



Federalism and National Development in Nigeria: An Assessment of former President Goodluck Jonathan's Administration

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Abstract: *The background to this study comprehensively captured the usefulness and unavoidability of social relations to human existence. Hence, it impressed that the desire to live in a society where the socio-economic needs, rights and privileges of humans who are drawn from diverse ethnic and socio-cultural affiliations are advanced and protected, gave rise to the formation of a sovereign union. Using the administration of former President Goodluck Jonathan as a case study, this research work holistically appraised the impact of federalism on national development in Nigeria; it investigated the extent to which some inherent problems in Nigerian federalism impinged on the successful realisation of national developmental objectives in Nigeria during the period under study and beyond. The study developed two research questions bordering on what constitutes the problems of Nigerian federalism as it pertains to national development, as well as the strategies to combat them. The study was anchored on the theory of Distributive Justice by John Rawls. The study adopted the review research design. The source of data for this study was exclusively the secondary source, using the instruments of textbooks, journals, official documents and internet materials. The study equally used the content analysis method for data presentation and analysis. At the end of the study, it was revealed that problems associated with agitations and complaints over revenue sharing formula, agitation for state autonomy, resource control, etc. constituted the problems of Nigerian federalism as they pertain to national development during the administration of former President Jonathan. The study therefore recommended among other things for an improved regional autonomy to achieve a maximum degree of widespread national development.*

Keywords: *Accountability, Autonomy, Governance, Socio-Economic, Revenue Sharing.*

Introduction

Historically, the fundamental idea or rationale necessitating the formation of a society is embedded in the collective resolve by a group of people who aspire for such a corporate union, to discover, protect and advance their socio-economic needs. According to Odigwe and Aibieyi (2015), the desire to create, exploit and share resources, originally prompted the formation of societies. Hence, the interest of humans is pivotal to the protection and advancement of the socio-



economic needs of the society, the quest for equitability and fairness in the processes to the attainment of such objectives assumes a paramount importance.

The impression conveyed above brings into focus, the relevance of federalism in the realisation of a society's socio-economic development. Fundamentally, federalism serves as a political arrangement, institutionally designed to suit the interests and aspirations of people from diverse heritage, defined in dissimilarities in language, culture, ethnic nationality and religion, who elect to exist as one corporate entity. In a similar opinion, Femi (2004) observes that federalism is a potent alternative that douses sentiments or agitations that border around fear of domination and protests about unfairness in the distribution of a society's resources.

The foundational framework for the establishment of federalism in Nigeria was laid by the then British Governor-General of Nigeria, Sir Bernard Bourdillon in 1939, with his creation of the Nigerian state into three provinces. The regionalisation of Nigeria into three provinces was entrenched in the Arthur Richards constitution of 1946. However, Nigeria was formally accorded the status of federalism by the Macpherson constitution of 1954 (Aigbepue & Augustine, 2011).

Nigerian federalism as formally instituted in 1954 emphasised the dominant role of regions in terms of fiscal relationship between the centre and the component regions. In fact, from the outset of the creation of federalism in Nigeria in 1954 up till the mid-60s, derivation principle of 50% from regions had determined the revenue sharing formula. The 50% sharing formula which was a product of Philipson Commission's recommendation in 1951 was a 50% slash from the previous 100% derivation for regions before 1951. In the wake of that, derivation principle was mixed with other principles like even development and land mas among the three regions. The argument in favour of that development was anchored on the need to assist the regions (especially the northern region) with lower revenue generating capacity, to develop socio-economically at a uniform pace with their southern counterpart. Subsequent administrations after independence in 1960 continued to slash derivation revenues accruable to regions or states as it were. In 1975, Yakubu Gowon's administration reduced it to 20%, while in 1981 and 1983, the separate administrations of Shehu Shagari and Muhammadu Buhari had slashed it to 5% and 1.5% respectively. Remarkably, critics have continued to describe that era as being the foundation of a "creepy and parasitic" pattern of economic growth and development in Nigeria (Uhunmwangho & Ekpu, 2006).

With the full concentration on the proceeds from the exportation of crude oil as the mono-source of Revenue generation in Nigeria, socio-economic development has over time, being determined by reliance on the monthly allocations given to states by the central government. According to Suberu (2001), the current federal arrangement that confers fiscal dominance on the central government and de-emphasises the supremacy of derivation over other principles is inimical to competitive regional development. Suberu further argued that the present federal arrangement can only encourage laziness and over-dependence.

There have been several calls from various quarters for the Nigerian State to adopt a realistic but favourable revenue sharing formula that will enhance rapid but uniform development across regions and states in Nigeria. According to Ikonne (2016), the argument about the need to adopt an acceptable revenue sharing formula in Nigeria has split the country along ethnic lines. According to Ikonne, the regions of south-south and south east are complaining about marginalisation. Ikonne further informs that the position maintained by these two regions is based on the fact that the current state of development in these regions, defined in terms of infrastructure and standard of living of the people, does not in any way equate the magnitude of national wealth generated from these regions.



In a separate contribution, Cookey (2010) posit that the clamour by the people of the south-south region for an upward review of derivational percentage in the revenue sharing formula was informed by the contention that the region contributes the largest chunk to national wealth.

In line with the above, Okerengbo (2018) and Ukaegbu (2017), decry the defective style of intergovernmental relations in Nigeria. According to Okerengbo, the sharing of functions in the exclusive, concurrent and residual lists has over time, led to the usurpation of jurisdictional powers and functions among the three tiers of government, most especially the local government. Consequently, such has given rise to grave impairment of socio-economic development, especially at the grassroot level.

In recent times, series of agitations for restructuring, secession, and resource control can be attributed to the faulty federal arrangement being currently practised in Nigeria. In the opinion of Daramola (2018), restructuring has the prospect of returning Nigeria to the era of regionalism where each region would be granted the opportunity to harness its potentials and exploit same for economic development.

Therefore, this study aims at examining the extent to which federalism has reflected justice, equity, fairness and evenness in the administration of national development in Nigeria, with particular focus on the administration of former President Goodluck Jonathan.

Methodology

This study adopted the review research design. This study exclusively used the secondary source to generate the various data, relevant for this study. The study relied on the use of textbooks, journal publications, official documents, internet materials, etc. as instruments through which the researcher reliably investigated issues surrounding the birth, growth and current operationalisation of federalism in Nigeria, as well as the level of its impact on national development. It was still through secondary sources that the researcher reviewed relevant literature on the dynamics of national development efforts during the former President Goodluck Jonathan's administration- the latter being the case study in this research work. This study adopted the qualitative data analysis method. The study deductively interpreted the findings, based on the inferences made from the content of the relevant literature reviewed.

Conceptual Clarifications

Federalism

Whare (1953), cited in Burgess (2006, p. 7), posited that federalism is generally viewed as a constitutional setup which shares the lawmaking prerogatives and duties between two levels of government, (the central and the component states). In their view, Odigwe and Aibieyi (2015) see federalism as a system of government in which sovereignty is shared between the central government and the component states. To Abbas (2016), federalism denotes the arrangement of a system in which agreement is entered among people from diverse races, different culture and territorial peculiarities to build a common political entity where both the central and regional governments are given specific functions-the latter which limits and privileges are unambiguously outlined in the constitution. In another definition, Adebani (2012) defines federalism as a system that recognises the division of powers and authority between the central and component state governments, while both retain separate autonomy.

In a more comprehensive explanation, Dabo (2015) conceives the term, 'federalism' from the perspective of its fiscal connotation. According to Dabo's definition, fiscal federalism involves a transactional relationship that exists between two levels of government in matters relating to the sharing of financial revenue.



The definition of federalism from the Nigerian perspective appears to contain a remarkably sharp distinction from the definitions provided above. This is due to the fact that in practice, the Nigerian federal system recognises the existence of three tiers of government: the federal, state, and local government. However, the inclusion of the Local Government level only suffices when the sharing of national revenue is taking place. Hence, Ukaegbu (2017) defines Nigerian federalism as the sharing of the administrative and fiscal responsibilities among the federal (the central), the state, and the local government-the latter which is the creation of the devolutionary powers conferred on the component states.

Similarly, Asibe (2019) defines federalism, within the realm of its significance to the Nigerian situation refers to a system where administrative powers and authority are shared among the three tiers of government which include the federal, state and local government, for the purpose of equitably distributing developmental needs.

Therefore, this study unequivocally states that federalism entails an institutional arrangement, practicable in a heterogenous society, that involves the conferment of administrative and fiscal authority between the national government and the component regions or states.

Development

The term, 'development' has generally been viewed as a social process that produces evolution, advancement, optimistic transformation or the contribution to a visible but meaningful rise in the physical, economic, political, social and demographic composition of any given society. Development in this context typically denotes incremental changes in the level, structure, identity and characteristics of a group, organisational outfits, societies or individuals. Clearly, the above clarification on the concept of 'development' represents a holistic definition, however, with limited emphasis on the human perspective (Onyeiwu, 2021).

On the other hand, renowned 'development' scholars like Pearson, Rostow and Ake, opinion development, solely from the economic stance, as well as how the latter affects the living condition and existence of the individual person. According to these authors, 'development' basically signifies a decisive and state-driven determination to create an increase in the degree of quality of the living standard of the people by implementing social policies that are explicitly intended at generating the means for sustainable income generation through provision of employment opportunities, social welfare services, provision of basic infrastructural facilities, etc. By extension, Rostow's model of economic development is entirely expressive of a cautious state action to put in place, situations that would maintain both the micro-economic and macro-economic development of any given society. The circumstances as perceived by Rostow's model must be connected to a socially conducive environment that would guarantee a network of instruments through which people realise their source of income. By inference, these should suggest actual laws and strategies of the state that would secure the unceasing formation and fortification of industries for the purposes of an all-out job-creating chances, food security, healthcare services and other sundry infrastructural necessities that will make life more contented (Okpani, 2018).

National Development

National development essentially entails a holistic effort initiated by the national government of any sovereign state, and also backed by enabling laws, to embark on a deliberate improvement of the socio-economic needs of the masses. Hence, the bulk of socio-economic needs of the masses reflect health, education, employment, income generation, security, housing, social welfare services, etc. Therefore, national development in this context will fundamentally involve the conception of various degrees of health, education, housing and other aspects of social welfare policies that should be primarily aimed at addressing the existing challenges in those sectors.



Furthermore, the same machinery or processes that initiated such policies will create programmes that should ensure the effective and successful implementation of the various socio-economic policies, aimed at improving the living condition of the people (Odiete, 2021).

On their part, Daramola (2018), sees national development as basically entailing a statutory obligation by the government of any sovereign state to invest hugely in both social and physical infrastructural development, with the central motive of significantly upgrading the living standard of the citizenry. Thus, Daramola (2018) further emphasised that the presence of visible infrastructural development in a country demonstrates a drive to maturity in the aspect of national development, and also justifies the sovereignty status of such a nation state. According to Oviem (2019), national development consists in every state action that is fundamentally aimed at adding value to the existential condition of people living in any geographically defined entity. This, in the opinion of Oviem (2019), must include improvement in the dietary condition of the people, improvement in the people's source of income, reduction in the level of poverty, access to good roads, access to quality but affordable healthcare services, access to decent but affordable housing, etc. In this regard, Oviem (2019), stresses that the absence of the above developmental indicators in any state automatically disqualifies such a state from being recognised as a sovereign nation that is striving to attain maximum developmental goals.

As a corroboration to the position maintained by Oviem (2019), Awolu (2020) impresses that:

Aside ensuring the maximum security of the lives and property of its citizenry-the latter which constitutes the primary responsibility of government, as well as denotes the fundamental essence of its existence, the government must be saddled with the core obligation of providing the means by which the living condition of the citizenry can be deemed meaningful and fulfilling. It is the duty of the government to halt the spread of poverty, hunger and lack by providing job opportunities through the creation of industries, expansion of job vacancies in the civil/public service and also by investing hugely in manpower development through the creation of diverse skill acquisition programmes and empowerment. The government can also tackle the spread of hunger and lack, through a well institutionalised system of social welfare administration. Again, in the aspect of healthcare delivery, the onus should be on the government to adequately fund the establishment of sufficiently equipped public health clinics that should be viable enough to attend to myriad health needs to the majority of the masses. (pp. 57-58)

The above contribution by Awolu (2020), comprehensively captures in brief, what national development fundamentally represents from its socio-economic angle. Thus, borrowing from the above authors on what national development presupposes, this study can confidently state that national development tersely emphasises a conscious effort on the part of the government to deplore all the human, material and financial resources at its disposal to create, rehabilitate and improve all sectors in the social and economic strata of the society, which bear relevance to human needs, for the principal purpose of achieving the progress and prosperity of the corporate existence of any politically organised society.

The Origin and Growth of Federalism in Nigeria, vis-à-vis its Relevance to National Development.

The origin of federalism in Nigeria dates back to the era of the then colonial Governor-General Sir Frederick Lord Lugard, following the colonial government's resolve to amalgamate the Northern and Southern protectorates. Essentially, the trace of the rudimentary practice of federalism could be noticeable during Lugard's era, with the latter devolving some elements of administrative powers to the colonial officials who exercised delegated governing functions on behalf of the governor general. However, the framework for Nigerian federalism was initiated by Sir Bernard Bourdillon in 1939 with his creation of Nigeria into three provinces. Formally, the framework for



Nigerian federalism was officially formalised in 1946 by the Arthur Richard's colonial administration, following the regionalisation of the country into the northern, western and eastern regions. Hence, that act of structuralizing the Nigerian state into three regions formally became the hallmark of the Richard's constitution of 1946 (Aigbepue & Augustine, 2011).

Following developments in the political trajectory of the Nigerian state, the federal structure which had its framework laid with the creation of three regions by the Richard's constitution of 1946, the nature of Nigerian federalism took a different but modified shape with the introduction of the Macpherson's constitution of 1951. The John Macpherson's constitution of 1951 was an evident improvement over the then defunct Arthur Richard's constitution of 1946. The Macpherson's constitution of 1951 formally created a federal system of government which established legislative houses at both the central and regional governments. Unlike in the case of Richard's constitution where the regional legislature only provided advisory functions, under the Richard's constitution, the legislature at the regional level had the autonomy to independently legislate on specified matters. Accordingly, these matters included health, agriculture, education, regional finance, social welfare, regional public works and rural communities economic planning. However, the autonomy by the regional legislature under the Macpherson's constitution was limited, as the central legislature reserved the constitutional powers to veto regional legislations (Ene, 2022).

The deficiencies inherent in the Macpherson's constitution of 1951 gave rise to agitations, especially at the regional level, for proper autonomy for the various regions to wield the powers to independently conceive, initiate, coordinate and execute socio-economic developmental needs within their separate jurisdictions. These agitations were basically premised on the fact that the Macpherson's constitution of 1951 subjected the regional legislature to the preponderant control of the central legislative arm. Hence, the central legislature, as empowered by the Macpherson's constitution could at liberty, overturn or overrule laws made by the legislative arm of government at the regional level. The criticisms against the Macpherson's constitution of 1951 pressed home the point that it offered the Nigerian state, a faulty federal structure. Thus, the system constitutionally restrained the component regional legislative organs from passing economic laws that could guarantee the autonomy of regions to independently exploit, develop and control the natural resources within their domain (Asibe, 2019).

Remarkably, the Oliver Lyttelton's constitution of 1954 made Nigeria a federating state of three regions. Specifically, the constitution clearly spelt out for the first time, areas of administrative jurisdiction between the central and regional governments. Thus, such functional administrative specifics were contained in the exclusive, concurrent and residual lists. While the central government had the statutory responsibility to solely perform functions in the exclusive list, both the central and regional governments were meant to jointly perform functions in the concurrent list. The regional governments on their part were specifically to perform functions in the residual list. Essentially, the 1954 federal constitution in Nigeria achieved a milestone as it was the first constitution to introduce the regionalisation of the public service. To its credit, that meant a constitutional empowerment for the regions to anchor and execute competitive socio-economic development at the regional level (Ene, 2022).

The creation of more regions which were subsequently referred to as component states was necessitated by the growing desire by groups with socio-ethnic and geographical homogeneity to gain separate jurisdictional government, existing within the federal arrangement. In most cases, the quest to achieve self-government by these groups, was further fuelled by fear of ethnic domination by larger ethnic societies over smaller groups in the distribution of socio-economic resources, as well as in the area of equal representation in government. Hence, the aspiration to have separate and independent governing regions under a federating system had led to the



duplication of component states in Nigeria. The underlying motive was to realise a faster rate of socio-economic advancement of the various federating units which is anticipated to have a concomitant relevance to national development (Daramola, 2018).

However, it has been widely observed that the practice of federalism has over time, failed to address the myriad of issues associated with the unification of the socio-culturally, ethnically and geographically diverse unions into one federating entity. Thus, the government at the centre has continued to be confronted by the daunting task of resolving the ever-rising dissatisfaction-propelled agitations across ethno-religious and cultural divides in Nigeria over the seemingly unjust and inequitable distribution of the gains of federalism. The widespread complain about the unsatisfactory impact of federalism on the Nigerian state borders mostly on fiscal relationship and nepotism. There has been in existence, a protracted conflict between the central (federal) government and states over revenue sharing between the two arms of government. The concern, on the part of the state governments is that, due to the fact that the extant Nigerian constitution has bequeathed on the federal government, enormous functions in the exclusive list, the central government an extremely large chunk of revenue allocation, at the expense of the state governments. Such, according to the position maintained by state governments has over time, been detrimental to developmental efforts at the state level (Ikonne, 2016).

Also, the revenue sharing formula among states in Nigeria has always created reasons for contentions and conflicts, as some states believe that they deserve higher revenue allocation than others. Such insistence by some states comes on the heels of the argument that there are regions that contribute higher in terms of revenue generation to the federation account. Hence, the proponents of this position contend that derivation principle should guide the usual monthly revenue allocation in Nigeria. The push for this choice of revenue sharing formular is mostly sponsored by states in the south-south and south east where there is large deposit of crude oil in internationally recognized commercial quantity. On the other hand, the rest of other zones in the country, especially states in the northern region have continued to clamour for the principles of even development and population. The various shades of nationally inclined arguments on the adoption and sustainability of a nationally accepted revenue sharing formular have over time, given rise to the call for the restructuring of the existing Nigerian federal system (Achugo, 2019).

A Brief Appraisal of the Impact of Federalism vis-à-vis National Development During the Administration of Former President Goodluck Jonathan, 2011-2015.

National development initiatives, programmes and efforts at implementation during the administration of former Nigerian president, Goodluck Jonathan were targeted at addressing the myriad of socio-economic challenges confronting the Nigerian state. President Goodluck Jonathan's administration national development agenda primarily focused on addressing developmental issues in the overall sectors that pertain to the fundamental existence of the Nigerian state. The various sectors include health, education, agriculture, commerce and industry, power, physical infrastructure, foreign relations, etc. In carrying out the tasks of nation building and development in Nigeria, the administration under former President Goodluck Jonathan was poised to explore and apply the virtues of fairness, equal justice and equity in the distribution of the dividends of the sundry socio-economic policies and programmes. Hence, Nigeria being a country where federalism is practiced, the heterogenous aspirations, demands and interests of the diverse peoples and ethnic nationalities that make up the Nigerian state should be accommodated and equitably considered and represented, with a view to minimize complaints about marginalisation or discrimination (Obimba, 2017).

In the education sector, the government of former President Goodluck Jonathan achieved a milestone by establishing 9 new federal universities and also enhanced the overall infrastructural improvement of the existing ones with a view to matching them with global standard. It was



during the administration of former President Goodluck Jonathan that there was a uniform spread of federal universities throughout the 36 states of the federation. The administration of former President Goodluck Jonathan established up to 125 Almajiri schools in the northern part of Nigeria. The main aim of setting up of the free Almajiri schools in the north was to ensure that education benefitted the millions of less privileged children in the poverty-ravaged northern Nigeria, most of whom are homeless orphans. Still in his effort to improve girl-child education in the country, the administration of former President Jonathan introduced Girls Education programmes with 27 Special Girls School in Adamawa, Yobe, Zamfara, Nasarawa, Ebonyi, Ekiti, Delta and Akwaibom States. The Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) was revitalized. His interest in adequate investment in the education sector, there was over 8 million library resources to basic and secondary schools across the Nigerian federation (Akande, 2022).

In the area of the economy, during his tenure as the president of the federal republic of Nigeria, the Nigerian economy fared well in several aspects. Between 2013 and 2014, Nigeria was rated by the World Bank and the IMF as the largest economy in Africa and also was ranked as the 23rd in the world. Thus, during this period, the Nigerian state could boast of a GDP of over US\$580 billion. In the year 2014, the Nigerian customs service realised a whopping N970 billion- a revenue earning by that agency which has remained the highest in the history of Nigeria. Also, in the area of foreign investment earnings, Nigeria was leading in the African continent during former President Jonathan's administration. By the end of 2013, Nigeria's non-oil exports rose to N2.97 billion. Also, in the first quarter of 2014, under the administration of former President Jonathan, a total of US\$9.70 billion was raked into the country's economy as foreign direct investment (FDI). The economic transformation agenda of former President Jonathan's administration also benefitted Nigeria's labour force. To that effect, it was during Jonathan's administration as Nigeria's president that the government increased national minimum wage to N18,000. Also, during Jonathan's administration, the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) monthly allowance was increased from N9,700 to N19,800 (Agagu, 2022).

In the area of agriculture, as a result of the massive transformation in that sector during the administration of former President, Nigeria, for the first time in 2013 recorded a significant reduction in food importation by 40%. Consequently, Nigeria in 2014, with an output of over 45 million metric tonnes was graded as the world's largest producer of cassava by the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO). This was achieved under the Youth Employment Agricultural Programme, (YEAP). Under this scheme, N120 million naira was disbursed to selected number of youths from the 36 states of the federation. In addition, the government of former President Jonathan granted farmers access to a N25 billion agricultural loan and grants through the Bank of Industry (BOI). The underlying essence was to boost rice production at a maximum level, both for local consumption and for export purposes. Hence, in 2014, rice production contributed N320 billion to Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Asibe, 2019).

In the transport sector, Goodluck Jonathan's national developmental strides led to the introduction of a multimodal transport system. This gave rise to the establishment of an upgraded maritime safety and security, as well as the rehabilitation of railways and water transport system. The railway sector which had, for many years remained moribund was resuscitated. Thus, owing to this development, more than 3,000 kilometres of rail lines across Nigeria were transformed. To that effect, intercity train services were introduced. Hence, these include: Lagos-Ibadan-Ilorin; Minna-Kaduna; Kaduna-Kano and the Kano-Nguru train services became fully operational (Achugo, 2019).

In the area of federal road construction, even the immediate past minister for works during the administration of for President Buhari, Mr. Raji Fashola admitted and hence, confessed that



former President Jonathan constructed more roads than any other Nigerian president. Mr. Fashola made this known in 2015, during the former minister's first news conference in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory. The former minister for works admitted that road construction under former President Jonathan recorded over 60% success which, according to Fashola, the immediate past government of Buhari hoped to advance upon. Also, the Minister of State for works during Jonathan's administration revealed that prior to 2011, Nigeria had about 4,500 kilometres of fairly motorable roads nationwide. However, by the end 2014, the country could boast of 25,000 kilometre good and qualitatively constructed roads. Again, the former minister went further to reveal that from 2011 to 2014, the government of former President Jonathan constructed a total of 62 federal roads in Nigeria. The former Minister for Works claimed that the administration of former President Jonathan constructed the Loko Oweto link road (between Nassarawa and Benue), Musa Yar'adua (Abuja airport road) 10 lanes, Kubwa road (Murtala Mohammed) 10 lanes, Goodluck Jonathan road (10 lanes), East-west Road, 346km. launched by Obasanjo in 2006 and commenced by Jonathan in 2011, and etc. (Usono, 2015).

The former President Jonathan, acquainted with the various complaints, misgivings and dissatisfactions from the diverse socio-cultural and ethnic affiliations that make up the Nigerian federation, over the impact of the several developmental efforts, decided to convene a sovereign national conference in 2014. The Nigerian National Conference (Confab) was headed by the late Justice Idris Kutigi. The central aim for setting up the national conference in 2014 was anchored on ascertaining the feelings and agitations of Nigerians on the impact of the Nigerian federal structure, with regards to the administration of national development. The confab of 2014 was mandated to collate opinions from delegates, representing the diverse ethnic nationalities, socio-cultural organisations, religious organisations, business groups, interest groups, etc, on the numerous national issues bordering on:

1. the status of intergovernmental relations among the three levels of government in Nigeria, especially with regards to finance and administration;
2. the level of evenness or disparity in the allocation of infrastructural development to the various geo-political zones or states;
3. the level of ascertainment of whether or not the principle of federal character reflects in appointments into key federal positions.
4. the status of inter-faith and inter-ethnic tolerance in Nigeria, among others.

In addition, the confab was mandated to receive inputs and ideas from scholars, experts and professionals who also constitute participants in the conference, on ways to restructure the existing federal structure in Nigeria, such that it will serve its fundamental purpose of driving development in a heterogenous society like Nigeria. Had the former President Jonathan succeeded in his re-election bid as President in 2015, maybe, most of the recommendations of the confab would have been implemented (Achugo, 2019; Akande, 2022).

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the theory of Distributive Justice by John Rawls. The theory of Distributive Justice primarily emphasises the socially just and equitable allocation of resources in a society. The theory of distributive justice is an integral of the larger body of utilitarianism, developed in 1971 by John Rawls. The central objective of John Rawls' theory of distributive justice is projected at ensuring that the allocation of social good and benefits in a society reflects equity and fair play. From a statist perspective, social good and benefits consist in the entirety of the commonwealth of the state which by the dictates of natural law, should serve the interest of all equally and equitably, and without recourse to prejudice or discrimination (Mukherjee &



Ramaswamy, 2011). According to Abada and Onyia (2020), the fair allocation of social benefits in this context include:

- a) equal distribution of collectively owned economic resources among the various ethnic and geographical units of a state;
- b) holistic and comprehensive distribution of infrastructural development needs uniformly throughout the topographical diversification of a state, while observing the principle of evenness, equity and fairness;
- c) the allocation and dispensation of social justice among individuals, regions and ethnic nationalities, on the mantra of dispassionate equity and fair play and;
- d) equitability and fairness in the sharing of public-owned employment opportunities and appointments among regions.

Hence, Mukherjee and Ramaswamy (2011) identified some of the cardinal principles and assumptions of John Rawls's theory of Distributive Justice and they include:

1. The belief that distributive justice in a state should be a reflection of a social contract entered into, between the people and the managers of a state, where in the latter are expected by the tenets of the contract to protect and defend the naturally-inherited rights and privileges of the former, in the spirit of fairness.
2. The belief that the principles of equity, justice and fair play should guide access to ownership and distribution of economic goods in the society.

The theory of distributive justice as propounded by John Rawls suitably fits into this study as it is in principle, descriptive of the prevalent state of ethnic disharmony in the Nigerian society-a situation largely informed by a trending poor system of distributive justice by the country's political leadership class. Thus, the existing federal structure in the country is lacking in the capacity to effectively address the myriad of complaints and agitations, emanating from the public space.

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

What Constitute the Problems of Federalism with regards to National Development in Nigeria During the Administration of Former President Goodluck Jonathan?

In this section of the study, the bulk of the issues to be investigated comprise in general, the core problems of federalism as they relate to national development. In specificity, this aspect of the study will interrogate literature on the issues raised at the Nigerian National Conference (Confab) of 2014, about the existing structure of Nigerian federalism, most especially as it affected national development during the administration of former President Goodluck Jonathan.

The problems of Nigeria's federalism as they pertain to national development are enormous. The problems of Nigerian federalism, vis-à-vis national development, according to Achugo (2019) include:

- a) the crisis of a nationally acceptable revenue sharing formula among the three tiers of government, (the federal, state and local governments).
- b) The multiplicity of ethnic nationalities in Nigeria
- c) The fear and agitations of ethnic domination and marginalisations by minority groups.
- d) Politics of nepotism, cronyism and ethno-religious sentiment among the various ethnic nationalities that make-up the Nigerian state.



- e) Tussle for power sharing among the teeming ethnic nationalities in Nigeria.
- f) Struggle for regionally-based resource control.
- g) Alleged weak autonomy of regional (state) governments
- h) Agitations for the creation of more states and local governments
- i) Agitations for secession.

Accordingly, the bulk of the indices of problems of federalism captured above, also reflected the sameness of problems of federalism during the administration of former President Goodluck Jonathan. Hence, the said glitches in the structure of Nigerian federalism had, in no less a measure, impacted on the trends of national development during the administration of former President Goodluck Jonathan. Thus, the hosting, by the government of former President Jonathan, of the Nigerian National Conference (Confab) in 2014, witnessed exhaustive deliberations by stakeholders, of majority of the points observed above. In the opinion of Asibe (2019), issues relating to agitations for nationally acceptable revenue sharing formula, the status of federal-state and local government relations, quest for good and accountable governance, agitations for creation of more states and the clamour for equal representation in national government, formed the major perspectives of discourse during the Nigerian National Conference (Confab) of 2014. The bout of debates by the 2014 confab stakeholders were tersely demonstrative of the shortcomings of Nigerian federal system in addressing national developmental needs during the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan.

The Issue of a Nationally Acceptable Revenue Sharing Formula: The vehemently expressed agitations and concern to entrench into the system, a nationally acceptable revenue sharing formula, had generated a separate line of strong line of argument between the southern and northern Nigeria. Stakeholders from southern Nigeria had strongly clamoured for an upward review of the derivation principle which constitutes an aspect of the national revenue sharing formula. According to southern stakeholders, especially from the south-south region, since up to 90% of Nigeria's national revenue is gotten from the Niger Delta region, comprising south-south states and some south east states, the region should be compensated with huge preference in revenue sharing among regions.

Northern delegates on the other hand, opted for increased emphasis on the adoption of the principle of balanced development as the most pivotal and acceptable revenue sharing formula for the country. The northern delegates countered their southern counterparts by revealing that the northern region had occupied the status of being the region from where the resources that generated the most revenue for the Nigerian state were exploited, prior to the discovery of crude oil in the south-south and south east zones.

Yet, the derivation principle of balanced development was used as the revenue sharing formula. That, according to them had ensured evenness in the spread of development among the various federating units in Nigeria. The northern delegates argued that between 1914 and 1946, the northern region contributed 75% to national revenue earnings but received 18.94% as against the south which contributed only 24.18% but received 81.06%. The northern delegates went further to reveal that from 1999 to 2013, the 17 states of the southern Nigeria had received a total of N26.53trillion as against the 19 states of the north which received a total of N10.53trillion. Such, according to the northern delegates was inimical to achieving fairness, justice and equity in national development (Duru, 2020 & Alechenu, 2021).

The Status of Intergovernmental Relations Among the Three Tiers of Government: Again, another area of concern brought up during the confab of 2014 as one of the problems of Nigerian federalism as they pertain to national development during the administration of former President



Goodluck Jonathan, was the pattern of intergovernmental relations that exists among the three levels of government. Participants at the confab argued that the prevalent federal arrangement which concentrated unlimited powers and numerous functions at the centre was defective. Accordingly, participants at the conference debated that the statutory conferment of functions on the three tiers of government which gives undue advantage to the centre, was frustrating to the realisation of faster and sustainable developmental objectives at the various component states and grassroots that make up the federation (Obimba, 2017).

Corroboratively, Achugo (2019), blames the situation on the constitutional designation and bestowal of administrative functions on the federal, state and local governments. According to Alechenu (2021), participants at the conference complained that the extant revenue sharing formula which allocated 48.5% to the federal government; 26.72% to states, and 20.17% to local governments was not sustainable. The participants, according to Alechenu (2021) argued that given the enormity of national developmental needs at the various states and local government areas-the latter where developmental challenges are massive, states and local governments did not receive a fair share in the revenue sharing formula. Also, Duru (2020) informed that the participants at the conference equally observed that the section 7 of the 1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria which provided for the merger of states and local governments accounts, needed to be reviewed as such grossly limits the powers of local government councils to effectively administer developmental needs at the grassroots.

Clamour for State Creation: Owing to the need to achieve a well-spread and balanced development nationwide, there has been a growing spate of agitations by groups for regional independence within the fold of the Nigerian federal state. The creation of more states in Nigeria, constituted one of the major issues deliberated upon at the 2014 confab. Most of the stakeholders at the conference who represented most of the minority groups in Nigeria pressed home the demand for the creation of more states so as to reflect diversity in the socio-economic development of every stratum in the Nigerian state, and also to achieve equal representation in government.

Quest For Good and Accountable Governance: The enthronement of good, responsible, responsive and quality representation in governance has always been the undoing of the Nigerian federal system. Such had, in effect, constituted a setback to the realisation of a positively-impacting national development during the administration of former President Goodluck Jonathan's administration. Hence, this formed a platform for an extensive and prolonged debate among participants at the 2014 confab. Majority of the delegates at the conference who comprised representatives from various civil society groups, had decried the high level of depreciation in public leadership's responsiveness to the tasks of governance in Nigeria. The absence of quality, patriotic and transparent system of governance, according to the delegates has been known to have a devastating consequence on the attainment of an appreciable level of national development. The delegates further revealed that beyond the agitations for increased state funding, the corrupt system of governance, employed by State governors in Nigeria frustrates the achievement of national developmental objectives in our various regions and localities (Asibe, 2019; Awolu, 2020; Alechenu, 2021).

What Steps Should be Taken to Solve the Problems of Federalism as it Pertains to the Administration of National Development in Nigeria?

On the issue pertaining to the need to adopt a generally acceptable revenue sharing formula in the current Nigerian federal structure, it was part of the resolutions during the confab of 2014 for the present Nigerian federal system to be restructured. This resolution was reached against the backdrop of the expedient need for the various regions in the country to discover, harness, exploit and convert the economic resource potentials in their domain, into revenue generating



possibilities. The intrinsic idea, according to the details of the resolution is for the various regions to have a reasonably fair share while the principle of derivation is still adopted as part of the revenue sharing formulas. In addition, it was recommended that the derivation percentage should be increased from its present 13% to 25% (Duru, 2020).

Furthermore, participants at the 2014 confab had severally suggested that, for the Nigerian federal system to have a strong impact and relevance to over-all national development, there should be an introduction of resource control by the various regions. Such, according to the stakeholders at the conference was fundamentally aimed at promoting the viability of the various states and regions in the country. In that circumstance, there would be an end to the age-long host-parasite federal system that encourages over dependence on crude oil production from a particular region as the main and only source of revenue for the whole country. Such, in the opinion of the participants at the conference would entail a revenue-generation empowerment and independence to regions and states (Alechenu, 2021). In corroboration, Asibe (2019) is of the opinion that resource control, if implemented will redefine Nigeria's federal structure as it has the potentials to introduce revenue-yielding diversifications by regions, which would in turn, boost the country's national income base. Also, Achugo (2019) impresses that resource control would ensure a systemically improved federal arrangement where the regions are allowed to independently initiate economic developmental plans. Under such platform according to Achugo (2019), regions or the various states will have the statutory obligation to independently generate revenues, manage their finances and pay some percentage to the central government. In addition, Awolu (2020) informs that resource control has the ability to correct the imbalance in the pattern of intergovernmental relations among the three tiers of government as it would entail a shift from central to regional economic planning and strategies.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is a natural tendency in man to abhor nastiness, brutality, injustice and deprivation and embrace a living condition that reflects safety of lives and property, respect for lawful rights and dignity of human person, social justice and economic well-being. Commonly, the pursuit of the above highlighted goals is usually dotted by the interplay between individual aspirations and environmental forces like differences in personal ideologies, as well as diversities in race, ethno-cultural and religious background and interests. Hence, the pivotal need to harmonise these varying degrees of social diversities would always necessitate the formation of a common union-the latter which is a prelude to the formation of a federal state.

The Nigerian state is structurally composed of diverse ethnic nationalities, languages, religions and socio-cultural affiliations. In addition, the heterogenous nature of the Nigerian state still harbours tribes and regions who are considered minorities by virtue of their smaller population and geographical detachment from the more populous regions. The fundamental essence of creating a federal union is to achieve an equal and fair protection of the socio-economic rights and privileges of the heterogenous existence of the Nigerian state irrespective of major or minority status.

This study extensively reviewed the various problems posed by the practice of federalism as it pertains to achieving an evenly spread national developmental objectives. Using the era of the administration of former President Goodluck Jonathan as the study scope, various literature reviewed in the course of the study revealed that the rising spate of agitations and complaints from the public space was an indication that the realisation of a satisfying degree of national development in Nigeria within the period under study and beyond was blighted. The various agitations, protests and complaints from Nigeria's public over the shortcomings of Nigerian federalism and how same impact on national development include the persistent disputes over revenue sharing among states, fear of domination of majority ethnic nationalities over minority



groups, regional autonomy, resource control, etc. The study observed that the persistent outcry against marginalisation in terms of national development will continue unabated unless urgent but proactive steps are taken to address the current trend.

There should be a spirited emphasis on adopting a generally agreeable and uncontested revenue sharing formula among the federating units. This is aimed at forestalling henceforth, the recurring trends of inter-regional rifts bordering on complaints of injustice, marginalisation and unfairness in the sharing of national financial revenues among regions and states. It is pertinent to adopt the resolution of the 2014 confab in this respect.

Again, the current federal structure in Nigeria which grants enormous powers, responsibilities and financial resources at the centre, at the expense of the regions and local units should be reviewed. Emphasis on greater regional autonomy is critical to attaining a holistic national development in Nigeria. To this end, it is expedient to review the statutory designation of functions in the exclusive, concurrent and residual lists to the federal and state governments. Consequently, when a couple of functions are deducted from the exclusive list and moved to the residual list, it would automatically entail an enlarged responsibility for state governments and the accompanying rise in financial allocation. That, under normal circumstances is expected to promote greater development in our various regions and local units.

Furthermore, it is high time the popularly canvassed concept of resource control is implemented in Nigeria. Region-based resource control will be a potent economic weapon that will have an impacting relevance on the proposed restructuring of the Nigerian federal system. This will promote self-economic reliance at the regional level. Consequently, that will promote a more robust revenue generation alternative for the various states in the federation, which will ultimately give rise to a speedy and competitive pattern of socio-economic development among the various federating units in Nigeria.

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