of more regimes". The commission in its report, held that:

In each region we come to the conclusion that – on its own merits – a separate state would not provide a remedy for the fears expressed; we were clear all the same that, even when allowance had been made for some exaggeration there remained a body of genuine fears and that the future was regarded with real apprehension (FRN, 1976).

Yet all that was recommended as a solution to these genuine fears was the entrenchment of some fundamental rights provisions in the constitution. The commission realised however, that "provisions" of this kind in the constitution are difficult to enforce and sometimes difficult to interpret. Still, it went ahead to recommend them because as it held. "Their presence defines standard to which appeal may be made by those whose rights are infringed" (Suberu, 1996).

At the 1958 constitutional conference in London, the representatives that had argued at the commission hearings in Nigeria for the creation of states renewed their demands and expressed their dissatisfaction with the commission's conclusions. The report of the resumed conference clearly revealed the minority position. It was stated that:

Though the desire for the creation of new states arises from the fear of minorities, it would be impracticable to meet all these fears by the creation of new states. There are many ethnic groups and people in Nigeria and however many ethnic groups and people in Nigeria and however many states were created, minorities would still inevitably remain.

The conference was unable to take a decision with regard to these demands but recommended the appointment of enquiry to investigate into the fears of the minorities and suggest the means to allaying these fears. The statehood aspirations of minorities in the immediate pre-independence period were sacrificed before the Nigerian altars of ethnic chauvinism political sovereignty and political expediency (Dudley, 1982). But the Secretary of states for the colonies finally decided that if states were to be created, the request for independence in 1960 should be abandoned. The representatives knowing what that would cost them, grudgingly agreed to bury their hatchet and accepted independence with the hope of solving this problem internally. This was how the British Government succeeded in blackmailing the Nigerian leaders into submission.

Thus, the problem which the British government could have solved was shifted to the doorsteps of the Nigerian leaders, and this became such an intractable issue that only the threat of succession by the Eastern Region forces Nigeria, in a panicky mood, to split the country into 12 states on 27 May, 1967 (Duchacek, 1977).

Nevertheless, what cannot be ignored is the fact that the creation of new states has also been fuelled by ethnic agitations and the desire of groups who feel oppressed and marginalised to have a state of "their own". Given Nigeria's complex ethos, linguistic configuration and the high level of politicisation of ethnic, religions and regional identities, the tendency is for such elite driven demand for better opportunities and access to the sharing of the national cake to take on its own specific dynamic. Thus, while it is arguable that states which presently constitute Nigeria's federation units are unviable, both in terms of the resource base and ethno-cultural configuration, and reflect a distortion of governance under the military, it must be conceded that they are product of, and a response to some form of agitation against oppression and domination (Egwu, 2005).

In 1967, the replacement of the four-region structure with a twelve state system is the most outstanding of Gowon's policy towards the ethnic minorities. Gowon was convinced from the outset level "without a definite commitment on the states' question, namely and freedom from fear of domination by one region or the other cannot be achieved. Although the 1967 state creation exercise gave satisfaction to sub-ethnic agitations for statehood within the majority groups, its primary rationale was to liberate the minorities from the regional stronghold of the ethnic majority groups. Suberu (1996) pointed out that:

The 1967 state creation was largely designed to promote a more equitable accommodation of minority groups within the federal structure ... Not surprisingly, many ethnic minority states (and even localities) have become veritable theatres of inter-ethnic and communal conflagration and explosion.

The minorities fears of discrimination, neglect, oppression and domination by the majorities heightened their demands for separate states. In January, 1994 General Abacha inaugurated a National Constitutional Conference (NCC). As noted by Suberu (2004), among the topics that featured prominently in the deliberations of the conference was the issue of state-creation. During the conference, forty five (45) requests for new states were received.

Table 1: The 45 requests for New States Received by the National Constitutional Conference, 1994.

Present State	Proposed States
Abia	Aba
Adamawa/Taraba	Sardauna
Akwa Ibom	Itai
	Atlantic
Anambra	Ezu
Bauchi	Gombe
	Katagum
Benue	Apa
	Katsina – Ala

Cross – River	Ogoja
Delta	Anioma
	Toru-Ebe
Edo	Afemesa
Enugu/Abia	Ebonyi
Imo	Njaba
Jigawa	Hadejia
	Lautai
	Bayajida
Kaduna	Gurara
Kano	Tiga
	Gari
	Tigari
Katsina	Karaelua
Kogi	Okura
	Okun
Kwara	Oya
	Yoruba/Ekiti
Niger/Kebbi	Kainji
	Ndaeluma (Nupe)
Ogun	Ijebu Remo
Ondo	Ekiti
Osun	Oduduwa
Oyo	New Oyo
	Oke – Ogun
	Ibadan
Plateau	Nasarawa
Rivers	Bayelsa/Niger Delta
	Orashi
	Ogoni/Rivers East
	Port Harcourt
	New Rivers
	Oloibiri
Sokoto	Zamfara
	New Sokoto/Sakkwato
Taraba	Mambila

Source: *Federal Republic of Nigeria, Report of the Constitutional Conference Vol. 2, Abuja; National Assembly Press, 1995, cited in Suberu (2004:288).*

The separate committees, headed by Dr. Peter Odili and Mr. Paul Unongo respectively, were set up to investigate and advice on the matter. Yet both committees failed to produce an acceptable resolution on the issue. The conference ultimately resolved to entrust absolute responsibility for state creation to the Abacha government (Suberu, 2004). Abacha regime also set up another committee on the creation of states and local governments on December 13, 1995, to investigate all demands for state creation and make appropriate recommendations to the government. The committee headed by Chief Arthur Mbanefo received a total of seventy two (72) requests for new states. Suberu (2004) argued further that although the committee made specific recommendations for the creation of some states and local governments, such proposals were never published and the government itself did not publish any White Paper on the committee's report.

Since the last state creation exercise on October 1, 1996, when additional six states was created, which brought the number of states in Nigeria to thirty-six, there has been growing demands for states creation by the ethnic minorities in Nigeria. Till today, there are serious agitations and demands for state creation, especially demands for Ogoja State from Cross River State, Anioma State from Delta State, Okun State from Kogi State, Ijebu-Remo State from Ogun State, Ibadan

and Oke-Ogun States from Oyo State. For instance, the Olubadan of Ibadanland, Oba Samuel Odulana, led some Ibadan traditional chiefs on October 28, 2008 to the National Assembly to demand for the creation of Ibadan State, they also present documents and maps to justify the long-standing clamour for the creation of Ibadan state. Not only that, the group justified the creation of Ibadan State on population, number of local governments, manpower, number of primary and secondary schools as well as Polytechnics and Universities (Ameah, 2008:9; Fagbemi and Adisa, 2008:5). A member representing Obokun/Oriade Federal Constituency in the House of Representatives while commenting on the demand for creation of Ibadan state noted that at present, all the states in the South West of Nigeria had sent proposals to the National Assembly on the creation of additional states from each of the states constituting the South Western Nigeria i.e. Oyo, Ogun, Osun, Ekiti, Ondo and Lagos State.

According to Adisa (2008), the demand has been a longstanding project of Ibadan indigenes, who believe that Ibadanland alone and the current Oyo South Senatorial District is big enough to be made a state. He stated further that state creation is one of the contentious items many are canvassing to be included on the list of planned constitutional amendment, in the National Assembly. Also, since the news filtered out that the current National Assembly plans to embark on a fresh attempt at amending the 1999 constitution, several communities have been presenting proposals for state creation to the Senate and the House of Representatives. In addition the Southern Senators' Forum (SSF) recent adopted a 10-point agenda which include the creation of states across the six geo-political zones. Meanwhile, the Igbo socio cultural group, *Ohanaeze Ndigbo* representing the Igbo ethnic group in Nigeria has described the clamour by other ethnic groups in the country for states as a ploy to trivialize the genuine demands of Ndigbo for additional state. The group noted that the South East which has only five states compared to other zones deserved one more state in the spirit of equity, insisting that other sections that were agitating for more states do not need it. The group observed that the demand for an additional state by the South-East was reasonable insisting that the zone had always been shortchanged by the Nigerian federation in development and provision of infrastructure (Aborisade, 2008:10).

Nzomiwu (2008:1-2) however observed that divergent views on the creation of new states in the South East have cracked the South East Governor's Forum. According to him, the Governors of Enugu and Ebonyi states want Adada state carved out of Enugu state while their counterparts in Abia and Imo prefer that Aba state be created from Abia, and Urashi state from Imo. The leaders of the Adada State Movement (ASM) from Nsukka Province claimed that they lost the opportunity in 1996 when Igbo leaders prevailed on them to concede it to their Ebonyi counterparts. They contended that since the choice of Ebonyi then was because it was the oldest agitation, the same principle should apply this time around.

With each ethnic group demanding a state or more of its own as a means of appropriating to itself a greater share of the statutory allocations, the agitation for states is seen as a sort of ethnic political economic strategy which consider the number of states from each ethnic group as added leverage for a more equitable share of national resources. In view of this, state creation is more or less a perennial feature of Nigerian federalism (Omotoso, 2004). In his own view, Oyovbaire (1982) notes that the ethnic minorities concerned themselves with the development and progress of their areas. Apart from this, they were concerned with achieving self-determination within the Nigerian Federal State and to realise this they articulated their demands intensely and fiercely. The ethnic minorities were not so happy about the 1996 exercise. They were of the opinion that the exercise put them at a great disadvantage in the Nigerian Federal Structure. This explains why the issue of ethnic and regional inequality in the distribution of states has remained an important source of contention in the Nigerian federation till date..

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study was embarked upon to examine the unending agitations for state creation in Nigeria. In the paper attempt has been made to examine the military and states creation in Nigeria, the rational and effects of state creation as well as ethnic minority and unending agitations for state creation in Nigeria. The paper pointed out that the unrelenting pressures for territorial changes in

Nigeria reflect the insatiable pressures by territorial communities for easy access to central revenues. Suberu (2004) contended that the attended proliferation of sub-national units in Nigeria has added a pathological and cyclical dimension to what has been characterized as the "deepening crisis of Nigerian federalism". The study also emphasized that the military has become the pre-eminent culprit in the saga of state proliferation in Nigeria.

It becomes clear that the creation of states as argued by Nnoli (1978), cannot overcome the difficulties, instead, it will aggravate the inter-ethnic situation by hampering the emergence of class consciousness in favour of state consciousness, permitting the use of regional governmental resources for ethnic competition, reinforcing the internalization of ethnic sentiments, continuing the emphasis on the division of the national cake rather than the baking of such a cake, and whetting the appetite of those who stand to gain from the allocation of resources along ethnic lines.

The energy and attention dissipated and focused on the question of state creation should instead be deployed in favour of activities which ameliorate the impact of these factors. Thus, emphasis should be placed on a drastic reduction of colonial type, scarcity and inequality through a revolutionary development programmes which, among other things, satisfies the demands of each citizen for a minimum of biologically and socially responsible standards of nutrition, drinking water, free education, free health services, employment, housing, clothing, care of the old, entertainment and effective participation at all levels of national activities to which he is entitled as a matter of social policy; and by a revolutionary onslaught in the structure of private ownership in the country. By combating socio-economic insecurity which arises from scarcity and inequality, such a programme will pull the rug from under the feet of ethnic identification. Otherwise, the vast majority of the population will remain an easy prey to the machination of the self appointed champions of ethnic interests.

Suberu (1998) calls for the creation of institutional and fiscal resources and thus the expansion of the national cake by all governments and segments while discouraging the current pre-occupation with sharing a shrinking national cake.

Apart from the creation of state, "federal character" principle can be strengthened to solve ethnic problem. Underlying this concept is the assumption that the various linguistic groups in the country are essentially significant in their differences rather than in their similarities. The increasingly pervasive belief is that there is ethnic diversity of such magnitude that the country has a "federal character" (Nnoli, 1978). However, it should be stated that if governments at all levels are responsive to the aspirations of the people and can ensure political stability and development, agitation for state creation would likely become considerably reduced and national development agenda enhanced.

The issue of states creation should be insulated from partisan politics. Impossible as this may appear, it cannot be denied that the political parties have sown and nurtured the issue of more states in the federation. The issue for them constitutes a pawn for winning the political game and not a balancing and therefore stabilizing factor. To this end, as long as the issue of states is left to the politicians, it will remain a perennial problem. Rather than leave the issue to the politicians we recommend that a States Creation Review Commission be provided for in the constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria.

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