States and Local Government Areas Creation as a Strategy of National Integration or Disintegration in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examines states and local government areas creation in Nigeria as one of the major strategies of ensuring National integration. The analysis was based on secondary data obtained from text books and other retrieved materials. The scope of the paper other than the introduction, covers; conceptual analysis of variables; review of local government areas and states creation in Nigeria, rationale for States and Local Governments creation; theoretical foundation; consequences; conclusion and recommendation. After a critical examination of the consequences of creation of states and local government areas which include structural imbalance in Nigeria socio-political structure; perpetuation of minority domination, continuous struggle for national resources in terms of sharing national revenue and creation of consciousness among ethnic nationalities. State and Local government creation rather promotes National disintegration. The conclusion of this paper therefore deviates significantly from the intended function of state creation as expected by the agitators. This paper utilizes functional approach in analyzing state and local government creation in Nigeria and it is recommended that the Federal Government should introduce a domiciliary policy to solve the problem of non-indigenes and minorities.

Keywords: State, Local Government Area, National integration, disintegration and creation

1. Introduction

The creation of States and Local Government Areas in Nigeria is a unique future of our Federal System of Government. Federalism according to Tamuno (1998:13) is the form of Government where the component units of a political organization participate in sharing powers and functions in a cooperative manner through the combined forces of ethnic pluralism and cultural diversity among others, which tend to pull people apart.

Nigeria is a country with over 374 ethnic groups, over 400 distinct languages (as against dialects), diverse belief systems, customs and institutions (Tamuno, 1998:22). The diversity identified calls for a purposeful action to create a viable entity. This option is rooted in the focus of this paper on "National Integration". Nigeria in all respect is a typical example of a plural society considering the socio-cultural heterogeneity of its constituent parts. Hence, how can integration be achieved in the face of socio-cultural and structural diversities. The amalgamation of the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria with the colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria in 1914 by the British Colonial administration marked the commencement of the political entity called Nigeria and the need for interdependence of its component parts which gave birth to states and Local Government Area configuration.

Ojong (2002) defines Local Government in line with Encyclopedia of Social Services, as "a territorial non sovereign community possessing the legal right and the necessary organ to regulate its own affairs, which presupposes the existence of a local authority with the power to act independently of external control as well as the participation of the local community in the administration of its own affairs through representation''. In terms of Nigeria, local government is a political sub-division of a state in a Federal System of Government. A State according to Bhasin (1997:136) can be defined as a legal concept describing a social group that occupies a defined territory and is organized under a common political institution and an effective government. From this position, a state as used in Nigeria refers to a political subdivision of a country in a federal system of government.

National Integration stemmed from the concept of Nation, which means a social group which shares a common ideology, common institutions, customs and sense of homogeneity. In the words of Bhasin (1997:136) a nation may comprise part of a state, be co-terminus with or extend beyond it. Simpson and Weiner (1989:231) defined a nation as ''an extensive aggregate of persons so closely associated with each other by common descent, language, or history, as to form a distinct race, or people, usually organized as a separate political state and occupying a definite territory". It is Simpson and Weiner's (1989) definition of nation that guides the discussion of states and local governments' creation as a strategy of National Integration in this paper.

The basic task of nation-building is the act or process of integration of various sub-national and regional groups, and enthusing in them a unified identity so that they think of themselves as a nation-state. Simpson and Weiner (1989) define Integration as the making up or composition of a whole by adding together or combining the separate parts or elements, into an integral whole. It is also the bringing into equal membership of a common society groups or persons previously discriminated against on cultural grounds.

The problem of integrating the diverse cultural diversity of Nigeria is very practical, and maintaining the existing level of integration is also a cumbersome task. The government over the years from colonial period tried to ward off fragmentation of Nigerian society and ensure unity of its component parts. One of the major strategies of national integration is creation of states and local government areas. The task of this paper is to determine if states and local governments' creation in Nigeria foster National Integration or disintegration.

A conceptual Analysis and Review of National and Social Integration

National Integration is an aspect of Social Integration. Angel (1989) defined Social Integration as the getting together of the parts of a social system to constitute a whole. Angel (1989) identified four major types of social integration, namely; cultural integration, normative integration, communicative integration and functional integration. Cultural integration refers to consistency among cultural standards. Normative integration has to do with consistency between cultural standards and the conduct of persons. Communicative integration refers to the extent to which the network of communication permeates the social system, while functional integration refers to the degree to which there is mutual interdependence among the units of a system of division of labour.

National integration is an all encompassing process of social integration, relying heavily on functional and communicative as well as cultural and normative elements of social integration. As

noted by Merton in Angel (1989), in social integration, each part of a system contributes to the welfare of the whole and all parts makes reciprocal contributions to one another. Each part probably contributes a net balance of functional consciousness to the whole; but the dysfunctional consequences obscured by the net positive balance may render the relationship between particular parts beneficial or otherwise. Drawing analogy from a chemical plant, Merton explained that a chemical plant may bring prosperity by the wages it pays, may also pollute the air in a manner that endangers the health of patients in nearby hospitals and people in the vicinity.

Deutsch (1957) focuses on communicative integration with overtones of both normative and functional integration. Deutsch (1957) studied social integration at the national level and attempted to throw light on the causes of high degree of integration among states that bring them together. Consequently, Deutsch (1957:5) defined national integration as the attainment within a territory of a 'sense of community' and of institutions and practices strong enough and widespread enough to assure, for a 'long' time dependable expectations of a 'peaceful change' among its population. Deutsch (1957:7) identified the following factors as indicators or National Integration: Mutual Sympathy; Loyalties; We-feelings; Trust and Mutual consideration; Partial identification in terms of self-images and interest; Mutually successful predictions of behaviour; and Co-operative action in accordance with such predictions.

2. Brief History of Local Government Areas and States Creation in Nigeria

Local governments in Nigeria developed through a system of indirect rule as laid down by Lord Lugard, which was then autocratic and unrepresentative. The representative local government emanated from 1947 colonial secretary directive that indirect rule of native authority be replaced with representative governments in line with request from African intelligentia, (Ojah, 2005:95).

Ojah (2005) explained that in Southern Nigeria native authorities were replaced with English style county or divisional, district or local council, in accordance with Local Government Law of 1952 which repealed the Local Government Ordinance of 1950. In the East the governing bodies were wholly elected, while in the West, three quarters were elected and one quarter titled members were nominated or selected. In the North the Native Authority Law of 1954 replaced the sole chief with the Chief-in-Council, while the traditional districts and villages groups remained as subordinate administrative organs of the Native Authority.

The 1976 Local Government Reform was the standardization of the councils nation-wide. Ojah (2005) noted the objectives of the reform to include:
1. Bringing about even and rapid development at the local levels throughout the country.
2. Facilitating the exercise of democratic self-government close to the local levels of our society;
3. Encouraging initiative and leadership potentials of the local people;
4. Mobilizing human and natural resources through the involvement of members of the public in their local development areas and to provide two-way channel of communication between the local communities and the government.

Further reforms from 1984 - 1998 led to the nation-wide election into councils from 1987 to date. In the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, local government affairs is placed on the concurrent legislative list, as a result of which different states enact laws for the running of local governments situated within the state. Although the councils are funded directly from Federation account, administration of each council today is subject to the state local government law.

Ojong (2002:37) summarized the stages of development of local government in Nigeria thus:
1. The Native Authority Systems/Local Administration (1900-1950s);
2. Period of introduction of British model of Local Government (1950-1956).
3. The period of decline of Local Government (1960-1970s)
4. Local Government during the military regimes (1966-1975)
5. The 1976 Local Government Reforms and Local Government in the Second Republic 1979-1987.

6.   Babangida Local Government Reforms 1985.

The 1999 constitution also accorded legal recognition to the 789 local government councils created by successive military governments before the enactment of the Constitution. Consequently, it is impossible for any state to create council areas, without constitutional amendment.

State Creation

After the Amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914, Nigeria operated with three major regions, namely; the West, North and East. In 1963 Mid-West Region was created from Western Region.

In 1967 the Military Government of General Yakubu Gowon created a 12-State structure in Nigeria. In February 1976, seven more states were created under Murtala Mohammed regime bringing the number to 19. This trend continued with the creation of eleven more states in September 1987 by Ibrahim Babangida led military government, thus bringing the number of states to 30 (thirty) and finally to 36 States-structure in 1996 with the creation of 6 more states by General Sani Abacha as Head of State.

3. Rationale for State and Local Government Creation

As noted by Suberu (1998:276) state creation is a response by the Nigerian State to used Federal structure of government to solve the country's problem associated with ethnic pluralism and distribution of national wealth to competing component. It was earlier noted that Nigeria is a country with over 250 ethno-linguistic groups, some of which are bigger than many independent states of contemporary Africa.

Suberu (1998:280) also noted original impetus for state agitation and creation in Nigeria to be 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. Thus, state creation was hoped to assuage ethnic minority grievances, and the creation of states was also expected to correct the politico-structural imbalance arising from the disproportionate size of the North, which accounted for over half of the federation's population and three quarter of the national territory. This is collaborated by Ojah (2005:58) who noted that "the Northern People's Congress had always resisted plans and suggestions for state creation because the party felt that such a development was likely to terminate the Northern hegemony at the centre". Ojah (2005) also noted advocacy of new states from minorities in Eastern Region under the umbrella of "Calabar-Ogoja-Rivers Movement (COR) and the Niger-Delta Congress.

General Yakubu Gowon who was the architect of state creation in 1967 by creating the first twelve states, stated in 2005 that "his real intention of creating the 12-States structure was to prevent Nigeria from being broken or divided into different countries like what Ojukwu intended to carry out under the name of Republic of Biafra (Ojah, 2005:90). Drawing inference from the above, the rationale for State creation can be summarized in two major dimensions. The first is that state creation attempted to ameliorate minorities' fear and integrate minorities as unique components of a federating society. Second is that state creation attempted to balkanize the hegemony of dominant ethnic groups, in order to ensure the unity of a federating society. From these two perspectives we see the functional dimension of State and Local Government creations as a strategy of social integration. As earlier noted the most significant objective of local government creation is to bring development to the grassroot, as well as integrate the local people into the mainstream of national development which is an aspect of social integration. To what extent these objectives are achieved is what this paper hopes to reveal.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical framework adopted to guide analysis in this paper is the structural functional theory.

According to Macionis (1989:16) this is "a theoretical framework based on the view of society as a system made up of many different parts that work together to generate relative stability." A social structure accordingly is a relatively stable pattern of social behaviour, such as polity like a state or local government which are the major dependable variables of this discourse. Merton in Ritzer (2000:250) defined social function as "those observed consequences of a pattern of action or behaviour which make for the adaptation or adjustment of a given system". Function may be manifest or latent. Manifest functions are consequences that are recognized and intended by people within the society, while latent functions are consequences that are largely unrecognized and unintended or not anticipated, (Macionis, 1989:18). Mertons in Ritzer (2000:251) also noted unanticipated or eu-functions as actions that have both intended and unintended consequences. Social dysfunctions are undesirable effects of actions on the operations of the society. Functional analysis as used in this paper is derived from Parsons (1951) earlier work studying interdependent parts of society as an open social system. From this theoretical standpoint we are considering social integration as a social function on the society. But is it latent or manifest and what are the dysfunctional consequences of state and local government creation? The responses to this and other issues raised earlier will be the focus of the next section.

4. Consequences of States and Local Governments Creation

In order to assess the consequences of states and local government creation on national integration in Nigeria, it is appropriate to review the interplay of indicators or factors of national integration in our federating society. These factors listed by Deutsch (1957:7) include: mutual sympathy, loyalty, we-feelings, trust and mutual consideration, co-operative action, and mutual predictions of behaviour.

States and Local governments' creation failed to promote mutual sympathy among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria. Rather than ensuring mutual respect and consideration, various ethnic groups agitated for more states to be created within their ethno-cultural territory. For instance the former Northern Region has 19 States plus the Federal Capital Territory with a total of 426 local government areas. The former western region has 6 states with 142 local government areas.

Table 1: Schedule of states and local government areas in nigeria arranged on regional basis (pre - 1967 regions)

S/N	Name of Region	Name of State	No. of LGAs per State	No. of LGAs per Region	No. of States per Region
1	Northern Region	Adamawa	21		
2		Bauchi	21		
3		Benue	23		
4		Borno	27		
5		Gombe	11		
6		Jigawa	28		19 + FCT
7		Kaduna	25	426	
8		Kano	44		
9		Katsina	34		
10		Kebbi	22		
11		Kogi	22		
12		Kwara	16		
13		Nasawara	13		
14		Niger	25		
15		Plateau	17		
16		Sokoto	23		
17		Taraba	16		
18		Yobe	18		
19		Zamfara	15		
20		FCT	5		
21	Western Region	Ekiti	16		

22		Lagos	20		
23		Ogun	22	142	6
24		Ondo	19		
25		Osun	30		
26		Oyo	35		
27	Mid-Western	Edo	18		
28		Delta	25	43	2
29	Eastern	Abia	17		
30		Akwa Ibom	32		
31		Anambra	21		
32		Cross River	18	178	9
33		Ebonyi	13		
34		Enugu	17		
35		Imo	27		
36		Rivers	24		
37		Bayelsa	9		
Total	4 regions	36 states	789	789	36 + FCT

Source: No. of States and Local Government lifted from 1999 Constitution.
Regions source from Suberu (1998 P. 276)

The mid western region with only 2 states and 43 local government areas, while the former eastern region has 9 states with 178 local government areas. FCT in the North is not a state, but a special administration unit, thus the asterisk.

Looking at the distribution of states and local government areas among the former regions, there is a marked structural imbalance with the North having more local government areas and states than all other regions put together. Thus if local government is to encourage grassroot development, one can not have even development. If States creation was to foster national integration, its uneven distribution among the region causes more agitation. This uneven distribution of states and local government rather promotes mutual distrust, against mutual trust; ill-feeling against we-feelings; agitation and struggle against mutual consideration and co-operation. Hence the factors or indicators of national integration are absent in Nigeria. One cannot consider states and local government creation as a source of national integration in this case.

It was hoped that states and local government creation will foster national integration with the elimination of minorities' fear and majority dominance which the regionalisation promoted. This idea is faulty on the ground that minority-majority conflict cannot be eliminated using state and local government areas creation. States creation in this sense can be seen as a vicious circle. Once there is majority and minority and there is an attempt to appease the minority by creating state for them, a new minority will emerge from the former minority. This create "majority of minority" and "minority of minority" in the new state and the circle continue to revolve. Considering this proposition it is difficult to use state creations to solve majority minority problem. Taking a practical example from the Calabar Ogoja River State Movement (COR) earlier mentioned, the minority groups in Eastern Nigeria which were dominated by the Igbo majority requested for State, and South Eastern state was created for the Efiks, Ibibio, Ejagams and Ikois and Rivers State for the Ijaw, Ikwere and Ogonis people in 1967. In South Eastern State, Ibibios were new majority and agitation for new state resurfaced again from the emerging minorities of Efiks and Ejagams. Even after the creation of Akwa Ibom from old Cross River State, the Ibibios still become majority in the new state, leaving Oron to agitate for "Atlantic State" and Annang to demand for "Itai State". This situation is the same in other States. See table 2 for details of action for creation of new States. In these circumstances, States creation cannot be seen as a strategy of national integration.

Table 2: The 45 requests for new states received by the National Constitutional Conference, 1994

Present State	Proposed State	Proposed Capital
Abia	Abia	Aba
Adamawa/Taraba	Sarduana	Mubi
Akwa Ibom	Itai	Ikot Ekpene
	Atlantic	Oron
Anambra	Ezu	Awka
Bauchi	Gombe	Gombe
	Katagum	Azare
Benue	Apa	Otukpo
	Katsina-Ala	Zaki-Ibiam
Cross River	Ogoja	Ikom/Ogoja
Delta	Anioma	Asaba
	Toru-Ebe	Patani
Edo	Afemesa	Auchi
Enugu/Abia	Ebonyi	Abakaliki
Imo	Njaba	Okigwe
Jigawa	Hadejia	Hadeji
	Lautai	N/A
	Bayajida	Daura, Kazuare or Gumel
Kaduna	Gurara	Zonkwa or Kanfanchan
Kano	Tiga	N/A
	Gari	N/A
	Tigari	Gwarzo
Katsina	Karadua	N/A
Kogi	Okura	Anyigba
	Okun	Kabba
	Oya	Kabba
	Yoruba/Ekiti	Ilorin
Niger/Kebbi	Kainji	Kontagora
	Ndaduma [Nupe]	Bida
Ogun	Ijebu-Remo	Odogbolu or Ijebo Ode
Ondo	Ekiti	Ado-Ekiti
Osun	Oduduwa	Ile-Ife or Ilesha
Oyo	New Oyo	Ogbomosho
	Oke-Ogun	Shaki, Iseyin or Igboho
	Ibadan	Ibadan
Plateau	Nasara	Akwanga
Rivers	Bayelsa/Niger Delta	Yenagoa, Brass or Sagbama
	Orashi	Ahoada
	Ogoni/Rivers East	Bori
	Port Harcourt	Port Harcourt
	New Rivers	South P/Harcourt
	Oloibiri	Ogbia or Nembe
Sokoto	Zamfara	Gusau
	New Sokoto/Sakkwato	N/A
	Mambila	N/A

Source: Suberu (1989:288).

The number of local government in a State is one of the major criteria of revenue allocation in Nigeria fiscal federation. As a result of this in every state there is demand for more local government areas in order to boost the revenue profile of the State. This condition also undermined the very philosophy of local government creation which was to boost grassroot development and promote national integration. Another dimension is the process where members of local government creation committee allocated more local government to their own places at the expenses of other places with higher population density. For instance Sultan Dasuki as Chairman of Local Government creation

committee recommended five local government areas for Sokoto town, namely Sokoto North, Sokoto South, Kware, Dange-Shuni, and Bodinga within Sokoto Metropolis which is smaller than Calabar in terms of land mass and population density, These Council areas were created while a big town like Calabar is divided into only two local government areas. This case brings about dissatisfaction in the mind of other ethnic groups and rather than integrate ethnic nationalities in Nigeria, further alienate them. From all indications, State creation does not foster national integration.

Drawing back from Merton's analysis of manifest function and latent function, it can be said that States and local government areas creation is a functional action in Nigeria political system. Integration is adopted as a manifest function, because reviewing the words of Yakubu Gowon the Architect of Nigerian State creation be maintained that he first created 12 states in 1967 to ensure the unity of Nigeria and integration of its component parts. At that point in time that expectation was realized. Nigeria was united despite the civil war which was unable to split the Country. This was achieved because the creation of State in Eastern Region weakens the strength of the Biafran Republic, as the States gave the minorities in South Eastern and Rivers the impetus to withdraw their solidarity to the Biafran State, making Biafra an Igbo affair. Thus State creation at the inception provides minority groups opportunity for self determination and revealed their uniqueness as a component of the federation.

But successive government politicized the process of State creation. Political elites use state creation to create political domain for themselves thereby causing divisions in the society.   In this regard, politicization of State creation turn previously homogenous groups into heterogeneous societies, marked by inter-ethnic rivalry, boundary conflict, communal war, killings, assassination and general breakdown of law and order. State creation today reveals its latent function and rather than uniting Nigerians to foster national integration it resulted in violence and conflict of various dimensions, thus causing ''national disintegration rather than integration.''

State creation divides one ethnic group into two different states. For instance the Efik Ikot Offiong now located in Akwa Ibom State. The resentment of the Efiks of Ikot Offiong by their neighbours in Oku is a major issue of national attention, claiming lives, properties, farmland and public revenue through intertribal conflict, mediation and boundary delineation. One can also see that state creation divide people who previously shared the same cultural heritage like the Idomas of Benue State and the Yalas in Cross River State. When one considers all these, the effect of State creation is now dysfunctional because it is leading to the very disintegration of the Nigerian 'state' or 'project'. If one considered national integration from Deutsch (1957:5) perspective as the attainment within a territory of a sense of community and of constitutions and practices strong enough and widespread enough to assure, for a long time dependable expectations of "peaceful change" among its population" and attribute that to the situation in Nigeria he is wrong.

Today, we are agitating for the re-structuring of the federation, some called for return to regionalisation, others called for confederation, while others still request for the division of the country to two or more countries, we are not desiring peaceful gradual change. We are drifting to outright disintegration. British Broadcasting Corporation reporter predicted that Nigeria will disintegrate within the next ten years. This prediction is an outcome of analysis of internal dynamics in our body polity.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The continuous demand for states and local government creation reflect the dissatisfaction of ethnic nationalities in Nigeria with the present number of states and local government areas. What number will be adequate to sustain peace and harmonious relationship is not known to anybody. Shall we continue in the vicious cycle of creating more states and also continue in building new frontiers of majority-minority conflict. This may not be the solution.

States and local government areas creation post both manifest and latent consequences as well as dysfunction on the social progress of our nation. Creation of States was able to foster national integration as the civil war did not split the federation. But today agitation for more States and local

government lead to building new frontiers of ethnic conflict, inter-tribal war, boundary despites on States and local government lines, as well as disproportional formula of revenue allocation and problem of fiscal federalism are all products of states and local government creation.   Hence, the problems account for the dysfunctional consequences occasioned by creation of States and local government areas, resulting in structural imbalance in the federation and inequality in wealth distribution which are both disintegrative elements acting against national integration. Today, we are no more pursuing national integration as a strategy of Nation building but fighting ethno-cultural nationalism which is a consequences of States and Local Government areas creation in order to attain national integration and unity.

We can achieve national integration if we play down on such faulty strategies of national integration as federal character, state of origin syndrome, quarter system and put in place appropriate domicile laws which allow Nigerians to gain residential rights of attaining their highest limit wherever they find themselves in Nigeria, without ethnic discrimination.

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