



POLITICS OF INTER-GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS IN NIGERIA: AN APPRAISAL OF CURRENT ISSUES

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ABSTRACT

The paper attempts a critical explication of the dynamics of purported unity in diversity amongst multinational states in the third world with federal system of government along the lines of horizontal and vertical power relations in administration and governance. It is based on secondary sources of data that made way for proper espouse of the views of varied scholars on the key issues under study. The analysis observed that there obtains conflict between and among the organs and levels of government in the making and implementation of public policies.

INTRODUCTION

The structure and composition of societies define their governance and administration. Multi-national states are mainly formed on the bases of heterogeneity in culture, descent and origin as seen in India, America, Canada, and even Nigeria. Thus, the Nigerian government and administration is structured in a manner that the various ethnic groupings and nationalities would be represented in processes of policy formulation and execution. The evolution of federalism in Nigeria derives from economic, political/constitutional, social and cultural developments which have influenced the nature and character of inter-governmental [power] relations (Ekpo, 2004). Fiscal and power arrangements are usually properly worked out among the various levels of government which invariably establishes the power configuration in federal states with the exclusive, concurrent and residual legislative lists clinically enumerated and delineated. The three tiers of government: the national (federal), state and local levels of government all have defined power allotments with the national government wielding overriding status and functions.

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The advent of civilian rule cum democracy in Nigeria in 1999 has occasioned recurrent issues/problems of inter governmental socio-political and economic wrangling and crises amongst the different levels of government. The issues of revenue allocation/sharing formulae, resources control; internal security and terrorism; creation of states; wage fixing; establishment of the sovereign wealth fund; structure, composition and funding of local government councils among others have generated intense debates that have at various times touched negatively on the foundations of the federation.

This paper thus attempted an in-depth analysis of the issues that are generating debates and crises amongst the levels of government in Nigeria in recent times. It is structured in four sub-sections with the introduction preceded by conceptual clarifications closely followed by the identification and analysis of the issues under study while the rear bears the concluding remarks.

Conceptual Clarification

Perhaps, an appropriate premise to commence this discourse is to embark on the clarification of the concept of inter governmental relations because of the attendant confusion that has smeared the concept. For instance, there has been a significant misconception that inter-governmental relations can be discussed only meaningfully in a federal arrangement (Ayoade, 1980). For a proper clarification of the concept, three schools of thought have developed. The first school contends that inter-governmental relations can only exist in a federal system, the second posits that inter-governmental relations can both exist within a federal structure and as well as in a unitary system of government, while the third school says that intergovernmental relations could as well include international relations.

The lesson we can draw from the above is that, inter-governmental relations exists both in the federal and unitary structures and in fact, the clamour that intergovernmental relations is only associated with the federal system should be discarded when we remember the Livingston definition of federalism which says that... 'Federalism is... not an absolute but a relative term; there is no identifiable point at which a society ceases to be unified and becomes diversified... All communities fall somewhere in a spectrum which runs from what we may call a theoretically wholly integrated society at one extreme to a theoretically wholly, diversified society at the other' (Rhodes, 1983:72).

Further still, Wright while alluding to the work of Bogdanor pointed out that other features of intergovernmental relations that set it apart from federalism included:

1. prominence of policy (rather than mainly legal) issues,
2. inclusion of all governmental entities-local units in addition to national-state (federal) relations,
3. importance of officials attitudes and actions,
4. regular, continuous day to day interactions among officials and
5. inclusion of all types of public officials-especially administrators in addition to elected officials (Wright, 1995).

From the above exposition, the poser here becomes how best can we define the concept of inter governmental relations? The concept has been defined as the interactions that take place among the different levels of government within a state (Adamolekun, 1983 and Olopade, 1984). Though, strong emphasis has often been placed on Federal-state relations in a federal system, a comprehensive analysis of such relations show diverse relations. With respect to a federal state therefore, nine types of relations are discernible. These are:

Federal-state, Federal-local, Federal-Civic groups, state-state, state-local, state-civic groups, local-local, Local civic groups and inter-civic groups (Olugbemi, 1980). Three types of such interactions can be perceived in a unitary state which are: national-local relations, inter-local relations and external relations.

The third type of relations that is, external relations belongs to another field of study known as international relations.

The concept of Inter-governmental relations originated in the 1930s in the United States of America and by 1950s, it gained widespread currency following the creation of the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental relations. But essentially whether we are referring to the evolution of inter-governmental relations in the United States of America or Canada, such evolution came to the forefront following the beginning of the significant economic and social development programmes by the existing federal government in these countries that began to have greater impact on other levels of government. Such spirit of change in the American federal system did not go unnoticed as Banovetz (1980) cited in Reagan (1972) asserted that: "Federalism-Old is dead. Yet federalism-new style- is alive and well and living in the United States its name is intergovernmental relations" (Banovetz, 1980, p.141).

However, how did intergovernmental relations as an "imported idea" start in Nigeria? Nigeria no doubt had her boundaries delimited by the colonial administration (the British Government). Prior to this development, the pre-colonial societies in Nigeria were made up of empires, a caliphate, kingdoms, chiefdoms, city states and village republics (Oyovbaire, 1981 and Oyovbaire, 1983). None of these societies had a ruler or social class that had a mandate or power over all these societies because each of these societies had separate rulers. The initial penetration of the British Government left Nigeria in three separate entities, that is, the Colony of Lagos, the Northern Protectorate and *Southern* Protectorate. These three areas were followed by distinctive boundaries but issues relating to boundary demarcations and delimitation often caused friction. The British Government became dissatisfied with the system of maintaining three separate administrative units with boundaries (Okafor, 1981). It was as a result of this that the British Government embarked on the amalgamation of the country so that the different entities could be united (Anjorin, 1967 and Ballard, 1971). Following the amalgamation move which was first orchestrated by Sir Ralph Moor in 1896, the actual unification came in 1914 but this failed to create a unitary system of politics and administration as there existed separate departments for the Northern government and corresponding separate departments for the South. Clifford constitution of 1922 aimed to bring a

web of relations within the administrative set up was in no means helpful as the Legislative Council which was established in Lagos did not have Northern representatives. This condition persisted till 1946.

During these years, the North was represented by the Lieutenant Governor and Senior Residents. This situation resulted into Southern Legislative Council to make laws for the Colony and the Southern Provinces only while the Governor legislated for the Northern Provinces by proclamation. This position of Nigeria which permitted amalgamation albeit different administration was as a result of the firm belief of British Political Officers such as Sir Hugh Clifford and Richmond Palmer that Nigeria could never be a suitable union. Coleman (1986) reiterated what Clifford said when he pointed out that if it were possible to cement the various ethnic communities

into a single homogeneous nation-a deadly blow would thereby be struck at the very root of national self-government in Nigeria, which secures to each separate people the right to maintain its identity, its individuality and its nationality, its own chosen form of government, and the peculiar political and social institutions which have been evolved for it by the wisdom and by the: Accumulated experience of generation of its forebears (Coleman, 1986, p.194).

By 1939, the amalgamation syndrome of 1914 suffered a major setback as Sir Bernard Bourdillon who became the Governor of Nigeria between 1935 and 1943 further divided southern Nigeria into two, but the task of writing this into the Nigerian constitution of 1946 was done by Sir Arthur Richards.

Though the country was in three parts (Regions), there was no substantial progress in the level of inter-governmental relations as there were no functional regional legislatures as the regional legislatures had no legislative powers.

They were mainly advisory in nature. Constitutionally, there were no National - State relations, being provided for yet, the Regional Legislatures acted as bridge between the central Legislative council and the Native Authorities (Ayoade, 1980). The 1951 constitution differed significantly from the 1946 constitution because it united the country the more by granting more autonomy to the three regions. The Regional Legislatures acted as the electoral colleges for the central House of Representatives. The Regional Legislatures then had some Legislative powers and each Region had an Executive Council. This arrangement brought a constitutional basis for relations between the two levels of government. Thus, all central Bills in respect of a Region must first be laid before that Region's legislature for consideration as well as for advice. The Regional Legislatures had powers to legislate on prescribed subject such as education, public health, local government and agriculture (Ojo, 1973). The competence of the central legislature was greater than this because, it had full powers of legislation on all subjects including those within the legislative competence of the regions. Where conflict arises between the two laws, the one enacted later prevailed over the one

enacted earlier. By this, it was possible for a Regional law to supersede a central law on the same subject-matter if the Regional law was enacted later. But this does not mean that the Region was superior to the centre. The 1951 Constitution also empowered the state government to establish the local governments and to regulate their activities. However between 1951 and 1954 that the constitution operated, there were no direct relations between the Central Government and Local Government.

The Lyttleton Constitution of 1954 further strengthened intergovernmental relations. There was the division of powers between the Federal and Regional governments. The powers of government were grouped under three headings which were: the Enumerated list or Exclusively Federal list, the Concurrent list and the Residual (Ojo, 1973) The Enumerated list contained such subjects like foreign relations, currency, defence, immigration, citizenship and census, aviation,, banks and so on upon which the Federal government had the sole authority to legislate on. The Concurrent List includes such matters like higher Education and Industrial Development, Insurance, Water Power, Scientific Research and so on upon which both the Federal and Regional governments could legislate. In the case of conflict between a Regional and a Federal law on the same concurrent subject, the Federal law prevailed. This arrangement removed the anomalous position of the 1951 where the regional law superseded a central law on the same subject matter if the Regional law was enacted later. Other subjects not included neither in the Enumerated nor Concurrent lists were Regional affairs. With this arrangement, Regional governments were not interfered by the Federal government. Besides the Central Regional relations at the time, there were also central-local relations.

Another level of intergovernmental relations surfaced following the creation of Lagos City Council in 1917 under the Township Ordinance of 1917 (Orewa and Adewumi, 1983).

The 1954 Constitution was a further improvement from other earlier constitutions because of the pronounced inter-governmental relations it brought about. In addition to the foregoing network of relations brought about by the constitution, it was in the same year that the marketing boards which were centralized before became decentralized so that both the central and the regional levels were having marketing boards. The relation between the two levels as marketing board was concerned was that, the Central Marketing Board served the regions in a consultative capacity (Nnoli, 1978). Each of the four regions in existence then had its own civil service and shared equal powers with the central government while the local governments were created, nurtured and financed solely by the regional government (Olopade, 1984).

Shortly after the military government took over the helm of affairs in 1966, the then Head of State, Aguiyi Ironsi discovered that the Federal-Region relations had almost broken down as the regions were powerful than the central. This had resulted into threats of secession which had pestered the country in 1914, 1950, 1953 and 1964 (Elaiwu, 1985). It was this situation that besmeared the country that resulted into the promulgation of Decree No 34 of 1966 which reverted the country

back to the unitary government. With this, Nigeria ceased to be a federal state but was christened the National Military Government, the regions were abolished and were referred to as 'group of provinces'. The same decree unified all the Civil Services. The resultant effect of this position as it affected the intergovernmental relations limited the degree of relations among the governmental structures in the country as the degree of relations in a federal system is more than that of a unitary government. But such relations were ephemeral as the administration of Aguiyi Ironsi was swept into oblivion through the July 1966 coup.

The Gowon administration that came shortly after the Ironsi's administration reverted the country to a federal system. The former regions retained their names and their separate civil services. It was under this new regime that intergovernmental relations received greater impetus as more states were created and closer cooperation and interactions between the Federal Government and the states developed. To crown it all, the federal military government through the 1976 local government reforms established a more developed relationship between the federal Government and local Government. Okoro (1998) has put this properly when he said that such relationship hinges more prominently on the degree of local government financial independence (Okoro, 1998)

Areas of Conflict from 1999-2004

Tamuno (1970) has forcefully argued in his article entitled 'Separatist Agitations in Nigeria since 1914 that

Historically, it was easier to establish the Nigerian state than to nourish the Nigerian nation. Though the former was to a large extent achieved through the 1914 Amalgamation, the latter eluded both British officials and Nigerians for several decades thereafter (Tamuno, 1970, p. 564).

Similarly, Taiwo (2000) once remarked that: "It is not an exaggeration to say that from 1914 when the Colony of Lagos, the Southern Protectorate, and the Northern protectorate were amalgamated to form the country now known as Nigeria, the relationship among its diverse units, have been marked by tensions of different degrees of severity" (Taiwo, 2000, p. 34). The above two references rightly summed up the relationships among the three tiers of government in Nigeria between 1999 and 2004. But Nigerian federation seems not to be an exception even the oldest federation of the world, the United States does experience conflict especially when the layers of government: federal, state and local are on the verge of determining their jurisdictional power. Little does one wonder when Jinadu (1998) pointed out such conflictual nature in federal state when he remarked that

the dynamics of federal-state relations within the federalist constitutional framework is one of a see-saw between interdependence and cooperation on one hand and conflict on the

other hand, between the centre and the units and between the units themselves (Jinadu, 1998, p. 11).

We shall from this premise consider these areas of conflict one after the other.

A. The Resource Control

The Resource Control controversy was between the Federal Government of Nigeria and the eight littoral States (Oil Producing States) which are: Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo and Rivers which have boundaries with the sea (Sanyaolu, 2002 and Dunmoye, 2002). The remaining 28 states later joined the eight littoral states in the struggle. But what was the struggle about? The eight littoral states were asking from the federal government the application of the derivation principle to revenues generated from natural resources located offshore from their coast (Ojameruaye, 2002). These states in essence were asking for a larger share than non-littoral states. They agreed that the revenue from offshore resources should be paid into the Federation Account but 13 per cent of it should be set aside for them while 87 per cent should go to all the states and Local Governments as well as the Federal Government. The clamour for resource control has been due to many reasons which include:

- a. the injustice and inequity that characterize the distribution of national resources, particularly oil revenue,
- b. the jettisoning of derivation as a fundamental principle of revenue allocation which reduced the amount of funds going to the pauperized oil producing areas as of right;
- c. the lack of infrastructural development in Nigeria at large, but in the oil producing areas in particular;
- d. the new democratic dispensation which allows for overt airing of grievances which were violently suppressed under military rule,
- e. the introduction of Sharia judicial system by a few Northern states which was seen by the southern states as a major test for the Federal Constitution. Demand for resource control is, therefore, an indirect constitutional cum economic response to the introduction of Sharia,
- f. the systematic destruction of the ecosystem in the oil producing areas which led to environmental degradation, pollution, acid rain and the attendant unemployment and mass poverty,
- g. failure of the multinational oil companies to contribute to the social and economic development of the oil producing states,
- h. the activities of ethnic militants made up of unemployed youths in the oil producing communities who are exerting pressure on their political and traditional leaders, thus necessitating political actions,
- i. the Ogoni Bill of Rights which demanded for political autonomy that will guarantee political control of Ogoni affairs by Ogoni indigenes; the right to the control and use of a fair proportion of Ogoni economic resources for Ogoni development (Edemodu and Nwokoh, 2002 and Dunmoye, 2002) Caught up in this demand from the eight littoral states, the Federal Government in February 2001 filed a suit at the Supreme Court against the 36 states of the Federation in which it sought an interpretation to know whether the state's boundary extends to continental shelf and the exclusive

economic zone and to know whether money derived from such zones as a result of mineral exploration should be shared to the littoral states or not. When the suit was filed at the Supreme Court, 11 of the 36 states raised preliminary objections in their statements of Defence challenging the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court to hear the suit. The eleven states were: Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Anambra, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Ebonyi, Edo, Ogun, Ondo and Rivers.

B. The Electoral Act of 2001

The Electoral Act of 2001 was very controversial from the time that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) had presented it as a bill to the National Assembly for debate. It received its loudest criticism following the signing of the bill into law with some controversial clauses. But those that set the states of the federation against the federal government were the signing into law of the extension of the tenure of local government councilors, chairman and vice-chairman from three as stipulated by the Councils (Basic Constitutional and Transitional Provisions) Decree 36 of 1998 (Sanyaolu, 2002) to four years; the reordering of elections beginning with the presidential and then National Assembly, Governorship and State Assemblies, followed by Local Government and the interpretation of constitutional provisions on functions of National Assembly against those of state houses . The legal tussle was first championed by the Speakers of the House of Assemblies of the 36 states of the Federation ' who headed for the Federal High Court at Abuja (Ojewuji, 2002). As a result of much delay there was no solution to the matter and because the speakers were not constitutionally empowered to initiate legal actions at the Supreme Court nothing was heard on the matter, but the 34 state governments of the 36 states of the federation took the matter to the Supreme Court. The 34 states were: Abia, Adamawa, Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Bauchi, Bayelsa, Benue, Borno, Cross River, Delta, Ebonyi, Edo, Ekiti, Enugu, Gombe, Imo, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Kastina, Lagos, Nasarawa, Niger, Ogun, Osun, Oyo, Rivers, Sokoto, Taraba, Yobe and Zamfara, Kebbi, Kogi and Kwara (Nwankwo, 2002). The remaining two states (Ondo and Plateau) joined in the suit later (Odiaka, 2002).

C. Removal and suspension of Chairmen from office

The State's government action towards the Local Governments under the period of consideration had resulted into uncordial relations between the states and Local Governments. Thus under the period, about 10 Local Government Chairmen were both removed and suspended from office. For instance, the governor of Kaduna State suspended several numbers of Local Government Chairmen, the governors of Zamfara and some other state governors were not left out in this act. It was this that infuriated the Local Government Chairmen which made them to sue the thirty-six governors and their state assemblies (Fadeyi, 2001).

Though this case was not pursued further in the court, the probability of misusing such constitutional power by the State Houses of Assembly in the affairs of local government Councils in Nigeria made people to suggest that such power be reviewed at the National Political Reform Conference with a view to checking such power.

D. Controversy over the Local Government elections into the newly created Local Governments in some states of the Federation.

Prior to this time, controversy had been surrounding the institution of Local Government in Nigeria as there had been a vehement agitation to scrap this institution in the time past. However, as the nation was awaiting the 2003 Local Government elections, the governors of Lagos, Nassarawa, Kogi, Katsina and Niger went ahead to create new local governments in addition to those ones recognized by the 1999 Constitution (Ishiekwene, 2004). But shortly after this, the National Council of State (NCS) took the decision of recognizing only 774 local councils. These were the Local Councils existing in the country before the newly created ones. The decision to abide by the old local councils was again reiterated by the People's Democratic Party (PDP) at its first meeting of the National Working Committee (NWC) for the year 2004.

E. Federal/ State planning dispute

There had been a dispute between the Federal Government and Lagos State in particular over which of the town planning authority should exercise town planning powers over the 45.72 metres land which runs parallel to both sides of the federal highways, under the loops formed by bridges as well as under the bridges. In Lagos State, such highways are Kingsway Road in Ikoyi, Western Avenue in Surulere, Old Agege Motor Road among others.

Since the land in question had at one time or the other been acquired by the Federal Government, the Federal Government's town planning authority that is, the Urban and Regional Development Division (URDD) of the Federal Ministry of Works and Housing (FMW&H) thought that it is under its jurisdiction to exercise relevant town planning powers which should include approving building plans for all forms of development within such land. The Lagos State Urban and Regional Planning Board (LASURPB) also asserted itself as the appropriate town planning authority on such land. LASURPB argued among other things that under the 1999 constitution, town planning was a residual matter within the exclusive Legislative and Executive competence of the state. Consequently, the issuance of development permits on land along set backs to federal highways should be the responsibility of the state.

It was in determination of which of the two planning authorities that has jurisdiction over such land that made the Lagos State to sue the Federal Government to the Supreme Court of Nigeria on Wednesday March 20, 2002. Fifteen months later, judgment was delivered in favour of Lagos State. Delivering the judgment, the Supreme Court declared that:

Town planning and the regulation of physical development of land was the exclusive responsibility of the state government in whose territory the land lay. Henceforth, the Federal Government should not engage itself in giving building permits, licenses or approval over federal land in any state territory except within the Federal Capital territory (FCT) (Abiodun, 2003, p.43).

MOST CURRENT ISSUES IN INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS IN NIGERIA

Internal Security

One of the most contentious issues of intergovernmental relations today is internal security. State governors are made ceremonial chief security officers where commissioners of police [who are agents of the national leadership and government] wield the real powers and functions in the states (Eme and Ede, 2009). This scenario makes it very difficult for the improved security of lives and properties and brings to bay the call for state police and vigilante services. The unprecedented surge in insurgency and terrorism across the country today is to a significant extent an offshoot of the dichotomy in the exercise of real functions in delivery of security matters at the state level. Cases of armed robbery, brigandage and kidnapping in various states of the south-eastern geopolitical zone, militancy in the Niger Delta and present cases of irregular cum orchestrated bomb explosions in the North point to the controversy of who should decide issues of security at the state level and cases of where the governor's political dominance stops. The book haram bombing upsurge prevails in the light of the notion that the governors who are supposedly chief security officers of their various states are in no small measures incapacitated in the delivery of security through the orchestrated structures of imported police force.

The Sovereign Wealth Fund/Act

It was observed in the days of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo that a reserved fund could serve as a buffer to the sustenance of Nigerian economy and the excess crude account was floated as aptly posited thus the Excess Crude Account (ECA) was the main financial nest-egg set up by Obasanjo's administration about few years ago to provide a buffer for the country's perennially precarious financial condition that was prone to the vagaries of incessant crude oil price fluctuation. At its peak the ECA accumulated over \$20 billion in 2007. However, the contributions expected from states triggered another controversy because states contested that they do not have enough resources to finance their projects and as such was not ready to save while in debt. Some of the state governors wanted all revenues accruable to the federation shared to enable them develop at their own pace following the supposed submissions of fiscal federalism maintaining that the establishment of the account was illegal as it was not provided for in the constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria. In the submissions of the governors, the issue of power generation and distribution sincerely has to be decentralized to give room for the various states to make independent though coordinate efforts and arrangements while the resources are shared to facilitate competition in the realization of the millennium development goals at the state level as declared by the United Nations.

Minimum Wage

Another issue of gross public discourse has been the fixing of living wage for public workers across levels of government in the country. Until now, heated debates have surrounded the scale of

wages and salaries for staff at federal, state and local government levels with the federal workers enjoying a comparative advantage. The government has shifted from an unstipulated amount to N7500 and N18000 recently. Workers at local and state levels of government are paid at lower scales in such a manner that a graduate with the local government system in Anambra State receives less than N25000 as an administrative officer thereby creating unprecedented perchance for federal appointment/jobs. Thus, the dichotomy between and amongst workers of different levels of government in the same country who buy their wares from the same markets and pay similar fees for their children leaves much room for discourse. The approval and formal implementation of the new minimum wage of N18000 induced a rife amongst the levels of government. The component units/states made it clear that they could not pay the wages at the current revenue sharing formulae. A handful of the states is of the view that new wage implies greater application of tax laws on the workers. Basically, the topic of minimum wage for any society should be one that will be predicated on the economy, especially in the specific context of productivity and market forces.

Unfortunately, what is driving the present minimum wage debate in Nigeria are factors that have little or no direct bearing on economics and productivity, but more on politics and other bane considerations such as corruption, incompetence and the inordinate scramble for the national cake. The establishment of minimum wage regimes is an attempt by the authorities to intervene and protect its citizens from being exploited at the workplace because the difference between slavery and grossly-underpaid job is very little, and any society that abhors slavery and its incidents must necessarily be concerned about relationship between the effort its citizens put into production and the reward that accrue to them as a result. A man whose labour contributes to the wealth of a system ought to have a commensurate compensation within that set-up, namely a wage that sufficiently takes into account his contribution and, possibly, same incentive.

Ordinarily, in a typical federation, every state or unit sets what it considers as the appropriate minimum wage for its workers, starting from the governor down to the least paid. The tragedy of the Nigerian situation is that while we seem to clamour for 'true federalism', we actively do things that fatally undermine federalism. What is federalism if it does not foster diversity and regional or local realities? How can the governor of Kogi State, for example, want to earn the same wage with the governor of Lagos? The reality in Nigeria is that it is the Kogi governor that would want to earn more than the Lagos governor despite the obvious disparities in the income and material capacity of the two states. We want to run our system like they do in America. We even routinely go there to 'learn how to' run a modern federal democracy, but we always fail to see that the governor of New York does not earn the same wage as the governor of Arkansas. The Mayor of the City of New York earns more than many state governors in the U.S. Why on earth must our governors earn equally? Once that pattern has been set, what then is the moral right to expect workers across the country not to ask for a uniform minimum wage, even if we do not have a uniform economic ability (Ikhariale, n.d)?

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study has identified and considered major issues in intergovernmental relations in Nigeria between 1999 till date while tracing the historical background to the composition and initial structures of Nigerian federalism. With the operation of a federal system of government in Nigeria, such relations have been so much complex and problematic. The complexity and the problematic nature of such relations began to increase in Nigeria's polity following the gradual increase of the federating units and the local governments at one level and the varieties of interests that cut across the various units.

Though, the adoption of a federal polity is a political design to absorb conflicting issues in every polity, the advent of May 29 1999 which gave birth to Nigeria's Fourth Republic witnessed the most conflicting political opposition ever experienced in Nigeria's polity as the various tiers of government engaged in competitive rather than co-operative relations thereby endangering the cordial relations expected among these governments. Afterwards the importance of intergovernmental relations in a federal polity is to enable unity and cooperation to prevail. This absolutely eluded Nigeria's democracy under the period under consideration and even beyond.

Unhealthy rivalry it should be pointed out disrupts the proper functioning of any polity. Besides, no group of governing elite is interested seeing the political system where they operate to degenerate into a state of anarchy. Looking back at Nigeria's political system, conflicting issues especially among the different levels of government swept both the First and Second Republics into oblivion. The military stifled the Third Republic. The Fourth Republic should be allowed to be different from the previous republics. This can only be done through the elimination of competitive cum conflictual politics and ensuring consensus politics.

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