

The Changing Structure of Nigerian Federalism Since Independence

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doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/bjmas.2022.04225>

Published January 19, 2025

Citation: Adebayo A.A. and Ojo M.C. (2025) The Changing Structure of Nigerian Federalism Since Independence, *British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies*, 6 (1),1-13

ABSTRACT: *The structure of Nigerian federalism has undergone significant transformations since independence in 1960. This paper critically examines the evolution of state creation in Nigeria, focusing on three distinct phases: the pre-independence demand for more states, state creation under civilian governments, and the more pronounced state creation under military regimes. The study employs a historical-analytical approach to explore the socio-political and economic drivers of state creation during these periods and their implications for federalism in Nigeria. The findings reveal that while state creation was initially motivated by the need for equitable representation and resource allocation, it gradually evolved into a tool for political control and patronage. The paper concludes by analyzing the impact of these structural changes on national integration, governance, and regional development, offering recommendations for the future restructuring of the Nigerian federation.*

Keywords: structure, Nigerian federalism, independence, state creation

INTRODUCTION

The federal structure of Nigeria has been a subject of intense debate and continuous modification since the colonial era. With over 250 ethnic groups, the challenge of balancing the diverse socio-cultural and economic interests within a unified political framework has shaped Nigeria's federalism. State creation, as a mechanism to address these challenges, has been a recurring feature of Nigeria's political development.

The roots of state creation in Nigeria can be traced back to the pre-independence era when ethnic minorities expressed concerns about domination by majority groups within the regional structure established by colonial administrators. These demands culminated in significant political developments, including the creation of the Midwest Region in 1963.

Post-independence, successive civilian and military governments adopted state creation as a strategy to promote national unity, ensure equitable distribution of resources, and address perceived marginalization. However, this process has also led to increased fragmentation, administrative inefficiency, and inter-regional competition. This paper critically examines the changing structure of Nigerian federalism by focusing on three key phases: the pre-independence demand for more states, state creation under civilian rule, and the military's extensive state creation efforts. By analyzing these phases, the paper provides insights into the motivations, processes, and consequences of state creation in Nigeria's federal system.

PRE-INDEPENDENCE DEMAND FOR MORE STATES IN NIGERIA

The complex nature of the Nigerian polity was a source of concern even for the British colonial administrators before the birth of the Nigerian state in 1914. C. L. Temple wanted the present area of Nigeria to be divided into units of area and population sizes that could be effectively administered by one officer. While Temple was not directly advocating for the creation of states, he wanted Nigeria to be split into units that could be easily managed by the colonial government (Okadigbo, 1987). Nevertheless, the idea of state creation in Nigeria was mooted by E.D. Morel as soon as the Northern and Southern Protectorates were amalgamated in 1914 (Oyediran, Nwosu, Takaya, Anifowose, Badejo, Ogboghodo, and Agbaje, 2008). These British officials were perhaps informed by the size and heterogeneous nature of the country. Morel also noted that the division of the country into various units would probably ensure a sense of unity among different groups (Nnoli, 1980). The idea of dividing Nigeria into various units was rejected by Frederick Lugard, who was the first Governor-General of Nigeria. Lugard preferred the division of the country into two—the Northern and Southern provinces (Ayoade, 1996). If Lugard had agreed to these early suggestions by dividing the country into more units, it could have possibly reduced agitation for states or regions in the colonial and post-colonial periods.

This is not to say that attempts were not made to divide Nigeria into more units. What is important is that the division did not go far enough. In 1939, the Southern Provinces were divided into two, namely, the Eastern and Western Provinces, by the colonial administration due to what was termed ethnographic and communication problems. It should be recognized that at the same time, the Northern Provinces had similar issues, but the boundaries of these Provinces remained untouched. This action eventually led to an imbalance in the political structure of the country.

With increased nationalist agitation after the Second World War, and more importantly, the emergence of new political parties during the process of decolonization, the imbalance in the political structure of the country became increasingly noticeable in the emergent nation-state. Regionalism was emphasized in the Richards Constitution of 1946, while these regions became political entities with the Macpherson Constitution of 1951. With these constitutions, competition for power among the various political parties at regional and national levels became intense. In 1954, Nigeria became a federation under the Littleton Constitution. The emergence of Nigeria as a federation heightened political rivalries among the various political parties, which were largely ethnically based, drawing support from the major ethnic groups—Hausa/Fulani, Igbo, and Yoruba—in the country.

Partly as a political strategy aimed at attracting support from other areas of Nigeria, leaders like Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and Chief Awolowo requested the colonial administration to create more regions (Amuwo, Agbaje, Suberu, and Herault, 2003). However, these same leaders were not prepared for any region or state to be created within their regional boundaries. Indeed, between 1954 and 1957, several movements for the creation of states emerged in different parts of Nigeria, apparently due to fears of political or religious domination by the major ethnic groups. In response to the concerns expressed by the minority groups, the colonial administration set up the Minorities Commission under the chairmanship of Sir Henry Willink in 1957. The Commission was tasked with addressing the fears of the minorities and exploring ways to alleviate them. One of the terms of reference was to create one or more states if necessary (Minority Report, Lagos 1957). However, the Commission did not find it necessary to create any state; instead, it recommended constitutional safeguards for the Independence Constitution (Amuwo, Agbaje, Suberu, and Herault, 2003). It was not until 1963 that the Mid-Western Region was created from the Western Region.

From 1960 through 1976 to date, regionalism has given way to statism, which has engendered a greater sense of loyalty to one's state of origin than to the Nigerian nation. Accordingly, statism has assumed the form of sub-regionalism and sub-ethnic irredentism or mini-irredentism at the state levels. After the major coup of January 1966, which ironically brought General Aguiyi Ironsi to power (Coleman, 1963), there was an attempt to impose a unitary state structure through the infamous Decree No.34 of 30th May 1966, which purportedly abolished the regions and unified the public services. This final decree became the last straw that broke the back of the federal camel. Responses to this decree varied, ranging from the appalling massacre (as revenge) of Nigerians from the southern regions, especially the Igbo, to the repatriation or flight—en masse—of individuals to their places of origin in southern Nigeria, and the declaration of independence by eastern Nigeria in the name of the Republic of Biafra, culminating in the return of federalism, this time with a stronger center.

Henceforth, the general agreement among Nigerians seemed to be that Nigeria should remain a federal republic. The question has been what type of federal republic? In 1987, General Ibrahim Babangida created nine additional states, bringing the total number of states in the country to thirty

(Ojo et al.). Subsequently, in 1996, General Sani Abacha created six new states, along with 774 local government areas and the Federal Capital Abuja. These changes were all aimed at restructuring and consolidating Nigerian federalism.

The contention brought by the previous colonial arrangement created a situation where the Southern Protectorate became qualitatively developed in terms of manpower (educated) and physical infrastructure, as well as economically, while the Northern Protectorate was qualitatively developed by geographical might and large population. This distinctive variation generated tension between Northern and Southern nationalists, who had earlier been united in the struggle for Nigeria's liberation. For instance, on 31st March 1953, Anthony Enahoro moved a motion in the House of Representatives for Nigeria's independence in 1956, a move that Northern representatives opposed, citing that the North was far behind the South in development, asserting that it would be a junior partner in an independent Nigeria (Crowther, 1978). The extent of this concern led northern delegates to advocate for a confederal arrangement to guarantee separate development, which had then become conventional wisdom (Olatunbosun, 2006). The Western delegates, who had previously supported confederation, also advocated for a confederal arrangement. The Western Region remained neutral. Consequently, the general trend of thought was biased in favor of a federal system, which became an interesting theme of debate (Olatunbosun, 2006). Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa maintained that "I am beginning to think that Nigeria's political future may only lie in a federation, because so far as the rate of regional progress is concerned, some of the regions appear to be more developed than others" (Paden, 1975).

STATE CREATION UNDER CIVILIAN RULE

Agitation for state creation is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria. Since the 1950s, Nigerians have developed an unending desire for new states. The intensity with which communities demanded new states after Nigeria's independence in 1960 led to repeated divisions of the country's internal boundaries: into four regions in 1963, 12 states in 1967, 19 states in 1976, 21 states in 1987, 30 states in 1991, and 36 states in 1996. In the 1960s and 1970s, the yearning for new states was driven principally by the need to address the perceived domination or fear of domination of ethnic minority communities by the majority (Igiehon, 1975). However, since the 1980s, the rationale for demanding new states has changed; most communities now yearn for new states based on the belief that additional states will translate into an enhanced share of federal revenue opportunities. Considering that much of Nigeria's federal revenue and opportunities in federal public service are shared on the basis of equality, more states for a particular community mean more revenue and opportunities (Kirk Green, 1968). This material consideration has contributed to the ongoing demands for state creation, including the current agitation for new states.

One noticeable aspect of the history of state creation in Nigeria is that civilian governments have found it extremely difficult to create new states. Apart from the government of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (1960-1966), no other civilian administration has been able to create new states despite

the numerous requests they usually receive. One explanation for the inability of civilian regimes to create new states is that the issue is highly divisive and requires a considerable level of consensus that most civilian governments cannot mobilize. Unlike civilian governments, military regimes do not need national consensus to make important decisions such as state creation. Considering that past civilian governments have been unable to create new states, it is, therefore, interesting to ask whether the current government will be able to create new states based on the requests presented to the National Assembly's constitutional review committees.

Technically speaking, the current constitutional review process is unlikely to result in the creation of new states. There are two reasons for this assumption. First, the present government, like previous civilian regimes, is unlikely to mobilize the level of national consensus needed to alter Nigeria's internal boundaries. The current civilian government, more than its predecessors, faces a Herculean task of galvanizing national consensus. It should be recalled that the election that brought this government into power was quite divisive, splitting Nigerians along ethnic and religious lines. Since the inauguration of the government in May 2011, it has not invested sufficient effort to unite Nigerians. The deep divisions that exist among Nigerians will definitely manifest in a forceful manner once the issue of state creation is presented (Kirk Green, 1968).

The second, and more important, reason why the current constitutional review process may not lead to state creation is that none of the requests for state creation has followed the constitutional requirements. The issue of state creation goes beyond mere submission of memoranda by the public and consideration of those memoranda by federal and state legislatures. Section 8 of the 1999 Constitution outlines stringent steps that must be satisfied before a state can be created. According to the Constitution, an Act of the National Assembly for the purpose of creating a new state shall only be passed if:

- a. A request is supported by at least a two-thirds majority of members (representing the area demanding the creation of the new state) in the federal, state, and local legislatures.
- b. A proposal is thereafter approved in a referendum by at least a two-thirds majority of the people of the area where the demand for the creation of the state originated.
- c. The result of the referendum is then approved by a simple majority of all the states of the federation, supported by a simple majority of members of the Houses of Assembly.
- d. The proposal is approved by a resolution passed by a two-thirds majority of members of each House of the National Assembly (Morel, 1968).

Considering the extent of social and political divisions that exist in Nigeria today, it will be extremely difficult to meet the above provisions. Each group in Nigeria sees state creation as an avenue to receive greater benefits. As such, it is hard for these groups to support the quest by a particular group to gain more states. To worsen matters, the Constitution is not clear about the agency that would conduct the required referendum. A common assumption is that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) would be charged with this responsibility, but in reality,

INEC may refuse to carry out that task as no budgetary allocation has been provided for it. Overall, it appears that the 1999 Constitution has effectively sealed the issue of state creation. It would take serious efforts by the political class to mobilize the level of consensus needed to alter Nigeria's internal boundaries.

Many people have expressed their thoughts on the issue of military intervention in this country. Therefore, the intention here is not to provoke further debate on the subject. The objective is to show that during the period of military leadership in Nigeria, states that were in dire need by some Nigerians—aimed at enhancing their self-determination within the federal framework—continued to be denied by civilian administrations. (Yahya, 1978).

Furthermore, this led to the strengthening of the Nigerian federation and the reduction of ethnic cleavages, paving the way for national unity—an essential element for desired nation-building in Nigeria through the creation of states.

The persistent refusal to create new states by the dominant ethnic majority in post-colonial Nigeria, against the insistence of minority groups on the issue; the arraignment of some minority leaders, like J.S. Tarka alongside Chief Obafemi Awolowo for treasonable felony, and the subsequent conviction and imprisonment of Awolowo and others accused of similar charges, proved dangerous indicators that the country was in a terrible state of disunity and on the verge of collapse. This was the situation when the military intervened on January 15, 1966. This intervention also had ethnic and regional connotations. For instance, the leader of the coup, Nzeogwu, expressed dissatisfaction with the northernization policy of the late Premier of the Northern Region. Nzeogwu also lamented the continued killing of the Tiv people as unjust and a source of concern. Though the coup was not successful, the most senior military officer, Major J.T.U. Aguiyi Ironsi, who assumed leadership after the killing of the Prime Minister, was himself an Igbo. From all indications, he pursued policies that favored his Igbo group. For instance, his introduction of a unitary system of government and his lenient handling of coup plotters like Nzeogwu, who was mainly from the Igbo group, attest to this claim. This is particularly significant when one considers the gravity of coup plotting in military law and practice. It has even been alleged that Ironsi was part of the failed coup, as everything had been done with his consent and approval (Coleman, 1958). The subsequent counter-coup of July 1967, staged by Northern military officers, was also a product of the same ethno-regionalism.

STATE CREATION EXERCISE UNDER THE MILITARY, 1967 – 1996

The military has been involved in Nigerian politics for almost three decades; indeed, since the coup d'état of January 1966 that ousted the civilian administration, the military has played a dominant role in the affairs of the nation. Except for the four-year civilian administration of Shagari (1979-1983), Nigeria from 1966 to the present has been governed entirely by the military, although democratic structures were experimented with at the state level between 1992 and 1993.

One of the issues that the military has paid attention to in Nigeria is the question of state creation, which has continued to be a topical issue in the country. Both civilian and military administrations have been involved in the politics of state creation, employing it as a vehicle for political engineering. However, the military has used state creation more than any civilian administration to stabilize their regimes. The first involvement of the military in the creation of states occurred a year after they took over the country. This, as will be shown later, was dictated by the need to weaken the secession threat from the Eastern Region. Without doubt, states are important variables in a federation and thus a prerequisite for its existence (Mackintosh, 1966).

Nevertheless, the creation of states by the military in Nigeria has so far not succeeded in satisfying all interest groups in the country. However, it is important to stress that the creation of states by the military has been one of the most significant achievements of military administration in Nigeria. It is against this background that this chapter examines the involvement of the Nigerian military in the creation of states. It analyzes the important factors that various military regimes considered in the creation of states. The chapter argues that the military in Nigeria has, over the years, used state creation not only to promote even development but also to stabilize their administrations.

GOWON AND THE CREATION OF TWELVE STATES IN NIGERIA

General Yakubu Gowon became the Head of State of Nigeria following the counter-coup of July 29, 1966. Debates on the creation of more states intensified during the early part of Gowon's administration because he reverted to a federal system of government, which his predecessor, Aguiyi-Ironsi, had abolished. Apart from the tense political situation, the vociferous nature of the debate must have influenced Gowon's decision to create twelve states out of the existing four regions. It is important to note that the timing of the creation of these states was appropriate, as it succeeded in weakening secessionist tendencies that almost disintegrated the country. In particular, after the failure of all peace initiatives by the Federal Government to pacify the aggrieved Eastern Region under the leadership of Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu, Gowon in May 1967 used the strategy of state creation to diminish Ojukwu's influence and authority in the Eastern Region. He succeeded in gaining the support of other minority groups in Nigeria. This measure also enhanced the unity of other parts of the country behind the federal government, especially during the Civil War (1967 - 1970).

In creating the twelve states, Gowon's administration emphasized the following criteria: recognition of federal principles, geographical contiguity, administrative convenience, economic viability, and uniformity in the process. The emphasis on the principle of federalism by Gowon was a reaction to the contentious issue of unitary administration espoused by the Ironsi regime. Additionally, geographical contiguity and administrative convenience were informed by the historical connections of the states, with a view to fostering a sense of oneness. It is relevant to note that, in the states that were created, the principles of geography and administrative

convenience were not strictly adhered to. For instance, the former Kwara State and the former North Eastern states had their component parts in the Niger and Benue rivers, respectively. Indeed, political exigencies rather than economic viability influenced the twelve-state structure created by the Gowon administration.

Immediately after the civil war in 1970, the federal military government was engrossed in reuniting the various sections of the country through the policy of reconciliation, rehabilitation, and reconstruction. This period also coincided with what is generally referred to as the oil boom era, which provided the federal military government with substantial foreign exchange, enabling it to embark on major capital projects. As part of the government's efforts to integrate the various peoples of Nigeria, the National Youth Service Corps was established in 1973. Despite these attempts to foster a sense of unity, there were persistent calls for the creation of more states in the country. Notable politicians like Anthony Enahoro and Shettima Ali Moguno lent their voices to the demand for more states, alongside leaders of various communities, interest groups, civil servants, students, and traditional rulers. The belief was that the creation of more states would help to consolidate the unity of the country (New Nigerian, 1976).

Indeed, by October 1, 1974, the pressure for the creation of more states was so intense that Gowon had to declare that, "in principle, more states would be created" (New Nigerian, 1974). Gowon's statement indicates that the states created in 1967 were not only inadequate; they also failed to satisfy the yearning of Nigerians. From this time onwards, Nigerians began to clamor for more states through paid advertisements in newspapers, and various representations were made to the government. While these agitations were ongoing, discontent within the military regarding Gowon's style of governance and the continual postponement of handing over power to a democratically elected government led to a military coup d'état that ousted Gowon in July 1975.

However, the states created by the Col. Yakubu Gowon-led military administration in 1967 were beneficial for the federation and promoted national integration and unity, which are essential for nation-building. The twelve states created may not be perfect, but they represented more of what was needed and demanded by the Nigerian people than the previous four regions that had been forcefully imposed and sustained. In 1975, Brigadier Murtala Muhammed, who became the country's new military Head of State after successfully ousting Gowon's administration, added seven more states to the previous ones, bringing the total number of states during his government to thirty, along with a Federal Capital Territory. Gen. Sani Abacha, who also emerged as Nigeria's military Head of State in 1996, added six more states to the wave of state creations by the military in Nigeria. Altogether, this has resulted in the present thirty-six states that Nigeria has.

Therefore, as noted earlier, although these creations may not be perfect, they helped to strengthen the Nigerian federation and significantly contributed to ensuring Nigerian unity. They are aiding in nation-building rather than fostering ethnic acrimony, regional disaffection, and disunity, which

were engendered by the previous regional arrangement. Cynics who think otherwise are free to do so, but others may find Toyo's submission quite appropriate here:

"It is not true that the creation of more states by either General Gowon in 1967 or by subsequent military regimes was simply the arbitrary or self-serving act of soldiers from Northern Nigeria. What is true is that there was an overwhelming and persistent demand for the creation of states in areas inhabited by ethnic minorities. This demand was ignored by the chauvinistic leaders of the larger ethnic groups. Some may not know, but it is a fact that the creation of more states by Gowon was not just a matter of justice. Without it, Nigeria would sooner or later have disintegrated amid flames of ethnic wars. Later events have shown how easily this could have happened. It was not possible to maintain one Nigeria with either three or four regions or with a unitary state that could only have been imposed by a military dictatorship after 1960."

After Gowon's creation of twelve states, the subsequent creations of states were also in response to the national questions raised by various ethnic groups. There is no state created by any military regime that was not a response to demands from agitators, who were usually former or would-be civilian politicians. The agitators were realistic in taking advantage of military rule to demand states and local governments. Experience under civilian rule had shown that bourgeois-minded civilian politicians from larger groups were not ready to entertain any self-determination for smaller groups. Nigerian civilian politicians are, by and large, a mediocre and selfish crowd. This has been especially true since 1960, when politicians no longer had a national or geographical cake to grab (Toyo, 2001)

STATE CREATION DURING THE MURTALA/OBASANJO REGIME

One of the major tasks with which the new military government preoccupied itself was the creation of more states. This was necessary because state creation had become a burning issue by the end of the Gowon era. By creating more states, the administration would satisfy the wishes of the majority of Nigerians, who believed that this would lead to more equitable development. Unlike the state creation initiated by Gowon, which occurred on the eve of the Civil War, the Murtala/Obasanjo regime inaugurated a panel headed by Justice Ayo Irikefe in August 1975. The panel was empowered to "examine the question of more states in the Federation and, should the committee find the creation of more states necessary and desirable to:

- (a) Advise on the delimitation of such states;
- (b) Advise on the economic viability of the proposed states;
- (c) Advise on the location of the administrative capitals of the proposed states; and
- (d) Examine and advise on all other factors that may appear to the committee to be relevant, so as to enable the government to take a decision that will ensure a balanced, stable federation.
- (e) 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. (Report on the Panel, 1976)

There is extensive literature on the subject of state creation in Nigeria, so detailed discussion is unnecessary here. What is important is to highlight the procedure followed by the Irikefe Panel of 1975 to understand the state creation exercise of 1976. To obtain firsthand information and gain a reasonable understanding of the country, sittings were held in various state capitals, similar to what the Minorities Commission did in 1957. At these state capitals, the panel received representations from individuals and groups. These tours likely helped the panel to place the agitations of various groups within proper historical and geographical contexts. It is also relevant to note that the tour of the country before recommendations were made for the creation of states marked a significant departure from the practices of the Gowon era. This difference in approach can be explained by the prevailing political circumstances of the two regimes.

By September 1975, the panel had received about one thousand memoranda. A cursory examination of these memoranda indicates that mutual jealousy and ethnicity dominated their contents. This suggests that, in a broader context, the demand for states was not necessarily based on the need for even development but rather on myopic and selfish interests.

Nonetheless, when the panel submitted its report, it was optimistic that the states created as recommended by the panel would quell further agitations for the creation of more states in Nigeria. Indeed, its chairman, Justice Ayo Irikefe, asserted that "the 1976 exercise should settle the issue of state creation" (Irikefe Commission: 42). What he failed to realize was that, to a large extent, state creation is a malleable tool in the hands of the military. Furthermore, the demand for states is a 'continuous' exercise in Nigeria, as any act of state creation will not meet all aspirations. Typically, the outcome is a mixture of contentment and discontentment. In February 1976, the existing twelve-state structure was expanded into nineteen states, with a new Federal Capital Territory at Abuja. While the creation of these nineteen states was seen as a step in the right direction, it is instructive to observe that the emphasis on the need for each state to be economically viable was again downplayed.

The creation of nineteen states was intended to reduce minority problems, promote equitable development, and provide for a strong federal structure. However, no sooner were the states created than agitations for more states began. This must have informed the provision for guidelines on the creation of new states in the 1979 Constitution. It is important to mention that throughout the Second Republic, there were requests for the creation of almost fifty additional states in Nigeria.

CREATION OF STATES DURING THE BABANGIDA ERA

In a palace coup in August 1985, Babangida came to power as the military president of Nigeria. Like all previous military regimes, one of the first steps Babangida took was to address the issue

of state creation, among other matters. To this end, he set up the Political Bureau in 1986 to provide a political blueprint for Nigeria. The Babangida administration allowed the Bureau to discuss various socio-economic and political problems confronting the nation. This was perhaps why the Bureau took the opportunity to discuss the issue of creating more states, citing reasons such as: the creation of a few additional states being necessary for a more balanced and stable federation; that it would assist in furthering the democratization processes initiated since the exercise began in 1967; and that creating additional states was important for removing a major source of political and social tensions that had bred instability and frustrated the country's progress toward national greatness (Report of Commission, 1987).

There was no unanimity among the Bureau members on the number of states to be created. While some advocated for two additional states, others argued for six more. The only point of consensus was the agreement on the creation of Akwa Ibom and Katsina States from Cross River and Kaduna States, respectively. This convergence of opinions regarding the creation of both Akwa Ibom and Katsina States likely influenced the military administration's decision to create these two additional states in August 1987. Furthermore, the creation of these two states was intended to alleviate agitation for statehood from the people of these areas.

With the creation of the two additional states, the Babangida administration appeared to have finally settled the issue of state creation in the country, at least during his regime. In the words of General Babangida: "This administration wishes to emphasize that no further comment or petition... will be tolerated (on the creation of states) during the period of the transition" (National Concord, 1991).

However, the wave of agitation following the creation of the two states in 1987 was so strong that the administration had to change its stance. Thus, in 1991, President Babangida stated that "the yearnings of the people are legitimate." It was not surprising, therefore, that on August 27, 1991, an additional nine states were created by the administration (National Concord, 1991). The rationale for the creation of states in 1991, as claimed by the President, was a "measure of the growth of the Federation and our ingenuity and resilience as a people, committed to living together in spite of plurality; that what began as two colonial units in 1914 has today been transformed into a federation of thirty states" (National Concord, 1991). The justification offered by the President was merely an embellishment of earlier reasons provided by his predecessors and the recommendations of the Political Bureau.

In spite of the number of states created by the Babangida administration, some sections of the country remained dissatisfied with the exercise. This dissatisfaction was often due to the location of administrative headquarters or boundary adjustments. Two examples illustrate this point: First, in Delta State, the Urhobo, Isoko, and Ijo—who had been at the forefront of the push for a Delta State—were disappointed when Asaba was chosen as the administrative headquarters of the new state. Second, the people of Hadeija protested against the location of the capital of the new Jigawa

State at Dutse. These examples show that the expressed wishes of the people and the historical factors claimed to have guided the administration in the creation of states were not applied uniformly (Toyo, 2001).

This study has shown that the issue of state creation has preoccupied successive military regimes in Nigeria, except for the Buhari/Idiagbon regime. It appears that the creation of more states was used to stabilize military administration. In the creation of these states, certain guidelines, such as the need for a balanced federation and geographical contiguity, were considered. However, it must be noted that in some cases, these guidelines were not strictly followed. Similarly, attempts by successive military regimes to create states have not succeeded in satisfying all interest groups in the country. Thus, agitation for the creation of states continues to feature prominently in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The evolution of Nigerian federalism through state creation reflects the complexities of managing a diverse polity. From the pre-independence demands for equitable representation to the civilian and military governments' strategies for addressing ethnic tensions and fostering national unity, state creation has significantly shaped the Nigerian federation.

While state creation has addressed some issues of marginalization and resource allocation, it has also introduced challenges, including administrative inefficiency, increased dependency on federal allocations, and heightened ethnic competition. The paper concludes that the restructuring of Nigeria's federal system should prioritize functional governance over political expediency. To achieve sustainable federalism, policymakers must focus on strengthening institutional frameworks, promoting fiscal autonomy for states, and fostering inter-state collaboration to address regional disparities.

As Nigeria continues to grapple with the tensions inherent in its federal structure, a re-evaluation of the principles guiding state creation and federal governance is imperative to ensure long-term stability, development, and unity.

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