

Causes, Cost and Possible Benefits of Inter and Intra Governmental Conflict in the Nigerian Federation

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Abstract

As a federation of 774 local governments, 36 states and a federal government, inter and intra governmental conflict is an inherent characteristic of Nigeria's federal system. Thus, this paper examines the dynamics of inter and intra governmental conflict in Nigeria with a specific focus on its causes, cost and possible benefits. It provides a review of selected cases of inter and intra governmental conflict within the country with a view to draw out the causes, cost and benefits of these conflicts to the Nigerian federation. It employs the qualitative research method and makes use of primary and secondary data sources for its analysis. Also, the paper adopts the decentralisation theory and the cooperation and competition theory, both of which provide theoretical grounds for a comprehensive analysis of the subject under focus. The paper reveals that constitutional ambiguity, inter-party conflict and personal interest of political actors are major causes of inter and intra governmental conflict in Nigeria. It further reveals that political instability, discrimination in the distribution of resources, delay in policy formulation and lack of collaboration among governmental levels are the cost of intergovernmental conflict in the country. The paper argues that despite the aforementioned costs, intergovernmental conflict has been instrumental to consolidating Nigeria's nascent democracy as it prevents arbitrariness and promotes checks and balances as well as an active judicial system. The paper concludes that intergovernmental conflict is not only natural but equally necessary for democratic development in Nigeria. However, intergovernmental conflict must be meticulously managed to prevent an outright breakdown of law and order.

Key words: Intergovernmental relations; intergovernmental conflict; Decentralisation; Conflict; federalism; Nigeria

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INTRODUCTION

Inter and intragovernmental relations are a major feature of governmental systems around the world as various units, subdivisions, organs or levels of government have to interact in performing their collective function of managing the affairs of the state. However, intergovernmental relation is more pronounced in federal systems, as federalism allows for the existence of two or more levels of government that are coordinate and independent in terms of division of powers and responsibilities (Wheare, 1965). Federalism, therefore, results in multi-level governance that combines self-rule and shared rule (Ojo, 2014; Watts, 1998). In other words, interaction among existing levels of government, which can be conflictual or harmonious, becomes inevitable. Hence, competition, bargaining, conflict and cooperation are recurring issues of intergovernmental relations in modern federal systems (Inyang, 2014).

In the case of Nigeria, the dynamics of the country's federal arrangement, which comprises 774 local governments, 36 states and a federal government, underscores the importance of intergovernmental relations both in practice and in academic study. To this end, studies have shown that intergovernmental relations in Nigeria have been characterised by conflict and unhealthy rivalry among the various levels and organs of government

(Chima et al., 2018; Abidoeye, 2015; Ijimakinwa et al., 2015; Ojo, 2014). It is against this backdrop that this paper explores the question: What are the observable causes, costs and possible benefits of inter and intragovernmental conflict in the Nigerian federation?

Historically, intergovernmental conflict in Nigeria can be traced back to the colonial period, during which the British colonial administration decentralised the country's political system and introduced federalism in Nigeria. The division of Nigeria into three regions by the 1946 Richards Constitution, paved the way for ethnic nationalism, ethnic politics and ethnic rivalry as each region was largely dominated by one of Nigeria's three largest ethnic groups. Thus, intergovernmental conflict during the latter days of colonialism even till the formative years that followed independence was largely a reflection of ethnic nationalism and rivalry. This is evident in the disagreement between the Southern and Northern factions of the House of Representatives over the motion for self-government moved by Chief Anthony Enahoro in 1953.

Following Nigeria's independence in 1960, ethnic nationalism and bitter rivalry among political parties continued to degenerate into inter and intragovernmental conflict. For instance, the intraparty conflict between prominent members of the opposition party, Action Group, resulted in a parliamentary crisis in May 1962 in the Western Region, which further culminated in the declaration of a state of emergency in the region (Osaghae, 1998). Similarly, the controversy that characterised the 1964 elections, which was largely due to the political rivalry between the Eastern Region dominated National Convention of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) and northern region dominated Northern People's Congress (NPC) resulted in a constitutional stalemate in which President Azikiwe refused to reappoint Tafawa Balewa as Prime Minister (Osaghae, 1998). As part of the truce agreement between the President and the Prime Minister, supplementary elections were rescheduled for 1965, which in the Western region was marred by unprecedented violent demonstrations (Osaghae, 1998). It was in the wake of this violence that Nigeria experienced its first military coup in January 1966.

More than six decades after independence, Nigeria's political system has evolved from three regions to 36 states with a centralised federal structure that recognises three levels of government, in which each governmental level derives its powers and responsibilities directly from the 1999 constitution. Arising from this decentralisation, intergovernmental relations have been characterised by cooperation and competition among the three levels of government. While cooperation tends to lead to harmonious relations, competition often results in acrimonious intergovernmental relations. Therefore, accentuating the importance of this study. The paper

adopts the decentralisation theory and the cooperation and competition theory, both of which provide theoretical grounds for a comprehensive analysis of the subject under focus. By examining cases of inter and intragovernmental conflict in Nigeria, this paper draws out observable factors responsible for conflictual inter and intra governmental relations. It further examines the cost and potential benefits of these conflicts to democratic governance in Nigeria.

The rest of the paper is divided into seven main sections. The first section clarifies the major concepts used in the study, the second section highlights the methodology and theoretical framework used in the research, the third section presents selected cases of inter and intra governmental conflict in Nigeria. The fourth, fifth and sixth sections examine the causes, cost and possible benefits of inter and intra governmental conflict respectively, while the seventh section ends the research with a concise summary.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Federalism, Inter and Intra Governmental Relations

In recent years, federalism has increasingly been adopted as a viable political arrangement for accommodating diversity and promoting unity among complex multicultural groups (Blindenbacher & Watts, 2003). This is largely because federalism provides for a political system "that is marked by the combination of shared rule and self-rule" (Watts, 1998, p.120). In other words, federalism allows for the coexistence of multiple layers of government bestowed with constitutional autonomy. This is perhaps more evident in K.C. Wheare's definition of federalism. For him, federalism is a "method of dividing power so that general and regional governments are each within a sphere coordinate and independent" (Wheare, 1964, p.10).

From the above definition, government in a federal state is often divided into various levels, with each governmental unit empowered to perform specific functions that are necessary for promoting the general welfare of the people. These levels of government which can include a central, regional, provincial or local government often have to interact and relate with one another in executing their respective functions, resulting in intergovernmental relations. Thus, Intergovernmental relations involve the various interactions between two or more levels of governments within a political system (Chukwuemeka & Aniche, 2016; Ojo, 2014; Kahn, et al., 2011; Olopade, 1984; Adamolekun, 1983). These interactions may be through formal means such as institutionalised processes and procedures, or they may manifest in informal means (Ojo, 2014; Watts, 2008). Van der Waldt and Du Toit (1997) noted that intergovernmental

relations entail the vertical and horizontal interactions between institutions of government. This implies that intergovernmental relations encompass both the relations between levels of government such as a federal, state and local government as well as the relations between the organs of government at the same governmental level. The latter is more accurately referred to as 'intra-governmental relations.'

Intergovernmental relations are often linked to a federal system which allows for the existence of constitutionally recognized subnational units and a central government. However, studies have identified three perspectives from which intergovernmental relations have been understood over the years (Ijimakinwa, et al., 2015; Chiamogu, et al., 2012). The first perspective argues that intergovernmental relations are peculiar to a federal system due to the existence of constitutional decentralisation. On the other hand, the second perspective argues that intergovernmental relation is distinctive to both federal and unitary systems of government, while the third perspective argues that there can be intergovernmental relations even at the international level. In his analysis of intergovernmental relations, Okoli (2005) emphasised the role of the constitution in explaining the features and nature of the interaction between each governmental level. Intergovernmental relations are often directed at facilitating cooperation rather than conflict among various levels of government and it is intended to ensure efficient and effective use of resources (Bailey and Dolan, 2019; Ogbuishi, 2007).

Similarly, Dave (1980 cited in Chukwuemeka & Aniche, 2016) argued that intergovernmental relations involve activities that are directed towards managing the inherent conflict within a federal system. He further noted that intergovernmental relations are founded on the grounds that strategies such as confrontation or coercion are often counterproductive. Ogo (2017) views intergovernmental relations from an institutional perspective. For him, intergovernmental relations relate to the interactions between institutions of government at the central, regional and local level, which is designed to enhance cooperation within the institutional arrangement of a political system. Conversely, Anderson (1960) argued that intergovernmental relations entail the interactions among individuals who occupy governmental offices. In other words, the nature of intergovernmental relations is determined and shaped by human interactions. Be that as it may, it is undeniable that institutional arrangements are often influenced by human behaviours and interactions, particularly in nascent democracies such as Nigeria which lacks strong institutional makeup.

This study defines intergovernmental relations as interactions between levels of government and among constituent units in a federal system. In the case of Nigeria, this would refer to interactions between the federal, state and local government as well as interactions

between two or more state governments. Correspondingly, the study views intragovernmental relations as interactions between and within the organs of government at the same governmental level. In other words, interaction between federal executive and federal legislature as well as interactions between lawmakers in a particular legislative chamber are all characterised as intragovernmental relations.

Conflict

Conflict is often linked to competition for scarce resources arising from opposing interests and goals (Rahim, 2011; Mack and Snyder, 1957; Schmidt and Kochan, 1972). However, as noted by Tjosvold et al., (2014) conflict also occurs among people who share common interests. They argue that individuals with common interests or goals can equally disagree on the most effective means for achieving such goals. As such, conflict should be understood as incompatibility, in which a person's actions can hamper the activities of another (Tjosvold, et al., 2014; Tjosvold, 2006; Roloff, 1987). Rubin, et al., (1994), views conflict as a situation in which there is disparate interest among actors, "or a belief that the parties' current aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously" (Rubin, et al., 1994, p.5).

Conflict is often broadly categorised into violent and non-violent conflict based on the intensity and escalation of the conflict. For instance, Pfetsch (1994) identified five types of conflict, which includes: latent conflict, manifested conflict, crisis, severe crisis and war. While the first two represent non-violent conflict, crisis, severe crisis and war represent violent conflict (see Axt et al., 2006). Non-violent conflict denotes the pursuit of conflicting interest without the use of coercion, force or violence. In other words, "parties do not use force against each other" (Axt, et al., 2006, p.6). On the other hand, violent conflict occurs when conflicting parties seek to pursue their interest by physically harming, destroying, eliminating, damaging or injuring one another (Sandole, 1998). As noted by Davies (1973) non-violent conflict can escalate into violent conflict when needs or demands are met with frustration. Smith (2004, p.3) views violent conflict as 'armed conflict' which refers to "armed clashes between two or more centrally organised parties, with continuity between the clashes, in disputes about power over government and territory."

Nwanegbo (2005a cited in Nwanegbo, 2008) provides three definitional perspectives through which scholars have viewed conflict over time. The first perspective views conflict as integral to social growth, that is conflict brings about positive changes that are beneficial to the society (Anyakoha 1998; Coleman, 1988; Kelly, 1969). The second perspective sees conflict as involving disagreement, incompatible differences or a clash of interest, which may occur between individuals, organisations or countries and may be neither

beneficial nor destructive (Oche, 2000; Sills, 1968). The third perspective views conflict from a more radical standpoint. From this perspective, conflict entails violent confrontation, collision or struggle (Nwanegbo, 2008).

Furthermore, Thakore (2013) noted that:

Conflict is an outcome of behaviours. It is an integral part of human life. Whenever there is an interaction there is conflict. Conflict means any expression of hostility, negative attitudes, antagonism, aggression, rivalry, and misunderstanding. It is also associated with situations that involve contradictory interests between two opposing groups. It can be defined as a disagreement between two or more individuals or groups with each individual or group trying to gain acceptance of its view over others (Thakore, 2013, p.7).

From the foregoing, conflict denotes a state of disagreement between actors on issues that are of mutual interest such as the distribution of shared and limited resources. It can arise as a result of incompatible goals, perceived competition, rivalry or misunderstanding in the process of socio-political and economic interactions (Ibeogu & Nwusulor, 2020). Thus, conflict is an inevitable derivative of human interactions. Against this backdrop, intergovernmental conflict refers to a conflict between the various levels of government and among the constituent units within a federal system. In the case of Nigeria's federal system, this will include conflict between the federal, state, and local government as well as conflict among two or more state or local governments. Furthermore, intragovernmental conflict denotes conflict between and within the organs of government at the same governmental level. Thus, conflict between state executive and state legislature as well as conflict between two or more legislators in a particular legislative chamber are all characterised in this paper as intragovernmental conflict.

METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper adopts the qualitative research method with data gathered from primary and secondary sources, which includes journals, newspaper articles, government publications, official reports, textbooks, media and eyewitness reports, as well as the researcher's observation of political events in Nigeria.

Decentralisation theory and cooperation and competition theory are adopted for analysis in this research. Decentralisation theory emphasises the distribution of power between a central government and semi-autonomous sub-national units in order to enhance responsiveness and service delivery. It is argued that lower levels of government such as the state and local government should be assigned with autonomous jurisdictional powers, which will ultimately enhance public service delivery and effective management of local affairs (Fatile & Adejuwon, 2017; Fatile & Ejalonibu, 2015). The

essence of decentralisation is to facilitate development at the grassroots level by encouraging local participation and responsiveness. In a decentralised political system, each governmental unit is expected to function within a specific jurisdictional domain. Thus, decentralisation theory is anchored on functional performances and democratic principles (Fatile & Ejalonibu, 2015; Oates, 1972).

Falleti, (2004) proposed a *sequential theory of decentralisation* which views decentralisation as a process that recognizes bargaining among actors and incorporates policy feedback effects. He further argued that decentralisation denotes a series of policy reforms that seeks to transfer "responsibilities, resources, or authority from higher to lower levels of government." (Falleti, 2004, p.3).

While decentralisation is expected to enhance efficiency, it can also be a source of intergovernmental conflict. For instance, inter-jurisdictional competition, which Oates (1972) identified as a feature of decentralisation can easily degenerate into unhealthy rivalry and conflict. As would be examined in the next section, jurisdictional competition between the federal and state governments over the collection of Value Added Tax (VAT) has become one of the recent cases of intergovernmental conflict in Nigeria. Furthermore, issues of how to assign duties or which governmental level should perform a particular function is often a major source of intergovernmental conflict in a decentralised political system. In Nigeria for instance, the management and control of internal security forces is a major policy area that continues to generate conflictual relations between the federal government and state governments. Though state governors are designated as the Chief Security Officers within their respective states, their control of the Nigerian Police is marginal and subject to the consent of the federal government, thereby resulting in agitations for state police (Ogunnubi, 2021). In essence, decentralisation often brings about jurisdictional conflict among governmental levels, which would amount to intergovernmental conflict.

On the other hand, the cooperation and competition theory, which originated from the works of Morton Deutsch emphasises the role of cooperative and competitive goals in the emergence and management of conflict (Tjosvold, et al., 2014; Deutsch, et al., 2011; Deutsch, 1973, 1948). The theory posits that human interactions are often influenced by how their goals relate, which can be:

Cooperative (positively related), competitive (negatively related), or independent. When people have cooperative goals, as one of them moves toward attaining goals, this progression helps the others achieve their goals as well. When people have competitive goals, their goals are negatively related, and only one of the protagonists can succeed in the interaction. When goals are independent, one person's success neither benefits nor harms the others' successes (Tjosvold et al., 2014, pp.554-555).

A major argument of the cooperation and competition theory is that the interdependence of goals between actors determines to a large extent the nature of their relationship with one another. Thus, when goals are negatively related, the nature of the relationship will be competitive and conflictual. However, when goals are positively related, the nature of the relationship becomes cooperative. Deutsch (2000) argued that while cooperative relationships yield mutuality, coordination and friendliness, competitive relations often result in suspicion, lack of coordination and desire to subjugate the other. He further noted that “constructive processes of conflict resolution are similar to cooperative processes of problem-solving, and destructive processes of conflict resolution are similar to competitive processes” (Deutsch, 2000, p.27). Therefore, a cooperative disposition among actors is vital for enhancing the constructive resolution of a conflict.

Cooperation and competition are major determinants of the nature of intergovernmental relations in Nigeria. For instance, local government officials that maintain competitive relations with their state governors are either starved of funds or illegally dismissed by their respective state governors. Similarly, the federal government often favours states that are able to sustain cooperative relations with the presidency, while those on the other side, are either punished or abandoned. During the administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo for instance, the federal government was complicit in the impeachment of at least three state governors (Rashidi Ladoja of Oyo State, Joshua Dariye of Plateau State and Ayo Fayose of Ekiti State all in 2006) who were no longer allied with the president (Arinze & Oliver, 2016).

SELECTED CASES OF INTER AND INTRA GOVERNMENTAL CONFLICT IN THE NIGERIAN FEDERATION

Passive cooperation and competition among governmental levels, arms and agencies is a major feature of intergovernmental relations in Nigeria (Ijimakinwa, et al., 2015), with issues of revenue allocation, jurisdictional powers, local government creation, autonomy and control, management of internal security and so on often generating conflictual intergovernmental relations (Ijimakinwa, et al., 2015; Ojo, 2014). To further stress the conflictual nature of intergovernmental relations in Nigeria, Jinadu (1998) noted that:

The dynamics of federal-state relations within the federalist constitutional framework is one of a see-saw between interdependence and cooperation on one hand and conflict on the other hand, between the centre and the units and between the units themselves (Jinadu, 1998, p.11)

Over the years, several cases of inter and intragovernmental conflict have emanated within the Nigerian federal system. However, only a few will be examined in this section, with a particular focus on the fourth republic (1999-2021). In more recent years, controversy over the collection of Value Added Tax (VAT) has been a major source of intergovernmental conflict between the federal government and many state governments, particularly those in the southern region of the country. Likewise, the controversy has equally pitched the governors of southern states who are mostly in support of state control of VAT against those of northern states who have largely taken the federal government’s position (Johnson & Ndujihe, 2021).

The controversy began with a court ruling in a state (Rivers State) which stopped the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) from collecting VAT within the state, while the state government authorised itself to collect these same taxes by passing a VAT law. By September 10, 2021, another state government (Lagos State) followed suit. As a result, both the federal government and these state governments have been laying claim to having the jurisdictional powers to collect VAT. Although the controversy lingers at the Court of Appeal, with the appeal court directing the parties involved to maintain the status quo ante, the atmosphere remains disquieting and confusing arising from the controversial stalemate. This is further stressed by the remarks of the chairman of the Nigerian Governors Forum, Governor Kayode Fayemi, who noted that Nigeria’s tax system is “problematic, confusing and contradictory” and that “the controversy over VAT required both political and legal measures to be settled” (Premium Times, 2021).

Another major issue that has given rise to intergovernmental conflict in Nigeria concerns how to best address the recurrent conflict between farmers and herders. While many southern and northern governors have constantly pushed for an outright ban on open grazing and the practice of ranching, the federal government under President Muhammadu Buhari continues to push for the resuscitation of the defunct grazing routes. Following a meeting on February 8, 2020, the Northern Governors’ Forum released a communique in which it took a stance against open grazing while embracing ranching as the way forward (Ahovi, 2021). Similarly, in a joint resolution by the Southern Governors’ Forum on May 11, 2021, the 17 Southern Governors decided to ban open grazing within their respective states (Guardian, 2021).

Responding to the decision of the southern governors, the presidency through the Attorney General of the Federation, Abubakar Malami and the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Media and Publicity, Mallam Garba Shehu, argued that the resolution was not in tandem with the fundamental human rights to free movement of all citizens which is guaranteed by the Nigerian constitution

(Oluwafemi, 2021; Daka, 2021). This imbroglio between state governments and the federal government further degenerated into a war of words between the presidency and the Governor of Benue State, Samuel Ortom, who had reportedly been denied access to the president on several occasions (Amaechi, 2021). It is important to note that the push for the resuscitation of grazing routes by the Presidency is anchored on the 1965 Grazing Reserve Law, which provided for 141 gazetted grazing reserves, mostly in the northern region of the country. However, the 1978 Land Use Act vests control of land under the purview of the state government, thus clouding the constitutionality of grazing routes (Onyekwere and Ochojila, 2021).

The federal government under President Buhari had previously adopted a policy of ranching rather than open grazing as of 2016 but is believed to have reconsidered its position following pressures from some interest groups (Falana, 2021). It should be further noted that the state governors are not entirely united in their stand against open grazing as a solution to the recurrent farmer–herder conflict. For instance, the Governor of Ondo State, Rotimi Akeredolu and the Governor of Kaduna State, Nasir El-Rufia, expressed conflicting views on the issue during a plenary session of the 25th Nigerian Economic Summit held in October 2021. While the latter (Rotimi Akeredolu) noted that the ban on open grazing in the south would promote peaceful cohabitation, the former (Nasir El-Rufia) was of the view that Nigeria does not have enough land to support ranching (Udegbunam, 2021).

Furthermore, the autonomy of local governments as the third tier of government in the Nigerian federation has been a major source of conflict between state and local governments. While the fourth schedule of the Nigerian constitution stipulates the functions of local government, it further empowers state assemblies to increase these functions. Similarly, section 162 of the constitution provides for a State Joint Local Government Account, which combines statutory allocations to state and local government, thereby giving state governments some form of control over local government's funds. Therefore, the autonomy of local governments to operate without interference from other levels of government remains contentious. There have been many instances in which state governors unlawfully dissolve elected local government officials at will.

One of the most recent cases occurred in 2019, when the Oyo State Governor, Seyi Makinde sacked all the 33 elected local government chairmen within the state while setting up caretaker committees to manage the affairs of each local government. This led to a legal battle between the governor and the dismissed local government chairmen that lasted till 2021 and ended at the supreme court. Although the dismissal of the local government chairmen by the state governor was declared unconstitutional by the supreme court, the tenure of the dissolved chairmen had already expired at the time of this

judgement (Nnochiri, 2021). Hence the sacked chairmen were only entitled to receive their outstanding salaries and allowances.

Other cases of inter and intragovernmental conflict in Nigeria include conflict between President Olusegun Obasanjo-led Federal Government and Lagos State Government under Governor Bola Ahmed Tinubu over the creation of additional local governments in Lagos State (Taleat, 2017; Ojo, 2014), the conflict between Federal Executive and National Assembly during the Olusegun Obasanjo's administration, which resulted into the impeachment of Senator Okadigbo and Senator Evan Enwerem as Senate Presidents (Abidoye, 2015), the recurrent physical altercation among Nigeria lawmakers both at the federal and state level (Channels, 2021; Premium Times, 2013), the conflict between the federal government and Ogun, Oyo, Lagos, Ondo and Osun State Governments over the power of the federal government to directly appropriate funds to local governments (Awotokun, 2005), to mention a few. In essence, the Nigerian federation is replete with several cases of inter and intragovernmental conflict, which continues to have varying impacts on governance within the country.

CAUSES

Inter and intragovernmental conflict in Nigeria is often influenced by various factors (Chima, et., 2018). Ofoeze (2002) observed that intergovernmental conflict is frequently attributed to jurisdictional issues. In Nigeria's federal system, power is constitutionally shared between three levels of government, with each level exercising some form of jurisdictional power over certain policy areas. In addition, the concurrent legislative list provides for 12 items upon which both federal and state governments can legislate, with the federal government empowered with an overriding clause. This overlapping model becomes an impetus for jurisdictional conflict. Similarly, constitutional ambiguity with regards to the distribution of powers, functions and responsibilities has been a major source of inter and intragovernmental conflict. For instance, the 1999 constitution empowers both the national assembly and state assemblies to make laws for the proper functioning of local governments, while local government is equally recognized as the third tier of government and as such it is expected to function independent of other governmental levels. This constitutional ambivalence largely accounts for conflict between the federal, state and local governments with regards to the management of local government affairs.

Another major source of inter and intragovernmental conflict has to do with inter-party conflict. In Nigeria, inter-party relations are often known to be conflictual, which more often than not snowballs into intergovernmental conflict. As earlier noted, the parliamentary crisis of May 1962 that resulted in a

declaration of a state of emergency in the Western region began as intraparty conflict within the Action Group (Osaghae, 1998). Likewise, Arinze & Oliver (2016) observed that the unconstitutional impeachment of former Anambra State Governor Peter Obi was largely as a result of the governor's refusal to join President Olusegun Obasanjo's political party. Furthermore, the acrimonious relationship between the Ekiti State's executive led by former Governor Ayodele Fayose and the State House of Assembly during the second term of the governor was largely as a result of inter-party conflict. While the governor was a member of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the state legislature was dominated by members of the All Progressive Congress (APC). This spurred conflictual relations between the two arms of government in which the governor was accused of sealing off the speaker's office while the governor accused the opposition lawmakers of "seeking to consolidate the interests of their party rather than the general interest of the people" (Salawudeen, 2014).

Similarly, in 2014, inter-party conflict degenerated into hostilities among PDP and APC lawmakers in Edo State House of Assembly. In June 2014, the speaker was suspended by the PDP faction of the assembly in a rowdy session that degenerated into physical altercation among the legislators, which required the intervention of the police with some lawmakers sustaining injuries (George, 2014). By September of the same year, intragovernmental conflict among the legislators took a new dimension as both PDP and APC faction of the legislative chamber were holding two separate plenary sessions at different venues (George, 2014). The role of party allegiance in intergovernmental relations is further underscored by the famous statement of the former chairman of APC, Adams Oshiomole who in 2019 said "once you join APC, your sins are forgiven" (This Day, 2019).

The personal interest and character of individual political actors also play a major role in intergovernmental conflict. This largely accounts for many of the inter and intragovernmental conflicts that occurred under President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration. Taleat (2017) observed that the suspension of fiscal allocation to Lagos State by President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration on the grounds that the government of Lagos State unconstitutionally created new local government areas was rather as a result of the president's personal disposition against the Lagos State Government. He further noted that states like Yobe, Ebonyi, Katsina, Nasarawa and Niger who did the same thing were not faced with similar punishment from the Federal Government. Similarly, the covertly sought third term bid by President Olusegun Obasanjo became grounds for conflict between the president and his vice president as well as several state governors who were presumed to be unsupportive of the president's agenda.

COST

Perhaps the most devastating instance of intergovernmental conflict in Nigeria's history was the Nigerian Civil War, which lasted from July 6, 1967, to January 15, 1970, the cost of which included the lives of thousands of Nigerians. In recent years, political instability, discrimination in the distribution of resources and delay in policy process and lack of collaboration are often associated with inter and intragovernmental conflict. A major fallout of inter and intra governmental conflict in the Nigerian federation is political instability, particularly at the local government level. Over the years, state governors have developed a culture of illegally dismissing elected local government chairmen who are perceived as being disloyal to the governor. This is often followed by the appointment of unconstitutional caretaker committees to manage the affairs of the local government. Thus, the term of office of elected local government officials is not guaranteed. This was the case in Oyo State in 2019 and 2007, Bayelsa State in 2013, Rivers, Ekiti and Edo State in 2012, Imo State in 2011, Ondo State in 2008, Abia State in 2006 and Plateau State in 2004 (Maduabuchi et al., 2014). Local Governments are therefore not only vulnerable to instability but have been equally rendered ineffective.

Another significant cost of inter and intra governmental conflict in Nigeria is discrimination in the distribution or allocation of resources. It is important to note that the federal, state and local government in Nigeria all get their allocation from the federation account, which is administered by the federal government. In addition, allocations to local governments are paid into the State Joint Local Government Account, which is administered by the state government. Therefore, the federal government is able to interfere with funds meant for state and local governments while state governments are equally able to tamper with funds meant for local governments. This fiscal arrangement has often been abused by federal and state governments respectively to discriminate against oppositions. This is evident in the failure of the federal government to appropriate funds meant for local governments in Lagos State under President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration, which no doubt forestalled smooth running of the affected local government areas. As earlier noted, the decision of the federal government to suspend fiscal allocation to Lagos State, which was based on the grounds that Lagos State government had illegally created new local governments was a manifestation of the president's opposition to the Lagos State Government, given that states like Yobe, Ebonyi, Katsina, Nasarawa and Niger who did the same thing were not faced with similar punishment from the Federal Government (Taleat, 2017).

Delay in policy formulation and lack of collaboration among governmental levels can also be linked to inter

and intra governmental conflict. An essential feature of intergovernmental relations in Nigeria's federal system is that it promotes collaboration among the various levels of government to address peculiar public policy issues such as insecurity and infrastructural development. Unfortunately, intergovernmental conflict forestalls such collaboration, delays policy formulation and tends to create uncertainty in specific policy areas. For instance, the lack of cohesion between the federal and state government on how to best address the incessant conflict between farmers and herders' community have marred the prospect of collaborative action towards mitigating this security threat. Therefore, the conflict between both communities has escalated recently resulting in a high level of internal displacement, food insecurity and growing poverty in several regions of the country. Similarly, intragovernmental conflict often prevents cooperation among the various arms of government, which can result in the failure of the executive to sign legislative bills to law as well as undue exercise of oversight functions by the legislative arm.

Furthermore, the VAT controversy between the federal government and some state governments, which has been earlier discussed, has resulted in confusion particularly for business owners who are at the receiving end of this imbroglio. Ikechukwu (2021) noted that "one of the immediate problems arising from these new developments on VAT across various states is that some business owners now see themselves as walking a minefield of confusion. To whom should they pay VAT?"

POSSIBLE BENEFITS

Given the various costs of inter and intragovernmental conflict discussed in the previous section, one might easily conclude that intergovernmental conflict is destructive to Nigeria's federal system. However, this is not necessarily the case given that intergovernmental conflict has been instrumental to consolidating Nigeria's nascent democracy by preventing arbitrariness, dictatorial tendencies of leaders and promoting checks and balances as well as an active judicial system. For instance, the clandestine attempt by former President Olusegun Obasanjo to amend the 1999 constitution in order to provide for a third term, which would allow the then president to self-perpetuate himself in office was averted as a result of resistance from various quarters of government against the President's unscrupulous third term agenda.

Similarly, the appointment of incompetent individuals and partisan politicians by the executive as members of sensitive agencies and bodies of government has been severally checkmated by the legislature. One of such was the rejection of former APC member Lauretta Onochie's nomination as INEC Commissioner by the Nigerian Senate in July 2021. Furthermore, the judiciary has no doubt been pivotal to the peaceful resolution of intergovernmental

conflict in Nigeria. The 1999 constitution empowers the supreme court to adjudicate disputes between the federal and state governments as well as disputes among states. Thus, to minimise bias and ensure a more balanced framework for resolving intergovernmental conflict, both the federal and state governments are actively involved in the appointment of supreme court members (Birhanu & Kebu, 2019; Adem, 2013). This institutional arrangement has further strengthened the effectiveness of the judiciary in performing its role as an arbitrator of intergovernmental conflict.

CONCLUSION

Inter and intragovernmental conflict has had both positive and negative impacts on Nigeria's federal system. Although it has resulted in political instability, discrimination in the distribution of resources, delay in policy formulation and lack of collaboration among governmental levels. On the other hand, intergovernmental conflict has played a vital role in strengthening Nigeria's democratic system. It has helped prevent arbitrariness and dictatorial tendencies of political leaders, while equally promoting both vertical, horizontal and diagonal accountability as well as an active judicial system. In this case, vertical accountability implies that each level of government can be held accountable by the rest, horizontal accountability indicates the ability of the three arms of government to hold each other accountable and diagonal accountability suggests that the constituent units can be accountable to one another. The December 2021 victory of local governments against the federal government over the usurping of local government's statutory responsibility of conducting marriages by the federal government further illustrates the important role of vertical accountability in safeguarding the Nigerian democratic system.

Given the nature of Nigeria's federal system, coupled with its richly divided heterogeneous society, intergovernmental conflict is not only natural but equally necessary for democratic development in the country. However, intergovernmental conflict must be meticulously managed to prevent an outright breakdown of law and order as in the case with the Nigerian civil war. Hence, the importance of bargaining, deliberation, arbitration and constitutionalism in managing intergovernmental conflict cannot be overemphasised. In addition, the judiciary plays a central role in adjudicating inter and intragovernmental disputes within the Nigerian federation.

END NOTE

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