

PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF DEVELOPMENT AGENDA FOR WESTERN NIGERIA

Gafar Idowu AYODEJI, Ph.D., LL.B¹

Raphael Iseoluwa OLAYINKA²

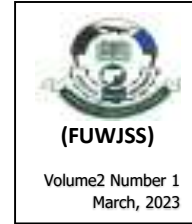
Emmanuel Temitope ABIODUN³

^{1&2}Department of Political Science,
Tai Solarin University of Education
Ijagun, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Emails: *ayodejigi@tasued.edu.ng*

olayinkaiseoluwa@gmail.com

³Sikiru Adetona College of Education, Science Technology,
Omu-Ijebu, Ogun State, Nigeria



Abstract

This paper examines the prospects and challenges of the Development Agenda for Western Nigeria (DAWN) in achieving regional autonomy and integration in the South-Western region of Nigeria. The paper relied on the cooperative federalism theoretical framework to argue that present federalism-based governance architectures in Nigeria are failing. This has resulted in mismanagement of the country's economic fortunes leading to difficulty in providing basic social services for the wellbeing of the majority of the population. As a consequence, the South-Western States of Nigeria are forming alliances to consolidate their integration and autonomy in order to bring meaningful development to the region. Findings of the study through which data of this paper emerged indicate that in spite of the expected challenges, restructuring towards regional integration within the south-west region have potentials of bringing about the needed regional development. Findings also show that the autonomy of south-western States is possible and will lead to socio-economic development when political leaders in the region handle the development of the region with sincerity of purpose. Thus, the paper recommends the proper engagement and enlightenment of citizens in the region through necessary engagements such as dialogue, social media networking and other available means.

Keywords: Federalism, integration, regional autonomy, restructuring

Introduction

The character of federal-state intergovernmental relations, as well as restructuring has been fiercely contested in Nigerian political and scholarly debates (Nwafor-Orizu, Chinyere, & Tochukwu, 2018). It is worth noting that the Nigerian federal system gives the central government a lot of power at the expense of the states. According to Mutiullah (2017), the military hierarchy's superimposition of power has turned Nigeria into a *de facto* unitary state, with state governments having no autonomy discretion on any matter inside their respective geographical areas. Obviously, the exclusive list, detailed in the Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria, (1999) reserve the power to the police and defence, mines, oil fields and mining, construction and maintenance of roads declared by the National Assembly as federal roads, maritime shipping and navigation, railways, fishing and fisheries, lakes, other inland waters ways within Nigeria, geological survey and natural gas, among other sectors instrumental to socio-economic development subnational government in their respective area.

By implication, despite being the chief executive and chief security of their respective states, state governments in Nigeria, including the Southwestern states, have been reduced to a lame duck in dealing with the challenge of insecurity and socio-economic development that they face (Oyewole & Agha 2019). Banditry and abduction, in particular, are on the rise in South-Western Nigeria (Oyewole & Agha 2019). Most of the states in the southwest are economically crippled. Only Lagos, Ogun State and Oyo were regularly featured among the top ten (10) states with the highest revenue generating states in Nigeria between 2010 and 2023 (Ikenwa, 2023; *Naira Metric*, 2016a; *Naira Metric* 2016b; *Naira Metric* 2016c; *Naira Metric* 2016d). As of April 13, 2023, the six states in the South West lead the list of geopolitical zones in the country with the biggest domestic debt burden (Ndubuisi, 2023). In other words, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (2016), the Southwestern area had the largest number of petitions on crime-related issues between 2010 and 2015. Assault, theft, stealing, burglary, unauthorised possession of guns, and violation of the public peace are only a few examples (Ayoola, Adeyemi & Jabaru, 2016).

Therefore, restructuring in this context denotes stripping the central government of certain powers and limiting its area of influence to allow each region to control certain affairs, resources, to make them effective on issues related socio-economic, security and other critical areas of human endeavour. Amidst the call to restructure, governors of south western states on 21st June, 2012, launched the Developmental Agenda for Western Nigeria (DAWN), to integrate south western states towards to facilitating critical development in priority areas (Famakinwa, 2012). It is believed that

integration will bring meaningful development and confront to the problem of insecurity confronting the region. Integration here denotes relationship of community among people within the same political entity; a state of mind or disposition to be cohesive; to act together; and to be committed to mutual programmes (Ojo, 2009). In light of this, the study looked at the potentials and difficulties of the Development Agenda for Western Nigeria (DAWN) in establishing regional autonomy and integration in the South-Western area of Nigeria for the purpose of developing the region.

The Nigerian Federal Structure and Regional Autonomy

The study of federalism remains a theoretical jungle, because the existing represents a blurred picture of what is and what is not a federal government; although each of the theorist of federalism speak a language peculiar to himself no disagreement exist in the divergent approaches to the subject (Jinadu, 1979). Hypothetically, the term has been viewed from the legal-constitutional, institutional and sociological perspectives. Wheare's (1964) view represents the legal-constitutional school, and yet remains the most appealing of all perspectives on federalism. Federalism, to him, is a method of dividing powers so that the general and regional governments are each within its sphere coordinate and independent (Wheare 1964 as cited in Ebiziem & Onyemere, 2018). Federalism has also been viewed to be an integral part of a democratic process or system. Owing to idea of the institutional school of thought, federalism is a process of democratisation in which the implicitness of the unifying principles within the parts (a characteristic of a federation) subsumes the parts within the whole (Awa, 1995 as cited in Anyebe, 2015). Ogbimi (2008) succinctly stated that federalism is an instrument for promoting democracy; a situation in which different learning levels (town/mayoral, local government/county, state/provincial, regional and central) are allowed to coexist in cooperative and inter-dependent statuses.

From sociological perspective, federalism has been argued to be the creature of the society rather than that of the law or constitution as espoused by the legal-constitutional school. A federal society is one with a plurality of ethnic groups with different historical, cultural and linguistic backgrounds; in which ethnic group occupies a marked and distinct geographical location from the other; Therefore the essence of a federalism lies not in the constitutional or institutional structure but in the society itself because it is the society that gave birth to the constitution (Mutillullah, 2017). The word "restructures" as pointed out in Oxford Learners Dictionary, means to organise something such as a system in a new and different way. To this end, restructuring is a systematic intervention aimed at improving the structure, operations system and procedures to enable its transformation

as a multifaceted agent of change, and as a veritable instrument of social cohesion and socio-economic development (Nkwede, 2013). Restructuring is the act of re-organising the legal, ownership, operational or other structure for the purpose of making it more manageable or better organised for its present needs (Ebiziem & Onyemere, 2018). In the context of Nigerian federalism, Nwankwo (Yaqub, 2016) posits that restructuring means divesting the central government of certain powers, limiting its influence in such area of as fiscal policies, military defence, foreign policy, immigration and national election. To him, a call to restructure is a call for the reinvention of the 1963 Constitution, which by legislation will make the existing geo-political zone a federating unit, as well as devolving considerable powers to the region.

Nwosu (Abah & Nwoku, 2017) opined that, the current federal structure is anti-development. He succinctly emphasised that, the federal government has too much power, too much responsibility to perform and too much money to waste. In view of this, there is a need to change such structure; changing the structure as espoused by Nwosu is also synonymous to the word restructuring. To Osaghae (Murnai, 2018), restructuring can be said to be a catchall term for the continuous process of adjustments that federal systems undergo; it entails changes in numbers, boundaries and powers of constituent units as well as relations between federal and sub national governments. He stressed further that any federal system that fails to continuously restructure and respond to changing dynamics is not likely to work well or survives. As rightly observed by Olowononi (1998), restructuring is a federal polity is intended to achieve certain specific objectives. He however, identifies two out of these objectives as:

- (a) One, it serves as a Mechanism to properly give focus and locus to attempts as collective identity and distributive politics, correct perceived structural defects and institutional deformities.
- (b) Two, it is also intended to lay an institutional foundation for a more, just and more equitable sharing of the political space by the multinational groups cohabiting.
- (c) From the foregoing, we can conclude that restructuring is the act of reshaping a country's structural and institutional arrangement, in such a way that will suit the yearnings of its people; as well as protect the interest of various groups in such federation, so as to ensure national cohesion and development. Regional autonomy is the term used to describe how a federating unit is governed and run in the local population's best interests and in accordance with their desires. The power of regions to rule and administer the interests of the local population in accordance with their own initiatives goes beyond simply decentralising governance to distant locations (Awa, 1964; Pereira-

Meanaut, n.d.; Agbakoba, 2021). It is also known as, and refers to an autonomous region's right, authority, and duty to manage and organise its own local government and public affairs in compliance with the requirements of laws and regulations.

As a corollary from the foregoing, Pereira-Meanaut (n.d., p.116) posited that:

...autonomy goes beyond the mere administrative decentralisation and recognises the existence of true political power - although limited - which is not derived from mere delegations of the state and which are not subject of relations of hierarchical inferiority with regard to the central power. The principle of autonomy is that of a pluralism of powers within territorial limits, the proliferation of jurisdictional spheres and of juridical ordinations, the distribution of the functions of the state (such as the function of law-making and that of governing) among different title-bearers which at times operate separately and in different territories and upon separate matters, and at other times act concurrently, juxtaposing themselves in the same territory and upon the same matters.

Within the context of federalism, regional autonomy can be in various forms. Oates, Tanz and Taiwo (Ogbimi, 2008) identified three forms of federalism as fiscal federalism which encompasses the allocation and disbursements of resources by government at various tiers whereby both state and federal authorities in a federation must be given the power in the constitution to have access and control its own financial resources (Abah & Nwoku, 2017); political federalism which is the division of power among tiers of government, where the tiers are co-ordinate and independent; and administrative federalism which has to do with delegation of functions to lower-level government, in consonance with guidelines or control imposed by the higher-level government (Ogbimi, 2008, p.11). Obidinma (Abah & Nwoku, 2017), emphasised that separateness of government also requires that each government must exist not as an appendage of another government, but as an autonomous entity that will be able to exercise its will in the administration of its own affairs without any external direction; and that any arrangement which allows one level of government to dominate the other does not qualify to be called a federal state.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopted the theory of cooperative of federalism to explain the context of the article. The cooperative federalism theory or intergovernmental consultation explains how the degree of independence enjoyed by subnational government in a federation enhances regional integration. The theory which was propounded by Wheare (1964) and expanded by Roderick Hills (1998) and others, proposes equal relationship

between federal authority and the federating unit in that each other as partner rather than subordinate; and this could be achieved by sharing powers and resources between federating units, so as to have enough resources to perform its constitutional duties. He, however, identified the three main assumptions of the theory by stating that the national and state agencies should work together jointly, sharing of power between state and national and that power should not be concentrated on any level of government (Jinadu, 1979).

In relation to this study, it is however important to note that the cooperative federalism theory of Wheare (1964) is significant. For there to be a genuine regional integration in South West region, we cannot rule out the need for the autonomy of the constituent units which happens to be the basic assumption of Wheare's (1964) theory of cooperative federalism. It will be difficult for states that lack political, financial or administrative autonomy to embark on a collaborative effort with other states to effectively combat the problem of insecurity without security agencies of its own or control over the existing agencies of the central government. The same way it will be difficult for states who find it difficult to internally generate revenue for the running of administration in their respective jurisdiction, due to lack of financial autonomy or inability to have full control of the mineral resources deposited in their states to engage in a regional integration which may require financial commitment.

Also, success of any regional integration lies on the shoulders of the political actors by shifting their loyalties in distinct national settings so as to ensure a high sense of belonging, mutual understanding and nationalism. These political actors, to some extent, must possess some degree of autonomy to make independent decision in such union without any form of interference or limitation from higher authority. The inadequacy of the regional integration as espoused by neo-functionalists, is overdependence of less developed states on the economic and its developed counterpart, which may also degenerate into a master-slave relationship which cooperative federalism forbids.

Agitations for Restructuring Nigeria's Federalism

In Nigeria, federalism is one of the political heritages the country inherited from her British colonialist. The origin of federalism could be traced to the Arthur Richard's Constitution of 1946 which brought regionalism by dividing the country into three regions, followed by the Macpherson Constitution of 1951 which made Nigeria a quasi-federal state; the country became a federal state with the introduction of the Lyttleton Constitution of 1954 (Abah & Nwoku, 2017). Prior to the amalgamation of the Colony and Southern Protectorate with Northern Protectorate in 1914,

the current geographical entity called “Nigeria” with geo-political zones and states were once a conglomeration of “empires, “emirates and “kingdoms”, that are previously autonomous political entities and sovereign within their spheres of jurisdiction (Nwkedde, Dauda & Orija, 2018). Osuntokun (Akinyemi et al., 1979) identified two major reasons that prompted the Nigeria’s federalism, which are: the deliberate intention of the British colonialist to impose a federal system on Nigeria, so as to maintain a neo-colonial control on the country after independence and historical as well as geographical factor. Similarly, Abah and Nwoku, (2017) submitted that what gave impetus to the adoption of federalism by the colonialist was the heterogeneous character of the ethnic nationalities; to encourage unity and also allow the autonomy of the constituent units to manage affairs within their jurisdiction

Nigeria since the introduction of the Richard Constitution of 1946 to 1966 when the military government aborted the First Republic, adopted regionalism within its federal structure. This system of government is believed to encourage unity in diversities as it allows the constituent units some level of autonomy to manage their own local affairs in areas of their jurisdictions (Abah & Nwoku, 2017). Abah & Nwoku, (2017) further posited that during this period, emphasis was on the principle of derivation which allowed each region to retain 50% of the revenue generated in their domains, while the practice of derivation enabled each region to embark on competitive development projects that led to the generation of more wealth to each region. For instance, the South Western Nigeria under the premiership of Obafemi Awolowo was able to witness meaningful development through regional integration and collaboration between states within the region. The Western Region Civil Service was a town-gown synergy that facilitated the strengthening of its economic analysis capacity through a unique collaboration that brought together civil servants and academics in a town-gown relationship. This infused civil service administration with debated and brainstormed ideas and innovation to function at optimal performance (Olaopa, 2018).

However, this arrangement was upturned in 1966, with the intrusion of the military into Nigerian political landscape (Abah & Nwoku, 2017), coupled with some other factors like the discovery of oil which paradoxically made the country a petrol dollar economy, the proliferation of states and creation of more local governments, the military modelled civilian leadership style exhibited in the Fourth Republic, ethnic domination, undue centralisation of powers which culminated into a master-slave relationship between the presidents and state governors consequentially led to the erosion of the autonomy of the constituents. Hence, at every critical moment in the country’s political history, efforts have been made by groups especially the

most disadvantaged section, to agitate for reforms, reconciliation, reconstruction, rehabilitation or restructuring one thing or the other about the country's institutional arrangement; and this have given birth to quite number of commissions, committees, constituents assemblies, constitutional conferences, constitutional amendment exercises, among others.

From 1960 when Nigeria got independence, many restructuring have taken place, we had three (3) regions, then we had Mid-West region, later we had nine (9) states, later twelve (12) states then nineteen (19) states and now thirty-six (36) states (Yakubu Gowon as cited in Munirat & Gusau, 2017). After the civil war between 1967 and 1970, the Yakubu Gowon administration coined the three "Re's" namely, "Reconciliation, Reconstruction and "Rehabilitation" so as to be used to blunt the edges of the traumatic years of the civil war on the country's unity (Yaqub, 2016). As a result of series of agitations that followed the creation of twelve states, the Murtala administration's focus was to ensure even development within the federal structure, bringing the government nearer to the people and the need to make the creation of new states to minimise future agitation. In achieving this, he set up a panel on the issue of state creation and boundary adjustment, headed by Justice Ayo Irikefe (Muhammed as cited in Agagu & Ola, 2007, p.123). In this same vein, the Gen. Sanni Abacha administration set up the National Constitutional Conference (NCC), which majorly debated on the issues of state creation (Muhammed cited in Agagu & Ola, 2007).

Regardless of the twenty-three years of interrupted civilian rule and democratic consolidation in the fourth Republic, the impediments bedevilling the country's federal structure remain unabated and the resounding calls for restructuring continue to echo. There have been two national conferences in the Fourth Republic, one convened by President Obasanjo in 2005 and the other Goodluck Jonathan in 2014 (Rufai, 2017). One thing peculiar to this calls and various committees set up over the years is that, it is centred on how the Nigeria federal system should be. But yet none of these aforementioned conferences neither restored true federalism (regional autonomy) nor minimise the call for restructuring. Thus, the next section discusses the importance of restructuring towards regional autonomy and integration.

Restructuring and Regional Autonomy and Integration within the Nigerian Federal Structure

Apart from the fact that restructuring will lead to regional autonomy and regional integration, other benefits of restructuring are highlighted below. First, encouragement of competitiveness among regions. Regional autonomy and integration will enhance healthy competition among the existing regions, as regional governments will strive to embark on

developmental projects and policies that will distinct from other regions. However, there is a direct correlation between competitiveness and the creation of peace and social harmony in this age of globalisation; the performance of nations is better assessed by their level of competitive abilities and capabilities. Competitiveness relates to the productive capacity of a nation, region or state to effectively utilise its human, capital and natural resources; therefore, within the context of the current national challenges, competitiveness is the only way for jobs, growth, revenue, prosperity (Famakinwa, 2015).

Second, reduction of overconcentration of power. It has been observed that, more powers had been concentrated at the centre manifested in a federal government assumed ever more powers and responsibilities, took the biggest chunk of national revenues (now about 53 percent) at the detriment of other tiers (Ezeibeim & Oyemere, 2018). States depend almost entirely on the central government for security, finance, roads, schools, health facilities, power, employment, water, industries, among others (Nkwede, 2018). Therefore, granting autonomy to the components units will reduce the arbitral power vested in the central government which has made the other tiers of government an appendage or stooge of the central government.

Third, reduction of the work-load and pressure at the centre. Restructuring the Nigerian federalism will not only enhance regional autonomy and integration, but it will also reduce the work-load and responsibilities of the central government. Considering the fact that the state and local government are closer to the people than the central government; restructuring through constitutional amendment will assign more function to them unlike what we have under the present federal arrangement.

Fourth, productivity and effective usage of deposited natural resources. As rightly observed by Atiku, (2017), the current structure which concentrates too much power and resources in the centre makes us economically unproductive, uncompetitive, indolent, and politically weak, disunited and unstable. It has made our component units too suspicious of one another, a suspicion that makes any rational discussion very difficult. It rests on the foundation of dependence on oil revenues, which seem to be in long-term decline and is, therefore, unsustainable. According to Osaghae (cited in Murnai, 2018), the states were not so lucky in the offshore-onshore case in which the federal government sought a declaration that it had exclusive rights to offshore sources of revenue and that states were only entitled to a share of revenue from onshore sources. Regarding this unproductive development, restructuring and regional autonomy will also enhance resource control; this implies that the components units will have access to effective management and creation of wealth and opportunities out

of the mineral resources deposited in their respective jurisdiction; as send certain percentage to the central government as royalty.

Lastly, reduction in the political tension or pressure at the centre. Due to the economic benefits and political power attached to the country's central government, the federation account and allocations from the centre easily became the target of national politics without appropriate and sufficient regards for the logic of economics and fair play in the management of limited resources (Tamuno, 2004). Various individuals from the different sections or ethnic groups in the country strive to be part of the national government and competitively struggle to attain the presidential seat. And this has always metamorphosed into electoral irregularities like rigging, vote buying political violence, among others. Therefore, restructuring and regional autonomy will also allow each region to have its regional government head, as it was in the First Republic where each region was being headed by the Premier.

Obviously, restructuring towards regionalism of the Southwestern states for effective governance and meaningful development is not impossible in Nigeria. However, certain factors as espoused below remain the potential impediments towards achieving this goal and the major ones are further enumerated below. First, there is a challenge of elitist interest. Over the years, the majority of the ruling elite have been reluctant to yield to the call to restructure the nation's federal system, especially those milking from the fat cow of ethnic domination, imbalance formula of revenue allocation, oil well and unjustified contracts that are being awarded to them. According to Amuwo and Herval (2004) Nigeria's political restructuring efforts under the Abacha military junta was informed mainly by elite factionalism; while the elite has been conceptualised as the only viable forum to reinvent normalcy to the country's federal system by correcting the structural and functional inequalities. Just as Jinadu (1979) posited that, the academic study of federalism like the academic study of regional integration is preoccupied with the role of elites in the federalising process and also with the part which social communication can play in that process; the conception of federalism in terms of the dispersion of power is useful.

Second, there is also an issue of ethnic domination and sectional interest. The numerical strength of the North in terms of population, states of the federation, seat allocated to them in the National Assembly, among others have been factors that have made impossible for restructuring or regional autonomy to become a reality in Nigeria. The word restructuring has been seen as a thorn in the flesh of the northerners who happen to be the dominant group in the country. It is believed among the conservative northerners who are opposed to restructuring and some myopic advocates of the concepts from the south that restructuring and regional autonomy will strengthen

other ethnic groups against the northerners who are the major beneficiaries of the present federal arrangement.

Since independence in 1960, people from the majority ethnic group have occupied government at the centre more than the people of the minority ethnic group; those at the helm affairs at the centre have conspired against oil producing areas in such a way that they are made to suffer the adverse effect of oil exploration and exploitation and without adequate compensation and benefits from the petrol business (Dode & Cletus, 2017). Before the country's independence, each of the three main ethnic groups feared the domination of one another; the Yoruba feared the Igbo, the Igbo feared the Yoruba, the Yoruba and Igbo who constituted the Southerners were feared by the northerners and vice versa. The North acknowledged the superiority of the South in terms of an early start in Western education and the formed the basis of the northern fear of southern domination; which stimulated the northernisation policy between 1950s and 1960s (Albert, 2004).

Third, constitutional amendment procedure continues to be albatross. The rigmarole and procedural task attached to Nigeria's constitutional amendment procedure have made the efforts to restructure the country's federalism a failed project exercise; the constitutional amendment process in Nigeria usually begins with setting of Constituent Assembly where citizens decide on which clause or provisions that will be deliberated on by the constitutional amendment committee who will deliberate on it before presenting its recommendations to the President, who is expected to present to the National Assembly. Nigeria has a rigid constitution which requires absolute majority before there could be any changes in its constitutional provision. Aside that, it operates bi-cameral legislative system with two legislative parliaments which are composed of parliamentarians from different ethnic groups that share different views, who also belong to different political parties with different position on restructuring.

Fourth, there is also the perennial problem of executive-legislative rivalry and superiority clash. The conventional rivalry between the executive arm of government and the legislature has also being a drawback and stumbling block militating against efforts to restructure the country's federal system. For restructuring to bring about regional autonomy, it will require constitutional amendment which is one of the constitutional duties of the country's National Assembly, where party affiliations or differences determine what policy or motion which the parliamentarian will support. Stating why he did not personally implement the Report of the 2015 National Conference despite having over seven months to do so. The former President, Goodluck Jonathan contended that the crisis in the National Assembly prevented him from doing so (Akintoku, 2018). He succinctly emphasised that, the then Speaker, Aminu Tambuwal, defected from the Peoples

Democratic Party (PDP) to the All-Progressives Congress (APC) and there was no way he could have been able to get his cooperation. Thus, at that time, the National Assembly was not conducive for the healthy deliberations and consideration of such an important document. It was therefore obvious that some members of the National Assembly and their collaborators were ready to shoot down anything that in their thinking would improve the image of Jonathan's government (Akintoku, 2018).

Fifth, there is also a fear of disintegration and secession. Regional autonomy, to some, is an unconscious means of strengthening the disintegrators who believe that the best solution for the Nigerian state misfiring is either to disintegrate or some of its components secede. It is believed that with financial and political autonomy, regional government will be enormously powerful than the central government. With this, it will be easy for a region to mobilise its citizens against the central government. This was the case in the 1960's when Major Odumegwu Ojuwku led the Eastern region to embark on the unattainable secession adventure.

Sixth, economic viability of the existing constituent units remains a source of worry. One of the criticisms levelled against the call for the return to regional autonomy is the doubt of whether the constituent units will be able to cater for the need of their people, considering the financial status of most states in the country today. Gowon posited that his fear about the resounding rhythm of restructuring is, whether the states will be financially capable to run their states properly (*Cable News*, 2017). Olowononi (2004) argued that the creation of more states has forced the revenue base of the affected states to diminish. Thus, the various constraints which impeded the raising of more internal revenues within the states, coupled with the decision of the central government to take over important taxes previously controlled by the regional government have made the state fiscally dependent on the federally collected revenue. And this has formed the basis of the argument against restructuring, as the antagonists believed that the present arrangement will work against the economic viability of the constituent units.

Seventh, the misuse of power and arbitrary tendency of politicians cannot be disregarded. Another criticism levelled against the call for regional autonomy is that, it will enhance fiscal autonomy and state policing the constituent units put national economic security at risk. These two variables are enough for the regional heads or state governors to possess enormous power which could be arbitrarily misused to enrich themselves, nourish their political ambition or to victimise and oppress members of the opposition or anyone against their political ambition.

Assessment of DAWN and Regional Integration in South West Nigeria

An empirical example of regional integration in the South Western Nigeria is the Developmental Agenda for Western Nigeria (DAWN Commission) which established by the Governments of Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Osun, Ondo and Oyo in July, 2013. This is to midwife the regional integration agenda by leveraging on the cultural background and historical relationship to bring about meaning development in the 21st century. In a bid to achieve these objectives, the Commission has highlighted six (6) Regional Developmental Strategy called “Agbajo Owo” which includes social and human development, economic and agricultural development, infrastructural development, home land affairs, partnership and intergovernmental relationship, governance, civil service and institutions (Famakinwa, 2012). For the purpose of evaluation, these regional developmental strategies will serve as a yardstick for evaluating this regional integration in South-West, Nigeria.

Since its inauguration in 2013, the Commission has enabled the six Yoruba states to communicate as a region by collating their views and pushing them forward to ensure development (Oyeleye, 2018). In an attempt to enhance social and human development in the region, the DAWN Commission in partnership with the Bank of Industry (BOI) organised the “First South-West E-commerce Summit and Expo” between March 26 and 28, 2018. Pacquedi Iraboore the representatives of BOI, submit that the summit was organised to expose the young e-entrepreneur and business owners to opportunities being offered by the Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises (SMSE), particularly in the South-West region (Atoyebi, 2018). As part of the Commission’s efforts to transform the education sector, it has convened roundtable discussions such as the Collaborative Framework for Education Development and Advancement in Western Nigeria which was held on June, 20 2016; with the principal objective of evolving a truly bespoke Southwest Education, and also to set a template for a coordinated approach to developing education as a critical competitive tool for regional advancement. In a bid to boost agriculture which happens to be the age longed source of revenue for the region, the governors under the aegis of Western Governor Forum have agreed to execute a Rice Accelerated Programme for Integrated Development (RAPID) to facilitate food security and job creation in the region by allocating land to the Lagos State Government for the cultivation of rice (Alimi, 2018).

The South-West Governors’ Forum met in Abuja, Ibadan and Akure on 7th June, 25th June and 22nd of July, 2019 respectively to brainstorm on how to curtail the growing spate of insecurity in the region (Amaefule 2019; Adebayo 2019; Oluwole, 2019). The forum identified the need for collaborative efforts in combating banditry, kidnapping and cultism in the region (Oyewole & Agha, 2019). The then Chairman, South West Governors’ Forum, Rotimi Akeredolu called for the setting up of a joint

regional border patrol and cooperation in intelligence gathering the six states. In this regard, the Southwestern governors made efforts to put in place new security architecture known as “Amotekun” to curtailing the problem of insecurity, confronting the region, in recent times (PM News August, 2, 2019).

On the other hand, it has been argued that the divisive tendency based on the political and ethnic differences within the Southern Western region could affect the ability of the Commission to produce the desired result. For instance, in an interview granted with the *The New Diplomat*, (2018 April, 5) Barrister Oladotun Hassan (The President of the Yoruba Council of Youths Worldwide (YCYW) posited that: The DAWN Commission is a succinct idea, but as far as politics is concerned within the region, it has nailed the coffin of the DAWN Commission; because we are divided across political lines. In every home state, there are lots of wrangling and acrimonies among the governors and this has really frustrated the implementation of the DAWN Commission.

Moreso, this integration tends to favour some selected states to the detriment of others, especially states like Lagos, Oyo and Osun. Cocoa House, Ibadan Oyo State is the headquarters of the Commission. By implication, most of the assets and investments of the Commission are situated in Ibadan, while most of the summits organised by the Commission are held in most of these states. The decision of South Western Government to allocate land to the Lagos State Government for the cultivation of rice through the Rice Accelerated Programme for Integrated Development (RAPID) will be great benefits to Lagos state than the allocators of the land. However, it is important to note that leadership problem, change of government in each of the state and their economic status affect the operation of the Commission to achieve the main mandate of the Southwest regional integration, especially in a situation where the governors belong to different political party.

Reflections on Restructuring, Regional Autonomy and Regional Integration in Nigeria

Considering the conception of restructuring as offered by various scholars, coupled with the assumptions and arguments of its proponents, it could be deduced that the call for restructuring is a call to return the system of government adopted in the First Republic. That is, an era where each region was autonomous in its respective jurisdiction. However, the term restructuring which is the new bride of its admirers in Nigeria, could also give birth to two inseparable twins, which are regional autonomy and regional integration. Integration whether at the regional, national or international level can be said to be a process by which members of a 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 behaviour. In this process, members of the social system develop an escalating sequence of contact, cooperation, consensus and community (Ojo, 2009).

According Haas (Dosenrode, 2010) the pro-founder of neo-functionalism regional integration, integration is a process whereby political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities to a new centre, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over pre-existing national states. Going by Haas's view on integration, it could be said to be an attempt by various sovereign nation-states and their constituted authorities to move towards the same direction different from their usual position for the purpose of achieving a particular goal. In the same vein, Ahmed and Dantata (2006) see integration as the process of ensuring that the component units of a country are brought together to achieve a high sense of belonging, mutual understanding and nationalism.

Therefore, we can say regional integration is a form of voluntary association, alignments and cooperation among different socio-political entities, who come together to form a union that will serve as a platform for them to collectively address issues peculiar to their existence and well-being. As espoused by Haas, political actors are presumed to shift their loyalties in distinct national settings, so as to ensure a high sense of belonging, mutual understanding and nationalism. Such political actors, in the views of Ahmed and Dantata (2006), to some extent, must possess some degree of autonomy to make independent decision in such union without any form of interference or limitation from higher authority.

Relying on the foregoing, regional integration and regional autonomy are inseparable twins. For there to be regional integration in Nigeria, we cannot rule out the need for the autonomy of the constituent units. In a bid to emphasise the need for the autonomy of the constituent units in federal settings, Wheare (Abah & Nwoku, 2017) asserted that a federal system must be fashioned in a manner that each level of government should be a co-ordinate to the other and that no tier should be seen to be subservient in relationship with other tiers of government. To Esho (Abah & Nwoku, 2017), autonomy of states is the defining principles, foundation and bedrock of a true federalism; so as to ensure that the federal government acts within the ambit of powers assigned to it while allowing the states to run their own affairs without frustration, intimidation, among others.

It is however important to note that, the term regional autonomy within the context of federalism could be synonymously referred to as decentralisation of power. Scholars of federalism have identified three possible trends in any existing federation as: centralisation, decentralisation

and deconcentration (Gana & Egwu, 2002, p.93). Gana and Egwu (2002) opined that decentralisation is simply represented by the tendency toward assigning increased responsibility to the constituent units of the federation. Thus, regional autonomy is the decentralisation of power to the regional government, so as to enable them to possess the power to perform expected functions, as well overseeing affairs that directly affect and has impact on their respective jurisdiction.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This article revealed that the call to restructure is not a new development in the country's political history, and this is as a result of the defects of the country's federalism, which give room for over centralisation of power at the expense of the constituent units. In an attempt to yield to the agitations of the advocates of restructuring, huge funds have been expended on series of national conferences and constitutional amendment exercises with beautiful and fascinating recommendations without attendant implementation. This has been attributed to sectional domination, executive-legislature tussle, fear of disintegration, among others. The article also revealed that pragmatic adherence to the call to restructure, will not only correct the abnormalities inherent in the Nigeria federal system, but will also pave way for regional autonomy; which is also a pre-requisite for integration at the regional level because it is when the subordinates within the regions are autonomous that they can be thinking of cooperating to ensure regional integration without any interference or constraint from the higher levels of government.

In view of this, the following recommendations have been made. First, there is a need for proper political education for Nigerians on the need to restructure the country's institutional arrangement, so as to correct the negative notion that restructuring is an attempt to humiliate and reducing the growing influence of a particular ethnic group or to encourage secession. Second, the composition of National Assembly in terms of representation should be done in a way that will ensure equity among the various ethnic groups, so that issue of national interest will not be subjected to the numerical strength or the wish of a particular ethnic group. Third, the Nigeria's fiscal policy and revenue allocation should be transformed from a distributive oriented to a productive or derivatives-oriented form, this will encourage state governments to map out better strategies and create opportunities that will enhance the economy. Lastly, South Western conference devoid of political affiliation or ethnic sentiments should be convened to chart a new course for regional autonomy and integration.

References

- Abah, E.O., & Nwoku, P. M. (2017). Restructuring Nigeria: The proposed form and shape. *Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research*, 25(7), 1518-1526.
- Abah, H. (July 17, 2018). Middle Belt Forum restates call for restructuring. *Daily Trust online*. Retrieved from <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/middle-belt-forum-restates-call-for-restructuring-261288.html>
- Adebayo, A. (2019 June, 25) South West governors vow to tackle security challenges in regions. *Premium Times Online*: Retrieved from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/336975/southwest-governors-vows-to-tackle-security-challenges-in-region/>
- Agbakoba, O. (2021, February 8). The missing fundamentals and regional autonomy for Nigeria. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://guardian.ng/issue/the-missing-fundamentals-and-regional-autonomy-for-nigeria/>
- Agagu, A. A., & Ola, R. F. (2007). *Developmental agenda of the Nigerian state*. Akure: Lord Keynes Publishing.
- Ahmed, I. K., & Dantata, B. S. (2016). Federalism and National Integration: The Nigerian experience. *Historical Research Letter*, 35, 2224-3178.
- Akintoku, E. (2018, November 20). Restructuring: I expected Buhari to implement confab report-Jonathan. *Punch Newspaper*. Retrieved from <https://punchng.com/restructuring-i-expected-buhari-to-implement-confab-report-jonathan-2/>
- Albert, O. (2004). Federalism, inter-ethnic conflicts and the northernisation policy of the 1950s and 1960s. In K. Amuwo, A. Adigun, R. Suberu, & G. Heral (Eds.), *Federalism and political restructuring in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books.
- Alimi, N. (2018, April 3). South-west governors to embark on joint rice project. *Nigerian Tribune online*. Retrieved from <https://tribuneonlineng.com/south-west-governors-to-embark-on-joint-rice-project/>
- Amaefule, E. (2019, August 20). South-west tops domestic debtors' list with N1.04tn. *Punch Newspaper*. Retrieved from <https://www.punchng.com/south-west-tops-domestic-debtors-list-with-n1-04tn/>
- Amuwo, K., & Heral (2004). On the notion of political restructuring in federal system. In K. Amuwo, A. Adigun, R. Suberu, & G. Heral (Eds), *Federalism and political restructuring in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books.
- Anyebe, A. A. (2015). Federalism as a panacea for cultural diversity in Nigeria. *Global Journal of Human-Social Science*, 15(3), 15-24.
- Atiku, A. (2017, March 6). It is a myth to say Nigeria does not need restructuring. A speech delivered at the Annual Professor Ademola Popoola Public Lecture, Faculty of Law, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. *The Plebiscite Naija* Retrieved from <https://www.theplebiscitenaija.wordpress.com/2017/03/19/speech-by-the-guest-speaker-atiku-abubakar-gcon-former-vice-president-federal-republic-of-nigeria->
- Atoyebi, O. (2018, March 12). Bank of industry (BOI), Developmental Agenda of Western Nigeria Commission (DAWN) seeks e-commerce growth. *The Nation*

- Newspaper online* Retrieved from <https://thenationonline.net/dawn-boi-nustream-host-southwest-e-commerce-summit/>
- Awa, E.O. (1964). *The federal system in transition: Regional autonomy. Federal Government in Nigeria*. Berkeley: University of California Press. <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520339064-005>
- Ayoola, F.J., Adeyemi, M.A., Jabaru, S.O. (2016). On the estimation of crime rate in the South-West of Nigeria: Principal components of analysis approach. *Global Journal of Science Frontier Research*, 15(2), 1-9.
- Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999*. Lagos: Federal Government Press.
- Debt Management Office (2013, December 31). Federal and state governments external debt stock as at 31st December 2013. DMO Nigeria. Retrieved from <https://www.dmo.gov.ng/debt-profile/sub-national-debts/1068-federal-and-state-governments-external-debt-stock-as-at-31st-december-2013>
- Dosenrode, S. (2010). Federalism theory and neo-functionalism: Elements for an analytical framework perspective on federalism. *Centro studi Sul Federalismo*, 2(3), 2036-5438.
- Dode, R. O., & Cletus, E.C. (2017). Emergence of oil and the dynamics in Nigeria dynamics of violence in Niger Delta: Remote and immediate causes. *Studies in Politics and Society*, 5 (1), 113-125
- Ebiziem, J. E., & Oyemere, F. E. (2018). The doctrine of federalism and the clamour for restructuring of Nigeria for good governance: Issues and challenges. *International Journal of Advanced Academic Research Social & Management Sciences*, 4, 274-293.
- Famakinwa, D. (2012). Development agenda for Western Nigeria (DAWN): The final implementation roadmap. Retrieved from <http://dawncommission.org/presentation.php>
- Famakinwa, D. (2015). Sub-national competitiveness. *Dawn Commission* Retrieved from <http://dawn-commission-org/presentation.php/>
- Gana, A. T. & Egwu, S. (eds) (2003). *Federalism in Africa*. Eritrea: Africa Word Press Inc.
- Hills, R. (1998). The political economy of cooperative federalism: Why state autonomy makes sense and 'dual sovereignty' doesn't". *Michigan Law Review*, 96(4), 813-944.
- Ikenwa, C. (2023). Highest revenue generating states in Nigeria: Top 10. *Nigerian Infopedia*, Retrieved from <https://nigerianinfopedia.com/highest-revenue-generating-states-in-nigeria/>
- Ndubuisi, F. (2023). South-West, South-South States top N5.33tn Domestic Debt Chart. *Thisday*, Retrieved from <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2023/04/13/south-west-south-south-states-top-n5-33tn-domestic-debt-chart/>
- Nwafor-Orizu, I., Chinyere, O. M., & Tochukwu, E. K. (2018). Political restructuring in Nigeria: The need, challenges and prospects. *International Journal of Academic Research in Public Policy and Governance*, 5(1), 25-47.
- Jinadu, L.A. (1979). A note on the theory of federalism. In A.B., Akinyemi, P.D. Cole & W. Ofonogaro. *Readings on federalism*. Lagos: Nigeria Institute of International affairs.

- Murnai, A. (2018, January 20). Obasanjo backs restructuring Nigeria. *Premium News*. Retrieved from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/256111-obasanjo-backs-restructuring-nigeria.html>
- Mutiullah, A.O. (2017). *Reflection on Nigerian politics*. Abuja: J. J. Professional Publisher.
- Naira Metrics* (2016, February 11). I.G.R of states in Nigeria for 2010. *Naira Metrics*. Retrieved from <https://www.google.com/amp/s/nairametrics.com/2016/02/11/i-g-r-of-states-in-nigeria-for-2010/%3famp=1>
- Naira Metrics* (2016, February 11). I.G.R of States in Nigeria for 2011. *Naira Metrics*. Retrieved from <https://www.google.com/amp/s/nairametrics.com/2016/02/11/i-g-r-of-states-in-nigeria-for-2011/%3famp=1>
- Naira Metrics* (2016, February 11). I.G.R of States in Nigeria for 2012. *Naira Metrics*. Retrieved from <https://www.google.com/amp/s/nairametrics.com/2016/02/11/i-g-r-of-states-in-nigeria-for-2012/%3famp=1>
- Naira Metrics* (2016, February 11). I.G.R of States in Nigeria for 2013. *Naira Metrics*. Retrieved from <https://www.google.com/amp/s/nairametrics.com/2016/02/11/i-g-r-of-states-in-nigeria-for-2013/%3famp=1>
- Nkwede, J.O. (2013). Federalism and state creation in Nigeria. *African Journal of Politics and Administrative Studies*, 6 (1), 70-80.
- Ogbimi, F. E. (2008). *Understanding the theory and practice of federalism and democracy*. Ibadan: Claverium.
- Ojo, E. (2009). Federalism and the search for national integration in Nigeria. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relation*, 3(9), 384-395.
- Olaopa, T. (2018, March 11). The core of South-West success story under Chief Obafemi Awolowo. *The Sun News Column*. Retrieved from <http://www.sunsnewsonline.com/the-core-of-south-west-success-story-under-chief-obafemi-awolowo-2/>
- Olowononi, G. D. (1998). Revenue allocation and economics of federalism. In K. Amuwo, A. Adigun, R. Suberu & G. Heral (Eds.), *Federalism and political restructuring in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books.
- Oluwole, J. (2019 July, 22). Insecurity: South West governors meet, promise overhaul of security architecture. *Premium Times Online*. Retrieved from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/south-west/342366-insecurity-south-west-governors-meet-promise-overhaul-of-security-architecture>
- Oyewole, N., & Agha, E. (2019 June, 29). Nigeria: Spike in kidnappings, banditry has South West on edge. *Daily Trust online*. Retrieved from <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/spike-in-kidnappings-banditry-has-south-west-on-edge.html>
- Pereira-Meanaut, A. C. (n.d.). Concepts of state and regional autonomy. Retrieved from <https://www.law.kuleuven.be/apps/jura/public/art/24n1/pereirameanaut.pdf>
- PM News* (2019, August 26). South West states set for take-off of WNSN, new security prospects. *PM News* Retrieved from <https://www.pmnewsnigeria.com/2019/08/26/south-west-states-set-for-take-off-of-wnsn-new-security-outfit/>

- Rufai, E. (2017). Next generation: What is restructuring and does Nigeria need it? Retrieved from www.chathamhouse.org/file/next-generation-nigeria-what-is-restructuring-and-does-nigeria-need-it#
- Tamuno, N.T. (2004). Nigeria federalism in historical perspective. In K. Amuwo, A. Adigun, R. Suberu, & G. Herault (Eds.), *Federalism and political restructuring in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books.
- The New Diplomat*, (2018 April, 5) South west governors frustrating DAWN commission's implementation, says YCYW President. *The New Diplomat* Retrieved from <https://www.newdiplomatng.ng.com/2018/04/05/swest-govs-frustrating-dawn-comissions-implementation-says-ycyw-president/>
- Wheare, K. C. (1964). *Federal government*. London: Oxford University Press.