

The Impact of States' Creation on Nigerian Public Bureaucracies

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Abstract

State creation is a major reorganisation policy of a federation aimed at promoting unity in diversity particularly among the various ethnic groups in a heterogeneous country such as Nigeria. The creations of states are also aimed at resolving boundary disputes and promote national development. However, the multiplication of states on the other hand, translates to the multiplication of administrative Agencies particularly the bureaucracy. The constant increase in the number of these administrative Agencies no doubt has a lot of consequences for their viability, effectiveness and efficiency. This is because it weakens the administrative capacities of these bureaucracies since their existence and indeed their survival in terms of finances depends almost entirely on the central government. This paper infers that the exercise of uncontrolled creation of more states in Nigeria requires radical reorientation coupled with strong political will for public bureaucracies at the state level to be able to meet their developmental and efficiency goals.

Keywords: State creation, Bureaucracies, Federalism, National Development, Diversity, Efficiency and National Integration

INTRODUCTION

One of the major challenges of a plural society like Nigeria is the need to constantly seek and promote sources of unity and national integration.

Being a federal state, the division of the country into component units in order to promote the spirit of unity in diversity, state creation becomes one major policy in this direction. In addition to creation of state and local government areas, and boundary adjustments, chiefdoms for minority communities were created by successive government in the country especially since independence.

Perhaps, the most significance and most popular among the reorganisational policies of the Nigerian State is the policy on state creation (Suberu, 1999). In order to redress structural imbalance, on six different occasions, successive regimes have implemented public policies on state creation in Nigeria since independence. Today, the country has been transformed from three regions in 1963 to 36 states through the various state creations.

One of the fundamental objectives of these state creation exercise is to promote national unity or integration in the federation. It has however been observed that rather than promote national unity, state creation has indeed promoted division and disunity among the various groups in the country. Beyond its failure to promote national unity, state creation, as an essential variable in Nigeria's federal political calculations has inevitably foisted adverse effect on the Nigerian civil service at both national and state levels.

The thesis of this study is therefore on the fact that creation of more state has negative impacts on the public bureaucracies thereby making their administrative capacity weak. The study is divided into four parts. The first part undertakes a conceptual analysis of the civil service in a federal state and the role it plays in national development. The second part undertakes a historical analysis of the various state creation exercise in Nigeria before and after independence. The third part examines the consequence of

state creation exercises on public administration as it affects the various level of public bureaucracy in Nigeria. The concluding remarks form the fourth part of this article.

1. THE CIVIL SERVICE IN A FEDERAL STATE

For a clear understanding of the concept of the civil service, it may be necessary to first examine the concept of public service. The term public service often refers to activities concerned with the management of government administration (Abubakar, 1992). Public services covers not only the civil service institutions of federal, state and local governments, but also their other accoutrements such as statutory corporations, established commissions or authorities, educational institutions, the armed forces and police, and the judicial service. The civil service is, therefore, only a fraction of the public service. It is composed of the ministries and departments of government and the bureaucrats and professionals who work in them.

Although the civil service refers only to government Ministries or Departments, distinct from the Local Government service, the judicial service, the teaching service and public corporations, it holds ministerial responsibilities for all these other governmental agencies to which they are accountable at the end of the day (Ayeni, 2007). As the primary and primate instrument of government, it assists the government in its responsibility of policy design, implementation for the good of the people and for national development. Today, governments, by their nature and design, are usually charged with a variety of functions and responsibilities. These are the maintenance of law and order, production and equitable distribution of a wide-ranging number of goods and services, and for policy design and implementation in support of a variety of defined social, political and economic objectives (Abubakar, 1992).

The need for government to perform these functions and carry out these responsibilities becomes more compelling in any country. Therefore, whether or not a country is developed, it is inevitable that every political system will, at one point or the other, attempt to develop some patterned means whereby wishes or statements of public policy are transformed into action affecting those within the system over whom political power is exercised (LaPalombara, 1971). In modern day political systems, this "patterned means" has generally been one form of bureaucracy or civil service or the other.

Bureaucracy or civil service according to Max Weber is the most efficient administrative organisation for the conduct of the affairs of government. Weber contends that "experts as found within the bureaucracy are best qualified to make technically correct decision, because disciplined performance governed by abstract rules and co-ordinated by the authority hierarchy fosters a rational and consistent pursuit of organisation goals (Plau and Scott, 1963). The civil service of any nation is often seen as the machinery of state policy execution. This reflects in a number of functions performed by the civil service, which Marx identified as a control tower for the flow of information, a prime source of proposals on a variety of issues moving up to points of political determination, and to oversee the mobilisation of resources and deployment of competence in the execution of public policy (Marx, 1971). It is clear from the above that the civil service of any nation serves as the major instrument used by government to formulate and implement its policies.

From our discussion above, we have seen the meaning, nature and responsibilities of the civil service of any nation in helping the government to formulate and implement its policies. However, the nature and characteristics of the civil service in a federation seem to possess certain peculiarities. The principal defining characteristics of federalism, according to Wheare (1964) is a division of power between a central and several regional or state government each of which is, within its own sphere, coordinate with others; each government acting directly on the people; each limited to its own sphere of judicial competence and each fiscally self-sufficient. In the analysis of the dynamics of federal societal politics, emphasis should be laid on the varying characteristics of the different segments and sub-units making up the federation and the attempts, by the central government, at articulating the varying and conflicting interests of the federating states (Livingstone, 1956). This type of arrangement in a political system has implications for a plural society like Nigeria. It suggests the need for a representative bureaucracy at the centre. Representative bureaucracy becomes important in a federal state in order to correct any form of imbalance. This could be in form of the under-representation of certain states in the federal or central civil service.

Whenever any form of imbalance or under-representation is noticed by some states, it has great implications for the civil service both at the centre and in the affected States. Some of these implications include the creation of tension, feelings of frustration and insecurity, existence of mutual distrust in the bureaucracies, the lowering of morale, *esprit de corps* and promotion of stateism. As would be examined later, these negative feelings have far-reaching consequences for the productivity of such bureaucracies. The Nigerian federal state evolved a home-grown federal character principle anchored on the country's federal nature to redress possible imbalance or under-representation of any part of the federating units. This principle, like the state creation exercises are aimed at promoting unity in diversity among the federating units of its plural society.

2. STATE CREATION EXERCISES IN NIGERIA: A HISTORICAL SKETCH

As already noted, the broad objective of state creation is to promote national unity and also to command national policy loyalty of all the diverse elements that make up its plural nature. This part of the paper undertakes a historical analysis of state creation exercises in Nigeria and their implications for the civil service productivity.

Today, federalism is a notable feature of the Nigerian political system. Federalism in Nigeria has however faced a number of problems since its inception during the colonial era. Since then, there has been an endless agitation for state creation as a way of solving the problem of structural imbalance. Indeed, it can be said that the seed of agitation for more states was sown with the Richards Constitution of 1946 which created three regions and resisted all requests for the creation of additional regions until it eventually granted independence to Nigeria in 1960. Thus, from 1954 when a federal structure became operational in Nigeria to independence in 1960, no new regions were created. Immediately after independence, agitation for the creation of more states began and rose to a high level. The pressure for additional region was high because of the minority problems in the Nigerian politics. The nation has

therefore witnessed fragmentations on six different occasions with each round of state creation leading to more agitation.

The first re-organisation took place in 1963 with the creation of the Mid-west region. This brought the number of regions to four. This structure was in place until 1967 when the creation of twelve states replaced the four regions. Following intense agitation for more states, another states creation exercise was done in 1976. This exercise brought the number of states in Nigeria to nineteen. The period between 1987 and 1991 produced the creation of states from nineteen to twenty-one and to thirty states under the same military administration. In 1991, the same government announced the creation of nine additional states in the country, bringing the total number of states to thirty. With the coming to power of another military regime, the demand for more state seemed to redouble. Hence, the administration established the National Constitutional Conference to among other things debate the possible creation of additional states. Eventually, the administration announced the creation of six new states, bringing the total number of states to thirty-six and the federal capital territory. Abuja also having the status of a state (Suberu, 1999).

However, since the return of the country to civil rule in 1999, the demand for the creation of more states had started on a very alarming note. The National Assembly has since been engaged in serious debates on the possibility of creating new states in view of the constitutional requirement to do so. The many requests for more states are still before the National Assembly which seems to be finding it difficult to handle it properly. A lot of policies and lobbying of the National Assembly members are still on-going.

The above represents a brief but broad historical review of state creation exercises in Nigeria before and after independence. As earlier noted, the division of the Nigerian state from three regions into thirty-six states today is perhaps the most important variable in the practice of Nigeria's federal society. Believed generally as the best way of bringing development nearer to the people and promoting national unity, it can also be conceptualised as the most damaging means of removing the Nigerian Peoples away from the Federal Government. This is because every state created has her own civil service.

CONSEQUENCES OF STATE CREATION ON NIGERIAN PUBLIC BUREAUCRACIES

One of the major consequences of creation of more States and which has far reaching implications for most states' bureaucracies is their economic failure. The fact that some states are not economically viable enough, hence they are unable to be well-organised administratively. As noted by Suberu, the states, on the average, depend on oil-based allocations from the Federation Account for over seventy percent of their finances (Suberu, 2001). There were occasions when State governments found it difficult to pay salaries and wages and they had to be saved by the Federal Government.

In this regard, the report of the Central Bank of Nigeria noted that:

As presently constituted, only few states and local governments can provide up to 30 percent of their planned expenditures from their internal revenue generation efforts. The statutory allocation from the Federation Account between 1990 and 1994 constituted, on the average, over 70 percent of the current revenues of the state governments, while

internally generated revenues accounted for only 17.8 percent and the balance was by special (discretionary) grants from the Federal Government. The finances of the local governments reflects a similar overdependence on statutory allocations from the federal and state governments (cited in Sunday Punch, Lagos 18 August, 1996).

Nevertheless, on the occasion of the country's thirty-sixth independence anniversary in October 1996, another six new states were created to bring the total number of states to thirty-six.

Even now, it is clear that, judging by the criterion of resources viability, many of the present states cannot survive the wage bill of their workers not to talk of providing social services. The uniform salary structure, for example, destabilized the states by requiring them to pay salaries that are sometimes in excess of their financial capacity. The effect is to turn the states into mere field administrations of the Federal Government (Ayoade, 2011).

This raises questions about the administrative capacity of some state bureaucracies. This is why some states, perhaps due to no fault of theirs cannot boast of sufficient bureaucratic personnel let alone talk of adequately qualified, competent and experienced manpower.

The economic failure of the state creation project was poignantly underscored in the lamentations of the then elected civilian governor of one of the younger states in Nigeria in December 1991. According to Governor Bisi Akande of Osun State;

The creation of Osun State in 1991, precipitated a "confused stampede for appointments into public offices, and for contrast by the top echelons of the military, civilian and traditional political class". The rush for primitive accumulation in Osun, according to the Governor, led to a bloated, top-heavy, public service, an empty treasury and the near-total immobilization of the government by huge salary arrears, unpaid gratuities and pensions to retired public officers and uncountable debts to all kinds of creditors (The Guardian, 27 December, 1991).

The situation described above will certainly have adverse effect(s) on the administrative capacity or reduce to a large extent, the productivity of the bureaucracies in the States.

A comprehensive list of the consequences has been made by Suberu (1998) thus:

The more perverse consequences of the practice of state creation policy in Nigeria have been shown to include: the promotion of the cake sharing syndrome, the augmentation of the centre's political and economic hegemony via the erosion of the size and resource base of sub national governments; the proliferation of unproductive, corrupt, wasteful and unviable political and administrative units; the intensification of ethnic, regional and communal tensions over the beneficiaries and modalities of territorial restructuring.

Another profound consequence of state creation and the resultant proliferation of administrative units is the fact that the Federal Government has become the ultimate in authority in matters of interest to all states and citizens. This is what Ayoade (2011) refers to as paternalistic federation where all resources and powers reside in the Federal Government. According to him,

The constitutional rights of the states are snuffed out leaving the states with positions without power or funds. The states live a precarious existence struggling to meet the legitimate demands of their citizens. Yet, for political and selfish reasons, we are being

threatened with the creation of new states which will sap the already financially strangled states of the remaining traces of life.

Perhaps, the only real argument for new states and localities lies in their presumed capacity to spread federal resources and developmental undertakings more evenly among territorial communities in the federation. However, given the declining productivity and viability of the national economy, even this redistributive role is becoming a mirage (Suberu, 1998).

In Nigeria, the politics and practice of the federal character principle have proved to be extremely divisive and explosive in regional, ethnic and religious terms. The absence of any definite or comprehensive guidelines for actualising it and the intensity of sectional pressures for access to public offices and resources, have combined to ensure that the federal character has operated more to expose and exacerbate Nigeria's ethno-regional divisiveness, than to mediate or ameliorate it (Suberu, 1999). If bureaucracy exists to serve the public interest, it must be seen to be doing so efficiently and effectively.

CONCLUSION

This paper conceptualised the civil service and its unique role in a federal state like Nigeria. It also examined the issue of state creation as arguably the most significant and most popular among the reorganisational policies of the of the Nigeria state over the years. These situations have had great consequences for public bureaucracies at both national and state levels since each state created has her own civil service. These state civil services have remained largely weak and inefficient administratively because their existence and survival depend heavily on the central government particularly in terms of their finances among others.

The problem here is that the agitation for the creation of more states has not abated. There are pressures on new regimes to create more states. These pressures are directly rooted in the struggles by ethno-territorial constituencies and particularly the elites within those constituencies, for access to those federal revenues and resources that are disseminated or devolved through the states and localities (Suberu and Agbaje, 1998). It is therefore appropriate to suggest here that further state creation exercises in future should consider the viability of such states financially and administratively for national development.

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