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Federalism and National Integration: Panacea to National Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examines the context and content of Nigeria's federal arrangements and the missing links in the country's federal practice. The paper further considers the country's efforts at national integration and the daunting hurdles to national integration in Nigeria. Presently, the unity and national development of Nigeria is being increasingly threatened by ethnic and religious crises that have continually plagued the nation since independence. The paper reflects that more than half a century after independence, Nigeria is yet to resolve the problems of national integration, stability and development. The difficulty in forging a united nation after independence has often provoked doubts and debates as to the viability of the Nigerian project. The paper contends that the bizarre federal system operated in Nigeria has also facilitated the emergence of violent religious and ethnic militias, while politicians exploit and exacerbate inter-communal and inter-religious tensions for selfish reasons. The paper maintains that the deeply flawed federal system in Nigeria and failure of successive administrations to evolve an integrated Nigeria has left the nation continuously trapped in the vicious circle of poverty. The paper therefore concludes that the prospects of genuine nationhood and development in Nigeria lies in a swift adoption of true federalism and the building of a strongly united, cohesive and integrated Nigeria.

Key Words: *Federalism; National Integration; National Development; Nigeria.*

1.0 Introduction: Nigeria is a deeply divided and plural society. Nigeria is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world with well over 250 ethno-linguistic groups, some of which are bigger than many independent states of contemporary Africa (Ojo, 2009:384). Onwujeogwu in Ojo (2009) recalled that at the beginning of the 1960s, there were over 3,000 ethnic groups (tribes) in the world, about 1000 were represented in the geographical space called Africa and about 445 were represented in the geo-political space called Nigeria.

It is worthy of note that states all over the world adopt political arrangements that best suit their nature and composition, and which would facilitate a substantial amount of cooperation among the various segments and institutions, all in a bid to achieve the desired end. One of such institutional arrangements especially for plural societies is the federal option. That is, a form of government where the component units of a political organisation participate in sharing powers and functions in a cooperative manner although the combined forces of ethnic pluralism and cultural diversity, among others, tend to pull them apart (Tamuno, 1998:3). Thus, courtesy of multiplicity of its ethnic and religious groups which qualified it as a 'plural society per excellence' (Mohammad, 2005:9), Nigeria emerged as an independent nation-state more than five decades ago under a federal arrangement meant to reconcile the various diverse elements in the country.

It is important to note that the operation of the system started formally in 1954 with the adoption of the Oliver Lythlethton's Constitution, which guaranteed substantial autonomy to the then existing regions. Federalism having been operated for more than half a century in Nigeria, one is compelled to make some observations about its practice. Akindele (2000:129) revealed that for one thing, Nigerians are presently recounting and rejoicing on the joy and anguish of the practice of federalism. These mixed feelings essentially derive from a culmination of events in the over fifty years of political investment on federalism.

Presently, the operation of Nigeria federalism since independence in 1960 has not yielded meaningful socio-economic and political development. Instead, half-hearted practice of federalism has resulted in over-centralisation of fiscal and political power, creation of unviable and federally dependent states and local governments, increased corruption, ethnicity and minority agitations over oil revenue.

Consequently, the paper posits that the prospects of genuine nationhood and development in Nigeria lies in a swift adoption of true federalism. The problems of nation-building and national development in Nigeria would start to receive proper attention only under a truly federal system of government and the great potentials of the country would be best realised within the framework of true federalism.

Similarly, one of the major challenges confronting Nigeria as a young democracy relates to the issue of achieving a greater measure of national integration amongst the various national groups that constitute her society. As a geopolitical entity, Nigeria has brought together divergently and ethnically different nations. These nations, whether major or minor, in their varying degrees of success or failure, have constituted one centrifugal force or another within this single polity. In the light of this, Lawal and Okam (2011:2) were prompted to endorse the view that this political unhealthiness constitutes a major divisive force of great magnitude in terms of the peaceful and corporate existence of Nigeria. Indeed, these negative forces constitute enormous problems and predicaments which are seriously antithetical to the attainment of national integration and development in the country.

As Ifeancha and Nwagwu (2009) elucidated, Nigeria's efforts at achieving national integration have remained largely unrealised. In their words, the history of democratisation in Africa, in general, and Nigeria, in particular, has remained the history of national disintegration. Thus, Onifade and Imhonopi (2013:75) disclosed that the integration crises facing Nigeria is manifest in the minority question, religious fundamentalism and conflicts, ethnic politics, indigene-settler dialectic, resource control, youth restiveness and militancy. The status quo has convulsed the productive sector, limited the impact of governments economic programmes on the people, threatened food security, complexified social insecurity, deepened the deterioration of physical and social infrastructures, distressed the living standards of a vast majority of Nigerians, militated against the educational system and resulted in the ostracisation of the generality of Nigerians and their exclusion from the political and economic space, among other glitches. The entire social matrix in Nigeria is characterised by inter- and intra-community, inter- and intra-ethnic, and inter- and intra-religious strife. Some of these conflicts are as old as the history of the Nigerian nation.

Emelonye and Buergethal (2011) demonstrated the perspective that although the British colonialists and the Nigerian elite that succeeded them used ethnicity to perfect their political strategies and notch up some socio-economic and political gains, poverty and ineffective governance in Nigeria today have further sharpened ethnic divisions leading to misunderstanding between ethnic and religious groups who see themselves as rivals that must be surpassed by any means, thus hampering national integration and development. They further endorsed that because the Nigerian state is beginning to lose legitimacy and authority, the fear of uncertainty has increased to the extent that citizens now resort to self-help, seeking security and solidarity in their own ethnic, religious or regional affiliation and identity.

Thus, a new dimension to Nigeria's ethno-religious violence, as revealed by Onifade and Imhonopi (2013), is the increasing recruitment and mobilisation of ethnic and regional militias, vigilantes and other armed groups such as the Oodua People's Congress in Yorubaland, the Arewa Peoples Congress in the north, the Bakassi Boys in the East, the Egbesu in the south, and the emergence of supercilious army of terror merchants who represent contending interests to Nigeria's detriment. The implication of these hydra-headed conflicts is that national integration suffers, there is increasing insecurity of citizens and property in the country, foreign direct investment is deterred and economic development is stymied (Onifade and Imhonopi, (2013:76).

Unless these issues are addressed by the governments, Nigeria would most likely find it difficult to be united, develop economically and to have stable democratic governance in the country.

Consequent upon the foregoing, the paper argues that the starting point to rescuing Nigeria's systemic collapse is the adoption and practice, by the country, of a true federal arrangement based on a different philosophy rather than the present warped union where there is too much power and resources concentrated on the centre. The paper further contends that Nigeria needs genuine and concerted efforts at integrative programmes to ensure national cohesion, unity, integration and development in all spheres of her life. The paper posits that achieving national integration, which also

means addressing existing challenges in its path, is critical to realising economic transformation in Nigeria.

2.0 Conceptual Clarifications:

2.1 Federalism: The concept of federalism has received broad scholarly attention. However, there is no universally accepted definition of the word 'federalism'. Consequently, each scholar defines federalism according to their perception.

Odion (2011), observes that early writers on the concept of federalism such as Jean Bodin, Olto, Cosmanus among others, viewed federalism as a voluntary form of political union of independent authorities. The union either temporary or permanent, was based on the need for special common purposes like defence, trade, communications and other reasons that would benefit the parties involved.

However, contemporary writers on the concept of federalism such as Livingstone, McMahan, and Rikers amongst others viewed federalism as mutual interaction between, and direct contact with, at least two levels of government. These scholars take their root from the 1787 American Constitution. The definition of federalism by these scholars rest on the fundamental principle that, federalism is a form of governmental institutional structure, deliberately designed by political 'architects', to cope with the twin but difficult task of maintaining unity while also preserving diversity (Odion, 2011). Thus, federalism is believed by these writers, to be capable of mediating the potential and actual conflicts arising from the heterogeneity within a nation-state (Akpata, 2000:8). For Elaigwu (2000:38), federalism is a compromise solution in a multinational state between two types of self-determination- the determination to maintain a supranational framework of government which guarantees security for all in the nation-state on the one hand, and protects the self-determination of component groups which seek to retain their individual identities on the other hand.

K. C. Wheare (1963), believed to be an articulate writer on federalism, conceived of it as an association of states formed for certain common purpose but in which the member states retain a large measure of their original independence. Thus, Wheare's proposition posits that the federal principle essentially entails a legal division of powers and functions among levels of government within a written constitution guaranteeing and reflecting the division. Though subsequent scholars have criticized him for being too legalistic in his formulation and so came up with postulations that seem somewhat a departure from his, all still revolve around a legal or constitutional framework. Models such as co-operative federalism, interdependent, and in the case of Awa (1976), mature and emergent federalism have been suggested to characterize the system, essence of which, is to gain insight into its nature. It is instructive to note that rather than characterization, political realities which often impinge upon the distribution of powers between the various levels of government in a federation are what determine the nature and character of federalism.

However, since other formulation of federalism from other scholars are variations of Wheare's work, the basic tenets or elements of federalism according to Wheare will be used as template to determine Nigerian federalism and the extent to which Nigeria has fulfilled the basic tenets of federalism. The basic tenets according to him are:

- a) There must be at least two levels of government and there must be constitutional division of powers among the levels of governments.
- b) Each level of government must be co-ordinate and independent.
- c) Each level of government must be financially independent. He argued that this will afford each level of government the opportunity of performing their functions without depending or appealing to others for financial assistance.
- d) There must be Supreme Court of the independent judiciary. He argued that in terms of power sharing, there is likely to be conflict hence, there must be independent judiciary to resolve the case.
- e) In terms of the amendment of the constitution, no level of government should have undue power over the amendment process.

Wheare maintains that once a country is able to satisfy these conditions, such country is said to practice federalism.

2.2 National Integration: The literature on integration is replete with different definitions of the term. As Bandyopadhyay and Green (2009) disclosed, terms used for national integration have included national cohesion, national unity or nation-building.

Integration, following Talcot Parson's (1956) analysis, involves the creation of society to solidarity and institutionalization of patterns of social interaction; ensuring that rules and regulations that define the patterns of interaction; and that the means of achieving desired goals are accorded their legitimacy within the social system. There are certain implications that characterize societal integration. Firstly, the question of societal solidarity and the existence of normative framework which presupposes in turn the existence of shared cognitive orientation in the process of social interaction. Put in other words, in every society, for effective societal integration to be achieved, people must be aware of, or share knowledge of both their historical past and culture which makes it possible for them to adapt to, and manipulate the situation, and also plan for the future.

Shared cognitive orientation more or less defines the parameter of social interaction by making acceptable norms and the sanctioning of deviant behavior meaningful. This means that when people engage in social interaction, they can more or less anticipate the consequences of their actions. In Nigeria, this normative framework is seemingly absent as well as shared cognitive orientation. Each ethnic nationality is in search and expression of its "local identity" which have found expression as ethnic, political and religious conflicts across the country.

Chizea (1985) demonstrated the perspective that national integration refers to establishing national central authority over subordinate political units. According to him, "it is a process leading to political cohesion and sentiments of loyalty towards central political institutions". National integration is thus conceived here as the subjective feelings which individuals belonging to different social groups of historically distinct political units have towards a new nation. Such a feeling is created through the objective control which the central authority has over the entire territory under its claimed jurisdiction.

Maurice Duverger in Ojo (2009:385) defines the concept of national integration as "the process of unifying a society which tends to make it harmonious city, based upon an order its members regard as equitably harmonious".

Nevertheless, Stephanie Neuman (1966:1) raised posers to the various conceptualizations of integration as they give no clear indication of what the end product would look like and how one would recognize an integrated polity. How much cohesion and which commonly accepted norms denote an integrated political or social unit? How would an observer identify integration or is it dependent on some other manifestations (such as conflict) to demonstrate a lack of integration? In addition, what institutional form will an integrated unit take? Will it be democratic or authoritarian? Would it be a centralized organizational entity with full sovereignty or would it be a loosely federal unit? Or are institutional forms irrelevant to integration?

Karl Deutsch et al. in Ojo (2009:386) offers a better definition of 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 peaceful community". According to him, a "sense of community is a belief on the part of individuals in a group that they have come to agreement on at least one point, that common social problems must and can be resolved on processes of peaceful change. Peaceful change in this context means the resolution of social problems without resort to large scale physical force".

From the foregoing definitions, it could be observed that national integration covers a vast range of human relationships and attitudes – the integration of diverse and discrete cultural loyalties and the development of a sense of nationality; and the integration of the citizens into a common political process. As diverse as these definitions are, they have a common link in that they all point to the fact that integration is what holds a society and a political system together.

2.3 National Development: For a proper understanding of the concept of "national development", it will be necessary to first briefly define the concept of "development". Development as a concept is a victim of definitional pluralism. It is a difficult word to define. However, attempts have been made by erudite scholars to conceptualize development. Some of these definitions will be explored for the purpose of this study. Gboyega (2003) captures development as an idea that embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications. It implies improvement in material

well being of all citizens, not the most powerful and rich alone, in a sustainable way such that today's consumption does not imperil the future, it also demands that poverty and inequality of access to the good things of life be removed or drastically reduced. It seeks to improve personal, physical, security and livelihoods and expansion of life chances.

Naomi (1995) advances that development is usually taken to involve not only economic growth, but also some notion of equitable distribution, provision of health care, education, housing and other essential services all with a view to improving the individual and collective quality of life.

Chrisman (1984) views development as a process of societal advancement, where improvement in the well-being of people are generated through strong partnerships between all sectors, corporate bodies and other groups in the society.

It is reasonable to note that development is not only an economic exercise, but also involves both socio-economic and political issues and pervades all aspects of societal life.

The word 'national', which is the first word in the concept 'national development', according to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, refers to a phenomenon that embraces a whole nation. National development therefore can be described as the overall development or a collective socio-economic, political as well as religious advancement of a country or nation (Lawal and Oluwatoyin, 2011:238). The paper endorses the view that the adoption of true federalism, which has the capacity of managing the plurality and diversity of the Nigerian experience, and genuine national integration programmes, will lead to national development in the country.

3.0 Overview of the Evolution of Nigerian Federalism: The journey towards having a federation of Nigeria started in 1946 under the Richards Constitution, which institutionalised regionalism in the country. Alapiki and Odondiri (1992:22) elucidated that each of the then three regions (North, East and West) had its constitution attached as a schedule to the Federal Constitution. The federation was finally established in 1954 with the Oliver Lythleton constitution, which granted substantial autonomy to the regions in some matters including establishment of regional civil service and judicial system. Prior to these periods, the country was administered as a unitary set up, though with some level of power devolution. It became finally consolidated at independence in 1960 when the country emerged as a federation delicately balanced on the tripodal pedestal of the three major ethnic groups (Tyoden, 2000:191).

Scholars have advanced reasons as to why Nigeria adopted the federal system of government. However, while they are agreed on the historical factors that made the adoption of federalism compelling such as diversities in nationalities, religion, culture and resources, they appear to differ on the political forces that propelled the historical factors in crystallising into a federal union.

Their arguments, as Mohammad (2008) postulated, can however, be narrowed into two basic schools of thought. The first school which can be described as the 'internalist' school located the political forces that propelled the historical factors into federalism in the nationalist leaders. According to this school, the realities of the countries historical past coupled with perceived economic advantage accruable from federalism as well as geographical and political factors made federalism attractive to the nationalist leaders before independence.

The above factors were re-enforced by growing suspicion and fear of domination by one group over another among the various units. Thus, it became appropriate to have a system of government that will grant units considerable freedom and autonomy in the internal governance of their people. This desire was found fulfilled in federalism since it is inherently decentralized and deconcentrated (Mohammad 2008). The emphasis here is that Nigeria's nationalist leaders have long before independence became convinced and reached the conclusion that the country could only survive on the basis of a federal system. For instance, this was one of the arguments of Nnamdi Azikiwe, Nigeria's first President (1960-1966), when he canvassed for a 'federal commonwealth of Nigeria' (Azikiwe, 1945). It was also the argument of Awolowo in his books, *Path to Nigerian Freedom* and *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution* published in 1947 and 1966 respectively.

In essence, the internalist school of thought is of the view that the nationalist leaders had a strong preference for federalism while the British merely endorsed what Nigerians themselves had desired (Elaigwu, 2000).

The second school of thought on the other hand, sees the adoption of federalism in Nigeria as externally motivated. In the light of this, Odion (2011) demonstrates the perspective that federalism is

a British imposition meant to serve the political interest of the British alone. It is therefore, as Alapiki and Odondiri (1992:21) reveals, nothing but a contrivance of the British rule for the purpose of administrative convenience of the colonial state apparatus. The argument of this school is that even before 1954 when federalism formally evolved, the country had been a conglomerate of different subcultures administered unitarily. Therefore, to later introduce the federal system reflects nothing but the self-interest of the British. It is the belief of some scholars that contrary to the widely shared notion of achieving unity in diversity, federalism was introduced as a divide and rule strategy, and to this extent, was an abominable, disruptive and divisive British heritage (Awolowo, 1968:69).

From a synthesis of submissions by the two schools of thought discussed, certain facts became obvious about the evolution of federalism in Nigeria. It is clear that some objective factors made federalism desirable if the country is to remain united. Hence, one can hardly query the foresight of the nationalist leaders who, out of the desire to have self-rule along with shared rule, opted for the federal solution. Similarly, the British overlords could not have pretended not to know that it was the most appropriate for a heterogeneous society like Nigeria, though other pecuniary considerations may have influenced the choice. Added to this is that the British would not have imposed federalism in the country if circumstances had dictated otherwise. In other words, adoption of federalism in Nigeria is neither an exclusive action of the British nor that of the nationalist leaders alone, rather it was a mutual desire of both parties (Watts, 2000:5).

A pertinent question that derives from the preceding analysis is that if mutual fears and suspicion of domination among groups, quest for self-determination, economic prosperity, desire for unity in diversity among other compelling factors, propelled a federation of Nigeria, to what extent then have these imperatives been transcended many years after adopting the system? Has Nigeria been able to leverage on the strength of federalism to achieve the much desired national cohesion and development? This calls for an examination of the content and context of Nigeria's federalism with a view to identifying the missing links in Nigeria's federal practice.

4.0 Analysing Nigeria's Federal Arrangement: Identifying the missing links in Nigeria's Federalism: As observed in the preceding section of this paper, there are certain principles on which rest the success of any federal system. One of such principles as we noted is the relative equality of units in terms of decision-making and absence of marked inequality between them in terms of wealth, population and land mass (Adeyeri, 2011:3; Ojo, 2009:389). Also central to maintaining balance in a federation is constitutional power and revenue sharing formula, which allows each level of government to operate effectively within their jurisdictional areas as enshrined in the constitution (Thom-Otuya, 2013a:31; Uhummwuango and Ekpu, 2011:178-179; Kayode Oladele, 2014). These factors have the potential to make or mar federal systems because they determine the stability or otherwise of federations. It is therefore, within these contexts that one can appreciate the level of contradictions that have taken place in the Nigerian federation (Suberu, 2001). Put differently, it is in this regard that one can appreciate the missing links in Nigeria's federalism.

As noted earlier, Nigeria's federalism became consolidated at independence. Since then, it has been operating in both political and fiscal contexts. The former concerns the form and structures of the federation while the latter has to do with the mode of expropriation and allocation of resources (Mohammad, 2008). Historically, Nigeria's federal system has oscillated between the excessive regionalism that marked the First Republic (1960-1966) and excessive centralisation of the military, and relatively, the post military era (Adeyeri, 2011:2; Yusuf Ali, 2012). This changing form as well has been accompanied by structural changes, which have moved the federation from its initial three regions at independence to its present thirty-six states structure and local units numbering about seven hundred and seventy four. In the light of the foregoing, Yusuf Ali (2012:4) advances that this dynamism has been informed by the desire to have a balanced federation where all nationalities will have self-fulfilment and actualisation. However, Mohammad (2008) was prompted to observe that on the contrary, these changes have only resulted in more imbalances in the federation one effect of which is that it accentuated the centralisation and concentration of power at the centre and this has denied the federating units the opportunity to develop independently.

Admittedly, states and local government creation exercises have served some useful purposes in the Nigerian federation. For one thing, it has spread development further to the grassroots, though inexhaustibly, in addition to limiting intra-state rivalry. However, Adeyeri (2011:2) disclosed that in

spite of the structural changes, the Northern region remains dominant over others so much that it is the decider on matters of joint deliberations. The domineering character of the northern region over others may however be traced to the origin of the federal structure in Nigeria. Crampton (Gofwen, 2004:13), elucidated that the northern region's 281,782 square miles constitutes three-quarters of the country's total land area. As a result of this asymmetry, even when new states are created, the north continues to occupy more than 50 per cent of states in Nigeria. The effect of this, as Mohammad (2008) noted is that it confers on the north, as a geopolitical zone, some advantages, both in resource allocation and federal appointments, especially where the criterion of states is employed. This arrangement obviously violates one of the cardinal principles of federalism, which is that of equality of component units in a federal system. Consequently, Oyedele (1999) entertained the perspective that it also proved the validity of Mill's law of federal instability, which states that no federation can be stable when one part of the federation constitutes a permanent majority in joint deliberations. Thus, Nigeria's federalism so far with its changing structure may not have succeeded in totally reconciling the centrifugal and centripetal forces in the federation (Mohammad, 2008). This is manifested in the series of disenchantments expressed by groups over the federal union.

One other thing that makes Nigeria's federal solution problematic is the persistent military rule over the years which has no doubt affected the structure of Nigeria federalism. In line with the military's command structure, Nigeria's federal system has been over-centralized to the extent that it reflects more of a unitary arrangement than a federal one (Elaigwu, 1998:6-7). Though, before the military intervention in 1966, Nigeria began with a formal federal constitution in 1954, which was decentralized to accommodate the diverse ethnic groups, each of the constituent federating units, known then as regions, operated its own regional constitution, police, civil service and judiciary. Each region even had a separate coat of arms and motto, distinct from that of the federation (Ojo, 2009:388). With the incursion of the military into governance, the federal government started acquiring more powers to the detriment of the constituent federating units. The first military "interregnum" in 1966, abolished regional police forces. The creation of twelve states on the eve of the civil war in 1967, though it brought government closer to the people, entailed considerable loss of power by the federating units. The Murtala-Obasanjo military junta in their bid to reduce 'divisive tendencies' in the nation, abolished state coat of arms and mottos making all governments in the country to adopt the coat of arms and motto of the federation, bringing about, from the benefit of hindsight, a false sense of unity (Policy Briefs, October, 1999).

The federal military government took over assets owned by states or group of states like television stations, sports stadia and newspapers, thereby strengthening the federal government at the expense of the states in terms of assets ownership. These denied the states of their means of livelihood and the opportunity to develop independently. This also made the contest for political power at the federal level a lot more intense among the different federating units and laid the foundation for many years of crisis and instability (Policy Briefs, October, 1999).

Many actions later taken by the military exacerbated this emerging problem. Very worrisome is the fact that local governments have no legislative power over any major tax revenue source although they have administrative and collective jurisdiction on two sources. This negative trend must have motivated Akindele, to canvas the argument that: What we need today is a non-centralized federal system in which state governments are politically virile, legislatively strong, financially resilient, and indeed, constituted self-confident and self-assertive centers of respect and political loyalty from the citizens they serve and over whom they exercise authority (Elaigwu, 1998:7).

Another missing link in Nigerian federalism is in the area of fiscal practice. In Nigeria, access to political power is a central factor in resource distribution. Therefore, Mohammad (2008) noted that a situation whereby accessibility to political power is what ultimately determines who allocates resources only provides opportunity for the controlling interest to expropriate larger percentage to its own advantage even at the detriment of the wealth producers. This was accentuated by various allocation principles adopted that tend to de-emphasize derivation as the utmost determinant of resource allocation. Odia Ofeimun (2005) in his in-depth study of the derivation principle in Nigeria's revenue allocation formula disclosed that from a historical perspective, the revenue allocation formula based on derivation which stood at 100% in 1946, reduced to 50% between 1951 and 1960. By 1970, it was reduced to 45% under the General Yakubu Gowon's administration, while under the Murtala-

Obasanjo' regime, it oscillated between 20% and 25%. He elucidated further that the Shehu Shagari administration reduced it to 5% and under General Muhammadu Buhari government, it was further altered to 1.5%. Babangida regime increased it to 3% and following series of agitations, it presently stood at 13% (Mohammad, 2008). This invariably, shows that in Nigeria, the issue of resource distribution is informed and dictated by the choices of the controlling interest at any period.

However, based on Wheare's postulations, federalism requires that there must be sufficient resources to support both an independent general government and independent units. It is not enough that the general government should be able to finance itself, it is essential too that the regional governments should be able to do likewise. If anything otherwise, Wheare maintained, no matter how much states desire a federal union or draw up a federal constitution, federal government in practice, will not be possible. This is because soon, the units or regions will either be unable to perform their functions or do so only at a price of dependence on the central government. Thom-Otuya (2013b:68) reflects that this position poses a missing link in Nigerian federalism in which states are being dispossessed of their resources. The resources are owned and managed by the federal government who gives states allocations on monthly basis. Therefore, Oyedele (1999:63) endorsed that even for a long time past, federalism had never existed in Nigeria in the real sense of it. Akinyemi (2011:11) argues that the practice of 'true federalism' in Nigeria was only between the period 1954 to 1966 because the period in question was characterised by large devolution of powers to the regions.

In the light of the foregoing, Mohammad (2008) disclosed that the manifest skew-ness in resource distribution between the component units in the Nigerian federation creates conflict of interests among them. While resource-endowed states insists on derivation as a major determinant in the sharing formula, the less-endowed states are canvassing for other determinants such as population size, need for balanced development amongst others. Therefore, Zabadi and Gambo, 2000:75) were prompted to endorse that in effect, efforts to arrive at a national consensus on the revenue sharing formula in spite of several revenue commissions have hardly yielded any acceptable outcome. Even the civilian administration that came into being in 1999 had to contend with this lack of consensus and the attendant agitation especially by the disadvantaged groups.

However, the poor run of federalism in Nigeria has not diminished the perceived utility of the system as evidenced by the clamour for so-called true federalism in Nigeria. Again, to say all about the operation of federalism in Nigeria are negatives is to downplay the utility and relevance of federalism as a system of governance. As some writers have observed, federalism is what made Nigeria governable. This is because, as Mohammad (2008) illustrates, by virtue of the country's vast size, resources and diversities, the country habitates lots of power potentates competing for state power amongst themselves. One could have imagined the conflicts that would emerge in the process of competing for power and resources if the country had been practicing unitary system of government. But federalism by its inherent decentralization of power creates opportunities for the various ethnic nationalities to man different spheres of interest. This has successfully diverted the struggle for control from the centre to other units such as the state and local governments.

Another feat achieved by Nigeria's federal arrangement is the greater participation of Nigerians in the country's political life. This is made possible by the principle of federal character entrenched under section 14(3) of the Constitution of Nigeria 1979 and has since been recurring in the country's constitutions. Although the federal character principle has been criticized on several grounds, as we observed earlier, it has made possible for individuals within the federation to rise to positions of eminence on the platform of where they come from, an attainment which may not be possible if merit had been adopted irrespective of ethnic or cultural background (Obasanjo, 1988:61).

Federalism has also to some extent, spread even development in the country. This has been made possible by state creation which usually open up new vistas of opportunity for spreading developments to the grassroots. The federal government also consistently establish federal presence in less-developed states. An example is the nine federal universities established by the federal government most of which were cited in newly created states like Bayelsa, Jigawa, Nasarawa, Ekiti, amongst others. It is in this context that Onyeoziri (2002: 14-15) was prompted to endorse that states are created to liberate minorities from the stranglehood of ethnic majority groups and for more balanced development by bringing it closer to the people.

Federalism has also encouraged modest competition among states as some states have lead the way in terms of developmental programmes and policies which other states and federal government

eventually emulate. Put differently, federalism has created healthy rivalry among component units in Nigeria. In the light of the foregoing, Mohammad (2008) elucidated that establishment of the first television station in the country by the government of the Western Region in the 1950s motivated other regions to do the same, and that the free education policy which started first in the Western Region was later emulated by other parts of the country and the federal government.

There is however, greater need for more devolution of powers to the component states and competitive fiscal practice by giving financial autonomy and independence to the component states.

5.0 Challenges to National Integration in Nigeria: Modern nation-states tend to be pluralistic in the widest possible sense. Whilst this diversity can be source of strength, they have been known also to fuel mutual suspicion and constituted ready folders of the embers of conflict. In drawing a parallel for Nigeria, it is recognised that the country has over 250 ethno-cultural groupings (National Conference Final Report, 2014:47). This multi-ethnicity has been compounded by pronounced religious differences, exploited usually for political considerations by avid political classes in contexts of extreme poverty and very low educational development among the mass of the populace. Whereas Nigeria is supposed to be a secular state, “one nation bound in freedom, peace and unity”, the prevalence of religiosity and its related nepotism at all levels, has effectively undermined the objectivity which secularity would have ordinarily imbued in national politics. Much worse than this, many political leaders exploit religiosity and ethnicity for personal advantages. Consequently, a major challenge on the path of national integration in Nigeria has been a **regenerative breed of selfish and greedy political gladiators** who seize power either through the barrel of the gun or through stolen electoral mandates. As they competed for power, prestige and associated benefits, the political elite in a bid to secure the support of members of their own ethnic groups accentuate ethnic differences and demonize members of other ethnic groups. Onifade and Imhonopi (2013:80) elucidated that the brutal killings of youth corps members serving in Northern Nigeria following the declaration of the results of the 2011 presidential elections speak volumes of the naked thirst for political position which brings out the beast in political leaders in Nigeria.

Another major hurdle to national integration in Nigeria is the **clamour by the various ethnic nationalities for a review of the constitution**. The country’s current socio-economic and political challenges are traced to the defects in the constitution, being the supreme document that mediates political activities and processes of governance (National Conference Final Report, 2014:49). These processes determine who exercises executive power, who makes laws, how do other players get their voices heard, and how political and public office holders are made accountable.

It is known that even the most perfectly-crafted constitutions do not themselves automatically foster democracy, good governance and the public good. Nonetheless, it is trite knowledge that where the Constitution is devoid of fundamental deficiencies and the process of its evolution is legitimately rooted in the people, it acquires the necessary authority to regulate affairs and interactions of the citizens without fear or favour, but with justice and equity. In this way, the much-needed stability between political contestation for power and the smooth running of government is established.

Up till now, a truly acceptable constitution has not emerged to mediate the social contract between the constituent nationalities of the country and the Nigerian state. This has caused critics of successive constitutions to dub the documents as ‘false constitution’. A valid charge in deed in view of the fact that our constitutions only emerged after public opinion gathered through consultations have been subverted by the so-called ‘necessary amendments and inclusions’ under the watchful eyes of the colonial administrators or their military successors in the post independence Nigeria. The successive constitutions have thus been vitiated by the absence of that critical organic connection which they are supposed to have had with the spirit of the people in order to give meaning to their cry of ‘We the People...’

In the final analysis, contemporary socio-economic and political challenges to national integration and development make two interconnected demands on the Nigerian state and people: the need to set in motion and make an acceptable constitution, and, the imperative to establish the much-needed structural and institutional mechanisms which would facilitate the urgent attainment of critical, people-centred economic growth and development. This clamour led the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, President Goodluck Jonathan, on 17th March 2014, to convene a Sovereign

National Conference chaired by the retired Justice of the Supreme Court, Justice Idris Kutigi. The Conference has concluded its deliberations and submitted its report to the presidency.

Corruption remains the single most debilitating problem confronting Nigeria's national cohesion and development efforts. Onifade and Imhonopi (2013:80) disclosed that corruption has so permeated the entire fabric of state that the issues that cause disaffection among ethnic nationalities in the country such as poverty, hunger, illiteracy and its attendant limited opportunities, unemployment, marginalization, infrastructural decay, homelessness and lack of access to quality health are products of corruption. The corrosive impact of corruption continues to undermine governance, stability and progress. It distorts and undermines efficient allocation of resources and by extension the country's capacity for competitiveness. It reduces the net value of public spending as well as the quality of services, public infrastructure, and the volume of tax revenues; and it encourages misappropriation and misallocation of resources. Corruption smears the nation with the most odious of perceptions and further impedes economic growth by discouraging investments both local and foreign. Politically, corruption desecrates the rule of law, respect for human rights, public accountability and transparency. It undermines the electoral process; it creates and exacerbates the problem of legitimacy for government and its institutions. It deepens income inequality and poverty even as it erodes the moral fabrics of society and fans the embers of grievances and conflict while engendering trafficking in human and other illegal substances, armed robberies and related violent crimes including terrorism. The problem of corruption has been duly acknowledged by successive governments with efforts made to stem such corruption. These efforts include in recent times the creation of several Anti-Corruption Agencies (ACA). These include the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission; the Code of Conduct Bureau and the Code of Conduct Tribunal; the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission; the Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative and the Technical Unit on Governance and Anti-Corruption Reform. Others are the Bureau for Public Procurement and the Public Complaints Commission. In the National Assembly, there are the Committees on Anti-Corruption, National Ethics, Values and Ethics, Code of Conduct and Public Petitions. These efforts notwithstanding, the malaise of corruption continue to ravage the country's politics. In the light of the foregoing, Adeyeri (2011:6) entertained the view that the inability to curb corruption in Nigeria is largely due to the lack of political will on the part of the political leadership especially in terms of bringing perpetrators of corruption to book, and the inability of the state to maintain law and order. The incidence of corruption has also been escalated in Nigeria by a combination of factors such as the weakness of law enforcement; the varied limitations of judicial institutions and processes; inadequate funding and the marked absence of synergy among ACAs; pervasive incidence of poverty; lack of social security and safety nets; vulnerability of public sector workers to corruption due to low wage and a skewed reward system.

Another obstacle to national integration and development in Nigeria is **the issue of rights and freedoms of minorities and ethnic nationalities concerning marginalization and exclusion**. Nigeria's ethnic groups are over 350. By definition, a minority ethnic group is one which is numerically lesser than major ethnic groups of a given country (National Conference Final Report, 2014:52). It may possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics which differ from those of the other groups. It usually shows a sense of solidarity directed towards preserving its culture, tradition, religion or language. Over the years, the issue of the rights and freedoms of minorities and ethnic nationalities concerning marginalization and exclusion have come to constitute a serious challenge to national cohesion and development. The sustained agitations have roots going back as far as the commencement of the amalgamation processes which culminated in the unification of the Southern and Northern Protectorates and the Colony of Lagos in 1914. These invariably brought the various ethnic minorities under the three dominant ethnic groups – the Hausa/Fulani, Ibo and Yoruba. It must be noted that minority/dominant ethnic group consciousness and agitations are also exhibited at the sub-national levels. In all, the ethnic minority and the issues of national integration are the products of the balkanization of nationalities resulting in their spread across states and even international boundaries. However, despite the provisions of constitutional safeguards for the protection of minorities and other forms of discrimination, some minority groups have remained disadvantaged by lumping them together with powerful hegemonic groups who monopolized political and economic power – thus provoking their persistent and consistent demands for the creation of additional states and/or re-adjustment of boundaries in the existing states.

The challenge here, therefore, is on how to mitigate the issue of discrimination and marginalization as well as those petty rivalries existing in inter-ethnic relationships which tend to impact negatively on the living conditions of most members of minority and other ethnic nationalities. In meeting this challenge however, the associated responsibility of managing conflicts with the guiding principles and tenets of our federalism in mind is necessary.

Lastly, the **fear of losing control by the ruling class** is an issue standing in the path of national integration in Nigeria. Building on the scholarly work of Nnoli (1979), Ifeancha & Nwagwu (2009) contended that the ruling class in Nigeria inherited a state structure and has left it without any form of modification or moderation up until now. In their view, rather, the ruling class is preoccupied with the use of state paraphernalia for accumulating surplus without producing this surplus. The resultant contradiction is an institutionalized myopic and visionless ethnic-centered leadership with separatist and particularistic political outlook (Nnoli 1979).

6.0 Efforts at Promoting National Integration in Nigeria: As observed above, Nigeria is a host to unwilling and variegated partners, therefore, efforts have been put in place right from the colonial era to create systems, institutions and programmes of government aimed at promoting national integration.

One of such efforts at promoting national integration and development in Nigeria is **the introduction and teaching of social studies education in Nigerian schools, universities and teachers training colleges in the 1970's**. Halilu and Okam (2011:4) endorsed that the main philosophy behind the teaching and learning of social studies in these institutions is designed at producing effective citizens and of forging a cohesive society that will support a notion of nation-building and national development by way of classroom meditation of curriculum programme in the subject area. In other words, an acquisition of the tenets and norms of effective citizenship by learners or students in our various school setting has to be mastered and cultivated through relevant curriculum programmes and processes intrinsic in classroom instruction in social studies education. In a similar vein, Okobiah (1985) observes that the main philosophy behind the birth of social studies education in Nigeria during the 1970's is aimed at a mobilisation of youth, students and young learners for the purpose of helping them cultivate an awareness and understanding that would transform them into citizens with skills, attitudes, competencies, moral values and reasoned judgment to effectively live, interact, interrelate and contribute positively to the economic, social, political and cultural integration and development of the Nigerian society.

The **unifying National Policy on Tertiary Education** is another action that Akpan (1990) considers to be aimed at national integration in Nigeria. In this sense, Akpan argues that Nigerian universities were seen to "serve as instruments for fostering national unity". Quoting the National Policy on Education, Akpan asserted that for universities to serve as effective instruments for cementing national unity (i) The quality of instruction in Nigerian Universities would be improved with a view to further enhancing objectivity and tolerance; (ii) University development would ensure a more even geographical distribution to provide a fairer spread of higher educational facilities; (iii) Admission of students and recruitment of staff into universities and other institutions of higher learning would be on a broad national basis; (iv) Universities would be required to develop teacher and student exchange programmes to improve both inter-university communication and knowledge of the country; (v) And widespread ignorance among Nigerian groups about each other and about themselves would be remedied by instituting a compulsory first year course in the social organization, customs, culture and history of the nations and its peoples. The award of degrees is to be contingent upon passing this course. However, Akpan rues the failure of higher institutions in the country, especially universities to be an integrative tool because (i) most universities in the country have exceeded the 30% quota for the 'locality' criterion favoring individual states where the universities are located more than other areas; (ii) universities recruit most of their students from their immediate geo-political and cultural environments. The proportions range from 34% for the University of Calabar to 65% for ABU Zaria. Interesting exceptions are found in the University of Ilorin, though located in the Northern geo-political region but draws 2% of its students from the North as compared with 51% from the South-west, and the University of Benin which though located in the Mid-West geo-political region draws almost twice as many students from the South-east; (iii) there exists a clear distinction in the pattern of student recruitment between the Northern and the Southern universities. The percentage

of Northern students enrolled in Southern universities is extremely low. In the East, it rarely exceeds one percent, and in the West it varies from two to seven percent. On the contrary, the percentage of Southern students enrolled in Northern universities is quite substantial, ranging from three percent at Bayero University, Kano, to fifty-seven at the University of Ilorin. To make the universities an instrument of integration, more needs to be done to address these challenges.

Another effort at national integration in Nigeria is the **federal character principle** initiated by the federal government. Bello (2012:1) noted that the principle was introduced to ensure representational equity in Nigeria in order to cure the malaise of unequal North-South duality. In essence, the principle of federal character aims at promoting a sense of belonging in the country by eliminating or at least minimizing domination resulting from imbalance in appointments.

As Ojo (1999) persuasively explained, federal character principle as an integrative mechanism is defined as fair and effective representation of the various components of the federation in the country's position of power, status and influence. He noted further that the principle provides a formula for participation in the governance of the country in such a way that a single section of the country will not dominate another or a segment dominating the rest. The basic assumption is that if every segment of the federation participates in governance, there would be almost equality in the country in the scheme of things and expectedly, it will engender a sense of belonging and national integration.

However, the purpose of the principle of federal character, though laudable, the application and operation of the principle tended to differentiate rather than integrate Nigeria. Following the provisions of the principle, the composition of the federal public services for instance and the conduct of its affairs must reflect the federal character of Nigeria. In practice, this means that in the appointment, promotion and postings of the federal public servants, every state, ethnic group religions or any other sectional group should be represented. Thus, the criterion of membership of the federal bureaucracy is accordingly heavily skewed in favour of representation. Representation of states, ethnic or any other sectional groups especially religious groups in the composition of federal bureaucracy has, thus, superseded recruitment on the basis of knowledge and technical qualification as determined through a competitive examination. The situation is not different when it comes to promotion and postings. There are instances where capable, long serving and loyal federal civil servants have been denied promotion, precisely because the quota for their states in these posts has been filled. By extension, this has denied the nation the capable and efficient hands needed for its development. In fact, the issue of representation based on the federal character principle has unwittingly degenerated into verbal and sometimes acrimonious exchanges between the North and the South of the country (Okoli, 1990; Obi and Obiekeze, 2004). Paradoxically, the federal character principle has succeeded in institutionalizing North-South dichotomy rather than integrating it.

Again, that the principle of federal character tended to differentiate rather than integrate is not by accident, it is by design. This position is supported by Olugbemi (1987) when he implied that federal character as defined and pursued by the 1979 and the 1999 constitutions cannot succeed in integrating the people because it was an ideology of the minority ruling class aimed at protecting their interest. According to them, the doctrine holds a lot in stock for the economically dominant class to the exclusion of the masses from the political process in the country. Firstly, it helps to divert attention from the internal economy where the mass of the people wallows in abject material want. Second, it helps to legitimize the dominant and exploiting class position in the society. Thirdly, it helps to prevent mass mobilization for development and by implication contributes in no small measure in maintaining an oppressive social order.

Federal character principle has also failed to achieve national integration because it encourages the valorization of the ethnic individuality rather than a dissolution of the ethnic personality [(Tahir, (1986), Ayoade (1998)]. The Principle of Federal character emphasizes the need for ethnic balancing as a necessity in the evolution of Nigerian citizenship and for ensuring less acrimonious relationships among the various peoples of Nigeria. It is argued that the principle "will make for a more equal federation to which more people will owe loyalty because, they see themselves represented meaningfully therein but unfortunately, the principle while stressing the imperative of ethnic balancing, invariably enthrones ethnicity and de-emphasizes the nation. In the process, too, it strengthens the parochial, particularistic orientations and individual ethnic attachments of Nigerians. These tendencies form the basis of disaffection among various groups in the nation. In addition, the

formula has not adequately addressed the problems of the minorities especially in states made up of different and unequal ethnic groups (Uroh, 2000: Saro-Wiwa 1987; Agbodike 1998).

Furthermore, **the National Youth Service Corps** is another effort of the country at nation-building. The scheme was created by Decree No. 24 of May 22, 1973, and the fundamental object is to enhance the interaction among the nascent educated elite in the country scattered in different parts of the country by providing them with the opportunity of living and serving in some developmental capacities in states other than their places of origin so they could better understand the cultures, perhaps the language and general lifestyle of their host communities. Thus, while helping to develop different parts of Nigeria through their one-year compulsory national service, young educated Nigerians were to also understand more about their other “brethren” living in other parts of Nigeria, their strengths and challenges. This was to be useful for these young ones when they assume leadership position because they would be able to proffer solutions to the challenges other Nigerians are facing and be guided and inspired by the strengths of other Nigerians. However, Onifade and Imhonopi (2013:78) revealed that the scheme has been fraught with ethnic consideration, favoritism and cronyism in the posting of corps members, exposure of these youths to security risks (as was seen during the 2011 General Elections where many corps members of Southern descent were butchered by some angry northern youths), corruption and misappropriation of funds. As Ojo (2009:392) noted, another dimension to the problem facing the thriving of the NYSC in Nigeria is the problematic nature of citizenship, indigeneship and settler status in Nigeria. In this sense, many Nigerian youths have experienced more of frustration rather than integration because after serving in a particular state other than theirs, they do not expect to get jobs where they have thanklessly undergone the NYSC programme because in many cases, they would be tagged as non-indigenes and will be forced to go back to their states of origin to avoid being discriminated against.

Another accommodative and integrative strategy adopted to foster nation-building in Nigeria is the **allocation of higher revenue to the Niger-Delta Region** for producing oil which is the mainstay of Nigeria’s economy. The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria, through the derivation principle, allocates 13% of the country’s wealth to the oil producing states. This policy appears to be useful in that it has appeased the Niger-Delta Region which has been restless in recent times. The policy has also substantially curtailed the problem of environmental degradation being experienced by the people of the region as a result of oil exploration activities in the region. However, a major obstacle on the path of the policy is the inability of government functionaries in the region to effectively utilize the oil revenue allocation for the development of the region.

The integrative policies highlighted in the preceding sections of this paper are not exhaustive. Space has not permitted us to discuss states and local government creation exercises, the movement of the federal capital from Lagos to Abuja, establishment of the Niger-Delta Development Corporation for development of the Niger-Delta Region, establishment of unity schools run by the Federal Government to promote unity in diversity, amongst others integrative strategies.

7.0 Conclusion and Recommendations: Federalism has been acclaimed to be the best institutional form of government that soothes countries with renowned diversity like Nigeria. It has boosted the United States of America, Australia, Canada, amongst others countries. The efficiency of federalism cannot be doubted, therefore, if the practice of federalism is strengthened in Nigeria, there is no doubt that it will precipitate/facilitate national development.

Unfortunately, the practice of federalism in Nigeria is a distortion of the accepted nature of federalism as conceived by Nigeria’s nationalists elites. A fundamental flaw in the practice of federalism in Nigeria, which has impacted negatively on national development, is in the area of fiscal practice. The current Constitution which entrenches a centralised, top-down, unitary-federalism, or what a commentator has aptly described as ‘feeding bottle federalism’ is for a system Nigeria does not need. The starting point in rescuing Nigeria’s systemic collapse is therefore, a new constitution that weans the country of the oil and natural resource curse. Tragically, the discourse on constitutional ‘amendments’ merely tinker at the margin and aim to preserve the status quo which is a dead end. My take here is that the most important ‘transformation’ the current crop of leadership at the executive and legislative arms will bequeath to Nigeria is to fundamentally re-engineer the meta-level governance architecture of Nigeria to unleash its competitive potentials for long-term prosperity.

The first step therefore, is to recognize that Section 162 of the Constitution is a fundamental drag on Nigerian development. It states that:

“The Federation shall maintain a special account to be called ‘the Federation Account’ into which shall be paid all revenues collected by the Government of the Federation... Any amount standing to the credit of the Federation Account shall be distributed among the Federal and State Governments and the local government councils in each State on such terms and in such manner as may be prescribed by the National Assembly”.

This is the formalization of the command and control structure foisted by the military. Some analysts argue that Nigeria’s development was halted since the first military coup. The constitution was suspended, and a quasi-unitary system imposed. Since then, Nigeria has not found its bearing again (Soludo, 2012). Competitive federalism was replaced by a system of centralized command in which everyone went cap in hand for handouts from the centre. By this provision, everyone received unconditional free money from the centre and with statutory powers to spend as it wishes, without monitoring or accountability. Even the local governments which were also ‘created’ by the centre directly received their own ‘shares’ from Abuja and could do whatever they wish with the money. To achieve national development, Nigeria should reverse the above situation. A mode of fiscal decentralization that rewards economic performance at the sub-national level should be diligently pursued, and a form of development that ensures the economic viability and prosperity of each state and geo-political region of Nigeria should be the main thrust of our policies.

One objective of the new constitution should be to abolish the monthly allocation to states as entrenched in the constitution, and jack up the federating units to mature into self-funding and independent units. Necessity, they say, is the mother of invention.

The first idea to consider is to possibly go back to the part of the 1963 Republican Constitution that deals with fiscal federalism. If it is not broken, why mend it? It served us well, and created a competitive federal structure. Section 140 of the 1963 Constitution provided something that looks more like a federal structure than the current structure. In part, it states: “There shall be paid by the Federation to each region a sum equal to fifty per cent of the proceeds of any royalty received by the Federation in respect of any minerals extracted in that Region; and any mining rents derived by the Federation from within that Region”. An alternative idea worth debating is why not grant rights over mineral resources to the respective ‘regions’ or states and let them pay taxes to the Federal Government?

A key principle is to ensure a true federal structure and a new fiscal federalism that is developmental, with each of the federating units being fiscally viable as to be able to fund its recurrent expenditures, and provide some basic infrastructure on its own without recourse to the centre. Currently, oil and other revenues from the centre are treated as unconditional grants (entitlements) to all tiers of government. This is wrong and creates the wrong incentives towards work and competition. Global experience is that such kind of aid (like a welfare system without individual responsibility) has left most of its beneficiaries helplessly dependent and the society worse-off.

We need to redefine the use of oil and other natural resource rents. The nation needs to agree that rents from such exhaustible natural resources (which belong to present and future generations) cannot be used for consumption by the present generation. Perhaps, they should only be used to build capacity and bridge to the future in terms of human and physical capital. Thus every government must be constrained to meet all its recurrent expenditure from its internally generated non-natural resource revenue, including the Federal Government.

Certainly, we need to debate the devolution of revenue powers to the regions/states. We need to review the derivation principle in the treatment of revenues to provide incentive for states/regions with natural resource endowments to exploit them. Just as an example, we could agree that derivation should not be less than 40%. Another 25% should accrue to the Federal Government, while the remaining 35% should go to a new pool called “Distributable Capital Account (DCA)” to signal that the fund is for ‘capital’ acquisition—physical and human capital. We need to debate how a far leaner and more effective Federal Government should be funded on a sustainable basis, and the kinds of transfers to distressed states/regions. We must make the Federal Government far less attractive!

One other factor that has largely worked against the economic viability of state governments in Nigeria is that the tax system is largely centralized. Soludo (2012) illustrates that based on the current

tax regime in Nigeria, if State X labours hard to attract companies to its state or even builds industries, the corporate tax revenues would be paid into the Federation Account and shared to everyone. Similarly, if a state promotes tourism, all the VAT collected (including from alcohol and cigarettes) would be paid into the Federation Account and shared to all—including states where alcohol and cigarettes are banned. Then the fundamental question that follows is where is the incentive to work hard or promote industry? Little wonder then that on all economic and social indicators, the average Nigerian was better-off in 1966 under the regions (as there was true federalism) than in 2015. What is the business of the Federal Government with VAT? Why can't states vary corporate tax rates to attract industries to their domains while the Federal Government only sets the upper limit?

Another travail to federal arrangement in Nigeria is the **federal character principle**. As demonstrated in the preceding sections of this paper, though our national leaders adopted federal character after independence to, among other things, achieve national integration and representational equity in public service and appointments to public offices, the principle has been criticized for sacrificing merit on the altar of mediocrity. As Okoli (1990:8) rightly observed, the insertion of non-task considerations and a modish concern for ethnic representation offsets presumed merit and job-skill related criteria. It is capable of resulting in a geometric diffusion of mediocrity. The emergence of a merit driven culture is, therefore, imperative and should be an area of immediate policy focus. To achieve this, a comprehensive review of ethnic balancing measures and diversity management related laws (e.g. federal character) should be undertaken with a view to ensuring greater promotion of merit. As we noted earlier, several integrative strategies have been adopted by the country in a bid to achieve national cohesion and development. However, the problem with them all is the wide gap between intents and actual implementation of these strategies. There is no gainsaying that Nigeria is multi-cultural society, a conglomerate of nations with different peoples and cultures, a basket of different religions and worldviews and a country with the diverse expectations of its people (Oyeyemi, 2002). As a recipe for Nigeria's integration, growth and development, there is the need to recognize that none of the ethnic groups, big or small, shares a uniform dream about Nigeria. This is because the ethnic groups' worldviews as Oyeyemi (2002) demonstrated, are completely different such as their expectations from their leaders, their notions of government, their moral standards, their perceptions and understanding of religion, their ideas of how to live and regulate their lives and their goals and missions as ethnic nationalities. He entertained the perspective that although these differences in choices and worldviews of the different ethnic nationalities that make up Nigeria are not wrong in themselves, ethnic groups must be allowed to make their different choices, being different people with different cultures, dreams, hopes and aspirations.

However, this obviously cannot happen until a consensual agreement is reached by all Nigerians on the future of the country. By writing in the constitution the indivisibility of the country, the military drafters of that constitution failed to respect the wishes of the Nigerian people and that sovereignty lies in and with the people. It is in the light of this that we strongly recommend the quick and effective implementation of the recommendations of the National Conference 2014. The myriads of challenges of national integration and the need for a platform for the various ethnic nationalities in Nigeria to voice out their hopes, aspirations and fears in the corporate existence of Nigeria and agree on how all the ethnic nationalities will co-exist peacefully and have the true feelings and sense of national identity led to the call by the various ethnic groups for the convocation of a sovereign national conference. The president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan convened a Sovereign National Conference on the 17th of March 2014. The conference which was chaired by a former Justice of the Supreme Court of Nigeria, Hon. Justice Idris Kutigi has concluded its deliberations and submitted its final report to the presidency on August 21, 2014.

The conference made landmark recommendations that will foster national cohesion and development of the country if the recommendations are implemented. However, there is a growing apprehension among the populace that the report of the National Conference may not ultimately be implemented. This apprehension is justified. The attitude of the presidency towards the recommendations and reports of several committees, conferences and commissions set up in the past to investigate one national malady or the other reveals that the presidency in Nigeria is a burial ground, where painstakingly written reports, pages of which hold proactive solutions to national challenges are allowed to gather dust. This fate must not befall the recommendations of the Idris Kutigi-chaired National Conference 2014. The President, in his transformation agenda, must

demonstrate examples by ensuring that the recommendations of the Conference are submitted to the appropriate governmental authorities for effective implantation.

The implementation of the report of the National Conference is made more compelling by the fact that the recommendations present the voices, hopes and aspirations of the various ethnic nationalities in Nigeria that were represented at the Conference. The effective implementation of the conference report will give the various ethnic nationalities the assurance that they are being carried along in the scheme of things in the country. As Akwara et al (2013:60) rightly elucidated, it is only when the various groups and peoples in the country are involved in the formulation of governmental policies and their implementation; when they get a fair share of the nation's resources; and are considered as peoples whose values, opinions and feelings do matter in the country that they can cultivate the necessary sense of belonging and identity with their fellow citizens and the governments at all levels. Consequently, they will work in unity toward the building of a united and strong nation-state in which all will be proud to belong. In the light of the foregoing, Odion-Akhaine (2000) endorsed that it has become very necessary to address the issue because of the deepening ethno-nationalism in the country which has resulted in the proliferation of ethnic organizations (militias) and violent ethnic clashes. Furthermore, to ensure national integration in Nigeria, the formulation and implementation of relevant youth development and empowerment programmes is critical. In addition to deploying the appropriate policies and programmes on education, employment, etc., other youth-related policies such as sports development need to be even more rigorously pursued seeing that in Nigeria, sports have emerged as a major national unifier and a veritable tool for the advancement of the spirit of healthy competitive rivalry.

In the pursuit of the goals of attaining national cohesion, Nigeria will need to continue its priority of commitment to welfare enhancing and pro-growth economic policies with the view to reducing the incidence of poverty. The associated increased transactional flows will impact positively on citizens' economic conditions, and galvanize even further the level of inter-group mobility and interaction. This is the process that, as a matter of deliberate public policy, must be actively cultivated and harnessed for national cohesion.

To increase the level of human interaction and transactional flows as a strategy for national cohesion, it is important to escalate the pursuit of infrastructural development and to deploy these not only across the urban areas but the rural areas as well. This will serve to open up the entire country and ensure even greater levels of inclusive socio-economic development.

There is the need to build a critical mass of nationalistic fervour around the 'Nigerian Project' as a strategy for achieving Nigeria's national cohesion. This essentially requires the creative development and communication of positive affirmative narratives in support of our national unity and development irrespective of our socio-cultural diversity.

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