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I, **Timothy Onimisi,** declare that this article, THE POLITICS OF STATE CREATION IN NIGERIA AND THE ECONOMIC VIABILITY OF THE EXISTING 36 STATES, is original research and has not being submitted elsewhere in any form before for publication.

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 being drawn to the continuous demand of some leaders agitating for new states considering he 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 attempt to bring out a clearer economic viability of the existing states and it intend to call on those seeking for more states to cease, judging from the economic situation of the existing states and 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 call on the people of Nigeria to support the Federal government in her attempt to transform the states.*

**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 amalgated 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 talk 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 that operates 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 tooks at the agitation for more 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. These 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 term 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 in balance in Nigeria became clearly in favour of the Northern Province.

This was further explained by Isah Momoh (Momoh, 2012) in his article when he put,

*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 became 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 perceptive 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 ascendency 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 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.

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 variable. He questioned and 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 (GPD), is the market values of all the final goods and services produced within a country usually (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 GPD divided by the territory’s population (Eigbe, 2012).

The below table is the list of Nigeria states in order of their total GPD (P8)

Table 1

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

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

**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 below shows the states with the highest unemployment rate to the least. It covers a period of five years 2005-2011

Table 2

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

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 refers to 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**

1. Sokoto 81.2
2. Katsina 74.5
3. Gombe 74.2
4. Jigawa 74.1
5. Plateau 74.1
6. Ebonyi 73.6
7. Bauchi 73
8. Kebbi 72
9. Zamfara 70.8

The state with the lowest poverty rate

1. Niger 33.8
2. Osun 37.9
3. Ondo 45.7
4. Bayelsa 47
5. 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 in Nigeria most ethnic and tribal associations has not cease 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 (Fabiyi 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 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 soci-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 soci-economic structure.

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

The support of Nigerian are all Nigerians is need in the transformation agenda of the federal

government in order to generate employment which will need to the reduction of poverty.

The existing 36 states should look inward and strengthen her internal 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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