

Exigent of Exploring more Robust and Pragmatic National Integration Policies and Programs and the Future of Nigeria as a United Federal System

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Abstract

National integration policies and programs are not only wheels, but oil and grease that drives a Federal System, especially a heterogeneous one such as Nigeria, the nature and manner in which Nigeria's federal system came into being which is amalgamation (1914) of different nations and groups with various and diverse interest and goals necessitated the entrenchment of national integration policies to bring the diverse groups together and to continue to protect their varied interest with the polity. However, it appears the existing integration policies are inadequate and fall short of achieving the desired national integration necessary for a united and prosperous nation, this is evident in the way regions have continued to agitate for secession and self-independence or break away from the federal system which has in many ways been hindering effective administration and governance of the polity. It is therefore exigent to explore more ways (policies and programs) to further bind the people (nations) that make up the country and give everyone a sense of belonging, fair play, equity and justice as members of the federal system. Summary method will be employed to gather relevant information from respondents from the six geopolitical regions of the country through structured evaluated questionnaire and key in depth interview (KII) on the strength and weakness of the existing integration policies if Nigeria must remain a united federal system evidence abounds that existing integration policies and programs such as Federal character, quota system, National youth service corps, right of residence and property ownership in any part of the country, freedom of association, inter-marriage, equal access to education and employment opportunities among others are grossly inadequate or not been implemented or abused, thereby leading to outcry of marginalization, segregation and call for review, it is the belief of this research work that there is the urgent need to reappraise our national integration policies and programs, this is the only way to enhance the continued existence of Nigeria as a strong united, indivisible, virile country where peace, unity and progress can be achieved.

Keywords: Robust, Pragmatic, National, Integration, Federal System

Introduction

Federal systems have over the years being one of the accepted structure of political administration of many nations and countries, this is because of its acclaimed advantage of ensuring unity in diversity, enhancing competitive development and guarantying independent and autonomy of the federating units. However this system is often built on some important pillars and mechanisms which enhances and lubricates its wheels and operation, the success or failure of the system to a large extent depends on the adherence to its base tenets or not, these tenets are not also static but dynamic, as society changes or evolves so also its tenets and operating mechanism also changes, the extent to which the system is able to adapt to these changes determines its stability or otherwise.

Conceptualization:

Karl Deutsch et al (1966), conceptualized integration as the attainment, within a territory of a sense of community of institutions and practices strong enough and wide spread enough to assure for a long time, dependable expectations of a peaceful community. He adds that national integration is the process of creating a homogeneous political community. It is the increasing promotion or emergence of peace through the breaking down of cultural and regional divides in the process of evolving a United States. National integration involve two processes; which political integration which refers to the progressive bridging of the elite-mass gap in the vertical plan and territory integration which is the process of creating a homogeneous territorial community (Coleman and Robert (1964).

Ojo (2009) conceptualized national integration from international perspective when he argued that it is a process by which members of a social system (citizens) develop linkages and location so that the boundaries of the system persist over time and the boundaries of sub-systems become less consequential in affecting behavior. It is a process through which members of the social system develop an escalating sequence of contact, cooperation, consensus and community. Etzioni (1985), posits that a community can only be considered to be cohesive when it meets the following touch stones. It has effective control of the use of the means of violence. It has a Centre of decision making capacity of effecting the allocation of resources and reward. It is a dominant focus of political identification for a large majority of politically aware citizens. Hence, national integration is the processes in which the different people in a state transfer primordial allegiance to one central authority, which becomes the representative of the people It also indicate the various processes by the central authority which the corporate social group to cohere and regard one another as member in the same stake with obligation towards one another (Frank et al 2013).

It is seen as a process that produces an omnibus of initiatives put in place by a state, its representatives or institutions guided by respect for the unique tradition and cultural backgrounds of ethnicity sharing the same polity with the goal of harmonizing all interests through a form of dialogue and representation and addressing differences that may be divisive and conflicting using the instrument of fairness, justice and equity in the sharing, benefits opportunities, and responsibilities in order to guarantee stability, longevity and prosperity of the polity

There is no doubt that countries or nations operating federal systems are quite aware of this tenets and dynamics, and this is why federal systems often give room for the review of these tenets and where possible accommodate new ones for the continued existence and survival of the system, this is why federal system possess attributes and characteristics such as divisions of power among the levels of government (Federal , State and Local), independent judiciary, constitutional supremacy, rule of law, coordinating relationship and joint efforts among others. It is evident that most federal system especially advanced federal systems such as United states of America (USA), Canada, Switzerland among others have over the years aligned and re-aligned their tenets through their established institutions and sometimes advancing new policies, guidelines of co-operation, interdependent and supervision among others in areas such as revenue collection and sharing, police (state police), custom and immigration, taxation and external relations.

Nigeria's federal system is no exception to this rule and dynamics of administration, no wonder that Nigeria federal system have adopted several mechanism to enhance its co-operate existence as a unified nation despite its varied groups and cultures some of which are federal character principle, quota system, National youth service corps, inter-marriage and right of residence among others and of recent, the call for rotational Presidency among the regions and ethnic groups, unfortunately all these have not addressed the issue of agitation for break-away of secession by some groups within the federal system. It is therefore imperative to explore more ways, measures and avenue or programs and policies that could further enhance the unity of the federating units and give room for desirable progressive changes and the overall development of the nation.

Statement of research problem:

Nigeria federal system is no doubt on the verge of collapse or disintegration as evident by frequent agitations, protests and calls by groups and individuals as well as organization for its divide along ethno-tribal lines. The Oduduwa (Yoruba) group calling for Yoruba nation, the Igbo's calling and agitating for the resurrection of the Republic of Biafra and the Hausa / Fulani calling for Arewa Republic. These calls and agitations are by no means to be underestimated or swept under the carpet as many groups have emerged and championing the cause of their people, the Odua/Afenifere group for the Yoruba in the Southwest, the Movement for the Restoration of the Sovereign People of Biafra (MOSOPB) and the Arewa Consultative Forum for the Hausa/Fulani in the North.

These agitations and calls are pointer to the fact that all is not well with the way the country is being governed or rule and the fact that, the hitherto integration policies and programs are either no longer effective, outdated or requires review and overhauling for better governance and administration of the polity, where everyone (region and people) will feel a sense of belonging and fair play and for the continued existence and survival of the federal system as a viable structure for the country, where growth and development will be achieved.

Aim and objective:

The aim of this research work is to explore more robust national integration policies and programs that could further enhance the unity and progress of Nigeria as a state.

1. To evaluate the existing national integration policies.
2. To ascertain the effectiveness or otherwise of Nigeria's national integration policies and programs.
3. To explore more robust programs and policies of national integration in Nigeria that could bring about a more united federal system.

Research questions:

1. What are the existing national integration policies and programs in Nigeria?
2. How effective are the existing national integration policies in addressing the issue of national unity?
3. Which other policies and programs do you think could further enhance Nigeria national integration?

Method and material

This research work employs field survey through the use of structured questionnaire which is distributed possessively to elicit relevant information from the respondents across the six geopolitical zones as a way of evaluating and assessing the effectiveness of existing national integration policies and program and its limitation, key informal interviews are also conducted to purposely selected individuals or groups across the six geopolitical setting, respondent's views and opinion are taken into consideration.

Significance or importance of the research work

Nigeria government has over the years employed various national integration policies and programs, this research work provides avenue for evaluating their efficacy, the research work assessing and evaluating the existing integration policies, will bring to limelight the shortcomings or limitations inherent in the existing national integration policies and the gaps to be filled. Field survey enables the researcher to have first-hand information from the people across the six geopolitical zones and regions about what they believe or think should be done to address the gaps in national integration. Respondents will proffer more robust and insightful strategy to further enhance national integration as a way to complement the existing ones, it will be clear or more explicit to know and understand that national integration policies are not static but dynamic as society changes or advances, the structure, bureaucratic principle changes so also the binding law and rules which guide the operation of such society need to be fine-tuned and review from time to time.

The research opined that Nigeria as a federal system need to learn from other advanced federal state such as United States of America (USA), Canada and Switzerland, through evolving up-to date strategies and mechanisms for managing and sustaining federal systems. Much needed to be done in terms of national integration among the component units (regions), people, state and local government areas, if Nigeria must continue to survive as a federal system, the issues of marginalization, resource allocation, fund sharing, equal access to political office and authority, as well as uneven development must be accorded the required priority and attention.

Scope and limitations

This research work covers the Nigeria as a country with a population of over 230 million people (according to Federal Office of Statistics 2023 report) it is however divided into clusters which is the six geopolitical settings, data is collected from a sample size of 600 respondents purposely selected from two states in each geopolitical zones (100\ State) Key in-depth interview was also conducted in the two states in each zones.

Limitation:

Although geographical land mass and wideness will ultimately be an issue, however, modern technology such as ICT, internet and cutting-edge devices will provide required solution as they are employed through research partners and research assistants from the regions and zones who carried out filed survey work under strict supervision.



Map of Nigeria showing the six geopolitical zones

Brief review of literature

One fundamental problem confronting Nigeria is the perceived high level of inequality that has led to mutual suspicion and marginalization of minority. Many scholars have given insight into the issue, challenges and factors responsible for crisis of national integration in Nigeria some viewed it as arising from the method of revenue allocation, others viewed it as lop-lopsidedness in power sharing and access to political office holding, while some viewed it as the nature and character of all federal systems (Abubakar 2020). Nonetheless, the challenges of national integration in Nigeria federal system has been attributed to colonial rule and colonial policy of

segregation (divide and rule), the British colonial rule in Nigeria which span over a period of about 100 years from 1861 to 1960 (annexation of Lagos in 1861 – independent in 1960) which saw Nigeria as separate independent region (southern and northern protectorate of west Africa) and which were ruled separately of each other with different laws (constitution) and the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914 by Sir Frederick Lord Lugard, the continued colonial rule by Sir Clifford, Richard, Macpherson and Lintteyton up to independence in 1960, gave rise to the segregation of the society and further compounded her problem of national integration.

Thus colonial heritage provided room for political instability, confrontation and conflict among the various groups thereby hindering effective national integration. In the same vain state fragility (fragile state) the Nigeria state has from onset been a weak state with little or no power to control and manage the affairs of the state since independence, no wonder there had been series of coup and counter coup, military intervention in politics, politicians seeking and securing political office by hook or crook and undermine the very purpose of the existence of the state as noted by Kham (2004) fragile states are characterized by weak ineffective and unstable political and democratic institutions, processes, lack of capacity to enforce rules, loose of autonomy, absence of rule of law among others.

Another problem is resource allocation and control, Nigeria state has over the years been faced with the problem of how to ensure fair and just equitable resource sharing and allocation among the component units of the federation and the regions, especially the oil producing area otherwise referred to (Niger delta), thus the lack of standard formula for sharing revenue among the component units (regions) has often led to conflict and misunderstanding and thereby hindering effective integration, the way federal government apply and use absolute financial superiority and power left much to be desired.

There is also leadership problem which often hinders national integration each successive leaders in Nigeria are ill prepared and lack the vision for a harmonious and virile state, owing to their obnoxious policies and leadership stifles which are often dictatorial, undemocratic and exclusive, beginnings from 1960 independence till date Nigeria leaders tend to be self-centred, parochial in thinking and sentimental about politics and administration, this has often give room for criticism, the poor majority over whom they ought to rule are often neglected as they often rule in the interest of their class and their colonial masters by toying the line of their colonial masters and policies such as IMF and World Bank as well as their policies and programs such as the Structural adjustment program in Nigeria which is been implemented to the letter by successive government.

Corruption and embezzlement of public fund by leaders and those in position of authority constitute a great impediment to national integration, funds meant for infrastructural development such as road, electricity, water, health care services are excluded from the poor majority who they are supposed to serve, closely associated to this is tribalism, nepotism, ethnic favouritism and undue advantage, this has retard development and make life miserable for ordinary citizens, thus giving room for division and disharmony, others include political instability, military incursion into the polity, external interference, lack of patriotism and disregard to societal values and norms.

Findings:

This research through field survey, the use of questionnaire and interview conducted in the six geopolitical regions, identified some factors hindering effective national integration in Nigeria (challenges), among which are colonial legacy, state fragility, poor or uneven resource allocation, leadership problem, corruption, nature and characteristics of Nigeria's society, greed, nepotism, lack of patriotism and the nature and character of federal systems generally itself. Among others.

It is also gathered that the federal government of Nigeria has over the years employed series of national integration policies such as National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), federal character principle, quota system in employment, appointment and admission into higher Institutions and colleges, citizenship, political participation by all. Equal access to political positions of authority, rotation of key political office holdings, zoning system, making state independent and autonomous as well as local government, de-politicizing the military, accountability and transparency, capacity building and reform among others.

The Exigent for Robust National Integration in Nigeria

The imperative and exigent for a robust national integration in Nigeria need not be undermined, given the ways and manner in which groups (ethnic and tribal) organizations, expressed dissatisfaction with the ways and manner which the country (Nigeria) is being administered and therefore, calling for break-up (secession) and possible total disintegration of the country into three or more smaller nations along tribal lines (Hausa/Fulani), (Yoruba) and (Igbo) and even middle-belt). It is pertinent to say that the existing national integration policies and program are falling short of their desired goals of binding the people and bringing about harmony. This is not to say that these policies and programs are not working but rather their implementation leaves much to be desired and more importantly, it should be known that as society changes or advances in terms of science and technology and other modern values as opposed to traditional values, so also the laws, rules guiding the society ought to change or be improved upon, this is more so in a heterogeneous federal system such as Nigeria characterized with various values and tradition, importantly the nature of federal systems generally, demands review of its managing mechanism over time, even in the most advanced federal systems like United States of America, Canada and Australia, this is why National Assemblies in most countries are central in fashioning out the best ways of managing federal system, unfortunately the Nigeria National Assembly is living far beyond expectation in addressing the myriad of issues and problems prompting agitation, conflict and demands for secession by groups and regions

It is pertinent to say and to suggest that apart of ensuring proper and effective implementation of the existing national integration policies such as addressing problems of resource allocation, uneven political office representation, marginalization, uneven and lopsided representation, lack of infrastructure, leadership issue, corruption, military intervention, building and making state and local government stronger virile and autonomous and building institutions that are effective in conflict resolution and transformation as well as enhancing people's sense of belonging through participation, access and provision of basic needs of life and above all

guarantee of fundamental human rights, rule of law and adherence to constitution and fair play among others.

This research work views the above as very imperative and important but are not only sort of the required ingredients to further enhance the unity of the country but there are more things that needs to be done, as posited by respondents through the questionnaires administered across the six geopolitical regions and the purposely conducted interviews.

Importantly, it is gathered that the most essential and fundamental issue that will address the age long demand and agitation for secession and disintegration in Nigeria is the review of constitution (constitutionalism) the body of rules and regulations that binds the people of Nigeria, needs to be overhauled and amended through the will of the people as opposed to the existing colonial and military fashioned and imposed constitution (1979 constitution). There has been argument around the fashioning of existing Nigeria constitution which is said to have been put together by the military regime and handed over to civilian government for use, it is believed to run short of conventional constitution, haven not taken the wishes and aspiration of the majority of Nigerian citizen who the constitution are meant to be administered upon, thus the first thing is to review the constitution to accommodate diverse interest of various groups and people across the country.

Secondly there is urgent need to strengthen the states and local government, which are the government at the grass root level set up for the purpose of local administration, this will enhance inclusive governance, people's participation in government and give sense of belonging and as well bring about grass-root or local development, adequate funding should also be made available for local administration and development purposes such as road, water, rural electricity, health-care provision among others, the recent decision by the supreme court of granting autonomy to Local governments in Nigeria and giving them independence and direct allocation of funding from the federal government is a timely and right decision, the essence of state and local government creation in federal system is to DE-concentrate power, devolve power and decentralize authority so as to achieve developmental goals and objectives, the way the federal government (National or Central government) super imposed herself on state and local government in Nigeria is far from the acclaimed principle of coordinate and insubordination, which are often emphasized in federal system, the Nigeria federal government is a super-power and arrogate to herself enormous power and functions to the detriment of other tiers of government, state and local government as contained in the Exclusive legislative list (Powers and functions of federal government), for real national integration, inclusive governance (people's participation) and overall development, independence and autonomy must be accorded to state and local governments.

Thirdly on the issue of resource allocation, most respondents across the six geopolitical regions opined that lop-lopsidedness of resource allocation from the federal government to regions (state) and local government including government establishments, boards and parastatal are the fundamental issues or problems leading to agitation by groups and organizations. It is true that there is no specified way or manner of sharing or allocating resources (revenue) in Nigeria 1979 constitution, this gave room for the federal government to determine and decide how revenue are shared and allocated among the levels of government, organizations and institutions in the federal system.

The Nigerian fiscal policy provides for sources of revenue generation and create ad-hock committee for disbursing the federally collected revenue among the levels and organs of government, through some institutions such as the Revenue Mobilization Committee and Federation Account Committee, among others to allocate and share revenue among the component units as well as determine wages and salary for the workforce (Wages Commission) the outcry by sections, regions and groups is hinged on changing and inconsistency in the allocation and distribution policies, so much that regions where actual resources are gotten (Niger Delta) demand for higher and larger percent of generated revenue in the name of derivation formula in which they requested that certain percentage ought to and should be reserved for the region (Oil producing region) (Niger Delta) while others are not in support of this as they consider it as undue advantage, other allocation and distribution formula are ecological (environmental) find security vote, emergency and disaster relief agencies, intervention and regional development agencies.

In a nutshell it is not only necessary but important to review, address and fine tune the resource allocation formula currently in use and to replace it with a collectively agreed formula which should be entrenched in the constitution for consistency and certainty, Nigeria should learn from advanced federal systems such United States of America (USA) Canada and Australia among others about parameters and mechanism used in allocation and sharing of their resources equitably and fairly.

Other findings revealed, equal access to political office holding, guarantee of fundamental human rights, freedom of association, religion, right of residence, marriage, property ownership, political participation, political mobilization and sensitization, infrastructural provision, good governance , adequate security of life and property, rule of law, good leadership, accountability, even development, quick dispensation of justice, fair hearing, freedom of press, improved welfare, food security, military politicization, good civil-military relations, employment opportunity, price control, social engineering and above all patriotism and discipline on the part of individuals and groups are some of things needed for effective national integration in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The strategies and ways to enhance robust national integration in Nigeria is multifaceted and in exhaustible, the more you inquire the more you get answers and solutions. It is therefore the responsibility of government to sit down and re-examine the aforementioned views and response, suggestions and recommendations put forward by the different people interviewed or on whom questionnaire have been administered It is also important to say that more need to be done in resuscitating the existing national orientation agencies such as the National Orientation Agency (NOA), which used to be (MAMSER) Mass Mobilization for Social Justice and Economic Recovery, a hitherto very effective organization for mobilization, social engineering and orientation has now become moribund since it became (NOA) with little or nothing to show for its activities in term of mobilization, enlightenment and social engineering, other institutions such as Peace Commission, Federal Character Commission, Boundary Commission and Nigeria Television Authority and some other Media organizations whose role is social mobilization and enlightenment need to be revived and strengthened.

There is definitely no doubt about the glaring fact that the country (Nigeria) is tilting towards collapsing and disintegration, and something urgent and fast needed to be done to sustain and retain her unity and continued existence as a united indivisible country which has been the dream of her founding fathers. It must be bore in mind that federal system by nature and character is fragile and contains centrifugal and external forces which must be managed on a continuous basis for the continued survival and existence of the federal system among the diverse but mutually agreed and consented elements, only then can we hope and have a united strong and dynamic federal structure capable of bringing the most desired progressive desirable changes, growth and development for all and sundry.

Recommendation:

This research work recommend that the constitution of the country which is the fundamental laws, rules and regulations binding the people together need to be review and amended to take care of the often identified and glaring anomalies in the system which has been the bases of agitation and protest by groups and individuals for restructuring or attempted secession such as Republic of Biafra, this is borne out of the fact that the present constitution in use in the country is said to have been drafted by the Military regime and handed over to the Civilian government which came in in 1979 with lots of anomalies and loopholes requiring amendment and review, it is high time that this anomalies and loopholes are addressed through constitutional review.

Secondly the issue of revenue sharing and allocation among the three tiers of government federal, state and local governments as well as between and among the organs of government legislative, executive and judiciary as well as other agencies of government, organizations, boards, institution and parastatal need to be address. It has been observed and noted that access to public office holding in term of appointment, employment and placement has been one of the major issue leading to rancour and dispute among people in the federal establishments and organizations. The hitherto principles of federal character and quota system seems ineffective and not achieving the desired objectives and therefore requires that more attention needed to be given in its implementation so as to give fairness to regions, groups and tributes which make up the country.

Spread of development to different regions, such as the provision of infrastructural facilities roads, water supply, power/electricity, health-care provision, educational institutions, industry among others will help dose the tension and the demands by groups and people of exclusion, marginalization and abandonment by the government, the prospects for national integration and local autonomy depend on the emergence of a purposeful national leadership and proper political restructuring of the federation designed to generate a national image that has more appeal than the regional ones. It is also important to say that more need to be done in resuscitating the existing national orientation agencies such as the National Orientation Agency (NOA), which used to be (MAMSER) Mass Mobilization for Social Justice and Economic Recovery, a hitherto very effective organization for mobilization, social engineering and orientation has now become moribund since it became (NOA) with little or nothing to show for its activities in term of mobilization, enlightenment and social engineering, other institutions such as Peace Commission, Federal Character Commission, Boundary

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