

**THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF FEDERALISM AND  
MARGINALIZATION IN NIGERIA: A REFLECTION ON NORTH AND  
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**Abstract**

The study explored the interface between the political economy of federalism and marginalization in Nigeria. We posit that the notion of marginalization was introduced into Nigeria by the nature of British colonial rule which saw the Hausa / Fulani as the most pliable people in Nigeria and handed over power to them after independence, which they have continued to use as a tool for marginalizing the southern part of the country. We relied on the documentary and survey method for data collection, content analysis and percentages for data analysis, rentier state theory was adopted for theoretical framework. We discovered that Nigeria federal system has continuously been used as a tool for marginalization but that it became rampant under the present administration as reflected in its lopsided appointments. The study recommended among others, that the idea of zoning and rotational presidency be enshrined in Nigerian constitution including the development of strong political institution that is independent and neutral Nigeria should develop strong political institution that will not be easily manipulated especially the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the judiciary, to achieve this, the exclusive power of appointing INEC Chairman and Chief Justice of Nigeria(CJN) must be remove from the President by way of constitutional amendment. If this is done, the incredible and kangaroo manner in which the former CJN justice Walter Samuel Nkanu Onoghen was removed would have been avoided.

Keywords: political economy, federalism, marginalization, lopsidedness, administration.

**Introduction**

All over the globe, federalism is seen generally as a viable variety of government especially for political unity in multi-faceted multi-linguistics and multi ethnic states. (Igwe, 2002). To this end, it is widely practiced in most states in the world including

Nigeria, United States of America (USA), Canada, Belgium, Australia, Bosnia, Brazil, Germany, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Switzerland among others. While federalism is used as a tool for political unification, its root is traced to ancient Europe and it was first adopted

in the modern era in the union of states, during the old Swiss confederation. The earliest brands of federalism took place in ancient times in the form of alliance between states. Some examples from the seventh to the second century BC were the archaic league, the Aetolic League, the Peloponnesian League and the Delian League. (Cited in Igwe, 2002).

The most influential country that has however adopted the classical doctrine of federalism is USA in 1787 after the Philedephia convention ( a form of constitutional conference) written in defence and support of American federalism, federalist Essay. (Awa, 1976). Most God-fearing state – America uses federalism as an instrumentality for state building, while some African state like Nigeria has erroneously relegated the use of federalism to that of chronic and malevolent marginalization in all ramifications to the detriments of minority ethnic groups. From its formative years, what we have in Nigeria colonial era has been a restive state occasioned by constant political turmoil. There is a connection between these challenges and diversities associated with the state as articulated by scholars and the apex in this relationship is the one that exist between the central authority and the component units. For Where cited in Awa, (1976), what we have in Nigeria is more of a centre and subordinate unit instead of a centre and coordinate component which is the crux of federalism, hence the problem of power sharing and marginalization

becomes a recurring decimal (Amuwo, Suberu & Agbaje et al. 2000). Despite all these, Nigeria remains a clay-footed united country but with dicey foundation. Against this background, this study focus on federalism and the politics of marginalization in Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

According to the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) part one, Nigeria is one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign state to be known as the FRN. The constitution shall be supreme with its provision having binding force, with clear division of powers between the legislature, executive and judiciary. The Nigeria state envisages a viable democracy, based on the doctrine of good governance, respect for the constitution and federal principle, rule of law, separation of powers, equitable distribution of the resources of the state and sharing of governmental position based on equalitarianism and respect for all the segments of the federating states. In spite of the above structural elegance, it has been observed that the country's resources and juicy position is not being shared with equalitarian, principle and doctrine of good governance. Rather it is replete with poor economic management among other hydra-head calamities besetting the Nigerian state especially since 2015. This issue have been negatively affecting Nigeria especially in the recent time.

### **Conceptual Clarification of Federalism and Marginalization**

From its etymological background, the term federalism is derived from the Latin word “*Foedus*” meaning covenant. It is a crucial political terminology in which a body of members are bound together by covenant with a governing representative head. The term is also used to describe a system of government in which sovereignty is constitutionally divided between a central governing authority and constitutional political units (like state or provinces), Ajagun, 2014. The classical theory tries to explain what federalism is. The outstanding exponents include Dicey, Harrison, Jethro Brown, Bryce, Robert, Garon a well known Australian scholar define federalism as a form of government in which sovereignty or political power is divided between the central and local governments, so that each of them within its own sphere is independent of each other.

Lord Bruce described the federal and state governments as distinct and separate in their action, describing it as a great factory where in two sets of machinery are at work see (Akpata, 2000, Amuwo et al. 1998). For Ojo (1973), a federal government can be defined as a system of government whereby the powers of the government are divided between the national or central government of the component states, region, provinces or cantons and in which each is legally supreme in its own sphere of authority. This implies that in a federal state, all the government both federal and regional are co-ordinate and independent in one

another. According to Awa,(1976), early writers on federalism used the term interchangeably with federal confederation, confederacy with the term differing in modern usages. Dicey sees federation as a political arrangement meant to reconcile national unity and diversity with the maintenance of the right of the state. For Wheare,(1953), federalism is a system in which two level of government of government – federal and regional (state) exist side by side with each possessing certain assigned powers and function. The most enduring feature of federalism was articulated by Wheare (1953), he noted that the most fundamental distinguishing characteristics of federal system is that neither the central nor the regional / state government are subordinate to each other. Further stressing on the nature of federalism he stated as follows.

I have put forward uncompromisingly, a criteria of federal government-the delimited and coordinate division of government function , and I have implied that the extent to which any system of government does not conform to the criteria, it has no claim to call itself federal. Wheare, 1953 p.14.

He also stressed financial autonomy and existence of independent judiciary as a sine-qua-non for the practice of true classical federalism. Classical federalism is the structure of intergovernmental relation which is contained in the collection of essays called the federalist essay written in defence and support of the constitution

of the USA as agreed upon in 1787 by the Philadelphia convention. Thus classical federalism refers to the federalism emanating from the federalist essay typified by the constitution of the United State of America (USA), Canada, Australia and Switzerland.

This type of federalism stress the need for corporation in some matters as well as the right to separate actions in other matters. It can thus be persuasively argued that USA is the first to use federalism as an ideology of national integration. Some of this balance and classical doctrine of American federalism is fundamentally absent in Nigeria and this may continue to reinforce marginalization. Other advocates and writers of federalism include Jean Bodin, Daniel Elezar, Rufus Davis, William Rikers, Sam Oyovbaire, Karl Fedrick, Hicks, Elaigwu among others. These writers has in one way or the other made formidable contribution to the meaning, nature and development of federalism.

In this study however, federalism is conceptualized as a system of government where there is an association of many states, having certain degree of autonomy and authority who willingly agree to form a union and enjoy equally progress and development without any form of political, economic, cultural and social marginalization.

### **What is Marginalization?**

Marginalization is to push something or someone to the edge of anything

especially of society or one, consciousness in order to reduce its or their effect, relevance, significance etc (Chambers 21<sup>st</sup> century Dictionary 1999). It can be defined also as a social exclusion that occurs when certain groups of people get denied access to areas of society. It occurs when a group of people are less able to do things or access basic services or opportunities. It is a situation where people are socially, economically, politically and legally ignored, excluded, neglected and therefore vulnerable to livelihood change. Marginalized people are often at a disadvantage when it comes to obtaining healthcare, decent education, employment. It is the consciousness but usually unwritten policy of excluding a targeted victim from important processes of national life at best keeping the victim at the periphery and at the very worst viewing him as security risk.(Igwe 2002). marginalization include denying professional opportunities due to someone's identity, not providing equal access to resources because of someone's identity, derogatory languages or bullying, singling somebody out due to his/her cultural practices or religious beliefs, blatant disrespect, refusing to recognize good work or consistently taking credits for another person's work, finding ways to isolate someone, like purposefully leaving them out of meeting among others (Frank, (1968, Gutmann, (1994). In a broader sense, marginalization refers to disempowerment, alienation and political exclusion based on race,

religious persuasion , ethnic or geographical location or numeric or demographic position in such a society, it involves the suppression of idea and denial of involvement in mainstream economic, political and social activities ( Charles 1999).

### **Historical Background of Marginalization**

Marginalization is as old as human society. The Jews in Europe, the African-American and native American, the Aborigines in Australia, the Berber in North Africa are some of the other complained of marginalization in the hands of more dominant patriots. The Israelites were marginalized by the Egyptians It is on this note that Onuoha, (2020) noted that there are some political office holders who are meant to perform their duties creditably well, but begin to do the contrary, this office holders pledge to one hand to uphold the law with on the other hand they break the law with flagrant impunity. This unwarranted and shoddy behavior of our political leaders is partly due to their desire to marginalize. Speaking on the unpredictable nature of Nigeria political leaders (Abdullahi, 2017 cited in Onuoha (2020 p.9) stated that "Nigeria, project is not working despite every effort. The country is at stand still. It is unfortunate we are still where we were more than 50years after independence and have not been to move away from where our colonial masters left us". Ango Abudllahi report 2017 the above lamentation from Ango Abudllahi summarizes the frustration, anger and disappointment

of most Nigerians about the future of leadership which has its genesis in the handing over of the political leadership of Nigeria to a few oligarchic class in Nigeria by the colonial masters. This unfortunate incidence of marginalization by the so-called "born to rule" people has its root in the colonial and immediate post-colonial era.

In Nigeria the most outstanding complaint of marginalization came from Igbos. in particular and the southern Nigeria in general. In a document, The violation of Human Right And Civil Rights of Ndigbo, in the federalism of Nigeria: A call for Reparation and Appropriate Restitution, submitted in October 1999 to the President Olusegun Obasanjo by Human Rights Violation Committee (alias the justice Oputa panel) through the Ohaneze, a cultural umbrella of Ndigbo, the Igbos narrated in fact and figured, in the high points of their inspired suffering especially since the tragedies of 1966 that culminated in Nigeria-Biafra war in 1967 (Igwe 2002). Despite all these, Nigeria remains a united country.

The most painful one is political marginalization which is a process in which a group or class of people in a given society are relegated to secondary or inferior positions. It is a deliberate attempt to sideline or ignore members of such society from political debate, economic, bargaining and social negotiates, Raleigh, 2010. He further stated that it takes the form of denying a certain persons access to

opportunities base on one's identity in society in some cases leading to dispossessing of people of their land livelihood or political representation, including neglect in political appointment.

### **Methodology**

For collection of data in this study, we relied on documentary methods thus we depend on text books, journals, newspapers and other government documents. We equally focused on survey method; we interview some members of the intellectual communities from 8 universities in north central and south east nigeria a total of 20 lecturers were interviewed. through unstructured elite interview. For our method of data analysis, we focused on the logic of content analysis Put appropriately in this study, we employed a mix method of data collection. This includes the documentary and survey methods. This will at not only allow us to gather data from primary, but also for secondary sources. Documentary is necessary for this study because the method is well suited for content analysis could help one selected what is dependable from what is not Ibeanu (1991). This makes it necessary for this study

### **Theoretical Framework**

The relationship between political economy of federalism and marginalization in our country will be explained utilizing the rentier state theory (RST). A rentier state refers to a state which gets all or a reasonable part of its income from the rent of

indigenous resources to external clients. The phrase rentier state has been in use from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in a variety of ways. It is most often associated with economies rich in purely natural resources like petroleum, but can also include countries rich in financial instrument like reserve currency. It is a political economy theory that seek to discuss state society relation. Rent is conceived as the money gotten from the endowment of nature (Marshall, 1920); example is Kuwait, Oman and the United Arab Emirate (UAE) because oil revenue account for 77% 93% and 77 respectively of the budgets of these countries.

A theory is built for two main purposes: analysis or explanation and prediction, the validity of a model or theory is judged on the basis of its predictive power, generality and simplicity (Okoile & Ohiaegbu (2009). The RST is a complicated associated ideas pertaining to the patterns of progress and the nature of states in countries dominated by external rent, specifically oil rent (Yates, 1996).

The term 'rentier state' was coined, and first used by an Iranian economist, Hossein Mahdavy in 1970, with reference to pre-revolutionary Iran. The term however gained new ground in the years after *Mahdavy's* writing. His writing witnessed a rebirth of idea in the 1980s in the works of writers like Beblawi & Luciani (1987). These scholars focused on the role of oil affluence on the nature of Arab States. For Beblawi & Luciani (1987), there are four features that are mandatory for a

state to be listed or labelled as rentier. these features are articulated as follows: In the first instance, the economy of that state must be predominantly rentier in nature. In the second place, the genesis of such rent must be foreign or external to the country. The point being made is that the rent must come substantially from external sources. The implication is that no matter how substantial domestic or internal rent is, it is not always enough to label such country as rentier, (Beblawi & Luciani, 1987). in the third instance, in a rentier economy, only an insignificant number of people are involved in generating the rents, whereas the majority is engaged in the distributing and consuming. For Yates (1996), this means that an open economy with impressive levels of foreign trade is not classified as rentier, even if it relies substantially on rent like agriculture, this is because a substantial number of member of the citizens are fully involved in the production of such wealth. In the fourth instance the administrative machinery of that country must be the major receiver of the external rent in the economy (Beblawi & Luciani, 1987).

This theory is necessary for the explanation of the nexus between the political economy of federalism and marginalization in Nigeria because Nigerian's federal system is grossly shaped by the country's political economy which predominantly revolve around oil rents. Our central thesis here is that the Nigerian political economy is the convoluted relationship between those that controls oil rent and the rest of the society. Here there is an inherent link

between oil resource and the country's practice of federalism.

The federal government of Nigeria which is currently dominated by the Hausa /Fulani oversees the distribution of the centrally generated oil revenue. The desire to adopt the balanced federal system has often generated serious controversies in terms of revenue allocation formula to be adopted. Thus our argument in this study is that inability of the Buhari-led federal government to distribute the oil wealth equitably in the form of lop-sided political appointment has become a form of marginalization of the oil rich states in the southern part of the country who believe that President Buhari-led government is not carrying them along in terms of political appointment and other perceived injustices. Eme and Onuigbo (2015), Babalola 2010. The grievances of the southerners was made known in what was termed the "Asaba Declaration of 2021". It is this show of muscle by the northern Fulani oligarchy in the current configuration of the federal government which have brought about complete marginalization of the southern Nigeria especially the Niger Delta who have become the goose that lays the golden egg makes this theory second to none in the explanation of the link between federalism and marginalization in Nigeria.

### **Genesis of Marginalization in Nigeria**

In amalgamating the north and the southern Nigerian Lord Lugard

institutionalized marginalization by unevenly allocating more geographical areas to the north to the disadvantage of the south. After conquering the northern emirs. The geographical area included in the northern Nigeria protectorate include the Okun-Yoruba land of Kabba, Ogidi, Ijumu, Gbede, Yagba as well as Ebira land, Igalaland fashioned effectively under Kabba province. The Ifelodun, Ofa, Omuaran, Ifelodun and Irepodun areas of Yoruba land were fashioned into Ilorin province see. (The history of northern Nigeria 2021). This was what Lord Lugard did to give more geographical areas to the north by carving out these mentioned areas from the southern Yoruba States which originally belong to southern Nigeria. This act of craftiness by Lugard has become a tool by the north to continually marginalize the south. Also the Richard constitution of 1946 gave overwhelming autonomy to the north including custom policy and foreign relations.

Marginalization has been in Nigeria since the colonial era and registered verbatim expression in the direct and indirect rule. While the North was under direct rule, the Southern Nigeria were governed through indirect rule till 1914. In post independence period, it was played out by creating a strong Northern Nigeria and a balkanized Southern region as occasion demanded. (Onwubiko, 1973, Ojo, 1976, Okpata, 2000). Raleigh 2010). The division of Mid-western state was seen by political pundits as a calculated effort to emasculate the

garrison of Opposition parties in Western Nigeria in 1964 (Amuwo et al. 2000). The creation of twelve states by Yakubu Gowon's military administration in 1967 featured as a formidable solution to the equity problem and marginalization in Nigeria. This notwithstanding, further state creation were fundamentally asymmetrical or lopsided to the advantage of the North over the South. This became obvious in the present 36 states structure of Nigeria federation, where the North has 19 states plus Abuja making 20 and 17 in the South. This has created serious marginalization doctrine especially with the South-East having only 5 states as opposed to other geo-political zones while north west has 7 states.

The dominance of Nigerian politics by the Hausa / Fulani has seen them controlling the commanding height of Nigeria key position especially since 2015 when President Mohammed Buhari came to power. The Hausa / Fulani always maintain a higher number of states to have a political advantage above the southern Nigeria in general public policies and indeed some governmental decision are not always formulated or taken from the stand point of objectivity and overall national interest or on the basis of justice, fair play and equity. Instead it is from the point of parochial and monographic ethnic and dubious consideration. Such that the ethnic group whose members dominate the federal government since independence and especially since the end of Nigeria –Biafra war has



persistently swung the pendulum of politics to their favour. Be this as it may, the Buhari-led government has been the last straw that break the camel back in fanning the embers of tribalism in government. The shoddy removal of Justice Walter Nkanu Onnoghen the former Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN) and appointment of Justice Mohammed Tanko stand glaring here this is just a tip of the iceberg in the marginalization of the entire southern Nigeria. . There is discrimination in federal appointments in fact the south have enough manpower to aspire to any political leadership in Nigeria. The utmost perpetual occupation of the presidency by the north is seemingly immutable only God will protect justice Mary Odili to rise to the position of CJN because she is a southerner.

**Institutions of Marginalization  
Some Institutions Are Used as  
Instrument of Marginalization of  
the South by the South Nigeria such  
institutions include:**

1. Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA) established on 5<sup>th</sup> February 1964. Its role is to provide officers cadet with knowledge, skills and values necessary to meet the requirement of a military officer through military, academic and character development. It is located in Kaduna state, North West Nigeria. This makes north to have overwhelming majority in Nigerian army.

2. National Defence College (NDC) formally in Lagos before relocating to Abuja in 1995.
3. The Nigeria Police Academy. It was established in 1988 following the perceived need to upgrade the quality of the Nigeria police force through the training of effective and civil oriented police force that will meet the demand of an ever evolving and complex law enforcement and criminal justice administration. It is located in Kano, North West Nigeria.
4. Nigerian Army University. It was established by the federal government of Nigeria to be a centre of innovation and technological development for Nigeria defence sector and enable the nation to meet the ever changing and rapid development in the dynamics of modern warfare. The Act to establish it was passed in 2018. It is located in Biu, Borno state North East Nigeria.

There are other important institutions located in Kaduna, North West Nigeria. The question arising from the establishment of these institutions is that is it only north that is fit to wear the cap?. Why must the above institutions be placed only in the north to the neglect and marginalization of the south. If we were running a unitary government this question would not have arise but, we are practicing a federal system where the federal principle is supposed to be

predominant. It is only in unitary system that one central unit of government can become lord over the units. This is marginalization of the highest order.

### **Political Economy of Federalism.**

Etymologically, the phrase political economy derives from Greek word, polis (city state) and Oikonomos theory of household. It originated from moral philosophy, however the phrase economic politic which was translated in English as political economy first appeared in France in 1615. James Stuart (1767) Principles of Political Economy, Adam Smith (1776). An inquiry in Nature and cause a wealth of nation, David Riccardo (1817) principle of political economy and taxation were the early classical political economist who explain how the state and economy combines to ensure good lives (Okoh, 2002.).

Political economy equips holders or wielders of political authority to achieve economic objectives. It focuses on the reciprocal influence and mutual interaction between the state and the economy. Thus Nigeria political leaders has seen the possession of state power as a way of amassing wealth and favouring their peculiar ethnic and religious group as epitomized in President Mohammed Buhari;s political appointment in all ramification. This is in line with the derogatory comment of Kwame Nkuruma’s statement “seek ye first the kingdom of politics, all other economy included shall be added unto you. It is this use of federal government strength and money by the Buhari-led

government to better his Fulani brothers by way of political appointment that makes this study political economy of federalism and marginalization in Nigeria.

### **Instances of Marginalization in Nigeria**

Speaking on the multiple challenges facing Nigeria, The National leader of Afenifere, a pan Yoruba socio-political group, in This day Newspaper, Chief Ayo Adebajo accused president Buhari of intentionally looking away from the multiple challenges confronting Nigeria. He stated that it would be total injustice if the South-East was edged out of the 2023 presidential election. he also accused President Buhari administration of ignoring the clamour for restructuring averring that it is insulting for the ruhing party (APC) and it is major promoters that they don't know the meaning of restructuring. According to Adebajo, it is more worrisome for Vice President Prof. Yemi Osibanjo to subscribe to this conclusion. Speaking further on Nigeria's multiply problems, He stated that . We all know that our constitution is not a federal constitution, but a document put together by Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar. In that case it doesn't require amendment but surgical operation because it is a fraudulent constitution. on security and other challenges facing our country, it is not that President Buhari doesn't know what to do, but he has private agenda. We have said it over and over that state should be allowed to take care of local security. Look how can you send a Minna man to Umuahia and expect him

to understand the terrain and secure the place. ...The idea of zoning emanated from the decision of early leaders to make sure no part of the country is cheated. But is sad that a zone is frustrating all efforts being made to achieve this.... Now Buhari has rounded off his two term of eight years and some haven't considered it necessary to zone presidency to south-east, is south east not part of Nigeria?. If we want peace, we must be just and fair to all. Akingbolu, 2022, p.58.

According to him, former president Obasanjo won election and spent eight years and handed over to Umaru Yar'Adua. He spoke elaborately in the need to righten the wrongs in Nigeria.

Many well-meaning Nigerians especially from the southern part has frowned at President Buhari-led government and accused it of colossal manipulation of the federal system to marginalize the south and eroding the principle of federal character. In this line of thinking (Awa,1972, Agbaje,1989 and Gboyego, 1989) have argued that the federal character has been manipulated by and channeled to serve the overall interest of the petty bourgeoisies.

Judging from its geographical position weather and climate vegetation Benue State is strategically positioned in

southern Nigeria but the state is placed in Northern Nigeria to further strengthen Northern hegemony and numerical strength. The clearer picture of marginalization of the Southern Nigeria by the acclaimed political invisible hand, has been manifesting in the numbers of local governments allotted to various states (Alapiki)2010. We have a situation in which Kano is still having 44 local government areas even after the creation of Jigawa state while the combined states of Rivers and Bayelsa and Cross River in the South-South geopolitical zone have a total of 49 local governments' area. This imbalance disparity and asymmetry is questionable and dubious considering that money is equally allocated to local government but the south especially south-south is the treasury base of the nation.

Is it unequivocally enshrined in constitution for the existence of 774 local governments in 1994 constitution section 7(1). Their existence is guaranteed under the law besides discrepancies. There is no equity and fairness in power sharing. The point at this study is the constant breaches in the constitution and assumed institutionalized agencies that aid marginalization in Nigeria. This is contrary to Awa (1976) who posited that federalism is on the degree of integration and level of interdependence.

A major shortfall in Nigeria federalism is that it is has turned to an instrument in the hand of some sectional political group to continue to intimidate and

suppress minority political group. Federalism in every sense involve a level of power sharing. Marginalization occurs in Nigeria because federalism is configured in a manner in which the North can solely determine the political fate of the entire country (Ayoade, 2000) by its demographic and geographic vastness. Political marginalization here brings a lot of worrisome and ugly issues that threaten our federal structure. The lopsided structure in power is directed at getting a large share of revenue that is centrally distributed.

Nigeria federalism is more regrettably not a product of ethnic and cultural similarity among the units making the federation while it remains clearer that ethnic and cultural pluralism is one cardinal factor that necessitate the adoption of federalism. The ethnic groups making up the Nigeria state do not share common ancestry, political attitude and social norms. So the Nigeria federalism are regarded by some people as the coming together of strange bed fellows. The amalgamation of 1914 was anchored on the need of the British colonial administration without mincing words, the formation of Nigerian federation was to facilitate colonial administrative effectiveness and efficiency and oil the wheel of economic exploitation to the advantage of the colonial administration, (Okpata, Utobo, Okafor and Nwegbe 2000). It is a well-known fact that a major European interest during colonial expedition in Africa was the sourcing of raw materials for their home industries. In the words of Jules Ferry the French

Prime Minister 1879 - 1883 "colonial policy is the daughter of industrial's policy . . . European consumption is saturated. it is necessary to raise new masses of consumers in other part of the globe, else we shall put modern society into bankruptcy." The objective of imperial expansion is colonial profit as quoted by J.A Hobson. in Onwubiko (1973). according to Lord Lugard European are in Africa for the benefits of her industrial class.

Unlike Nigeria, it was the political leadership of men like George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, James Madison and Alexander Hamilton that gave birth to America federal system. The contribution of Charles Tupper to Canadian federalism and J.O. Lang, Duffy Charles and James Service etc to the federal union in Australia gave credence to the inevitability of political leadership to the formation of federation. These federations were not a product of a foreign administrative fiat and gun boat diplomacy as seen in Nigeria it is rather based on the agreement reached during the Philedephia Convention of 1787.

The Hausa / Fulani has maneuvered themselves into the princes of Nigeria.

The British colonial masters saw them as the most pliable and manipulable ethnic group in Nigeria. Consequently, they entrusted power to them and they have held on it tenaciously. They ingenuously devised a way of holding on to power

either under civilian rule or through long years of military dictatorship in Nigeria (Obi-Ani, 2004). Currently, they have exhibited the worst form of human degradation during the military administration. Currently the economy is in shamble and social infrastructure in decay.

For the first time the Hausa / Fulani raised alarm shortly after president Obasanjo announced ministerial and appointment of Service Chiefs. They complained that the Service Chiefs were Christians instead of Muslims and that they hail from Middle belt rather than the core north (Obi-Ani, 2004). The question must be the idea of core north arise here what is core north, is it among the six geo-political zones in Nigeria?. A federation thrives in diffusion of power but in Nigeria power is so concentrated at the centre that initiatives by the component units had been stifled thus reinforcing marginalization.

British colonial policy had created multifaceted problems for Nigeria for instance, while the British introduce its liberal western education in the south, it never did so in the north, preferring instead, the indirect rule system. The implication of this was that it introduced uneven educational development. A prominent historian Obaro Ikime condemned this attitude of segregation between the north and southern Nigeria. In a bold and highly revealing academic paper presented in Abuja conference (1987), sponsored by the federal government, Professor Obaro Ikime made it clear that the reign of political

power lies with the north, during the time under review, he made it clear that the north has held the office of government / head of state for more than 20 years out of the country's 26 years on independent that was 1960 – 1986. Explaining democratic failures in Nigeria” Diamond (1986) cited in Onuha (2002) noted that ethnic conflict, political culture federalism and economic statism are to blame for the failure of democracy in Nigeria. The author particularly fingered asymmetrical federal structure of Nigeria as the main culprit. According to him

In virtually giving the North a unilateral Mandate over the whole of Nigeria, this bizarre Version of federalism destroyed genuine Guarantees of inter-segmental equivalence and engendered an explosive contradiction between. The North political predominance and southern Socio-economic predominance

The main thesis is that the current structure of Nigerian state is not sustainable and a recipe for disaster. To be very candid, the Northern domination of the Nigerian state has generated the greatest controversy since the emergence of Nigeria state in 1960. It should be noted that this domination was extracted from the British government as a condition for accepting British authority. It is on record that chief Anthony Enahoro was the first to move for Nigeria's independence in 1953. This resulted in a walk-out by Northern parliamentarians who were of the view that Nigeria was not ready for independence. The walk-out and the

crisis it generated helped them to bargain with the British government for domination. Since then, Northern political predominance has become the rule. Today, Northern Nigeria has 19 states, out of 36, and 419 local government areas out of 774. The southern part on the other hand has 17 states and 357 local government areas. The implication is that every month the 19 Northern state receive a minimum of 57% of 100% revenue to which they contributed less than 5%. This has generated a lot of envy among other component parts of the Nigerian state (Onuoha 2020).

Contributing to the debate, *Wogu et al* (2015) noted that the Nigerian and western observers often blame inter-ethnic competition, known locally as tribalism for the instability and weakness of Nigeria democracy. On the contrary, according to him, Nigeria's constitutional democracy is weak because it is an imported ideology imposed on an artificial political unit. They noted that the territory known as Nigeria springs not from an African but European logic from lines drawn on a map over 100 years ago at a conference table in Berlin. Consequently Nigerians have no common history and no communal symbols. The only thing they share consist of rigged elections and violent political confrontation, largely as a result of regional rivalry. According to them, government redistribution of petroleum revenue according to the territorial unit foster this rivalry.

Supporting the view of diamond, Wogu, Ogbonna (2021) and others, noted that British sole interest in putting Nigeria's together was solely commercial. As Ayoade, (2010) has noted, this explain why Nigeria was amalgamated without integration. Ogbonna, further, noted that the holistic structural lopsidedness that was foisted on Nigeria paved a fertile pathway for political rancor that soon graduated into incessant military interruption of the political orders.

Eyo (1986) in a discussion of what he considered to be the psychological bane of Nigeria politics, state that Nigeria as a political entity stand precariously on tripod which distorted attitude and perception are founded. These include (a) Ethnicity (b) religious intolerance and (c) personal greed for political power and wealth. He noted that Nigerian leader have been infected by the social diseases of ethnicity, religious bigotry and inability to resist corruptive self-gratification. The enigma is how to insulate future Nigeria leader from the diseases. The task according to him, is, to say the least, extremely difficult particularly because new leader cannot be bred outside the existing socio-structural context. Through the natural processes of socialization, new leader have to learn from what is operative in their socialization context.

Asadu ,2014 seems to support the argument that it will be extremely difficult to breed new leader who will be free from corruption because in the view of many Nigerians, a

public office holder is a failure if he does not steal from national treasury to favour his primordial interest.

Moreover, part of the issues concerning the national question which have continue to reinforce political marginalization is not unconnected with the absence of national leaders our central thesis here is that Nigeria leaders are mostly ethnic tin-god striving hard to appear in national toga. As a product or child of British colonialism, Nigeria has retained to a large extent its ethnic and religious disparities and mutual exclusions. It is this symptoms which have robbed the country a true national leader and who will live above chauvinistic sentiments and reach for ideals of national unity and cohesion. The Yoruba leaders had reportedly bitten their fingers in regret for voting President Buhari, who in their view turned the other way. With the list of President Buhari's appointment in (Eme & Onuigbo, 2015). Olusegun Obasanjo reacted to the lopsided appointments.

For paucity of space here, others who expressed disappointment at the appointment of President Buhari are Ohaneze Ndigbo, the apex socio-cultural organization of the Igbo people, Mr. Ebu Adegboruwa, Farooq Kperogi a northerner and university lecturer in USA, Professor Akin Oyebode a constitutional lawyer, Mr. Oliseh Metuh, see (Ogunseye,2015). Others are Chief Ebenezer Babatope who averred that "democracy to Buhari is government of the northerner, by the northerner and for the northerner" God

bless Nigeria Oketola, (2015) p.12 cited in Eme & Onuigbo (2015). Also among the list of the reactions are Senator Enyinnaya Abaribe, Chukwuemeka Ezeife, Yinka Odumakin a member of Afenifere Yourba socio-cultural group said President Buhari's action pose grave danger to Nigeria. To substantiate the above facts President Buhari's appointment in 2015 is shown in the table below in percentages.

Geo- political zone	Number of appointees	Percentage
North West	13	43
North east	6	20
North Central	3	10
South-South	5	17
South West	3	10
South East	0	0
Total		100

**Source: Eme and Onuigbo, 2015**

The table above speaks for itself that the government of President Buhari starting in 2015 was dominated by the north in terms of political appointments into key position. The post referred to in the above table , include those of Permanent Secretaries, Director-Generals in Extra-ministerial Departments and Parastatals, Director in Ministries and Extra-Ministerial Departments Senior Military officers, Senior Diplomatic post and managerial cadre in the federal and state paratatal bodies, agencies and institutions. This was done by President Buhari in violation of the federal character principle.

A more embarrassing scenario which exposed President Buhari's lopsided government was reflected in the recruitment of Department of State Security (DSS) employment in 2017. In 2017 the DSS had commissioned 479 cadet officers who were supposed to be

five slots from each state of the federation (Nathaniel 2017). But the final listing shows a colossal disparity in the exercise in favour of the North. For instance, Katsina which is the home of the president produce 51, Lagos 7, Kano 25, while Abia got 7 slots. This is a clear case of marginalization and a chronic violation of the federal character principle this was on March 5<sup>th</sup> 2017. (Nathaniel 2017). Also on 15<sup>th</sup> of March 2016 Sahara Reporters and Premium Times reported the illegal and kangaroo recruitment of 91 individuals who were relatives and ward of politicians into the Central Bank of Nigeria, (CBN), under the helpless situation which Mr Godwin Emeziele find himself as the de jure CBN governor while the "Presidency" was the defacto CBN governor.

The action of the DSS Director General (DG) Mr Yusuf Bichi from Kano state north west Nigeria, is grossly inimical to the federal character principle, doctrine of equity, principle of patriotism and the change agenda of the APC-led federal government. This action also contradicts the president's inaugural promise of " I belong to everybody, I belong to nobody. (Nathaniel 2017).

In another instance it was reported that out of the total of 628 cadet trainees that were recruited , 535 were from the north east and north west while only an infinitesimal 93 were from either the south east, south-south, south west or north central. Finding equally revealed that at least 71 of the trainees officers hailed from Bichi local government area

of Kano state, the home of the DG see (Sahara Reporters September 29,2020). It was also anonymously revealed that those officials of DSS who made the secret details revealed to journalist were unjustifiably and unreasonably transferred. The source equally confide in us that some security official even from the north are absolutely not happy with President Mohamadu Buhari's monographic and sentimental government because it is escalating ethnic tension.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Many well-meaning Nigerians have argued that the country is plagued with the absence of viable democracy and effective leadership. Our federal system is fundamentally flawed in its design unlike Canada, USA, Australia among others. Notwithstanding that the idea and the principle of federal character has its genesis in the 1979 constitution in Nigeria, its implementation since 1999 has not relatively assisted in solving the hydra-headed problem of ethnic bigotry. Thus it is not a problem to have a beautiful guiding principle that ensure a balance federalism but the ability of political leaders to follow such principles.

### **Recommendations**

We therefore proffer the following recommendations for implementation.

- Nigerian constitution should be amended in a manner to reflect the number of political appointees that must come from a given geo-political zone, this will eradicate the concentration of key position in



a given or particular geo-political zone, since no zone is superior to the other in a balanced federal system.

- The idea of rotational presidency should not only be a lip service doctrine but must be codified in the constitution to avoid any part of the country using its numerical strength to dominate or oppress the other. Zoning should be done in a way that whenever presidency is zoned to the north, no southerner should contest and whenever it is zoned to the south no northerner should contest but all the states in the federation should however cast their votes. This will reduce the use of population to intimidate any part of the federation.
- Nigeria should develop strong political institution that will not be easily manipulated especially the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the judiciary, to achieve this, the exclusive power of appointing INEC Chairman and Chief Justice of Nigeria(CJN) must be remove from the President by way of constitutional amendment. If this is done, the incredible and kangaroo manner in which the former CJN justice Walter Samuel Nkanu Onoghen was removed would have been avoided.
- Political appointment should be based on principle of merit and credible performance rather being based on region and genealogical relations.

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