

Federalism and the Minority Question: A Historical Perspective.

by

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Abstract

Over the years, Nigeria has experienced quite a number of violent agitations perpetrated by groups like the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) Boko Haram, Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), the Fulani herdsmen, and Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) among others. Some of these agitations like the current militant operations in Nigeria's Niger Delta region are occasioned by the minority question or agitation. Minority agitations exist among Nigeria's somewhat demographically weaker groups who perceive they are marginalized because the federation is skewed to favour a few demographically stronger groups, and has created tensions in grave proportions. This study, therefore, sought to provide a critical analysis of the nature of Nigeria's federalism, and how equity has thrived vis-à-vis access to socioeconomic and political resources among the different ethno-religious groups. Likewise, the study adopted the theory of Justice by John Rawls as its theoretical framework, and it utilized the historical and descriptive research methods with which information were generated from secondary sources. A comprehensive content analysis was undertaken to analyse the information generated. Findings from the study showed that the minority question in Nigeria is guided by demonstrations for the control of resources like crude oil, and access to political and economic power. Hence, relegating national interest to the background in place of ethnic interests. It was, therefore, recommended that constitutional arrangements should be made granting political and fiscal powers to the State and Local Governments to be independent of the Federal Government.

Keywords: *Federalism, minority question, ethnicity, culture, religion, crude oil, political power, resource control.*