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THE POLITICS OF STATE CREATION IN NIGERIA AND THE ECONOMIC VIABILITY OF THE EXISTING 36 STATES

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Abstract

The politics of state creation in Nigeria has assumed a worrisome dimension. The demand for creation of new states is growing in an unfortunate manner, political and ethnic associations are at their best to undo one another a head of the 2014 National Conference. The attention of scholars has been drawn to the continuous demand of some leaders agitating for new states considering the weak economic viability of most of the existing states and a near bankrupt of most of the states judging from the indicators and index of the economic agencies in Nigeria. This paper attempts to bring out a clearer economic viability of the existing states and it intends to call on those seeking for more states to cease, judging from the economic situation of the existing states as a result of their total dependence on the central government for survival. The paper recommends the need to reposition and strengthen the existing 36 states structure, and it calls on the people of Nigeria to support the Federal government in her attempt to transform the states.

Key words: Nigeria; state creation; economic situation; Federal government; transform

Introduction

The entity known as Nigeria today never existed under a single geographical sphere until 1914 when the colonial masters under the leadership of Lord Lugard amalgamated the Northern protectorate and the Southern protectorate. The South split into Western Region and Eastern Region. The Northern protectorate stayed as one, bringing into existence the well-talked-about three regional structure of Nigeria (Terzungwe, 2012). This marks as the starting point in the splitting of the country, which has metamorphosed into 36 states today.

Although the politics of state creation is not new to Nigerians, tongues are already wagging and observers are wondering why some leaders are agitating for new states when some states are literally bankrupt (Odiegwu, 2012). As virtually all states in Nigeria are broke (Okubanji, 2011), and meeting the financial obligation of their citizenry would elude them if the central (Federal) government fails to allocate resources to them at any given time.

This paper seeks to explore the economic viability of the existing states using some indicators and index of the major economic agencies in Nigeria. It looks at the agitation for more states despite the current challenges of the existing states. This paper posited that the Nigerian people should learn to live with the existing 36 states structure and join in the transformation agenda of the government rather than clamoring for more states, this is because the creation of more states will only increase the existing unemployment,

lack of development which could lead to the total collapse of the existing economic structure.

Historical analysis of state creation in Nigeria

The lowering of the Union Jack (British Flag) for the Nigerian flag after the two British administrations were merged to form the country called Nigeria was remarkable. This serves as the starting point on the present challenges facing the country (Osaghae, 2011). Although the country was merged to be effectively administered by one officer (Gana, 1997).

In 1939, the Southern provinces were divided into two, namely the Eastern and the Western provinces by the colonial administration because of what was termed ethnographic and communication problems (David, et al 1999). It should be noted that boundaries of Northern Provinces had similar problems, but the boundaries were left untouched (Momoh, 2014). The structural imbalance in Nigeria became clear in favour of the Northern Province.

This was further explained by (Momoh, 2012),

“The West was the cocoa region, the East was the palm oil region and the North had hides and skin derivable from the cattle reared by the Hausa Fulani’s, the Groundnut and cotton from most parts of the North and the various food crops from all parts of the North. Because the North was seen from the Periscope view of the colonial Masters as monolithic entity With widespread natural resources, It was considered politically Correct to leave it as one”.

The creation of Mid-West region in 1963 arose as a result of the fear expressed by the minority tribe in the country. It would be recalled that by 1953 the minorities had become united, determined and vociferous in their demands for separate states (Ojo, 2009). These led to the formation of the Minorities Commission under the chairmanship of Sir Henry Wilink in 1957. But the commission did not find it necessary to create any state, instead constitutional safeguards were recommended for the independence constitution (Mackintoshi, 1966). It was however not until 1963 that the mid-western region was created from the western region (David, et al 1999). From the economic perspective the excision of the mid-west region from the west was to wrest the control of the oil rich Niger-Delta from the then Action group so that the NCNC controlling the Root crop, rice). Grain laden and solid mineral rich middle belt will be more economically strong and stable (Momoh, 2012).

The creation of 12 states in 1967 was derived from the political ascendancy of the new military based ethno-political coalitions and the urgent need to under-cut the imminent secession of rich Eastern region from the

Federation (Ojo, 2009). The creations of 12 states in Nigeria were more of an economic and win the war strategy “than a political weapon (Momoh, 2012). Momoh (2012) further explain that:

“To further balkanize the power of the major over regional enclaves because of access to economic resources not directly belonging to them but residing in minority areas, the minorities of the North were equally liberated with the creation of North central state, Northeastern state, North western state. The west was further split into Lagos, Western state, Mid-west state. It is obvious that the excision of Lagos from the western region was more to reduce the commercial and financial power of that region”

In February 1976, additional states were created to being the number to nineteen, with Abuja as the new federal capital territory. While the creation of the nineteen states was seen as a step in the right direction, it is important to note that emphasis on the need for each state to be economically viable was again down played. The need for an even development was put forward as the reason for the creation of the states, but a closer look at it shows that it was far from it, rather ethnic sentiment seriously played out

Table 1: The list of Nigeria states in order of their total GPD (P8)

RANK	STATE	GPD 2010 IN MILLIONS OF USD
1	Lagos	\$74,674
2	Rivers	\$21,073
3	Delta	\$16,749
4	Oyo	\$16,121
5	Imo	\$14,212
6	Kano	\$12,393
7	Edo	\$11,888
8	Akwa Ibom	\$11,179
9	Osun	\$10,470
10	Kaduna	\$10,334
11	Cross River	\$9,292
12	Abia	\$8,687
13	Ondo	\$8,414
14	Osun	\$7,280
15	Benue	\$6,864
16	Anambra	\$6,764
17	Kastina	\$6,022
18	Niger	\$6,002
19	Borno	\$5,175
20	Plateau	\$5,154
21	Sokoto	\$4,818
22	Bauchi	\$4,713
23	Kogi	\$4,642
24	Adamawa	\$4,582
25	Enugu	\$4,396
26	Bayelsa	\$4,337
27	Zamfara	\$4,123
28	Kwara	\$4,123
29	Taraba	\$3,841
30	Kebbi	\$3,397
31	Nassarawa	\$3,290
32	Jigawa	\$3,022
33	Ekiti	\$2,988
34	Ebonyi	\$2,848
35	Gombe	\$2,732
36	Yobe	\$2,501

It is important to note that the first 5 states from the above table are Southern Nigeria

In August, 1987 Akwa Ibom and Kastina states were created as recommended by the political Bureau set up by the government in 1986 which was to provide a political blue print for Nigeria and in August, 1991 additional nine states were created by the administration of president Babangida. The president claimed that the states were created as a measure of growth of the federation and over ingenuity and resilience as a people, committed to living together in spite the plurality that began as two colonial units in 1914, which is today transformed to many states (David, et al 1999). General Sanni Abacha created additional six (6) states in October 1996. It is imperative to note that economic viability of these new states was not made a priority rather they were created to satisfy some ethnic interest and to achieve political gain.

An evaluation of the economic viability of the 36 states in Nigeria

The economic viability of the existing states in Nigeria has always been questioned. These are further confirmed by the outgoing governor of the central bank of Nigeria, Mallam

Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, when he said most of the states and local governments in the country are not viable. He questioned the reason behind creating more state, local government and ministries which are not economically viable (Okubenji, 2011). It is important to note that only five states out of the 36 states in Nigeria are considered viable (Odigwu, 2012)

The evaluation of the activities of the 36 states will be analysis on the bases of Gross Domestic product (GPD), unemployment and poverty.

Gross domestic product (GDP)

The gross domestic product (GDP), is the market values of all the final goods and services produced within a country (Eigbe, 2012). It is the primary indicators used to gauge the health of a country's economy (investment, 2009). It is a measure of the economic health of the political entity under consideration. GPD per capita is the amount of the GDP divided by the territory's population (Eigbe, 2012). The Table 1 shows the list of Nigeria states in order of their total GPD (P8).

Table 2: The states with the highest unemployment rate to the least (2005-2011)

S/N	STATES	PERCENTAGE
1	Bauchi	30.0
2	Gombe	28.1
3	Bayelsa	27.6
4	Yobe	27.3
5	Adamawa	25.8
6	Akwa Ibom	25.16
7	Jigawa	24.1
8	Katsina	23.9
9	Borno	23.8
10	Rivers	22.8
11	Delta	22.2
12	Niger	21.6
13	Kano	20.8
14	Imo	20.7
15	Taraba	19.4
16	Ekiti	19.4
17	Zamfara	19.3
18	Enugu	18.9
19	Edo	18.5
20	Sokoto	18.1
21	Cross River	13.3
22	Lagos	17.03
23	Ebonyi	16.7
24	Kogi	15.7
25	Ondo	15.2
26	Abia	14.8
27	Oyo	14.6
28	Kebbi	14.4
29	Kaduna	14.4
30	Ogun	14.3
31	Anambra	13.5
32	Nassarawa	13.5
33	Osun	12.4
34	Plateau	11.7
35	Kwara	9.6
36	Benue	8.5

Unemployment

Unemployment is defined by the Bureau of Labour Statistics (BLS) as people who do not have a job, have actively looked for work in the past four weeks and are currently available for work (BLS 2012). The national Bureau of statistics in Nigeria defined it as the percentage of the citizens who are not employed (NBS, 2010). The Table 2 shows the states with the highest unemployment rate to the least. It covers a period of five years 2005-2011. The Federal Capital Territory is 18.5%. Source National Bureau of statistics (NBS, 2010). The National Bureau of statistics (NBS) has put the figure of unemployed Nigerians in the first half of 2013 at 23.9 percent, up from 21.1 percent in 2010 and 19.7 percent in 2009. As at last, the total number employed Nigerians rose from more than 12 million in 2010 to more than 14 million in 2011, with the figure increasing by 1.8 million between December 2010 and June 2011. (John, 2014)

Poverty

Poverty is often referred as the living standard of majority in a given society. In 2004, Nigeria's relative poverty measurement stood at 54.4%, but increased to 68% (or 112,518,507 Nigerians) in 2010 (Kola, 2012).

Poverty rating in Nigeria:-

	States	Percentage
(i)	Sokoto	81.2
(ii)	Katsina	74.5
(iii)	Gombe	74.2
(iv)	Jigawa	74.1
(v)	Plateau	74.1
(vi)	Ebonyi	73.6
(vii)	Bauchi	73
(viii)	Kebbi	72
(ix)	Zamfara	70.8

The state with the lowest poverty rate

(i)	Niger	33.8
(ii)	Osun	37.9
(iii)	Ondo	45.7
(iv)	Bayelsa	47
(v)	Lagos	48.6

The average poverty rate of the states in the North West geo political zone remains the highest

North west	71.4
North East	69.1
North central	60.7

The record showed that poverty was least prevalent in the :-

South West	49.8
South South	55.5
South East	57.5

Source: National Bureau of statistics (2012).

Propose new states

Despite the economic challenges of the existing 36 states of the Federal of Nigeria most ethnic and tribal associations have not ceased in the call for new states. The Nigeria senate on Tuesday September, 2012 announced that it had received 57 requests for new states.

The senate leader, victor Nadoma Egba explained:

“We have 57 request pending before us for state creation. I know that people should know that they have to negotiate and lobby at least two thirds of the 36 states of the Federation to get any section of the 1999 constitution amended (Fabiya et al 2013).”

In the current republic and even with those stringent constitutional provisions, the legislature still receives requests for state creation. Among such proposed states are Igboezue, Adaba, Aba, Njaba, Orlu Orimil and Orashi (South East): Anioma, Oil River, Ogoja, Afemaiesan, Toru Ebe and New Delta (South South); Oduduwa Ijebu, Ibadan, New Oyo, Oke-Ogun (South West); Apa, Idoma, Edu, Okun, Oya (North Central); Amana and Savannah, Kategun (North East); and Gurara (North West. (Ossai *et. al.*, 2011).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has shown that the issue of state creation has existed from time past which commences with the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria, up to the last state creation excesses of 1996 by General Sanni Abacha. It appears that the creation of more states in Nigeria's recent history do not pay much regards to the economic viability of the existing once, rather states were created for the stability of military administration (David, et al 1999) and socio-political interest of certain session of the country. The agitation for more states creation has continued unabated, the question is how viable are the existing 36 states in Nigeria? This research shows that the existing states are in a situation of bankruptcy and creating more states will lead to structural collapse in Nigeria's socio-economic structure.

It is on this note that this paper recommends the repositioning and strengthening of the existing 36 states structure in Nigeria.

The support of Nigerians is need in the transformation agenda of the federal government in order to generate employment which will lead to the reduction of poverty.

The existing 36 states should look inward and strengthen her internally generated revenue in order to ensure job creation and elimination of poverty and the provision of social services to her citizens.

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