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Abstract.

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1.0 Introduction

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Federalism: A Conceptual Exploration

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Abstract

Federalism has indeed been one of the most widely debated concepts in politics. This paper thus attempts to illuminate on the meaning and nature of the concept noting the requisites for its adoption and sustenance as well as current arguments in the literature on the topic. The essence is to bring to fore its dynamism engendered by societal impulses. While it remains the best option for plural societies, its efficacy and continued relevance as diversity management technique will for a long time depend on its degree of adaptability to social, political and economic impulses from the society.

Key words: Federalism; pluralism; self rule; adaptability.

1.0 Introduction

All through history, human societies have operated under one form of governmental system or the other depending on the nature and needs of that particular society. The modern state system too is not an exemption. While some adopt systems that allow for complete centralization of power as in a unitary state, others operate under a union of states with each preserving its autonomy and right of independent existence. Yet, others have adopted systems that combine the benefits of centralization with considerable decentralization. This latter form finds expression in the idea and practice of federalism. Since the conception of this idea of federalism, many scholars have written widely on the subject and covering a variety of areas. As a concept and in practice, it has enjoyed much patronage from scholars, politicians and even journalists with each attaching meanings that only reflects more or less their individual perceptions. While some see it as a mode or process of governance, others see it as a form of political ideology which manifests in institutions and structures set up for operating it. Equally, with its increasing adoption by states and varying degree of successful operation, it has come to steer debates among scholars as to its meaning, form and relevance as a governmental

arrangement. Nonetheless, to say all about the concept have been exhausted is to underrate its topicality. More so, scholars have demonstrated through research that it is a dynamic concept whose meaning varies from one society to another and which equally changes in response to social, political and economic impulses from the society. Hence, an understanding of the concept requires putting into consideration its dynamism. This paper is devoted to examining the pros and cons of the subject with a view the aim of revealing some of its important aspects. What is the nature of the subject? What conditions or factors make it desirable and to thrive? What is the current trend of thinking in the literature about the subject matter of federalism? These are some of the issues explored in this work. Aside this introductory remark, the rest of the paper is organized into five sections. Section one looks at the meaning and nature of the concept. This is followed by a review of those factors that facilitate its adoption by states. The third section is on the principles on which federalism rests while the fourth examines current arguments on the continued relevance of federalism. The last section concludes the article.

2.0 Meaning and Nature of Federalism

Attempts at conceptualizing federalism are as old as the development of the concept itself. Even till date, it is still being used loosely and applied to a 'wide variety of political and governmental arrangements ranging from unitary arrangements such as Nigeria's so-called military federalism to confederal arrangements such as the European Union' (Osaghae, 2003: 213). This may be attributed to the nature and circumstances that give rise to and which informed its operation in different societies and contexts. But one discernible fact about the concept is that flexibility of its usage has not led to any fundamental disagreement about its meaning and essence (Osaghae, 2003: 214) thus, it is principally aimed at addressing governmental concerns that bother on the twin but difficult task of maintaining unity while at the same time preserving diversity. In other-words, it has been conceived as 'a device for the management of diversity (Ayoade, 1980:20). This definition presupposes the existence of opposing and often conflicting groups and interests in the state, all of which must have to be accommodated in an overarching national union though the exigencies of their history may tend to pull them apart. Federalism is thus a process of bringing equilibrium between the centrifugal and centripetal forces in the society (Akande, 1988:417).

Federalism has also been defined as a methodology of limited union directed to the production of limited unity (Ramphal, 1979: xiv). This is because; it allows

units to exercise jurisdictional control over their territories while it also provides hegemony for national institutions. It makes this possible through a constitutional power sharing arrangement between the central and unit governments in such a manner that the jurisdiction of each level is recognised and constitutionally protected. Such an arrangement has the advantage of managing or reducing conflict that may arise from inter relationship between the diverse groups or units in the state. As such, federalism serves as an institutional solution to the disruptive tendency of intra-societal ethnic pluralism (Long, 1991:192).

What the above definitions suggest is that federalism is a governmental and institutional arrangement which seeks to maintain unity in diversity because power is shared between a central government and other component units each maintaining its (often different) identity within the federal union. Thus, a federal constitution becomes necessary where size, cultural and linguistic diversity, historical particularism and a considerable decentralization prevail (Bellof quoted in Ayoade, 1980:20). But despite the agreement of scholars in the purposes and ends of federalism, it is observed that the principles of federalism postulated often differ and to that extent lacking in scientific exactness and do not stand empirical observation at all times and in all places (Okhaide, 1992:536). This may however be attributed to the dynamism of the system, which in turn is traceable to historical exigencies and changing circumstances on the one hand, and mood of political leaders and policy formulators on the other.

K.C. Wheare is believed to be the most articulate writer on federalism. He conceived of a federal state as an association of states formed for certain common purposes but in which the member states retain a large measure of their original independence (Wheare, 1963:1). The emphasis of Wheare was that, a federal state is one characterised by a constitutional division of power in such a way that there is a central government which, represents the entire units and also act on their behalf in certain matters of common interest to all while the units equally exercise legislative and administrative powers within the sphere allotted by the constitution. To this extent, he was advocating dual or layer cake federalism where none of the units is dependent on the other for the exercise of its powers. This factor however forms one of the bases of the critique of Wheare's formulation.

As argued by Seidman (1975:162), Wheare and other classical scholars' conception of federalism emphasizes the independence of each level of government and a complete separation of powers. That is, a situation where the powers appropriate to each level of government can be defined with reasonable precision

and kept distinct and independent from each other. Although this has the advantage of preventing conflicts that may arise out of improper allocation of functions in federation, in reality however, such separation by levels of government in a federation is both impracticable and undesirable especially where the government operates within the same territory, serve the same clienteles, and seek comparative goals (Seidman 1975:102). Similarly, to conceive of the federal principle as a method of dividing powers so that the general and regional governments are each within a sphere co-ordinate and independent as did by Wheare (1963:10) raises a philosophical question with regards to Sovereignty as an indivisible supreme power of the state. This is because, since no one unit has control of the other, legal sovereignty neither lies exclusively with the central government, not the unit governments but rather, it is shared between the two levels of government. But the reality is that, such a situation of shared sovereignty is difficult to obtain. Not even in Wheare's most perfect examples of federal states. He had identified countries such as the United States, Switzerland, Australia and Canada as perfect examples of federal systems. But in virtually all these countries and in most cases, there are interaction points between levels of government and virtually in all cases, the central seems to predominate. In other-words, whatever the nature of division of power in a federal system, legal sovereignty usually tilts towards the central government.

Consequently, no single federation is seemed to have fully embodied the federal principle enunciated by Wheare and others like him. Rather, such formulations only succeeded in informing other scholars on the (supposed) legal relation between the general and regional governments without inquiring into the rationale for and origin of federalism (Dudley, 1963:96). But it must equally be noted that whatever the origin and rationale for federalism, relations between various levels of government must certainly occur within some legal or constitutional framework; hence, Wheare's formulations cannot be totally jettisoned.

Although subsequent scholars have come up with formulations that represent a departure from the classical conception of Wheare, all still revolve around a legal framework. The debate has however continued to revolve around the question of appropriate balance of power among the levels of government. Consequently, models such as cooperative federalism, interdependent, mature and emergent federalism have been suggested to characterise the federal system. The cooperative federalism scholars such as Daniel Elazar and Morton Grodzins believe that levels

of government in a federation are in no way exclusively independent of each other but rather and to some extent, mutually dependent. Hence, there can be no clear cut separation of functions especially since all levels of government occupy same territory and seek after similar goals. Like all others, scholars in this category recognize the fact that, federalism provides opportunity for ethno-cultural diverse groups seeking a means of self expression and protection to exercise political authority within their own territory but under a larger framework. To them, the diverse groups participate in sharing powers and functions in a co-operative manner; though the combined forces of ethnic pluralism and cultural diversity among others tend to pull their people apart (Tamuwo, 1998:3). This idea of cooperative federalism however suffers some set back in the sense that it fails to recognise the fact that separation is inherent in the federal system even without a clear cut separation of functions by levels of government. At least, the federating units still maintain their various identities. Equally, it over-simplifies interaction in a federation to that of co-operation whereas experiences have shown that relation between levels of government in a federation has not only been characterized by cooperation but often by rivalry, conflict, bargaining and even compromise. For this reason, some scholars have suggested the use of the term interdependent federalism in place of cooperation since according to them, government within federal systems interact with each other in a relationship of both cooperation and rivalry (Okhaide, 1992: 540).

But Awa (1976) equally makes a case out of this suggestion. To him, the use of the term interdependent federalism in place of co-operative federalism amounts to tautology because cooperation, bargaining and conflict are factors inherent in federalism. More so, the basis of cooperation and bargaining is partly in the interdependence of the two levels of government. If we must therefore use any expression to characterize federalism, the terms 'mature and emergent' are more appropriate. 'Being more elastic, they are likely to be more lasting' (Awa, 1976:6-7). Noteworthy, however, is that the essence of characterization is to conceptualize and capture the workings and relationship of levels of government within a federation thereby gaining insight into the nature of the federal system. But categorizing federal systems as mature and emergent seems not to serve this purpose. Rather, it implies stages of growth of the system. Similarly, emergence of federations is informed by certain factors which are peculiar to each federation. Therefore, one must not expect them to develop at the same pace. In other words, at

what stage does a federal system become mature or is emergent since both terms are relative, subjective and depend on the individual scholar's perception.

The inference we can draw from the above review is that political realities which often impinge upon the distribution of powers between the levels of government and their relationship in a federation determines the nature and character of federalism. Consequently, the concept becomes merely a process rather than a static form of governance. Thus, attempts to have a concise conceptualization have always proved difficult. Perhaps what is missing in most postulations lies in the fact that most scholars fail to recognize that federalism or federal situation cannot be appropriately conceived by mere rigour of academic discourse without recourse to certain observed traits and character of different federations. This is because, it is a system that continues to witness constant innovations manifesting in changing power relations between levels of government especially with increasing complexity of governmental functions amidst other exigencies such as emergence of new interests and demands. In other words, federations are characterized by varying circumstances, which have made it difficult to appropriately study them using a single model. This tendency has also propelled contemporary scholars to see federalism more as a political ideology and further attempt to distinguish between federalism and federation.

As argued by Burgess (1993:3), this drive is not a new endeavour as it has been implicit in much of the literature on the subject for many years. It however received impetus especially with 1982 Preston king's publication (*Federalism and Federation*) wherein he drew attention to federalism as an avowedly ideological and/or philosophical position (Burgess 1993: 3). Some other scholars afterwards such as Burgess (1993), Chapman (1993) and Smith (1995), also tend to see federalism in this light. They went further to distinguish federalism as a political ideology and federation as an institutional manifestation of such ideology. As an ideology, federalism is taken to mean an overtly prescriptive guide to action while federation represents the action which flow from the ideological belief often manifesting in the society's institutional character and structures. Consequently, it is their submission that there may be federalism without federation but there cannot be federation without some matching variety of federalism. In other words, it is only when such an ideology is expressed and manifested that we now have federation in place.

One discernible fact from the analysis so far is that federalism is a highly dynamic concept. But this dynamism is inevitable because of the ends which it is

expected to serve. Gagnon (1993:16) identified four of such ends viz.: serving as conflict management device; serving as mechanism for protection of minorities and social engineering; allowing for politics of innovation and; for representation. It should also be noted that success of the system in these regards is in part dependent on how it is operated which is also dependent on the prowess and wisdom of political leaders and also partly, on the nature of social heterogeneity and prevalent political culture. While in societies with developed political culture, such goals of federalism may be attained at a very limited cost, countries with underdeveloped culture find such extremely difficult. Perhaps the above reasons help explain partly why many federations are faced with difficulties in restraining their internal divisive tendencies. For instance, a country like Nigeria is currently faced with difficulties in restraining the centrifugal tendencies of especially its ethnic minority groups. Also, Canada and India are respectively finding it difficult restraining the divisive forces of French-Canadians in Quebec (Canada) and the Sikhs in Punjab (India) in one or more territorially based constituents (Long 1991:192). All these are in addition to many other federations in crisis. Equally for this reason, one may be compelled to agree with Duckacek's (1984) position that the traditional argument for federalism as an institutional panacea for accommodating intra-societal ethnic pluralism may be exaggerated (quoted in Long 1991:192). This view was also shared by Watts (2000:3) when he noted that experience with federations since 1945 makes it clear that federalism is not the panacea that many have imagined it to be. This is largely because according to him, a number of post-war (1945) federal experiments have either been abandoned or temporarily suspended.

But the above views may not be a lasting argument for the fact that most studies on federalism tend to place much emphasis on the constitutional division of power in a federation as having stabilizing effects to the exclusion (or near passive mention) of some other variables. Identification of such other variables which include the extent of societal heterogeneity, origin and of course, conditions necessary for the formation and sustenance of a federation, among others, will therefore constitute a useful premise on which to begin an analysis of the federal system.

3.0 Conditions for Federalism

Federalism has been described as a device through which the federal qualities of the society are articulated and protected (Livingston, 1952:84). These federal qualities consist of the societal diversities such as language, culture, race, religion, nationality etc that make up the population. But as argued by Awa

(1976:15), some of the forces that cause diversity cannot be readily quantified. Thus, one cannot really argue that if a certain degree of diversity was present anywhere, it would be appropriate or even necessary to establish a federal government there. Notwithstanding, scholars have identified certain conditions and factors necessary for the formation and sustenance of federalism.

Wheare (1963) made an incisive contribution in this regard. According to him, the communities concerned must have the desire for union and to be under a single independent government for some purposes. This must also be complimented with a desire to have independent regional governments in some matters. Without this desire to be separate in some things, Wheare maintained, what may likely result is a unitary state with some appropriate degree of decentralization.

Apart from the desire for federal union, Wheare (1963:36) also argued that it is essential for the federating states or communities to have the administrative capacity to operate the system. This is informed by the fact that federalism requires having different levels of government, there is therefore the need to have effective personnel to run the various units for the realization of the union's goals. Wheare is therefore of the view that some inquiries into the capacities of communities as well as into their desires or aspirations will be necessary before it can be decided whether federal government is the system that they ought to adopt.

Wheare also identified some factors which are likely to bring about a desire for union. This include, a sense of military insecurity and the consequent desire for joint defense; a hope of economic advantage from union; geographical contiguity of federating communities either in a loose confederation or as parts of the same empire; similarity of political institutions and; a community of language, race, religion and nationality. But Wheare warned that presence of these factors in a territory may not likely produce on its own, the desire for union. On the contrary, they may as well be factors of separation. A great deal therefore depends on the leadership or statesmanship at right time (Wheare, 1963:36). in other-words, even if these factors are present, they may be overcome by more efficient leadership in favour of a unitary form of government. What is remarkable is that these postulations of Wheare have become the hub from which later day authors radiate. For instance, Appadorai (1974), Awa (1976), Oyovbaire (1985), Isijiola (1994) among others.

Awa (1976) however made a slight departure from other conceptions in that he recognized some of the factors as main determinants while others are not too important in making communities adopt federalism. He argued, for instance, that it

is other forces that make the factor of geographical contiguity important else, why do some territories join in a union with one neighbour and not with another where all the territories are contiguous (Awa 1976:17). He cited the case of Northern Cameroon joining the Nigerian federation while the Southern Cameroon joined the Cameroonian Republic in the period before independence. Similarly, similarity of social and political institutions, a community of language, religion, race and nationality or what he called, ethnic and cultural factors may not necessarily induce federalism. This is because according to him, it is possible for people in various territories with same racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds to stay together under a unitary government whereas people with dissimilar cultural and ethnic backgrounds and institutions may desire a union because of its economic or other advantages. This was the case with countries such as Canada, Switzerland, former USSR, Nigeria and Malaysia, among others. Consequently, Awa (1976:35) argued that the main determinants in the formation of a federal union are the economic resources and advantages, political association, fear of insecurity and, leadership. But of all these factors as well, he singled out the element of leadership as the most important single factor that can help bring about the establishment of a federal union. His argument was that, while previous political association may allow the various territories to acquire intimate knowledge of the economic and other resources available to each other, 'astute political leadership makes it possible for people to appreciate the benefits which are desirable from the federal union' (Awa, 1976:37). This primacy of political leadership in forming a federation emphasized by Awa falls in congruent with earlier postulations of Wheare (1963:40) when he noted that, 'this factor of leadership, of skill in negotiation and propaganda, can make all the difference between stagnation and an actual desire for union'.

4.0 The Sustaining Principles of Federalism

Adoption of a federal arrangement may turn out to be an exercise in futility except conscious attempts are made at sustaining it and making it work. This desire has driven scholars to recognize certain factors which are essential for the sustenance and survival of federations. The value of these factors lay in the fact that they have the potential to make or mar the operations of the federal system. Among such factors we may note is the absence of marked inequality among the component units in terms of wealth, population and landmass. According to Awa (1976:38), no one unit should be so large that it can by virtue of its size compete effectively with the rest of the units or the entire union. By size here he meant the volume of

population and amount of wealth possessed by the units. In other words, relative equality among the component units of a federation constitutes an essential stabilizing factor in the operation of the federal system. This is because, in a situation where a unit is greater in size and wealth than other units put together, the tendency is that such unit will insist on being the master. Where they are two, they will be irresistible when they agree and whenever they differ, everything will be decided by a struggle for ascendancy between them (Mill quoted in Appadorai, 1974:500). A situation as such obviously vitiates the practice of federalism.

Added to the above is that the central and unit governments must each possess sufficient economic and financial resources. According to Wheare (1963:51), it is not enough that the general government should be able to finance itself but it is also essential that the regional (units) governments should be able to do likewise. Wheare contended that without financial self-sufficiency 'no matter how much a state desires union or draws up a federal constitution, the practice of federal government will not be possible. This is because the regional governments will be financially dependent on the central government. What is being emphasized here is that, fiscal autonomy of units helps ensure stability and sustenance of a federation whereas financial subordination makes an end of federalism.

A satisfactory division of powers among the component units is another factor essential for maintaining a federation. Two strands are implicit in this. The first concerns rational allocation of functions, and taxing powers between the component units such that no unit is worse off. The second aspect relates to independent decision-making powers of each level of government and non-encroachment on each other's sphere of decision-making. Noteworthy is that both are ensured through constitutional provisions.

With regards to the former, division of powers are clearly enumerated in a written constitution usually in form of exclusive, concurrent or residual powers; although the extent of each unit's power vary from federation to federation. The essence of enumerating these powers and functions according to Awa (1976: 46) is to make their distribution and the responsibilities of the governments as clear as possible in order to reduce the area of uncertainties and suspicion. Concerning the latter, the constitution usually contains provisions on conflict resolution between the units and the central government on the one hand and, among units on the other. Usually in most federations, there exists an independent Supreme Court saddled with responsibility of resolving such disputes as may arise between governments. Equally, the constitution also guarantees equal rights of participation of all units in

matters that are of joint concern including the process of amending the constitution. In effect, power in a federation is divided between the inclusive government and a number of units such that both levels of government are coordinate and interdependent in many ways. It is for this reason that Awa, 1983 (quoted in Agbese, 1999:10) concluded that the basic rationale for adopting a federal system is the quest to satisfy the demand of democratic theory. That is, enabling people to participate actively in making decisions that affect every aspect of their lives.

It must however be emphasized that though the constitution and its method of dividing powers are crucial in sustaining a federation, they are not sufficient to ensure success on their own. Rather, their value lay in their capacity to engender a common commitment to the primary goal of federalism (Ramphal, 1979: xix). What this implies is that notwithstanding other factors, federalism and federation become a failure where there is no political ideological commitment towards its maintenance from both leaders and followers (Ramphal 1979: xix; Burgess 1993:105). There may be new impulses, new trends and conflicting demands from various units in the federation. But where there exists a high level of ideological commitment, such conflicts will not be allowed to disrupt or mar the operation of the system. The thrust of the argument here can succinctly be captured in these words:

For a federation to be able to resist failure, the leaders and their followers must feel federal-they must be moved to think of themselves as one people with one common, self interest – capable, where necessary, of over-riding most other considerations of small-group interests... 'the good' for any one must be consciously subordinated to or compatible with 'the good of all'. This then is tantamount to an ideological commitment not to federation only as a means... but ... as an end, as good for its own sake, for the sake of answering the summons of history (quoted in Ramphal 1979:xix).

Our analysis so far brings into focus certain characteristics and principles of federalism that are not only peculiar to it but also serve as ingredients for its survival and maintenance. Scholars agree on the fact that federations fail not just because there are flaws in its practice, but because some of these guiding principles are flagrantly violated. Federalism depends on values such as compromise, tolerance, power sharing and, generally shared belief in rules rather than power as a means of resolving conflicts (Oyedele, 1999:61). But in this as well, we cannot downplay the role of leaders. Leadership prowess and ability is very essential in

making the people exert their energy and be ideologically committed towards maintaining the federation. However, one fact stands out, even leaders are usually influenced by their own sectional or group interests and idiosyncrasies. They often over-shadow thinking and blur their perceptions of acting federal on issues that concerns the whole especially when sectional interests are to be sacrificed. A conglomeration of these factors and many more therefore constitute what usually engender crises in many federations.

5.0 Current Debate on Federalism

Generally speaking, the federal idea is a specific form of human organization. It is one of the genus fully constitutional government involving the endless debate about political authority and power (Burgess 1993a:3). This means, it relates to authority and power sharing in the state in such a manner that the units will be practically involved in the exercise of authority. In other words, federalism presupposes the existence of diversities that need to be accommodated. Thus, it serves two ends jointly: maintenance of unity and, preservation of diversities. Noteworthy is that current arguments on federalism is informed and revolved around the creative tension arising out of the predicament of duality of goals. On the one hand, records of failure of many older federations, USSR, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and increasing instability and tension in surviving ones (Canada, India, Belgium, Nigeria) have continued to make scholars doubt the adaptability of the system to solving diversity problems of plural societies, a trend resulting in the resurgence of diatribe on federalism (e.g. see Dare, 2003: 91-92). On the other hand, inspite of the criticisms and negative dispositions towards federalism in some quarters, some other scholars still makes case for its continued relevance.

Watts (2000:4) noted that even in such classical federations such as the U.S.A., Switzerland, Canada and Australia, that stand out for the longevity of their constitutions, tension still exist between the responsibilities appropriately concentrated at the central level of government and the degree of responsibility and autonomy left with the component units. But despite this experiences, Watts (2000:8) have argued that there seems still, to be a revival of interest in federalism especially in the 1990s. As he puts it "political leaders, leading intellectuals and even some journalists increasingly refer to federalism as a liberating and positive form of organization". He went further to note that:

Belgium, Spain, South Africa, and perhaps Italy appear to be emerging towards new federal forms, and in a number of other countries some consideration

References

has been given to the efficacy of incorporating some federal features, although not necessarily all the characteristics, of a full-fledged federation (Watts 2000:8). But Watts have only reechoed the earlier thoughts of Smith (1995:1) who noted that federalism has emerged as a major issue on the political agenda of post cold war world. He attributed this to the 'resurgence of both nationalist and ethnic tensions which have propelled, if not taken sustenance from, the end of the cold war and the accompanying search for how best to organize... national and ethno-regional communities so as they can live with difference'. Espousing a cross-cultural view of this tide, Smith noted further that, changes at the end of the cold war... have seen the demise of socialist federations and the subsequent but only too painful search by some of their successor states... to experiment with new forms of federation... In western Europe, not only is federation considered as a project for renegotiating the political boundaries of sovereignty and citizenship but for many ethno-regional communities... a way of refocusing a politics of identity by going local and continental.

Equally, Williams (1999:1) has pointed out with respect to African countries that, because of the perennial and pervasive anomalies of centralized governance in African countries, it has been suggested that attainment of more autonomy and independence by constituent units of these states could be the only method to contain misrule. This autonomy envisaged in governance is called federalism.

Also worthy of consideration is that break up of federations usually come as a matter of no alternative except balkanization. The reluctance of states at dissolving their federal union may therefore be seen as indicating its continued relevance to management of diversity problems of plural societies. In effect, we may argue that federalism perhaps may not be a solution to the society's political ills, but it provides, through representative institutions, a viable and practicable way of combining the benefits of both unity and diversity. Moreover, King (1993:36) has argued that no type of state, either federal or non-federal ever achieved perfect unity. This is because, all past states have in any case collapsed, one can therefore see no good reason why every present state, of whatever type should not in due course follow suit. In other words, federalism as a governmental system may not necessarily produce absolute unity in the society or stop the society from being difficult to govern. Moreover, as Watts (2000:14) noted, it is because they are difficult countries to govern in the first place that made them adopt the federal arrangement.

What is more is that, perhaps there is 'a federal solution sweeping the world' (Elazar 1991: 7) but the degree of efficacy and adaptability of federalism will for a long time depend to a large extent on two important factors: The degree of society's acceptance of the norms or spirit of compromise and tolerance and, the extent to which it satisfies the demand of the particular society. As Jibril (2003: 115) reflects, 'the central object of federalism is the expansion of political space, autonomy and institutions to the benefit of geo-political units in a context in which the political community accepts that ethnic, religious and cultural differences exist and that their management would benefit from differential levels of governance.'

6.0 Conclusion

Our analysis so far revealed that federalism has enjoyed much patronage in the literature. However, trend of arguments crystallize on the fact that it is a system that is capable of reconciling the centrifugal; and centripetal forces within a society. Thus, it fits most in plural or heterogeneous societies seeking a way of accommodating its various plural elements under a stable national community. While it may not be possible to readily quantify the extent of diversities that must be present for federalism to prove appropriate as the system to be adopted, it often lends a sense of appeal to societies with considerable plural elements. Federalism is also realized to be a dynamic system, capable of responding to socio-political and economic impulses that arise in the society from time to time. This, it must be noted however, depends on a number of factors such as the extent to which its sustaining principles are upheld and essentially on the nature of political leadership. Realities have shown that the extent of conformity to the sustaining principles of federalism is what makes or mare federations.

Equally, failure of federations may not amount to failure of federalism as a system of governance. This is because, in spite of records of failure of some federations, there still seem to be a renewal of interest in the idea of federalism as evidenced in tendencies towards federation among some geo political entities round the globe. This we may hinge on the resurgence of politics of identity within nations and the belief that management of ethno-cultural diversities would benefit from differential levels of governance. Consequently, despite its fluctuating fortunes, federalism still holds better prospects for states seeking to manage their intra societal pluralism.

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