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## **The Politics of States', Local Governments' Creation and Nigeria's Search for Geo-Political Balancing**

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### **Abstract**

*Undoubtedly, one of the major absurdities of Nigerian federalism well noted in the extant literature which has also been responsible for her convoluting character is structural imbalance. This paper took a cursory look at this anomaly in line with Mill's law of federal stability. The paper reviewed all previous attempts at both state and locality creation exercises till date. The paper however inferred that it is imperative that the challenge of geo-political balancing is resolved if the polity will be stabilized.*

**Key Words:** *Federalism, Ethnic-minorities, Geo-politics, State Creation, Local-Government.*

### **Introduction**

One of the absurdities of Nigerian federalism well noted in the extant literature as one of the factors responsible for her convoluting character is structural imbalance, created by the British colonial administration that handed over at independence a federation with a preponderant Northern Region, which was about a third of the entire federation both in land mass and population size. This lopsidedness undoubtedly is a negation of J.S. Mill's law of federal stability, which posits that for a federation to be stable the component parts must be fairly equal in size. Coupled with minorities'

fear of marginalization, the quest by Nigerians, most especially the minorities, for the creation of their dream states has reached a crescendo. Thus, continuing fragmentation of the polity at intervals have equally animated sub-nationalities to keep on demanding and insisting on creation of local government areas; all in an attempt to achieve geo-political balancing.

Ever since 1954, when the minorities in the country first bombarded the then colonial government with an avalanche of requests for the creation of their autonomous divisions, in order to ensure equity and justice in an unfolding Nigerian federal structure; the demands for the creation of additional states and localities to the already existing ones by Nigerians have become a common place. From a federal structure of four units in 1960 (federal and three regions), now we have a staggering number of 37 units along with the federal capital territory and 774 local governments (Gboyega, 2003).

It needs be reiterated that the experience of ethnic minorities worldwide has shown that several approaches can be adopted to manage the problem. These include: assimilation, ethnocide, genocide, constitutional safeguards, reversal of status and territorial solution, which otherwise is known as, state and locality creation. When this is to be done, to enhance national integration, a number of factors are equally taken into consideration. They are: (a) their land (territorial) areas (sizes); (b) their natural resources (in terms of economic viability); (c) their population size; and (d) the equality for living standard of their population (Obateru, 1995:8). In a perceptive work, Aaron Gana (1987), observed critically from Willink Commission of 1957 to the Politburo of 1986, that principal reasons advanced for creation of states can be classified into four viz: (a) to promote stability; (b) to promote unity and harmony; (c) to facilitate cultural authenticity and (d) to promote rapid development(Gana, 1987). An elder statesman –

Chief Obafemi Awolowo – also opined that “ethnicity is the major factor to be considered as a criterion in creating any state in a federation so that minority groups in the midst of majority groups who differ in language, culture and historical background will not feel inferior”. In another work credited to the amendment of creation of Western Region, Awolowo came up with another set of criteria for creation of states in a federation like Nigeria thus:

The Action Group (AG) had adopted two distinct but coordinated approaches to the issue of more states in Nigeria. The first approach is the idealistic one, while the second is the materialistic approach. The AG as a matter of fundamental principle believes that if the unity of this country is to be enduring and if our populace is to have a binding peace and happiness, each ethnic group or linguistic group in Nigeria must be assured of political self determination within the federation (Awolowo, 1947:54).

Another nationalist and elder statesman, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe also recommended a number of criteria for state creation based on ethnicity of which both the federal and state governments must be regrouped into various ethnic groups (Azikiwe, 1943). Both positions of Awolowo and Azikiwe premised on the basis of ethnicity and linguistic differences are meant to ensure national unity and stability. Their positions on the issue were supported strongly by James Coleman too (Coleman, 1965).

Various scholars of federalism have also proffered a number of factors for state creation, among which are: (a) the need to minimize conflicts between states and among states, (b) the need for unity in the country, (c) the need for government to be nearer to the people, and (d) the need for maintenance of worthwhile cultural peculiarities and economic development

(Adejuyigbe, 1979). The federal military government, while creating states in 1967 however adopted the following criteria: (a) recognition of federal principle, (b) geographical contiguity, (c) economic viability and uniformity and (d) administrative convenience.

It is against this background that this paper examined the extent to which the fragmentation of Nigeria on six different occasions: 1963, 1967, 1976, 1987, 1991 and 1996 states' creation exercises cum the creation of several localities have in any way enhanced national integration and geo-political balancing of Nigeria.

This paper has a number of rubrics. With an introductory overview, the paper proceeded with the review of previous states creation exercises as regard the motive(s) that informed them. The second part dwelt on local government creations, using the 1991 population census to justify the reorganizations. The third part was an overview of states' and local governments' creation exercises using political, economic and demographic criteria to justify the exercise. This paper however inferred that continuous fragmentation of the polity without taking adequate cognisance of population requirement is not good for the system. Moreso, that it has not really enhanced the much desired national integration and development.

## **State Creation Exercises**

### **1963 Mid-Western Region Creation**

As rightly noted by Fred Onyeoziri (2002:13-16), an important aspect of the national question in Nigeria is the persisting conflict between the majority and minority ethnic groups. The latter always resented the old regional system for subjecting them to the domination of the majority groups. And not surprisingly, "the ethnic minorities in Nigeria has always expressed a preference for the creation of states along ethnic lines within a federal system" (Akinyele, 1990).

It will be recalled that by 1953, minorities had become united, determined and vociferous in their demands for separate states in difference for the domination and eventual subjugation by the larger ethnic groups in the country. At this stage, however, the British colonial government was already washing its hands off the administration of the country and would not want to dabble into such rather touchy and sensitive issue as the creation of states. The best they could do in such circumstance was to set up a commission to look into the genesis of the grievances of minorities with a view to fashioning out devices that could guarantee their interests within an independent Nigeria.

Between 1954 and 1960, when Nigeria got independence, the issue of minority groups and their place in emergent new Nigeria dominated the series of constitutional conferences that were held preceding the attainment of self-rule in 1960. What the minorities eventually got at independence in 1960 was a guarantee of their rights, especially as enshrined in the 1960 independence constitution. In 1963, however, luck smiled on the minority groups in the then Western region. Mid-Western region was created out of the existing one, the then Premier of the Western region, Chief Obafemi Awolowo justified the creation of Mid-western region on the ground that the exercise would lead to even development pattern in the country (Lagunju, 1996:45).

However, the excision of non Yorubas, partly Igbos, from the Western region in 1963 did not arise from a genuine concern by the nation's leaders for the predicament of the minorities. Rather, the reorganization was part of a vindictive campaign by the then ruling federal coalition parties – the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC), and the Eastern-based National Council of Nigeria Citizens (NCNC), to destroy the main federal opposition party, the Action Group (AG), while resolutely resisting the statehood aspirations of the minorities

in their respective home regions. Both the NPC and NCNC reaped enormous political and/ethnic benefits from their decision to cash-in on an intra-party crisis in the AG to declare a state of emergency in the West and subverted the region (Suberu, 1995:10-12). Whereas, the NPC leader, Sir Ahmadu Bello, resisted attempts to grant autonomy to the people of the Middle-Belt. He told Chief Obafemi Awolowo, that the people were the 'property' of his ancestors (Rewane, 1995:5). Long afterwards, Chief Awolowo had occasion to refer to the incident at one of the meetings of AG with its affiliates. The late J.S. Takar, leader of the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC), vowed that he would rather die fighting for his people's right to self-determination than allow the *status quo* to continue. The northern oligarchy's demand for full regional autonomy, therefore, was intended to keep the Northern region as an indivisible political and administrative entity under its firm control. The Eastern region and the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) also, were not then prepared to concede to the people of Calabar-Ogoja and River provinces (COR provinces), the right to self-determination (Suberu, Op.cit). Thus, the first effort at state creation was with acrimony and fierce party rivalry. Therefore, the exercise could neither have served as an integrating effort nor geo-political balancing, which it was intended to be.

### **1967 Twelve States Framework**

For about four years (1963-1967), there was a lull in the agitation for the creation of new states, borne out partly because of the constitutional problem that the new Nigerian nation had to grapple with. But more importantly because the various ethnic groups in the country had learned to tolerate and live together peacefully for the sake of the new federation. Then, the January 15, 1966 coup d'etat came which suspended the constitutionality of the country and imposed military rule on the polity at the return of normalcy. Because of the apprehension and fear by a section of the country and

secession bid by that section of the country, that is, the easterners, the creation therefore on May 27, 1967 of twelve states structure from the existing four regions by the Gowon regime was indeed, an attempt to nip in the bud, the decision by the Ojukwu-led Eastern region to secede from the rest of the federation. Hitherto, the eastern region was treated as monolithic, but with the creation of the Rivers and the Cross Rivers States, the core Igbos of East lost the support and allegiance of the other tribes that formerly were united in single Eastern region. According to General Gowon, the creation of states must be done first, to remove the fear of domination. He expressed the hope that “representatives drawn from the new states will be more able to work out the future constitution for this country which can contain provisions to protect the powers of the states to the fullest extent desired by the Nigerian people” (Gown, 1986).

It would be recalled that the establishment of a twelve state framework in 1967 derived from political ascendancy of new military-based ethno-political coalitions and the urgent need to under-cut the imminent secession of oil-rich Eastern region from the federation. The military counter-coup of July 1966, in particular, effectively transferred the reins of national power from ethnic majority politicians or their cohorts in the military to a minority dominated governing coalition into three new states, two of which comprised oil-rich minority populated areas, leaving the Igbo landlocked and economically isolated in the third state. A similar attempt to contain centrifugal pressures in the federation informed the excision of the colony/province of Lagos from the Western region, which thus became landlocked and less attractive or viable as a prospective independent Yorùbá republic. The Midwest region was left intact, while the north like the south was fragmented into six states. In essence, the 1967 reform/reorganization not only ended the structural imbalance engendered by the disproportionate size of the North; it also created a federal

structure in which the interests of minority ethnic groups and indeed the nation at large, could no longer be abused by anyone ethnic majority group. All of this was of course, consistent with the military's emerging commitment at manipulating the state-structure to augment the hegemony of the center and tame the divisive tendencies inherent in Nigeria's cultural diversity (Suberu, 1998:281-282). One aftermath of the 1967 states' creation was that it served as an eye opener to the advantages and benefits that statehood can bestow on those people inhabiting such geographical divide. The result was that Nigerians were only held back in demanding for creation of new states from the existing ones; during the period 1967-1970 because of the civil strife in the country.

### **1976 Nineteen States' Structure**

The deluge started shortly after the cessation of hostilities in 1970 as more and more Nigerians clamoured for the creation of their dream states from the existing ones. Agitation for creation of new states soon became a political issue and newly emergent politicians used the issue to canvass for votes and political support in their bid to gain the rein of governance especially from the Gowon regime, believed, then to have overstayed its usefulness. Little wonder therefore, when the Murtala Muhammed regime shortly on gaining power; set up the Justice Ayo Irikefe panel to look into the issue of states' creation in the country. It was inaugurated on August 7, 1975 with specific terms of reference to:

- (1) Advise on the delimitation of such states.
- (2) Advise on economic viability of the proposed states.
- (3) Advise on the location of administrative capitals of the proposed states.
- (4) To receive and examine written representations from individuals, groups, organizations or associations who may have views on the desirability or otherwise



of creating states in particular areas (Ministry of Information, 1976).

According to the white paper on the Irikefe panel, whose recommendations provided the basis for the reorganization of 1976,

... the basic motivation in the demand for more states is rapid economic development. All other reasons (most especially political) adduced by state agitators are in the view of the panel to a large extent mere rationalization to achieve the basic purpose of development (Ministry of Information, 1976).

With this blunt acknowledgement of the economic rationale, state agitation in Nigeria must be related to the general ascendance of statehood as a pivot of distributive politics in the country (Suberu, 1991, 158-160). The 1976 states' creation exercise was implemented in the wake of both a phenomenal expansion in federal petroleum export revenue allocation arrangements that enthroned inter-state equality as the pre-eminent standard of financial devolution.

That restructuring has some basic features. First, owing to the explicit association of state-creation with the devolution of central revenue, there was an official commitment to making the state as equal in population as possible. This was in order to ensure some per capital equity in the access of territorial communities to federal revenues. Consequently, many statehood requests were rejected on no other ground than their relatively limited population, which did not justify any reorganization. The palpable casualties of the policy were the numerically disadvantaged ethnic majority groups. In essence, while as many as six of the twelve states created in 1967 were majority-controlled units; only about seven of the nineteen states in 1976 could be regarded as ethnic minority states (Osaghae, 1986:158-160). Moreover, as regards federal

balancing, the nineteen states structure consisted of ten and nine states in the North and South respectively, thereby overturning the pre-existing equality between the admittedly more populous North and the apparently smaller South and regional inequality in the distribution of states has remained an important source of contention in the Nigerian federation.

A second and related feature of the 1976 reorganizations as rightly observed by Suberu (1991) was the explicit transformation of the rationale for state-creation from its original role. As a sop for minority fears into a scheme for the dissemination of central revenue (derived mainly from southern ethnic minority communities) to predominantly ethnic majority populations. Henceforth, state-creation would cease to be a vehicle for extending political and economic self-governance to distinct ethnic communities. Rather, it became an administrative strategy for the devolution of federal largesse to an omnibus and amorphous array of territorial communities and coalitions (Suberu, op.cit).

Thirdly, partly in order to reduce the obviously insatiable distributive pressure for new states and nollify the numerous unsuccessful candidates for statehood, the 1976 reorganizations were accompanied by a nationwide reform and revitalization of the local government system too. This reform which re-constituted the federation into 301 Local Government Areas (LGAs), sought to transform these governments into an effective third tier of Nigerian federation and genuine instrument for decentralization, development and democracy at the grassroots.

Fourthly and finally, the 1976 reorganizations were explicitly linked to a programme of transition from military to civilian rule. Thus, the creation of new states was officially presented as a problematic and disruptive issue, which a 'corrective' military regime should resolve before handing-over power to civilian rulers. Unlike Gowon administration, which

procrastinated on the issue of democratization and state-creation, the Murtala-Obasanjo government saw the prompt resolution of the state issue and the disengagement of the military from politics as essential to its image and legitimacy as a corrective government. However, while the Murtala-Obasanjo government correctly perceived the state issue as potentially equally capable of disrupting and delaying the process of demilitarization, it had resisted further agitation for changes to the nineteen-state structure. On this ground, its successive military regimes have been quite eager to use the issue as a ploy to legitimize and/or prolong military rule.

### **Second Republic and Politics of State Creation**

Perhaps because state creation is a very fundamental issue, which can only be tackled with gut and determination, agitations for more states have always been more vociferous during military than civilian rules. In fact, apart from the Midwest (for political reasons discussed earlier), all other states were created during military administrations. However, during the Second Republic, agitation for more states went on unabated. Demand for new states was so volatile an issue in the Second Republic (1979-1983) (Graf, 1996:141), that none was eventually created till the collapse of that Republic. As it is well known, however, the attempts to create new states during this period were stymied by constitutional complexity, partisan acrimony, economic uncertainty and unfettered sectional recrimination and suspicion (Suberu, 1998).

However, for the comprehensive list of demand for new states during the second republic, which were not granted, (see table 1).

But despite the National Assembly's 29 proposed new states for referenda, no single state was created until the December 31, 1993 military putsch of Buhari/Idiagbon duo. Their administration did not make any move to create states. In fact, political activities were outrightly banned. Table 2 shows the

29 proposed states' and local governments, which were eventually not created before another military putsch.

### **1987 and 1991 States' Creation**

With the coming into power of General Ibrahim Babangida in August 1985, states' agitators demanded for the creation of more states. Their clamour gradually became profound and found responsive cord as soon as Babangida took over power. No sooner he assumed mantle of leadership than he set up the Political Bureau, headed by Dr. S.J. Cookey to look into the demands, by people, for the creation of more states in the country. Based on the recommendation of the Bureau, federal government in September 1987 created two more states – Katsina and Akwa Ibom, thus, making the number of states in the country to twenty-one.

In an important sense, the 1987 state-creation exercise sought simply to complete the unfinished business of the 1976 exercise. This is because the creation of Akwa Ibom had been explicitly recommended by the Irikefe Commission, while the Zaria-Katsina imbroglio in Kaduna state and the attendant agitation for the separation of the two communities have become extremely strident even before the military disengagement in 1979. An additional achievement of the 1987 reorganizations was to make the number of states in the federation exactly divisible by three. This was widely considered necessary in order to avoid a return in the proposed Third Republic of the unfortunate constitutional cum electoral controversy in the federation, akin to the  $12\frac{2}{3}$  legal debacle of 1979 (Dudley, 1982:165-178).

While the 1987 reorganizations genuinely appeared to be 'in the national interest', as claimed by Gen. Babangida, the 1991 reform underscored both the continuing popular pressure for new states and Babangida's desire to exploit these demands to promote his personal rulership project (Amuwo, 1995). The demands emanated largely from the Igbo intelligentsia and

political leadership. These Igbo elements claimed, quite forcefully and persuasively, that they have been economically short-changed and politically marginalised in the various reorganizations of the federal structure since 1967. Babangida responded to this particular grievance by creating two new Igbo states – Abia and (new) Anambra and locating the capital of a third state, Delta in the Igbo city of Asaba. The six remaining states that were created in 1991 gave satisfaction to distributive pressures emanating from Hausa/Fulani and Yorùbá sub-groups (Jigawa, Kebbi and Osun) or responded to the need to extend political and economic decentralization to geographically large, administratively unwieldy and/or culturally incompatible areas (Kogi, Taraba and Yobe). However, the location of five of the nine states in the North compounded the problems of geo-political balancing vis-à-vis the distribution of states. The new thirty-state structure consisted of sixteen states in the North against only fourteen in the South. The minorities were similarly short-changed; they had only twelve of the thirty states.

The 1991 re-organizations trivialized and bastardized the process of territorial reform in Nigeria. The creation of the nine new states and the accompanying reorganizations of the localities were done in a precipitate and prejudiced manner. Consequently, rather than promoting national integration, the re-organizations provoked an unprecedented orgy of protests, demonstrations and riots involving tens of fatalities (Johnson, 1991).

### **The 1996 Re-Organizations**

With the coming into power of General Sani Abacha, those clamouring for states' creation seemed to redouble their call for more states. General Abacha himself made pronouncements supporting the rights, especially as the issue of creating new states was concerned. Thus, following the

recommendation of the disbanded National Constitutional Conference (NCC), on the need to create more states, General Abacha set up the committee for states creation, local government and boundary adjustment. Consequently, he appointed Chief Arthur Mbanefo as its chairman. Immediately on assumption of office, the committee requested for the submission of memoranda from members of the public and set January 15, 1996 as the deadline. At the end of the day, 2,369 demands for local governments and 280 boundary adjustments were made (Daily Times, 1996:12).

The Committee received a total of seventy-two requests for new states (twenty-seven requests more than the number received by the Constitutional Conference). See Table 3 for comprehensive list.

Although, the committee made specific recommendations for the creation of some states and local governments, such proposals were never published, and the government itself did not publish any white paper on the committee's report.

Nevertheless, on the occasion of the country's thirty sixth anniversary on 1st October, 1996, General Abacha announced the creation of six new states as follows:

Bayelsa with headquarters at Yenagoa was created out of Rivers State. Ebonyi with headquarters at Abakaliki, was excised from Abia and Enugu States. Ekiti with capital at Ado-Ekiti, emerged from Ondo State. Gombe with headquarters at Gombe, was excised from Bauchi State. Nasarawa, with capital at Lafia, was created out of Plateau State. Zamfara, with headquarters at Gusau emerged from Sokoto State (Ibid).

The analysis could go on and on, but for space constraints, we now turn to Local Government creation exercises before we use 1991 demographic data to argue whether there are more or less local governments in each state based on their population sizes.

### **Creation of Local Governments**

What is said above of the fragmentation of Nigeria into 36 states is also true of the 774 local government areas. The number of local governments has grown from 299 (1976) to 774 (1999). These local governments are uniform in structures, have the same functions, similar sources of revenue and share common relationships with the federal and state governments (Gboyega, 2003:24). *The Census News*, based on the 1991 population census, however, listed only 541 (five hundred and forty-one) local government areas (Census News, 1992). See tables 5 and 6 for the population sizes of the states and population range of states and local governments.

Like the states, Local Governments' population sizes exclusively vary from 24,825 (for Ibeju Lekki) to 1,011,808 (for Ojo) both of which are in Lagos State. Set out in Tables 5 and 6 is the classification of the population of the 541 Local Government Areas into twelve (12) population categories. The class interval of the first two (2) groups is 50,000 while those of the remaining ten (10) classes are 100,000. Of the remaining 531 Local Government Areas, 52.1 percent (118) are in the 50,000 to 100,000 class and 17.2 percent (93) in the 200,001 to 300,000 class. This means that approximately 31 percent (69.3) precisely of them are in the class of 100,000 to 300,000.

In table 5, the average population of the 541 Local Government areas is 163,600 (163,600 precisely) obtained by dividing the country's 1991 population of 88.5 million by 541. Set out in columns 2, 3, and 4 of the tables are respectively,

the populations of the states and the numbers of their local government areas that extensively vary from 95,000 (for Abuja FTC) and 474,167 (for Kebbi State) population wise.

In column five is the number of local government areas which each state should have based on their national average population of 163,600. The figures in the column are obtained by dividing the population of each state by 163,600. In the last column of the table are the standard deviations from their national quotas of local government areas they are entitled to, based on the national average of 163,600.

The figures in the column are preceded by plus and minus signs to indicate the numbers of local government areas which they possess above and below their national quota while zero implies possession of their normal national quotas. The figures in column five are subtracted from those in column three to obtain those in column six.

Seventeen states possess 1 to 10 local government areas above their national quotas while twelve possess 1 to 23 below their national quotas. It is only two states (Kwara and Jigawa) that possess their normal national quotas of local government areas when juxtaposed by their population sizes. Akwa Ibom State exceeds its national quota by ten (10), its national quota should be 14 but presently has 24. Osun State should have 13 but has 22; Lagos State should have 35 but has only 12, a shortfall of 23.

Since the national average population of the 541 local government areas is 163,600, Obateru, suggested that the maximum population size of any local government area should be 100,000. This means that the population range of local government areas should be 100,000 to 300,000. The two basic factors to be considered in determining their population sizes within the range should be their natural resources and the living standards of their residents. There should be a kind of



correlation between the population sizes of local government areas and the performance of their levels of governments.

Consequently, population of 100,000 to 200,000 is suggested for the more developed ones and 200,000 to 300,000 for less developed ones. If the population range is accepted, then the number of local government population classes in the table 6 reveals that there is need to merge some local government areas in most of the states, while the four states of Lagos, Kaduna, Kano and Katsina have good cases for more local government areas (Obateru, 1995:9).

Agreed that creation of additional local government areas in a plural federal system is not an aberration, in the sense that as posited by Morton (1960), it is difficult to find any governmental activity which does not involve all three of the so-called “levels” of the federal system. In the most local of local functions – law enforcement or education, for example, the federal and state governments play important roles. In what, *a priori* may be considered the purest central government activities – the conduct of foreign affairs, for example, the state and local governments have considerable responsibilities, directly and indirectly. But where these local governments are financial liabilities which deepen local governments’ financial dependency, this is adverse and counterproductive because decentralization which necessitated their creation is eventually undermined by absence of local authorities’ own revenues (Mawhood, 1983). Therefore, the rationale of fragmenting Nigeria’s federal system into several localities not only to enhance effective decentralization, which is the hallmark of federalism, but also to enhance administrative efficiency is far from been achieved.

### **State and Locality Creation: Implications for Nigeria’s Development and Geo-Political Balancing**

Despite the high figure of both the number of states and localities in Nigeria, with demand for more still unabated, the

question that bothers on this segment of the paper is: how many states and local governments are ideal for this federation and are the created ones in any way further both integrative and development guests of the country? While there is a considerable merit in the demands, as regards development, it is noteworthy that there are two approaches to achieving equitable spatial spread of economic development: (a) through the creation of more states and local government areas; and (b) through effective engagement in physical (spatial) planning which is sometimes referred to as Urban and Regional Planning. From economic viability consideration however, there appears to be no justification for the creation of more states in Nigeria in the foreseeable future as virtually all the existing thirty-six (36) states are not economically viable. Apart from Lagos State, which has tried to balance its budget since its creation, all other states have had to depend on the federal government for survival. This then presupposes that if the issue of availability of resources as pivotal for creating states is considered, then only Lagos State can be said to meet such consideration. Nigerians are saddled with unviable states, which cannot muster the least economic muscle required for autonomous political units.

The gap between statutory allocations and internally generated revenue is too wide. A situation whereby a state cannot generate the money needed to pay workers' salaries is not good enough. This trend does not only continue but financial condition of the states is also more precarious. The current revenue allocation system does not help the states too. It gives the federal government – 48.5%; state governments – 24%; local governments – 20% and special funds (administered by the federal governments) – 7.5%. Thus, effectively, the Federal Government administers 56% of the federal account. It is noteworthy that state and local governments have mounted intense agitation since return to civil rule to revise the allocation formula in their favour.

Nevertheless, rapid rise in the number of states in the recent past, “has, no doubt, led to the multiplication of personnel and administrative facilities in the public sector, to the extent that, taken together, the entire public sector in the country is doing no more than the payment of salaries” (Ode, 1996). Yet there are 36 states and requests still unabated for more. In a federation like this, whereby the federal government plays ‘Father Christmas’, for the states to survive, it has a lot of negative consequences for the federal system. Beyond state creation for political reasons, it is high time we took economic viability as a factor into consideration. It is a negation of federal tenets to create level(s) of government without financial muscle.

Agitators for more states are unconscious of the fact that proliferation of states in the federation is capable of reducing the political power of such states. Larry Diamond was right when he stated that:

The greater the number of states, the weaker and less viable individual states will become, with the direct consequence that the centre would actually gather more power and initiative (Diamond, 1987).

Thus, continuous creation of states and local governments may reduce their power to check the abuse of an overbearing federal centre. While big states can threaten the corporate existence and stability of the federation, small states neutralizes the deterrence effect of states in inter-state and centre-state relations as rightly observed by Ayoade (1988:20, 21). It is not likely therefore, that a single state or few states can confront the federal centre like in the secessionist attempt of 1967. But this does not mean that there will be no disaffection anymore. In fact, political disaffection may increase as the states’ capability for ventilating their grievances decreases.

Few states in the federation appear adequately viable on account of strength of their secondary and tertiary industries as earlier noted. When one considers table 5, vis-à-vis the 1991 population census with 30 states and federal territory then, the population sizes of the states vary from 1.41m (for Yobe State) to 5.69m (for Lagos State). This wide variation is equally evident in their annual revenues and expenditures, with the consequential effect of uneven development. Though, there is hardly any federation with fairly equal component parts, but the wide disproportionality is a source of concern in Nigeria. The irony of it all is that India with a far larger population size than Nigeria has twenty-five states, while Nigeria with 36 is still clamouring for more (Ordershook and Shertura, 1997:27).

In the first place, it is now widely recognized that the successive changes in the internal territorial configuration of the federation have served more to satisfy the distributive ambitions of the three ethnic majority formation of Hausa/Fulani, Yorùbá and Igbo, than to assuage the fears of the politically vulnerable ethnic minority communities. For this reason, the Ijaw community had trenchantly denounced the 36-state structure then as fraudulent and a 'clear embodiment of the usual bankruptcy' of the Nigerian system of federalism (The Guardian, 1994:A14).

Second, territorial changes in Nigeria have often spawned profound disagreement over the choice, ethno-territorial composition and localities and over the disposition of the assets and personnel of the old units from which the new ones had been excised. These disagreements are often compounded if not generated in the first place, by the arbitrariness arising from the creation of virtually all the states and localities by military fiat (except the 1963 one) rather than by popular ratification and/or constitutional legislation and proclamation. What is more, the creation of new states and local governments immediately fuel pressures for discrimination

against new classes of so-called ‘non-indigenes’, that is, Nigerians resident in states or local governments other than their own. All of this makes the creation of new states and localities in Nigeria an extremely divisive and disruptive exercise.

Thirdly, Nigeria’s internal territorial reforms have remained pathetically inconclusive, as each successive exercise in state and local re-organization has merely spawned new minorities’ antipathies and agitations for new states and localities. The cyclical character of territorial changes in Nigeria contrasts sharply with experiences in most other federations, where initially reforms of states and/or local boundaries have been followed by period of fairly stable consensus on the internal territorial configuration or morphology of the federal system (McHenry, 1986). Fourth, as Nigeria continues to totter under the impact of its worst economic crisis since independence, the negative economic or financial implication of establishing new states and localities are becoming increasing obvious. Beyond the expansion of bureaucratic and physical infrastructure in the newly established administrative headquarters, the developmental (as distinct from distributive) value of new financial devolution which accrues to the new constituent units from the revenue sharing system is immediately consumed by administrative overheads and new patronage positions, which leaves little resources for real development.

Fifth, there is the general realization in Nigeria that, far from reflecting a genuine desire officially to resolve some continuing anomalies or inequalities in the federal territorial structure, the creation of new states and localities is being promoted and manipulated by the military as a way of prolonging and undermining the re-democratization project. Not surprisingly, the creation of new states and local governments has featured prominently in the contentious and rather circuitous political transition programmes of both

Generals Babangida and Abacha. The experience in the current democratic experiment is interesting. Most of the state governors were creating additional and local governments at will despite the fact that hitherto, these local governments suffered from both administrative inertia and financial amnesty. With transition to a new government in 2003, they all suffered natural death. It was in this state of confusion that the federal government set up another panel to review the local government system in Nigeria. The outcome of the panel's recommendations and government's white paper are still being awaited.

### **Conclusion**

At a time of deep dissatisfaction and intensive frustration with the over-centralization of the federal system, the repeated creation or proliferation of new constituent units can only compound the imbalance in the inter-governmental system. Moreover, the direct role of the federal government in re-organizing the boundaries and redefining the structure of localities is a blatant centrist assault on the received federal doctrine regarding the rights of state administration and local populations to determine the nature of local authorities without taking into consideration local peculiarities (Suberu, 1995). According to Bola Ige (1995), today, Nigeria is the only country in the world, which says it is federal but where local government affairs are directed from the Federal Capital. It is so bad that since 1988, primary education nation-wide also has been planned and funded directly from the federal capital through the activities of National Primary Education Commission (NPEC) (The News, 1998). If such centrist tendencies could be jettisoned, then, Nigerians may have to be re-orientated on how to live peacefully together in a federal set-up rather than stimulating the demand for more states. What we discovered was that continuous fragmentation will only serve to foster the growth of more sub-nationality competition against the nationalism of the nation-state. And

since it has created more minorities, it means the policy has failed as an antidote to fear of ethnic domination. Although even development has become its new rationale it has still failed to bring about even development. Dependence on federal support too seems to have increased the intensity and hostility of the scramble for the “national cake” (Onyeoziri, 2002:13-16).

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Table 1: 49 Formal Requests for New States in Nigeria October 1979 – June 1983

Existing States	Request	Existing States	Requests
Anambra	Adada Anambra Wawa	Imo	Abia Njaba
Anambra/Imo Bauchi	Ebonyi Gombe Katagum	Kaduna Kano	Katsina New Kaduna Ghari
Bendel	Anioma Coast Delta Edo		Hadejia Jigawa Lantai Tiga
Benue	Makurdi New Benue	Kwara Lagos	(See Benue Kwara)
Benue/Kwara	Kogi Okura	Niger Ogun	- Ijebu
Borno	Gujba Kukawa New Borno Savanna	Ondo	Ekiti New Ondo
Cross River	Akwa Ibom Calabar New Cross River Real Cross River	Oyo	New Oyo Oduduwa Osun
Gongola	New Gongola Nasarawa Taraba	Plateau	Middle Belt Nasarawa
Imo	Abia	Rivers	Oil Rivers Port Harcourt
		Sokoto	Niger Delta Kebbi New Sokoto Zamfara

**Sources:** Adapted from R.T. Suberu, "The Struggle for New State in Nigeria, 1976-1990" *African Affairs*, 1991), 90, p.504. Also, see, Report of the Isa Obaro Committee on State Creation. Sunday Sketch, Ibadan, 12 June, 1993.

**Table 2: 29 Proposals for New States Recommended for Referenda by the National Assembly (1979-1983)**

Existing State	Proposed State	No. of L.G. As Involved	Existing State	Proposed State	No. of L.G. As Involved
Anambra	New Anambra	8	Imo	Njaba	-
Anambra/	Ebonyi		Katsina	Katsina	7
Imo		6		New Kaduna	7
Bauchi	Gombe		Kano	Ghari	3
	Katagun	4		Jigawa	4
	Anioma	5		Lautai	4
Bendel	Delta	4		Tiga	3
	New Benue	7	Ondo	New Ondo	9
Benue	Kogi	-	Oyo	New Oyo	7
Benue/Kwara	Okura	6		Osun	10
	Gujba	5	Plateau	Nasarawa	
	New Borno	7		Middle Belt	5
Borno	New Cross River	8	Rivers	Port Harcourt	4
Cross River	Taraba	8	Sokoto	Kebbi	7
	Aba			Zamfara	7
Gongola	Abia	9			
Imo		4			
		10			

**Source:** R.T. Suberu, op. cit. 1991, p.514.

Table 3: The 45 Requests For New States Received By The National Constitutional Conference, 1994

<b>Present State</b>	<b>Proposed State</b>	<b>Proposed Capital</b>	<b>Predominant Ethnic Composition</b>
Abia	Aba	Aba	Igbo
Adamawa	Sardauna	Mubi	Hausa-Fulani NM
Akwa Ibom	Atlantic	Oron	SM
	Itai	Ikot-Ekpena	SM
Anambra	Ezu	Awka	Igbo
Bauchi	Gombe	Gombe	Hausa-Fulani
	Katagun	Azare	Hausa-Fulani
Benue	Apa	Otukpo	NM
	Katsina Ala	Zaki-Ibiam	NM
Cross River	Ogoja	Ikom	SM
Delta	Anioma	Asaba	Igbo
	New Delta	Warri	SM
	Ndokwa	Utagba-Ogbe	Igbo
Edo	Toru-Ebe	Patani	SM
Enugu Abia	Afemesan	Auchi	SM
Imo	Ebonyi	Abakaliko or	Igbo
Jigawa	Njaba	Afikpo	Igbo
	Bayajida	Okigwe	
		Daura, Kazaure or	Hausa-Fulani
		Gumel	Hausa-Fulani
Kaduna		Hadejia	Hausa-Fulani
	Gurara	Hadejia	
Kano		Zonkwa or	NM
	Gari	Kafanchan	Hausa-Fulani
	Tiga	Dambatta	Hausa-Fulani
Katsina	Tigari	-	Hausa-Fulani
Kogi	Karaduwa	Gwarzo	Hausa-Fulani
	Okura	-	NM
Kwara	Okun	Idah	Yorùbá
Kwara/	Yorùbá	Kabba	Yorùbá

Kogi	Oyi	Ilorin	Yorùbá
Niger	Kainji	Kabba	NM
	Ndaduma	Kontagora	Nm
	Ijebu-Remo	Bida	Yorùbá
Ogun	Ekiti	Ijebu-Ode	Yorùbá
Ondo	Oduduwa	Ado-Ekiti	Yorùbá
Osun	New Oyo	Ile-Ife or Ilea	Yorùbá
Oyo	Oke-Ogun	Ogbomosho or Oyo	Yorùbá
	Nasarawa	Saki or Iseyin	NM
Plateau	New Rivers	Akwanga or Lafia	SM
Rivers	Nun-Rivers or Oloibiri	Port Harcourt South	SM
	Ogoni	Ogbia or Nembe	SM
	Orashi	Bori	Hausa-Fulani
	Port-Harcourt	Ahoada	Hausa-Fulani
Rivers Delta	Bayelsa	Port Harcourt	NM
Sokoto	Sakkwato	Sagbama	NM
	Zamfara	Sokoto	
Taraba	Kwararafa	Gusau	
	Mambilla	Wukari	
		-	

**Source:** Adapted from Report of the Committee on State Creation. The Report of the National Constitutional Conference, 1995.

**Key:** NM - Northern Minorities

SM - Southern Minorities

Table 4: 1991 Population of the 30 States, Fct and Local Government Areas

Serial No.	States	State Population (millions)	Number of L.G.A.	Average L.G.A. Population	No. Of L.G.A. Based On The National Average of 163,600 (b)	Deviation from the National Average
			(a)		(b)	(a-b)
1.	Abia	2.30	16	143,750	14	+2
2.	Adamawa	2.12	15	141,333	13	+2
3.	Akwa Ibom	2.36	24	98,333	14	+10
4.	Anambra	2.77	15	184,667	17	-2
5.	Bauchi	4.29	23	186,522	26	-3
6.	Benue	2.78	18	154,444	17	+1
7.	Cross River	2.60	14	185,263	16	-2
8.	Delta	1.87	14	180,000	11	+3
9.	Ebonyi	2.57	19	185,882	16	+3
10.	Edo	2.16	12	118,571	13	-1
11.	Enugu	3.16	17	166,470	19	-2
12.	Imo	2.49	21	220,556	15	+6
13.	Jigawa	2.83	17	194,000	17	0
14.	Kaduna	3.97	18	137,333	24	-6
15.	Kano	5.63	29	131,250	34	-5
16.	Katsina	3.88	20	157,000	24	-4
17.	Kebbi	2.06	15	474,167	+2	-4
18.	Kogi	2.10	16	130,526	13	+3
19.	Kwara	1.57	10	195,000	10	0
20.	Lagos	5.69	12	149,231	35	-23
21.	Niger	2.48	19	100,000	15	+4

22.	Ogun	2.34	12	145,417	14	-2
23.	Ondo	3.88	26	192,941	24	+2
24.	Osun	2.20	22	180,909	13	+9
25.	Oyo	3.49	24	156,786	21	+3
26.	Plateau	3.28	17	192,941	20	-3
27.	Rivers	3.98	22	180,909	24	-2
28.	Sokoto	4.39	28	156,786	27	+1
29.	Taraba	1.40	12	123,333	9	+3
30.	Yobe	1.40	10	141,000	9	+1
31.	FCT, Abuja	0.38	4	95,000	2	+2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>88.51</b>	<b>541</b>	<b>163,600</b>		

**Source:** Remi Obateru, "Stop Fragmenting Nigeria", *Nigerian Tribune*, Ibadan, 12 January, 1995, p.9.



Table 5: States and Local Government Population Range

Serial No.	States	State Population	No. of L.G.A.	Up to 50,000	50,001-100,000	100,001-200,000	200,001-300,000	300,001-	400,001-	500,001-	600,001-	700,001-	800,001	900,001	1,000,000-
1.	Abia	2.30	16	2	4	7	1	1	1						
2.	Adamawa	2.12	15	1	5	7	3								
3.	A'lbom	2.36	24		14	8	1								
4.	Anambra	2.77	15		2	9	3								
5.	Bauchi	4.29	23		3	11	8	1	1	1					
6.	Benue	2.78	18		3	12	3								
7.	C'River	2.60	14		1	11		1	1						
8.	Delta	1.87	14		5	8				1					
9.	Ebonyi	2.57	19	1	3	14	2								
10.	Edo	2.16	12		4	6	1								
11.	Enugu	3.16	17		2	8	6	1							
12.	Imo	2.49	21		8	12	1								
13.	Jigawa	2.83	17			14	3				1				
14.	Kaduna	3.97	18		1	6	8	3							
15.	Kano	5.63	29		2	16	8	3							

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16.	Katsina	3.88	20		1	12	4	3							
17.	Kebbi	2.06	15		2	11	2								
18.	Kogi	2.10	16		8	4	3	1	3						
19.	Kwara	1.57	10	1	4	3	1								
20.	Lagos	5.68	12	1	1	4			1						
21.	Niger	2.48	19	11	3	11	3	1			1		1	1	
22.	Ogun	2.34	12		3	2	6	1		1					
23.	Ondo	3.88	26		4	18	3				2				
24.	Osun	2.20	22	3	10	9									
25.	Oyo	3.49	24	1	8	9	5								
26.	Plateau	3.28	17	1	1	9	4	1							
27.	Rivers	3.98	22		3	11	6	1							
28.	Sokoto	4.39	28		4	19	4	1							
29.	Taraba	4.48	12	1	5	4	1		1		1				
30.	Yobe	1.41	10		2	7	1								
31.	FCT, Abuja	0.38	4	1	2		1								
	<b>Total</b>	<b>88.51</b>	<b>541</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	
	<b>%</b>			<b>2.6</b>	<b>21.8</b>	<b>52.1</b>	<b>17.2</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>.2</b>	<b>.7</b>	<b>.4</b>	<b>.2</b>	<b>.2</b>	

**Source:** *Census News*, NPC, Abuja, September, 1992, Vol. 3, No.1