

REGIONAL PLANNING, STATE CREATION AND PERCEIVED MARGINALIZATION: ISSUES OF CONFLICT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study focused on the demand for creation of more states and local government councils, to spread development within the entire federation. It has as its case study the yearnings of the people in Oyo North area of Oyo State, to make a new growth center and enjoy socio-economic benefits of creating Oke-Ogun State. Using gender and age as moderating variables, sample was randomly selected in Irepo, Iseyin, Oorelope and Saki East local government areas of Oyo State where 50 respondents represented each local government council, making a total of two hundred respondents. A questionnaire was developed to eliciting information relating to the awareness of/agitation for, and the benefits that are likely to accrue should new state be created. For the purpose of presentation and analysis, simple percentage was used. The findings showed that state creation would contribute to the socio-economic development of Oke-Ogun area, more employment opportunities would be created for people. It would also bring government closer to the people, and at the same time regional planning of the supposed rural areas would result to urbanisation. The implications of these findings are that males' agitation in the process was stronger than their Female counterparts; the number of respondents between the ages of 18 and 60 was higher in agitation for creation of state among the respondents than respondents

between the ages of 61 and above. This implies that ages 18 - 60 are working class, who foresee urbanisation and development of their area. In the other hand, crime rate is likely to rise to be able to adequately tap the associated socio-economic benefits of developed cities. Though, this can be reduced to the minimum level if adequate security measure is provided by the government.

Introduction

In most countries of the world, different geographical areas are not endowed the same way. While some areas are blessed with some category of resources, others are rich in other types of treasure. These resources, which are material and human, also vary in stock from one place to another. Hence some areas tend to grow and develop at a higher rate, at the expense of others. According to Ugwu (1992), the resultant effect of this is over concentration of activities and its attendant problems of population explosion, congestion, housing shortage, environmental problems, etc. in the favored areas or cities, and underdevelopment or backwardness in the less privileged areas. If the trend continues unchecked, it will not only amount to social injustice and inequity to some class of people or areas but also constitute a setback to regional and overall national development. This is the concern of regional planning which is aimed at correcting lopsided development and promoting regional and national development through the identification, analysis, and allocation of resources within and among region of a state or country (Roberts, 2004).

The failure of the country's planning machinery to recognize the spatial diversities and complexities in the cultures, peoples and material resources of the country justifies the need for regional planning and a sound regional development policy

and framework for the country. Going through history of the country, however, it was found out that regional planning has not been really embraced, notwithstanding the fact that such attempts as categorization of cities, creation of administrative units and unconscious establishment of regions like river basins, Niger-Delta, among others, have been made. Urban and Regional Planning is the field addressing urban and metropolitan growth and development. It includes economic, social, environmental and often political concerns within a city or a region.

Regional planning deals primarily with the physical planning of town and countryside. The term is generally used in reference to an extension of town planning. It aims at the planned development of a defined region so as to make the most productive use of its natural and human resources. Ugwu (1992) described regional planning as a process, based on law and undertaken by a form of responsible government directed towards influencing private and public which results in the best environment and the soundest use of resources of which we are capable. Nigeria may be described as having no

specific, well formulated, clear regional development policy or framework. The country, over the years, has witnessed a number of constitutional developments and creation of more administrative units, both of which directly or indirectly affect the regional structure and development of the country. These include: the 1946 10-year development and Welfare Plan for Nigeria, the First Second and Third National Development Plans of 1962-68, 1970-74, and 1975- 80 respectively.

The third National Development plan was the first development planning approach that set a priority for regional planning, one of its objectives is the creation of "balanced development" and the plan was therefore, structured to generate growth simultaneously in all geographical areas of the country. The plan provided basis for regional planning and development by articulating that, "policy will be directed towards ensuring that both the rural and urban areas are equipped for their proper role in the development of the national economy". During the plan period, such achievements as creation of more states, setting up of the Federal Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and Environment, local government reforms, setting up of twelve River Basin Development Authorities (in 1977) to cut across state boundaries, establishment of Regional Planning Division within the Federal Ministry of Economic Development and Reconstruction, among others were witnessed.

The question of state creation, and indeed location of capitals are among the panorama of re-current and perennial issues that have the prominent and frequent status in Nigerian news headlines. Right from pre-independence era to the present dispensation, creation of states and location of their capitals, have always been national issues in which nearly all segments of the Nigerian social has generated violence, going by the aftermath of the catapults in the have interest (Ezenagu, 2001). It has generated peace as it previous versions of state creation exercises in Nigeria. Irikefe Panel (Farounbi, 2008:45), for instance, expressed the belief that state creation exercise should be used as an instrument to ensure rani economic development among all the ethnic groups, increase participatory democracy as an insurance against political instability promote and

institutionalize a balanced and stable federation and remove the genuine fears of domination of the minorities (FRN,1983).

Many justifications have been advised for the push for new states out of the existing 36 states in the federation. Similarly countless reasons have been canvassed to support creation of states. Politics of the time is, however, driving fast towards the emergence of new states due to under-development of some areas. People of Oyo North are not left out in the agitation of Oke Ogun state. Oke Ogun is a well defined geographical area, and as the name suggests, that is the other side of Ogun River. Ogun River actually makes Oke Ogun a distinct geographical line, it is on the Northern side of this river which cuts across the present Oyo State and a part of Ogun State from which the name was coined. So, geographically Oke Ogun is more than 60 per cent of the population of the present Oyo State with a population of about 1.4 million, according to the last census and has 10 local government areas. Politically, economically, educationally, health-wise and in all dimensions, the region has been marginalized. Oke Ogun people see creation of state as an instrument of development.

Statement of the Problem

The issue of creation of state and capital is not recent in Nigeria political history and that the significance of space i.e. location or amenities have been well studied by several scholars, given the importance attached to these two issues in national and community development (Aku, 2010). Starting from General Gowon administration series of editions of state creation have taken place in Nigeria, culminating in Nigeria having 36 federated states apart from Federal Capital

Territory (FCT) and 774 local councils. In spite of this number, demand for new states and capital has not waned down, rather it has been at increasing tempo more so under the current dispensation and it was an issue under the 1999 Constitutional review committee of the National Assembly under President Olusegun Obasanjo before the selfish 3rd term agenda sunk everything all together. The matter is still on from late Yar'Adua administration to the present Jonathan administration.

The people of Oke Ogun community are among the groups seeking for new state and capital in Nigeria in the current democratic dispensation. The implication of the undying thirst for more states by Nigerians is that there is underdevelopment in the land and people want development of their areas, as states and capitals have been understood as socio-economic development harbinger. Benjamin (1996) pointed out that some cities which were stagnant before, like Sokoto, Maiduguri and Calabar, becoming new growth centres after the 1976 state creation exercise, apart from the already existing ones like Lagos, Kano, Port-Harcourt, Jos, Benin etc. confirm this.

This study then examined the agitation for states creation in Nigeria; it specifically looked into the case of Oke Ogun people agitating for Oke Ogun State to correct under-development in Oyo North Area of the present Oyo State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to investigate regional planning, state creation and perceived marginalization as issues of conflict in Nigerian society. Specifically, the study was designed to:

- i. To find out the extent at which the creation of Oke Ogun state will affect the socio-economic development of Oyo North area of Oyo State.
- ii. To investigate the impact of gender in the agitation for Oke Ogun State among the people of Oyo North area of Oyo State.
- iii. To investigate the impact of age in the agitation for Oke Ogun State among the people of Oyo North Area of Oyo State.

Research Questions

In the light of the above, the following research questions were raised

as the basis for the study;

- i. To what extent will the creation of Oke Ogun state affect socio-economic development of Oyo North area of Oyo State?
- ii. Of what impact will gender have in the agitation for Oke Ogun State among the people of Oyo North area of Oyo State.
- iii. Will there be any significant difference in the agitation for Oke Ogun State among the people of Oyo North Area of Oyo State base on age?

Methodology

The design of this study was a descriptive survey. The area of the study was Oyo North Area in Oyo State. The population of this study comprised male and female citizens of age 18 and above. Random sample technique was used to draw the respondents. The sample size for this study is two hundred (200), this implies that fifty respondents each was randomly drawn from Irepo, Iseyin, Oorelope and Saki East local government areas of Oyo State.

A structured questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. This is a self developed instrument based on the objectives of the study and extensive literature review. The questionnaire was made up of sections A and B. Section A elicited information on personal data of the respondents while section B elicited information based on the agitation for Oke Ogun State and the possible effect of the state creation on the socio-economic development of Oyo North Area of Oyo State.

To determine the reliability of the instrument, a trial testing was carried out in Afijio Local Government Area of Oyo State, which is not part of the study area. Fifty copies of the instruments were distributed with the help of a research assistant. The copies were collected on the spot after the respondents had administered the questionnaire. The Kuder Richardson-21 reliability procedure was used to determine the reliability co-efficient and 0.75 was obtained. The use of Kuder Richardson-21 was considered to be appropriate due to the fact that the research instrument was an objective test

with more than two options. Two hundred copies of the questionnaire were distributed and returned. The research questions were answered descriptively using simple percentage.

Results

(i) Research Question 1: To what extent will the creation of Oke Ogun state affect socio-economic development of Oyo North area of Oyo State?

Table 1: Distribution based on the certain benefits a region stands to enjoy by creating a state

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Social	68	34
Economic	110	55
Others	22	11
Total	200	100

Table 1 shows different types of benefits an area stands to gain if there is a state creation. The survey shows that the economic benefit is the most valued benefit as demonstrated by the respondents with its 55%, while social benefit carries 34% and others carries just 11 %

Research Question 2: Of what impact will gender have in the agitation for Oke Ogun State among the people of Oyo North area of Oyo State?

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents Based On Gender

S/N	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
1	Male	108	54
2	Female	92	46
	Total	200	100

Table 2 stipulates the number and percentage of both the male and the female participants in the survey. Base on the results for the local government areas covered, more male adults participated in the process than female counterparts as they constitute 54.0% to 46.0% respectively.

Research Question 3: Will there be any significant difference in the agitation for Oke Ogun State among the people of Oyo North Area of Oyo State base on age?

Table 3: Distribution of respondents based on age

S/N	Variable	Numbers	Percentage
1	18-24	61	30.5
2	25-40	90	45.0
3	41-60	35	17.5
4	61 & above	14	7.0
	Total	200	100.0

Table 3 shows that the number of adults between the ages of 25 and 40 (90 respondents) was higher among the respondents with 45.0%, followed by respondents in ages between 18 and 24 (61 respondents) with 30.5%, while the classes of age 41-60 and others take 17.5% (35 respondents) and 7.0% (14 respondents) respectively

Summary of Findings

The findings of this study as obtained after finding answers to the questions are summarized as follows:

1. There are different types of benefits an area stands to gain if there is a state creation, but the survey shows that economic benefit is the most valued benefit as demonstrated by the respondents, followed by social benefit. Other benefits recorded the lowest scores.
2. Base on the results for the local government areas covered, more male adults participated in the process than female counterparts. This reveals

that male adults are more involved in the agitation for the creation of Oke Ogun state.

3. The scores of respondents between the ages of 25 and 40 was higher, followed by respondents between ages 18 and 24. The respondent between ages 41 and 60 followed while the respondents between ages 61 and above recorded the lowest scores This shows that the youth are more involved in the agitation for the creation of Oke Ogun state.

Conclusion

Nigeria has been Observed to be made up of diverse ethnic groups and different geographical areas of varying material and human resources. The emerging patterns of development show that there are disparities in development between urban and rural areas, and among different geographical areas in the country. By the disproportional share of state and local government councils between the north and the south, the epitome of hegemony of the north and the marginalization of the south is established. This implies that one area is more developed than the other, and therefore the less developed area is a disadvantaged section of the country. State creation is among the issues that are to redress the imbalance in the socio-political system and there it is of prominent status in Nigerian government and politics for national integration.

It is no doubt that the issue of state creation and, location of capitals remains an important issue in the centre stage of Nigerian political alchemy, more so when states becomes distributive mechanism for federal financial and non-financial opportunities. Given this, for one reason or the other, several of the Nigerian socio- Cultural and sub-cultural groups yearn for the state of their own, though

some scholars and political commentators have described the states as one way of diffusing centrifugal tendencies of the Nigerian political elites at the centre to the states as means of access to power, at one end and at the other end, it is a socio-economic opportunity in terms of power and wealth.

It is therefore politically and economically logical for all concerned apparatuses of the Nigerian state involved in state creation to act quickly and grant new states and capitals for democracy and development to be expanded.

This is the opinion that this paper shares and the motivation for the demand for state by the people of Oyo North, just as the results of the survey conducted on the subject matter have revealed. To this extent, since state and in fact location of capital have become socio-economic development instruments, all efforts that will yield new states and capitals where needed be put in place, especially wielding the necessary influence by the traditional rulers, powerful indigenes and other stakeholders within and outside Oyo North community on the power that be in this democratic dispensation become urgent and imperative.

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