

## Federalism: The High-Octane Underwriter for and of Corruption in Nigeria

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### **Abstract**

*The essence of federalism is to promote regional autonomy, foster development, provide checks and balances and to improve the wellbeing of the generality of Nigerians. Unfortunately, federalism has become a shield, cover-up and hiding place for corruption in Nigeria. In this sense, corruption is given the garb of tribalism and ties of kinship. The division of Nigeria into units and sections, which only serve to gather people of a like ethnic cleavage and who dip their hands into the Nigerian commonwealth and take away the funds meant for the people and end up being let off the hook, because that is what his people, or is kinsmen want. It has also deteriorated into Nigerians being drawn to criticise or condemn the said grievous acts of corruption or fending off the corrupt based on which region or area the person hails from. This is why federalism staves off punishment, and works hard to hold the culprit from bearing the brunt of their action. Working through the hermeneutic and critical tools, we will seek to unravel this development, by reeving through what federalism is and what it is not, what ways it plays this role and how to curb this unwholesome move towards legalising corruption.*

**Keywords:** Federalism, corruption, tribalism, impunity and development

### **INTRODUCTION**

It has been argued that federalism represents that type of institutional mechanism” that accommodates, guarantees and protects the “intra societal plural elements” of any nation state. This is so because it is structured to aggregate different and diverse interests of the various ethnic nationalities in Nigeria together under one roof and gives them a single direction as a state. According to the 1999 Constitution, Nigeria operates a federal system of government. That is why we are thrilled when Awofeso, Olu & Obah-Akpowoghaha observe, “But ever since adoption about five decades ago, the high hopes and aspirations which propelled its adoption seem not to have been fully transcended as evidenced in series of agitations by scholars.”<sup>1</sup>

The Constitution of Nigeria, at its Section 2 (1) & (2) states thus, S. 2 (1) “Nigeria is one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign State to be known as the Federal Republic of Nigeria” and S. 2 (2) “Nigeria shall be a federation consisting of states and a federal capital territory”<sup>2</sup> which puts the government to test, why the dividends of federalism have been too elusive for the country all this while. In the comments credited to Awofeso, Olu & Obah-Akpowoghaha, “the inappropriate intra and intergovernmental relations and processes have been flagged as the root cause of this institutional deficiency and to some schools of thought, issues such as corruption, ethnic and egoistic politics, military incursion and among others have created deficiency within the Nigerian federation.”<sup>3</sup> It is here we part ways with the proponents of the positive outputs of federalism? We are here contending that in Nigeria because of the sloppy way and manner the British destroyed patriotism, created cultural bias and divided this country along the lines of ethnicity and tribalism, that Federalism has become a veritable tool for the perfection and ruthless practice of corruption and impunity. According to Uhumwuangho and Ekpu, the British created the Nigerian federalism, which forcefully amalgamated and hence distorted the “different empires, kingdoms and societies, which were traditionally administered” The British failed to

<sup>1</sup> Awofeso, Olu & Obah-Akpowoghaha, Nelson Goldpin, (2017). “The Challenge Of Federalism And Its Implications For The Nigerian State” in *International Journal of Politics and Good Governance*, Volume VIII, No. 8.3 Quarter III 2017 ISSN: 0976 – 1195, p. 2

<sup>2</sup> Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999.

<sup>3</sup> Awofeso, Olu & Obah-Akpowoghaha, Nelson Goldpin, (2017), p. 2.

address the inherent tribal, ethnic and conflicting relationship, and the attendant vices such as “cannibalism, ritual murder and the killing of twins were rampant among some of the peoples.”<sup>4</sup> This explain why federalism is now easily interchanged with federalism, and why to perpetuate their grip onto power, and to foster the regime of praise singing in the face of corruption charges by falling back on their ethnic cleavages. In ThisDayLive, Alex Enumah, reported that- “Ex-Aviation Minister, Stella Oduah, ex-aide, Others Arraigned over Alleged N7.9 Billion Fraud”<sup>5</sup>, and the Premium Times, 7<sup>th</sup> January, 2014, also reported “Aviation Minister, Stella Oduah Scrambles To Cover-up Certificate Forgery Scandal”<sup>6</sup> that she had to contend with but instead of facing the charges and showing remorse, she resorted to whipping up ethnic and tribal sentiments so that her “sins” would either pale out into nothingness, or would simply be overlooked since her people endorsed her returning to the Senate. See Kenneth Udeh’s “Anambra North: Enugu Residents Back Stella Oduah, As Senator Empowers Youths, Women”<sup>7</sup> and CEOAFRICA 5<sup>th</sup> July publication that the South East Association of Igbo Ladies spoke in defence of the EFCC discovering the sum of 2.5 billion Naira in the bank account of one of the Senator’s and former minister’s house maid. The reason for running under ethnocentric biases created by our fluttering federation is that this country is not run like a Federation, but it is run like a military command structure, with a central command. We are in a unitary system of government disguised like a federation. This is why after she decamped to the ruling APC in 2021 from the PDP,<sup>8</sup> where she was alleged to have committed all the havoc, she was covered and protected by the federal might and up to this date, nothing had been heard of that case. In its report, YNaija News accessed from [www.ynaija.com](http://www.ynaija.com) (01/02/2025) was explicit from their heading which yelled, “The Princess Diaries: How Stella Oduah Got Away With Everything (Naija Long Read)”<sup>9</sup>, which had in its report a passage that read, “Many of her defenders predictably kicked off the game of defending her, because she was from their part of Nigeria. Of courses this ends in a zero-sum game, where no thief ever gets lynched in the end, except those who have the misfortune of low ambitions like snatching a handbag or such other inconsequential things; in which case we are too happy to bath them in petrol and set them alight as one united mob.”<sup>10</sup>

The real problem with our federalism is uneven power distribution between the federal government and its constituent parts, which is why Nigerians hide behind federation to perpetrate all kinds of corrupt practices. For some, federation is believed to be “a bad marriage that all dislike but dare not leave, and that there are possibilities that could disrupt the precarious equilibrium.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Uhunmwuango, Sunday Okungbowa & Ekpu, E. E., “Federalism: Problems And Prospects Of Power Distribution In Nigeria” in Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa (Volume 13, No.5, 2011) ISSN: 1520-5509), p 173.

<sup>5</sup> Enumah, Alex, 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 2023. “Ex-Aviation Minister, Stella Oduah, ex-aide, Others Arraigned over Alleged N7.9 Billion Fraud” in ThisDayLive Newspaper, accessed from [www.thisdaylive.com](http://www.thisdaylive.com) on 01/02/2025.

<sup>6</sup> Mojeed, Musikilu, Jan., 7<sup>th</sup> 2014, “Aviation Minister, Stella Oduah Scrambles To Cover-up Certificate Forgery Scandal” Premium Times Newspaper, accessed from [www.premiumtimesng.com](http://www.premiumtimesng.com) on 01/02/20125.

<sup>7</sup> Udeh, Kenneth. 13<sup>th</sup> February, 2023. “Anambra North: Enugu Residents Back Stella Oduah, As Senator Empowers Youths, Women.” Accessed from <https://www.thesun.ng> on 01/02/2025. See also [www.ceoafrika.com](http://www.ceoafrika.com) “SEAIL Defends Stella Oduah Over Theft Allegation – CEO Africa”, Tusaday, 5<sup>th</sup> July, 2016.”

<sup>8</sup> See “Stella Oduah Dumps PDP, Declares For Senate Under APGA” 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2018, in PM News from [www.pnewsnigeria.com](http://www.pnewsnigeria.com) on 01/02/2025. Also see, [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) “TVC News – Former Aviation Minister And Serving Senator decamps from PDP defects to APC.” 26<sup>th</sup> August, 2021.

<sup>9</sup> Olabanji, Wole. December 21, 2013. “The Princess Diaries: How Stella Oduah Got Away With Everything (Naija Long Read), from [www.ynaija.com](http://www.ynaija.com) accessed on 01/02/2025.

<sup>10</sup> Olabanji, Wole. December 21, 2013. “The Princess Diaries

<sup>11</sup> Uhunmwuango, Sunday Okungbowa & Ekpu, E. E., “Federalism” p. 174

## WHAT IS FEDERALISM?

Federalism is defined in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary as “*The distribution of power in an organization (as a government) between a central authority and the constituent units*”<sup>12</sup>, these constituent units can either be called states as is the case in Nigeria, or provinces. A federal government assigns its powers and functions so that both the central government and the government of the federating units act within a well-defined sphere coordinate and act independently of each other. A federal government is directly antithetical to a unitary government where as it were all power and functions are concentrated in the hands of the central government.

Contrary to a unitary system of government, a federalist state is not governed as a single unit, power does not flow from the top down and the central government is not the sole sovereign body as all the federating units, which in Nigeria is constituted of thirty-six (36)<sup>213</sup> states are all equally and independently sovereign. In a truly federalist state, the federating units are not bound to exercise only such powers and functions as the central government so chooses to delegate to them<sup>14</sup>

It is a fact that the central government is more powerful as if in the words of Jean Jacques Rousseau<sup>15</sup> acts with the with and power of everybody and all the units, but in spite of this, the federating units are also sovereign, have the feature of checks and balance in place that tend to balance each other. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria declares at Section 2(2) that “Nigeria shall be a federation consisting of states and a federal capital territory”<sup>16</sup>.

To be more apt, there is symmetry within the central and the central and constituent units in a federalist government, which is hardly the case in Nigeria’s federalism, which was a creation of colonialism for the selfish interest of the colonial powers. According to Awofeso & Obah-Akpowoghaha, the British colonial masters imposed federalism on Nigeria and Nigerians “in order to maintain a neo-colonial state apparatus for effective control of the country after independence because British colonialists had the opportunity to de-emphasize the particularistic tendencies of the different ethnic groups in the country but for selfish reasons, they ended up creating ‘structural imperfections to bedevil inter- ethnic relations after independence.”<sup>17</sup> The end result of this is a federalism that is dedicated to corruption and such anti-patriotic vices that seek to destroy and contort the values for which true federalism was set up by its creators. This is how federalism, in severing the bond of unity, seeks to set everyone on edge, one against everyone, and tribe against the other tribe.

## FEATURES OF TRUE FEDERALISM

A true federalist state’s operation is expected to concord with the following indices or to present with the following features;

1. The relationship between the central government and the constituent units expressed like a contract hence of is evidenced in a written and therefore inside constitution.
2. The operations in a federalist nation reinforces the doctrine of the supremacy of the constitution because having derived their powers from the constitution, neither the central nor the constituent units or states can exercise or carry out any function outside the powers vested on that subset of the government except that delegated that set of

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<sup>12</sup> Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, by Merriam-Webster, Merriam Webster, Springfield, Massachusetts, 1991, p. 454

<sup>13</sup> P. A. Oluyede & D. O. Aihe, Cases and Materials on Constitutional Law in Nigeria, Ibadan, University of Ibadan Press, 2003, p. 575; Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999.

<sup>14</sup> Fred R. Harris, *America’s Democracy*, Glenview, Illinois, Scott, Foresman and Company, (1980), pp. 48 - 51

<sup>15</sup> Fred R. Harris, *America’s Democracy*, *ibid*.

<sup>16</sup> Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended)

<sup>17</sup> Awofeso, Olu & Obah-Akpowoghaha, Nelson Goldpin, (2017). “The Challenge Of Federalism And Its Implications For The Nigerian State” in *International Journal of Politics and Good Governance*, Volume VIII, No. 8.3 Quarter III 2017 ISSN: 0976 – 1195, p. 2

government because both are subordinated to the constitution and hold its provisions as supreme.

3. The constitution distributes governmental powers between the central and the unit governments. The details of such division vary from one nation to another, but primarily, matters of common interest to all units and which require uniform regulation such as foreign affairs, defence, currency, immigration, Armed Forces, etc are the sole preserve of the central government, while others are either shared like police where it is fashionable to have state police, and security while the rest of the functions are left to the federating units.
4. True federalism implies two sets of government – the central or federal and the other the federating unit as the states or provincial government. Each sub-set is independent of the other, on its own, with its area of jurisdiction, and they are taken as being constitutionally equal in status and position to each other and none is superior to the other. This is why they can both have check and balances on themselves and on each other.
5. In a true federalism, each structure of government established at the center is replicated at the unit level. For instance, the federal and state are both required to operate bicameral legislatures, both have High Court Appeal Court and Supreme Court. The Supreme Court of the states interprets the constitution, decides disputes between the centre and provinces or between provinces, or the different organs of government, so as to ensure the states themselves are put to check within constitutional units.<sup>18</sup>
6. The legislative arm of government under true federalism is generally bicameral in that while the lower house is said to protect and represent the nation as a whole especially the constituting units, the upper house is deemed to be represent and to embody the federalist idea.
7. Both the federal or central government and the units can propose amendment to the constitution, unlike what obtains in Nigeria where it is the sole preserve of the federal government vide the federal legislative houses.
8. The government’s participation in the appointment of persons into key offices in the land is a shared responsibility of both federal and constituent states.
9. The central government is not too strong so that the states must necessarily depend on the federal government for all its needs. The states rather are obliged to pay only a percentage, or prescribed sums into the federal coffers.
10. Both the central and federating units have the power to create states or local government areas and to adjust boundaries and not to be subjected to such insurmountable hurdles placed on the way by the federal government so that states have nothing to do in this regard as we encounter in Nigeria.
11. Independence of the judiciary<sup>19</sup> is one basic feature that is guarded jealously in a truly federalist country and appointment does not originate from are subset of government but issues from both federal and the states.
12. Emergency provisions and emergency responses are not solely vested in the central government as states or the provincial units can undertake it as required, not wart for the federal government, even if lives are at stakes.
13. States in a true federalism can withdraw from the union or secede without any contrary force being brought to bear on that state, nor will that state tagged a rebel.
14. Equality: in a true federalism representation at the upper and lower legislative houses are based on the equality of the states, not based on the population size, land mass, the

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<sup>18</sup> B. O. Nwabueze, *A Constitutional History of Nigeria*, Ikeja-Nigeria, Longman,(1982), p. 128; Dr. Kimse Okoko & N. J. Nna, “Federalism and Resource Allocation: The Nigerian Experience” in *Nigerian Journal of oil and Politics*, Vol. 1, No.1, September 1997, pp. 16, 17.

<sup>19</sup> Fred R. Harris, *America’s Democracy*, pp . 59 - 60

economic viability of that state, etc. This is based solely on the principle of equality in the union.

15. Power does not flow from top down, both flows across the strata of a federalist state, both horizontally and vertically to give effect to the federation<sup>20</sup>. This also explains why the states also share power to the local governments, down to smaller units called wards to ensure that power flows across, horizontally, vertically and in all directions. It is in this way that the states and local communities “*will have significant scope of decision taking, considering the specificity of their local environment*”<sup>21</sup>”
16. Federalism is beneficial to the country because it fosters a national unity built on shared interest, and at the same time, it allows and permits the diversity and differences which are peculiar to each state.

### **ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF A FEDERAL SYSTEM**

Like any political system, a federal system possesses potential advantages and disadvantages. Some of the advantages federal systems of government are said to have over unitary systems include:

- a) They disperse and limit power, protecting individual citizens and entities from an overly powerful government; (checks and balances).
- b) They increase the scrutiny of government action and reduce incidences of corruption; (through an integral plan of checks and balance of all tiers by each tier and that the government is nearer to the people).
- c) They provide for greater representation of citizens and more opportunities for citizenship involvement in the democratic processes: as voters, electoral candidates, campaigners or activists.
- d) They allow for the customisation and differences of policies and laws to meet local needs and preferences.
- e) They encourage cooperation, competition and innovation among governments, potentially leading to better designed policies and more economically efficient governments, as governments can learn from each other’s policy successes and failures. This includes damage control from a policy or government failure.

These advantages can be summarized as enhancing both the liberal and democratic elements of a political system: enhancing checks and balances, enhancing democratic participation, representation and processes, and potentially better policies.

Some of the potential disadvantages of a federal system of government are said to include

- i) Inefficient duplication of government activities;
- ii) Buck-passing or unclear lines of responsibility; and
- iii) Conservatism, in that it is more difficult to institute certain reforms that apply to the whole country.

### **FEDERALISM AND CORRUPTION**

It is not a fact that federalism actually aids corruption. It could be true that true practice of federalism definitely leads to the establishment of many structures and democratic institutions and processes. Both this indeed is the beauty of democracy – the involvement of the people who willingly give their consent to the operations of the government that they are a part of, and hence the origin of the legitimacy and wide acceptability<sup>22</sup>. A truly federalist state does not aid corruption, official squandermania or any other social ill by the leadership or representatives.

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<sup>20</sup> Kimse Okoko & N. J. Nna, *ibid.*, p. 17

<sup>21</sup> Nyemutu Roberts, *The State, Accumulation and Violence: The politics of Environmental Security in Nigeria’s Oil Producing Area*, Ibadan, NISER Monograph Series no. 17, 1999, p. 68

<sup>22</sup> Fred R. Harris, *America’s Democracy*, p. 322

Corruption in Nigeria is an attitudinal thing, which goes beyond the abuse of federalism to greed, poverty and insatiety. In fact, it hinges on a form of madness that issue from the age old saying that “absolute power corrupts absolutely”.

What is worrying with the Nigerian experience is that the operators of the system have deliberately derailed from and abandoned from the basic tenets of what federalism is. What is federalism, which is what operated when we have the three regions has been abandoned and jettisoned by the “new-breed politicians” to feed their lust for power and wealth. The first attempt after independence was by Gen. J.T.U. Aguiyi – Ironsi. Though his aim as at then was to consolidate, rebuild and pull the nation from the brink of collapse after the bloody coup of 1966, but it succeeded in giving federalism a kick thus stalling the very federalism. When the leadership went to the North, the contract relationship was cancelled and made to look like a union and this swept away the rudiments of democracy as it removed equality and freedom, and brought in instead unequal representation in which the North began taunting the claim that the North is higher in “population” and land mass than the South, even when it is well established that the fertile alluvial plains of the south attracts and do support higher population. A case in point is the population of Lagos and Kano States. Before Kano was split into Jigawa and the present Kano, it had 45 local government areas and a population of about 9 million, over that of Lagos State. After Kano was split into two states that is, Kano and Jigawa under General Sani Abacha, Kano was again split into 45 local government areas with a population of over 9 million to ensure that Kano was still more populated than Lagos State that was not split. This is because the federating units have no say in the administration, no input into the running and the sole aim is to, on that basis manipulate the revenue accruable to Kano State on the basis of land mass and the total number of local government councils in that state. Thus, the leaders from these areas having gotten what they least merited, have no other option than to go on a spree to misappropriate, squander, award projects that end up as elephant projects and are abandoned as long as it lines their pockets with the loot.

Furthermore, Nigeria’s federalism appears built around revenue allocation and it is what Ken Saro-Wiwa described as “*a nation at war with itself*”<sup>23</sup>. The state apparatus depend on it, “*the oil rent which underwrite petrolic accumulation are realized state interventions and fiscal linkages which naturally presupposes an understanding of the social relations and class interests that constitute the state...and the regime of accumulation that it regulates.*”<sup>24</sup> the meaning to be gleaned from this is that the federalist arrangement of Nigeria collects and receives from the deltaic oil producing communities and bestows same at the beck and call of the states to be squandered by the states as ordered by the federalist arrangement. This Nyemutu goes further to explain, is caused by the rent-seeking aspects of the state, the internal politics and dynamics of petrolic accumulation and the fact that the state cannot appreciably manage the outfalls and contradictions of our Nigerian federalism.

Our leaders have also remodeled our federalism after unitary government so that like it is operational within military formations, all instructions, allocation of funds and execution of projects and actions flow from above. This is why as I earlier said that absolute power corrupts absolutely, this has imposed falsehood on us all so that whatever the man at the top says or does, is right and ought to not be questioned. This is why the place of the judiciary and legislature, at the state level has been compromised and leaving the state to mortgage their rights one of which is to our making do with only one Supreme Court and one upper legislative house at the centre. This does not entail strict separation of power and checks and balance, because every decision at the various subset levels has to be vetted and verified, at the centre, thus the centre is too powerful. In so doing, members of the tribe or ethnic area from which the man at the top comes from is also seen as above board and faultless. And it is here that the leadership get the needed opening to perpetuate all forms of corrupt practices, because the argument turns into a sort of

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<sup>23</sup> Ken Saro-Wiwa, *Nigeria: The Brink of Disaster*, Port Harcourt, (1991), p.52.

<sup>24</sup> Nyemutu Roberts, op cit, p. 9.

assuming that it is the tribesman's turn and is it wrong timed to act now that his tribesman is there and hence, why didn't the action take off earlier, before now<sup>25</sup>?

It is taunted that sovereignty belongs to Nigerian people alone, but the fact tends to remain that our state in its practice of federalism inevitably becomes entrenched in the struggle and conflict propped up by local political conditions resulting from the effect of revenue allocation from oil. As understood from the submissions of Nyemutu Roberts, the ensuing problems imposed on all of us aggregates to environmental instability in the ecosystems and political instability occasioned by agitations of the oil producing communities<sup>26</sup> and the states response based on the transmuted form of our federalism which takes from the communities their natural endowment and does little or nothing to return their gesture. Our federalism or bogie two tier governance is a farce and a fraud perpetrated on Nigerians.

Our federalism as practiced did abandon all the virtues that uphold that system, and has evolved counterfeits or systems antithetical to, that will make for and sustain corrupt practices of our leaders. This ugly evolution and setup have resulted more or less into-

1. Increasing demand for welfare spending to the detriment of savings, investment and capital formation, an environment in which corruption flourishes.
2. There is tradeoff between popular government and economic development in which case, because decisions flow from the top, the central government even ends up dictating who becomes the governor of any state for the sake of financial returns and loyalty to the man at the centre, and this nourishes corruption in governance even reflecting the sort of electoral processes we end up with.
3. These appointed leaders in the name of elected leaders in order to gain some level of acceptability may embark on projects that have no relevance such the Governor Amaechi's Mono Rail in Rivers State, basically white elephant with over bloated political portfolio appointments which serve to diversify corrupt base of the government, which true federalism would have eliminated.
4. Appointment of misfits and mediocre who knowing how ill qualified they are, resort to corrupt practices, tribal and ethnic considerations and divide and rule and the settlement syndrome to appeal to their mentors and re-assure them that they can perform.
5. The judiciary and legislative arms are made permanent appendages of and subservient to the executive arm so that their independence is never assured not even presumed, and so politicians can continue their spending spree of corruption unchecked, unhindered and even when they are eventually charged to court, these same courts end up collecting huge sums of money as bribes and freeing them as in the case of James Ibori of Delta State sentenced in Britain.

Thus, in our own brand of federalism, instead of engendering economic progress and cultural cohesion in diversity, it invites political instability; instead of bolstering belief in the political system, to nurture a climate of open and free debate and instead of also unleashing the people's creative energy, what we have on our hands is mutated versions of federalism, where in order to overcome the difficulties into which the abnormality of our hope of federalism has dumped us, we work assiduously to enthrone corruption and hide under it to perpetuate all forms manipulations to keep in touch and to remain in charge, lest the edifice breaks up and we are left with nothing else but fragments.<sup>27</sup>

## **REMEDIES**

To remedy this abnormality in our federalism, which has infested our system like a deadly virus, and to cure ourselves of the canker worm of corruption, squandermania and social

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<sup>25</sup> Kimse Okoko, et al, p. 32

<sup>26</sup> Nyemutu Roberts, *ibid*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>27</sup> Nyemutu Roberts, *ibid*, pp. 61-68.

vices that faulty federalism come on the back of such misconception, we need to first of all think of tackling the root cause of the problem.

Our federalism should be revised to make it agreeable to the people and in tandem with its practice the world over. As had been canvassed all over, there will be need to convoke a national conference, sovereign or not, the fact that there are elected representatives notwithstanding. The various features which make federalism the pride of nations like the United States of America and India should be appealed to, erected and given adequate backing to blossom. The centralized and unitary form of our state apparatus or its indirect application in whatever forms should be resigned to the dust bin of history revised and made to genuinely reflect the qualities of true and genuine federalism, and it should be one that will in all ramifications be practically oriented and pragmatic. The judiciary and legislature should be made independent. The status of the states should be upheld and equated with the federal or central government. The people's loyalty in a true federalism is said to be normally divided among the states and the federal subsets within the federalist arrangement in the sense that the same individual citizen is both a citizen of a state, which in the United States of America is simply termed state of residence, and as well as citizens of the federal or central government. The federating units should be made more of a sovereign entity much like the federal or central, and all forms of interference by the centre should be restricted only on those areas that the compact have agreed to, that such issues ought to be either exclusive, concurrent or residual in the hands of the federal, state or local government.

In addition, the powers in the hands of either the federal or the units should not be made absolute in any way so that it does not distort the equilibrium. In same way, representation in the National Assembly, which is both Senate and House of Representatives, should be equal so that no other consideration but equality of status is permitted to determine the criteria for representation and so that no state or region can claim superiority over the others.

Also, the revenue formula should not be centralized as it is presently the case in Nigeria because it does appear or at best it is mostly seen as the "*conspiracy of the powerful over the powerless*"<sup>28</sup>. but should be from the federating units, whose obligation will be paying a percentage of its gross in come to the central government. This will restore sanity into our federalism system. A case in point is that of Canada where all land, mines, minerals and royalties and all sums accruable from oil belong to and are paid to the several provinces. There is also the need to emphasize the principal fact that the sole purpose of federalism is to safeguard and promote the unity of the Nigerian state while at the same time learn how to accommodate the differences and diversity in our nation state and not to make it the sole dividing factor.

In tacking corruption, squandermania and other social vices that has propped up in our federalism, the first, step will be to close the widening gap between the powerful and the powerless, the haves and the have nots, the rich and the poor. This act of allowing the means of production and wealth to be concentrated in the hands of a few should be reviewed and rejected. More emphasis should shift to empowering the people and thus strengthening the bond of federalism that hang so loose and thereby make the middle class and the poor economically viable through meaningful employment and engagement in economic tasks this will make more people able to fend for themselves, and so watch and check the "fortunate" politician so elected or imposed on the people as he amasses and accumulates wealth, drawing on the petrolic accumulation of the people of the Niger Delta area. Its time all the people rise to uphold the basic features of democracy and federalism, and to say enough is enough of counterfeiting and producing mutant variants of federalism in the name of the true federalism. For instance, before government bans importation of Tokunbo cars, the government ought to have had a car assembly which will sell cars at almost same cost or a little above the cost the Tokunbo cars otherwise it

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<sup>28</sup> Dr A. Lazarus "Resource Control in Federal States:A Comparative Analysis," by Kimse Okoko (Ed) Nigerian Jurnal of Oil and Politics, 19998, p.40



will be an inadvertent move to make the men of the customs and excise to target extortion of huge sums of money from the traders or importers, but it will not effect a ban on the importation of second hand cars. Also, before a particular popular market, though illegally set up or to be relocated due to development or road is destroyed or demolished, it will be equitable if the new market is ready so that the traders don't have to bribe local officials to be able to secure a place or somewhere to continue their business. This will strangle the grip of corruption as it will seek to make the people self-sufficient and independent.

It also not just not just enough to give a three months period to hear and determine an election petition, its far more better to make certain that such matter can be fully determined within such a time, or we make the parties desperate, and the judges target of bribery offer and put justice on sale to the highest bidder.

The system should be made to operate away from and outside of corruption and such like vices. For example, a contract review commission with powers to prosecute persons and indict companies for bogus contract awards and a law that blacklists such companies and their directions and officials will ensure that contracts are awarded within allowable market rates and only to performing contractors, not merely because, they are party loyalists. The same law should make it mandatory that contracts inherited by a subsequent administration should be continued and completed by the new government using the original contractor initially awarded, unless the contractor is found wanting.

There is the dire need for the re-orientation of our values and priorities to make them compatible to federalism and to aid in combating corruption. It is quite sad that our society places so much emphasis on wealth and materialism, without necessarily trying to find out how such wealth was acquired. Instead of showering people with money, we should internalise the ideals of honoring people who have achieved certain feats in fields or have distinguished themselves with things which have lasting effect on the people, to show that wealth and money (is not all). We should halt the move towards monetizing just everything. Such misplaced priority tends to make any person in any public office to look towards how to surround himself with stolen wealth and money so as to be recognized and so honoured, so he goes a stealing and indulges in corruption.

Also, the corrupt practices monitoring and enforcement agency should be made independent of state politics and influence of those in power. Unlike what of obtains today, the economic and financial air commission should look towards tracking down all who are corrupt, not as a tool to witch hunt only political opponents and those who refuse to make returns. Also, the current trend where indicted politicians and persons engage the commission in plea bargaining should be stepped. It makes the government appear in the eyes of the public like an accessory after these corrupt practices and crimes. More than that, it tends to approve of such act and more so, tends to sanction the corrupt act as if to say, keep the stolen wealth are did not see, but the ones seen, we take only a party. It is totally wrong. This is why corruption has become a hallmark of our political regime, whether civilian or military.

It is also imperative to as a matter of urgency encourage and fund nongovernmental organizations to help spot and report corrupt officials and acts of those in power, so that the democracy of a well managed charade set up by government can be by – passed and the information from these groups should be treated with dispatch. Unless this is done, and those who posses and control state apparatus and power continue to define and regulate corrupt practices, then we will be daydreaming as they will surely continue to perpetuate corrupt practices and to permit same by making it an ineluctable and integral part of our polity. It means that the powerful and the rich would unabashedly indulge in corrupt practices while those below will commit all sort of misdeeds to get to the position that will afford them the privilege to also with reckless abandon and impurity because at the conclusion of their despicable acts of corrupt escapade, they will very probably get away with their loot, or if at worst they are prosecuted, the culprit is sure that he can avail himself of plea bargaining option, where the wealth and moneys ill-gotten can be traded in a give and take fashion, and the illicitly acquired wealth can be retained

in part so that the corrupt official does not get any worse off. This is why plea bargaining is generally criticized and is not a good and effective tool to combat corruption and corrupt practices.

However, as we have explained above, if we adopt the options elucidated and proposed above, we believe that we would be drawing close to the redemption and recovery of our federalism, and making it meet the demands of true federalism, so as to bring it up to meet the practice of the system the world over, and would have in one fell swoop combated and won corruption all the way.

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