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MANAGING DIVERSITY IN NIGERIA: INTERROGATING THE DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES OF A PLURAL AFRICAN STATE

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Abstract

This paper interrogates the development challenges of a plural African state by studying the managing of diversity in pluralist Nigeria. The case study country is the most populous state in Africa and the sixth most populated nation in the world. The structural makeup of the country, with over 250 ethnic groups and more than 500 spoken languages, exemplifies national diversities and plurality. Plural society tensions constitute one of the most debilitating world problems that diminish collective human potential. The embedded domestic frictions also invariably translate to the stunting of regional and global development. The purpose of the study is to investigate how the management of plurality and its associated diversities relates with national development in plural societies. The work adopted the documentary research methodology by consulting extant literature, which entailed the examination of book contents, perusal of journal articles, studying of official government publications and online materials. The investigation found a position of mismanagement of plurality and diversities in the case study country which leads to functional deformities. Political elite corruption was central to this scenario. The implication of the study's findings is that such assumed national and regional problems occasioning plural society tensions which actually contribute to retarded global progress have remained unaddressed. A further significance of the study's results is that with political elite consciousness and altruistic contributions, plural states with presumed fatal diversities can fully transform into developed and unquestionably modern societies.

Keywords: *Pluralism, federalism, plural states, the Nigerian state, African states, Development in Africa*

INTRODUCTION

Generic development remains elusive in Africa (Alameddine, 2023; Gumede, 2018, Dekker & Pouw, 2022). It is worth emphasizing at once that Africa which is under reference is a continent of fifty-five independent states. Nonetheless, the Nigerian state in the western section of the continent controls the largest population in the region. Nigeria's population is currently estimated at 218.80 million but projected to "reach about 401.31 million by the end of the year 2050" (World Population Review, 2022). Africa is currently inhabited by 1.42 billion people spread across its fifty-five countries (Worldometer, 2022). Nigeria's population is a significant component of this African demography. On account of its population and other critical considerations, which cover human and natural resources endowments, the country is usually perceived to be (potentially) great. By many standards therefore, Nigeria remains an important African nation even if its national and international prowess is increasingly highly pooh-poohed. In any case, it appears as if the preponderant viewpoint is that the country merely possesses the potentials for greatness (Onaiyekan, 2020).

Nigeria's currently contested greatness is actually interwoven with the country's diversities (Edewor et al, 2014; Gadu, 2019; Fayemi, 2020; Olaoye, 2021). Remove this diversity from the features of the country; nothing would remain of the location's immensely flaunted enormity. The Nigerian state is enormously multinational in makeup. It comprises over 250 ethnic nations speaking more than 500 dissimilar languages, with all the groups associated with a diversity of cultures (Bell, 2021; Okeke & Oboko, 2021; Pereltsvaig, 2011). Nigeria is in such regards the world's third most multilingual country with 526 languages, after Papua New Guinea (839) and Indonesia (707) (World Economic Forum, 2016). Nigeria is also a religiously diversified nation, with Christianity and Islam constituting the most broadly practiced religions. Furthermore, Nigeria's population is almost equally divided into Christians and Muslims, with a small minority of members of African traditional and other religions (CIA, 2020). Then similar to the situation in other parts of the African continent where Christianity and Islam are

the dominant faiths, there is in different parts of Nigeria, religious syncretism among these two creeds and the traditional African religion (Chitando, 2016).

Nigeria's administrative divisions consist of the 36 states of the federation and the federal capital territory located at Abuja, all of which are further subdivided into 774 local government areas (LGAs). Nigeria's economy is the largest in Africa (Aleyomi, 2022). According to Savannah Energy (2022) "Nigeria is estimated to hold approximately 193 Tscf of proved natural gas reserves, making it the tenth largest gas reserve holder in the world and the largest in Africa. Nigeria also has proven oil reserves of approximately 37.0 billion, ranking as the second largest in Africa and the tenth largest in the world". The list of other mineral deposits in Nigeria is quite long and their quantities certainly gargantuan. Hence, in terms of human and material resources Nigeria is seemingly a great country. Yet The World Bank (2022) posits that 4 out of every 10 Nigerians (40% of the population) exist "below the poverty line of US\$1.90". Such a scenario then smacks of national confusion, possibly emanating from structural functional deficiencies. Diversity and plurality are probably the sources of the general disorder in the land

Meanwhile, some beneficiaries of the confusion in the nation continue to claim that the presently challenged giant status of the country is still undamaged (Egobiambu, 2021). The trouble with Nigeria (Achebe, 1982) therefore may be the failure of leadership. However, it is also probably more accurately locatable as the inability of Nigeria's political elite to convert the diversity and plurality in the country into valid attributes of development (Yusuf & Zakari, 2023). It is not arguable that national greatness is totally void, when palpably devoid of validation by domestic circumstances. It is then against such background that this article interrogates the issue of managing diversity in the plural African state of Nigeria. The paper essentially examines how diversity and plurality may be managed in the country in the context of structural functionalism and the wellbeing of the citizens. The significance of the study is locatable in the certainty of the results serving as benchmarks for policy formulation and implementation in all the other plural states on the global arena with challenges bordering on structural diversities.

CONCEPTUAL ELUCIDATION: PLURAL SOCIETY AND PLURALISM

Plural societies contain disparate ethnic and cultural elements, which may breed conflicts. Most states are actually faced with such challenges. This usually arises from arbitrary definitions of the state boundaries to encompass two or more ethnic nationalities, or due to immigration or colonization. The undesirable effects are exacerbated by discrimination, exploitation, segregation, elitism, racism and a lack of awareness of cultural diversities, leading to lack of integration and other disparities. Even though assimilation is one of the answers to the negative effects of a plural social order, it also breeds discontent. A sense of balance in the combination of ethnic and national features is yet to be found (The Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential, 2020). Analogously, pluralism in social scientific studies refers to the viewpoint that "in liberal democracies power is (or should be) dispersed among a variety of economic and ideological pressure groups and is not (or should not be) held by a single elite or group of elites. Pluralism assumes that diversity is beneficial to society and that autonomy should be enjoyed by disparate functional or cultural groups within a society, including religious groups, trade unions, professional organizations, and ethnic minorities" (Liesangthem, 2008, p.1).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM AND ELITE THEORY

The paper's theoretical framework is combinatory, embedding structural functionalism and the elite theory. Structural functionalism in the social sciences refers to the intellectual tradition under which "each of the institutions, relationships, roles, and norms that together constitute a society serves a purpose, and each is indispensable for the continued existence of the others and of society as a whole" (Duignan, 2022, p.1). Consequently, "in structural functionalism, social change is regarded as an adaptive response to some tension within the social system. When some part of an integrated social system changes, a tension between this and other parts of the system is created and will be resolved by the adaptive change of the other parts" (Duignan, 2022, p.1). The beginning of modern "references to social structure can be traced to the French social scientist Émile Durkheim, who argued that parts of society are interdependent and that this interdependency imposes structure on the behaviour of institutions and their members (Duignan, 2022, p.1).

In further explications, Duignan (2022, p.1) highlights that "to Durkheim, the interrelations between the parts of society contributed to social unity—an integrated system with life characteristics of its own, exterior to individuals yet driving their behaviour". Durkheim accordingly, "pointed out that groups can be held together on two contrasting bases: mechanical solidarity, a sentimental attraction of social units or groups that perform the same or similar functions, such as preindustrial self-sufficient farmers; or organic solidarity, an interdependence

based on differentiated functions and specialization, as seen in a factory, the military, government, or other complex organizations" (Duignan, 2022, p.1). Henry Maine and Ferdinand Tönnies were some of the other scholars of Durkheim's era, who made related distinctions. Gangwar (2022, p.3) elucidates that "structural functionalism is an explanatory theory primarily developed by Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons while further debates and theories on structural functionalism have been articulated by various scholars like Radcliffe Brown, Kingsley Davis, and Wilbert Moore".

Structural functionalism as perceived by Gangwar (2022, p.3) contributes that "lays its emphasis on the large-scale social structures, social institutions, their interrelationships, and implications on society". According to this contributor, "the basic principles of structural functionalism can be comprehended in three simple terms: maintenance of social stability, collective functioning, and social evolution". In the viewpoint of Gangwar (2022, p.3) therefore structural functionalists believe that "the social structure of society consists of various components such as social institutions, social norms, and values that are interconnected and dependent on each other". They believe that "each component of the structure has a specified role and altogether these social patterns contribute to the balanced and stable functioning of society and furthermore, that social structure adapts to the changing needs of society, if any part of the structure acts dysfunctional then society as a whole might collapse".

Structural functionalism is considered a germane theoretical framework for this paper. Its basic assumptions accord with the diverse and plural makeup of the Nigerian state. The fundamental suppositions of structural functionalism are further amenable to the desiderata for managing diversity in Nigeria and successfully confronting the development challenges of the plural African state. In the application of structural functionalism to the study, it is held that every institution, relationship, role, and norm that collectively makes up a society serves a purpose, and each is critically needed for the sustainable existence of the others and the specific society in its totality. For instance, it is held in the study that each of the over 250 ethnic nationalities in Nigeria is part of what gives the country its Nigerian status. Each of such ethnic nations can serve a purpose in the regards of finding solution(s) to the developmental bottlenecks in the country.

The complementary theoretical framework of the paper is the elite theory. The genesis of 'classic' elite theories is traceable to "the end of the nineteenth century and in the first decades of the twentieth century through the works of Vilfredo Pareto (1848–1923), Gaetano Mosca (1858–1941), and Robert Michels (1876–1936). Subsequent renditions of the theories also carried a strong imprint of Max Weber's ideas; especially concerning the centrality of political power and charismatic leadership (International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, 2022; Nnorom, 2022). Elite theory refers to the theory which attempts to explain power relations in modern societies. It holds that a tiny minority, in the society comprising policy-planning networks and economic elite controls the most power in the state and that this power is not a product of democratic elections (Witten, 2022). Through positions in organizations and corporate boards, and influence over policy-planning systems, through monetary support of foundations or linkages with policy-discussion groups and think tanks, members of the select group exert enormous power over government and corporate decisions. The fundamental proposition of this theory is that power is condensed, the elites are united, the non-elites are heterogeneous and feeble, elites' concerns are unified bases on their identical positions and backgrounds, and the decisive attribute of elite power is institutional status (Glasberg & Shannon, 2010).

In additional elucidations but with emphases on the American political economy, Johnson (2005, p.1) had asserted that elite theory refers to "the theoretical view held by many social scientists that American politics is best understood through the generalization that nearly all political power is held by a relatively small and wealthy group of people sharing similar values and interests and mostly coming from relatively similar privileged backgrounds". According to Johnson (2005, p.1) "most of the top leaders in all or nearly all key sectors of society are seen as recruited from this same social group, and elite theorists emphasize the degree to which interlocking corporate and foundation directorates, old school ties and frequent social interaction tend to link together and facilitate coordination between the top leaders in business, government, civic organizations, educational and cultural establishments and the mass media".

The resultant position is that "this 'power elite' can effectively dictate the main goals (if not always the practical means and details) for all really important government policy making (as well as dominate the activities of the major mass media and educational/cultural organizations in society) by virtue of their control over the economic resources of the major business and financial organizations in the country (Johnson, 2005, p.1). The power of the elite is perceived to derive most fundamentally from their personal economic means and particularly from "their positions within the top management of the big corporations, and does not really depend upon their ability to garner mass support through efforts to 'represent' the interests of broader social groups" (Johnson, 2005, p.1). Elite theory is accordingly antithetical to pluralism under which more than one pattern of power prevails. It focuses on how different major parties and social groups influence several types of representation

under more influential sets of leaders, to contribute to putative representative political outcomes that portray the group needs of society.

In the application of elite theory to the work, the author considers the role of the elite in managing or mismanaging structural diversity and other attributes of plurality in the case study country. In these regards, the paper essentially considers how political elite positions may facilitate or hold back structural functional harmony in plural states.

A LITERATURE REVIEW

There are certainly in existence some earlier scholarly efforts in the regards of addressing the issues of diversities and plurality in Nigeria. There are still others bordering on the nation's development challenges. From the angle of religious pluralism Adama et al. (2020, p.156) highlight that the relationship among the three main religious bodies in Nigeria (Islam, Christianity and African traditional religion) "has generated the problem of persistent prejudice, suspicion, distrust, intolerance, aggression and destruction of lives and property as oftentimes experienced in several parts of the country". According to Adama et al. (2020, p.156) "these conflicts have left trails of political, social, economic and psychological losses which have also injured and poisoned established relationships among Nigerians". Besides other recommendations, the researchers suggested the creation of new employment opportunities for the country's youths. Such additional engagement avenues are needed massively in the country to re-channel the energy expended on religious extremism by this category of citizens into more creative endeavours. Adama et al. (2020) have accordingly aptly established linkages between acute unemployment and national crises arising from religious pluralism in Nigeria.

Still focusing on religious pluralism Olasunkanmi (2021, p.130) deposes that the phenomenon "has always posed a problem to sustainable development in Nigeria and any societies which tie political battle for supremacy, socioeconomic dominance and cultural superiority complex to their religions breed developmental crises". In the view point of Olasunkanmi (2021, p.130) "this has been the case in Nigeria because, interactions between the three dominant religions in Nigeria, namely: Christianity, African Traditional Religion and Islam have been largely governed by divisiveness, hatred, bigotry and violence and the consequence is developmental deficits". The researchers recommended "tolerance and accepting of individual religious differences as key to peace and harmony in the country and that, politicians should not use religion as a language of power but rather emphasize its role in achieving social goals that positively affect the well-being of the people".

Moving away from the specificity of religious pluralism, Onyekachukwu & Oghogho (2018, p74) focused on "cultural and ethnic pluralism and their implications for national integration in Nigeria". They posit that "national integration is one of the un-accomplished desires in Nigeria". The authors "among other suggestions, recommend that massive cultural education should be embarked upon by relevant agencies in the country such as the National Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO), the National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC), the Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC) and the National Orientation Agency (NOA) to take pride in the strength and plurality of Nigeria".

Furthermore, restructuring Nigeria's pattern of federalism has been attracting research attention. Onwumere (2019) thus introduces "ethno-religious pluralism and political restructuring in Nigeria" into the applicable configurations. According to Onwumere (2019, p.149) "the structure of Nigeria as currently constituted, can no longer foster the purpose of encouraging unity in diversity, as the result of ethno-religious politics hence, the clarion call for the political restructuring of Nigeria". Onwumere (2019, p.149) highlights that "the principle of federal character in the appointment of people into key positions had been jettisoned as observation revealed that all the key appointments were skewed in favor of a particular region, while leaving other ethnic regions with little or no appointments". The paper accordingly, attempted to "critically analyze ethnicity, religion and their attendant crises that hampered restructuring and finally recommended among other possibilities that the practice of devolution of powers be adopted to harness the vast potentials of Nigeria's pluralistic nature".

In their equally related contribution, Chidozie & Orji (2022) explored the subject matter of the cultural fundamentals in determining the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria. They observed that the generic notion of cultural inequality systematically obstructing democratic inclusion of subordinated groups is trite. The paper argued rather that the present crises characterizing democracy in Nigeria is related critically to the absence of space which can deal with both cultural pluralism and social complexity. What needs to be done in the estimation of these authors is the creation of the requisite space.

Examining the issue of Nigeria's development challenges from its national security nexus, Mimiko (2022, p.641) asserts that "the past twenty years of civil but limited democratic rule has not significantly enhanced the responsiveness of the Nigerian state to the aspirations of a preponderance of its society, therefore, a re-casting

of the governance structure is imperative to reposition and imbue the state with the capacity and commitment to deliver on critical social needs that can be the basis for national security". Mimiko (2022) thus, aptly introduces the security of one and all (ethnic groups and their members, linguistic divisions and the speakers of the languages, religious organizations and the adherents to such religions) as a sine qua non for confronting a nation's development challenges. Still contributing to the surrounding issues, Maichiki & Yahaya (2022, p.1) argue that the "essentially anaclitic ties to ethnic groups in Nigeria emerged in the context of artificial scarcity, itself a bye product of the failure of the Nigerian state to provide for its citizens". However, they contend, "ethnic diversity is not an exclusive preserve of the Nigerian state, albeit Nigeria is adjudged as one of the most diverse countries in Africa. Thus, the country's poor development is sometimes attributed to its diversity and population where many Nigerians think of themselves first and then their primordial publics, while the nation-state is often accorded the least priority" (Maichiki & Yahaya, 2022, p.1).

These authors argue that "although the management of Nigeria's ethnic diversity is a challenging issue, it is not merely the fact of the diversity but the failure of the state to manage the diversity and the vast natural and human resource that the country is blessed with that essentially transform this diversity into a problem". Invariably, when Maichiki & Yahaya (2022) refer to "the failure of the state to manage the diversity" in the country and turn such national multiplicities into positive attributes, the allusion is to the failure of the political elite in those regards.

Joining the embedded debates at this point, the current paper proceeds to focus on the critical issues that may need to be effectively addressed in managing diversity in Nigeria and similarly confronting the development challenges of the Nigerian plural state in Africa. Table I below will be found handy in subsequently making some illustrations and elucidations in the paper.

Table I: Most Multilingual Countries in the World

S/N	Country	Geographic Location	Number of Languages
1	Papua New Guinea	Oceania	839
2	Indonesia	Southeast Asia	770
3	Nigeria	West Africa	526
4	India	South Asia	454
5	United States	North America	422
6	China	East Asia	300
7	Mexico	North America	289
8	Cameroon	West-Central Africa	281
9	Australia	Oceania	245
10	Brazil	South America	229

Source: Adaptation from World Economic Forum (2016)

The intended illustrations principally focus on the three most multilingual countries of Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and Nigeria, highlighting national tendencies in managing diversity and different country's positions in development index.

INCIDENT OF CENTRALIZED FEDERALISM IN NIGERIA

It is probably only in the Nigerian federation that the incident of a centralized federation is obtainable. Furthermore, the official name (full name) of the country is the Federal Republic of Nigeria. However, the republican status of the country is not disputable but its federalism has continued to demand attention for reorganization. Nigeria's component states (and by implication the ethnic, linguistic, religious and all other subsystems of diversity and plurality in the country) look up to the central government for direction and accommodation. This tendency then appears totally contradictory to the characteristics of diversity and plurality locatable in the country's composition. It seriously seems as if the development challenges of the plural African state would be more earnestly addressed under a fully liberalized federation. Under such scenarios, federating states would principally collect tax revenues and remits the appropriate ratios to the center. The current practice whereby the center is the major revenue receiver for paternal distribution to the states seems counterproductive in managing diversity. While centralization remains attractive to Nigeria's political elite, in Indonesia, that is also highly plural in nature with 770 languages (see Table I) decentralization is the orthodoxy with even village heads comprehensively integrated into the national governance architecture (Berenschot & Sambodho, 2017). The study

has not found such evidence of decentralization in plural Papua New Guinea. Indonesia is then internationally classified as an industrialized country; Nigeria and Papua New Guinea are not.

THE ISSUE OF EFFECTIVE POLICING

At the center of the problem of insecurity in Nigeria which unarguably hinders development in the country is the issue of ineffective policing. Police performance and challenges in Nigeria have continued to attract research attention and critical lay commentaries (Babalola, 2022; Bakere, B. (2021; Johnson, 2013; Ojo, 2014). Possibly central to all the performance issues of the police in the country is the question bordering on effective communication. According to Babalola (2022, p.6) “the fact remains that the 925 Divisions, 106 Area Commands, 37 Commands and 12 Zonal Commands in Nigeria cannot communicate effectively even within the organisation let alone with the public”. It needs to be added to the problem of communication that in a diverse and plural state as represented by Nigeria, it is unwieldy to command this police formation from the federal capital territory where the Inspector General of Police resides.

In historical perspectives, according to Bakere (2021, p.2) “what is known as the Nigeria Police Force in Nigeria today was first established in 1820. It has, however, gone through many stages and years of restructuring, reformation and reorganisation during and after the British Colonial administration in the country. During the colonial period, most police formations were associated with local governments which were then known as the Native Authorities”. In linguistically diversified and plural societies, it seems quite plausible to concentrate police efforts at the local government level where the citizens and the police are joint heirs to the local government heritage. However, everything about the police in Nigeria’s diverse and plural state is centralized. Then among the most outstanding function of the unified police force in the country is to serve as guards and escorts to the nation’s elite while criminals freely stop other citizens from engaging in development-oriented endeavours.

Then comparatively, in multilingual Indonesia, illustrative of a plural state (see Table I), the police system is a complex web of structural functionality. Besides the Indonesian National Police and its special units, there are still other complementary or integral police platforms and law enforcement agencies such as the municipal police, forestry police, prison police and railroad police. There are still others which include Remote Islands and Coastal Development police, agricultural quarantine police and the military police corps. The list further includes the Maritime Security Agency, the Sea and Coast Guard, the National Police Water Unit and Marine and Fisheries Resources Surveillance Force (Sumampouw et al, 2022). In plural Papua New Guinea, the police plan is not so complexly webbed, probably leading to the high incidence of violence against women in the country (Wiessner, 2020).

CREATION OF MORE STATES

Some Nigerian stakeholders see the creation of additional states out of the current thirty-six states structure in the country as an unreasonable exercise. Such opinion holders are disconcerted about the creation of a few additional states in the country. However, Okeke (2020) has seminally proposed the changing of the existing thirty-six states structure in the country into senatorial zones and the conversion of the one hundred and nine senatorial areas into states. This proposal undoubtedly accords with the pluralistic trajectories of the Nigerian society. Nevertheless, the proposition is not all about pluralism. Again, it is not based on considerations about the number of states in the other federations at the international arena. Each polity is entitled to the number of regions, states or provinces it considers desirable. Plurality of states in very enormous dimensions appears desirable in Nigeria because it is fundamentally utilitarian. In the face of dwindling federally collected and distributed revenue yields each of the states would be forced to ingeniously catalyze development in its location

Usually, the most outstanding argument against the creation of additional states in Nigeria is that the new creations would not be viable. Incidentally, that is also the weakest proposition being canvassed as the supreme point. What is viability all about in this context? It is merely a euphemism for saying that there would not be enough cheap funds to be embezzled by the political elite in the country. The unviability contention is considered insipid in this contribution because the primary task of the politicians should be to make such states viable. Multiplicity of federating states is a prerequisite for moving the Nigerian plural nation forward. Governors of the current states in Nigeria are overwhelmed by the magnitude of the work they are to do in their various locations. So they usually fail to conquer in terms of service delivery. Then the current states are only considered comparatively viable because they have managed to continue to supply the inordinate needs of the political elite and their families.

In multilingual Papua New Guinea (the most multilingual country on earth) (Table I refers) there is the likelihood of Bougainville Island which has been part of the country attaining Independence status in 2027 after

an already successful referendum (Harding, B., & Pohle-Anderson, 2022). In the Nigerian state (the third most multilingual country in the world) the claim of the political elite is that the people have become permanently weaved together by providence and issues of referendum and separation are anathema.

THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

What appears like the greatest statutory attempt at recognizing Nigeria's diverse nature and its plurality is to be found in the number of local government areas (LGAs) in the country. There are 774 local government areas in the Nigerian state. The local government areas (for local self-government) are structurally and functionally implied to provide for diversity and plurality in governance and development inputs from the citizens. However, the local government as a tier of government in the country seems to have been created as mere embellishments to the constitution. The three tiers of government in Nigeria's governmental architecture are the federal, state and local governments as the first, second and third tiers of government respectively. However, the reason for the existence of the third tier of government in the country cannot be said to have become generally clear to the observers of Nigeria's political culture and administrative evolution.

Contributing to the embedded analyses, Ebiseni (2018, p.3) highlights that "the combined provisions of Sections 3, 7, 8 (2) (3) (4) (5), 9, 162 particularly 162 (5) (6) and (7) of the 1999 constitution of Nigeria as amended, make the existence, establishment, structure, composition, finance, functions of local governments subject to the state and also the federal governments in several contradictory and anachronistic provisions". According to Ebiseni (2018, p.3) "the 774 councils provided in Section 3 and listed in Part 1, First Schedule of the 1999 constitution of Nigeria, have become a source of agitation in terms of its arbitrariness, illogicality and inevitable injustice". Ebiseni (2018, pp.3-4) further argues that "first, the geopolitical breakdown of the councils shows that the north (northern Nigeria) has a total of 413 with the North East having 112; North Central 114; North West 187. The South has a total of 355 with South East 95; South-South 123; South West 137; The FCT (Federal Capital Territory) has six Area Councils. But comparative historical analysis shows that under the NA (Native Authority) system in colonial times the north had 147 while the south had 215".

The local government system has accordingly complicated diversity in the country and also polluted plurality. In any case, a more fundamental issue for this paper borders on the development import of the local government areas. If the LGAs were serving as effective vehicles of development in the country only minimal attention would need to be paid to the lopsidedness in their constitutional contradictions. Oke (2020) amplifies that Bauchi State in the Northern part of Nigeria with a population of five million, has 20 LGAs, compared to the oil producing Rivers State in the southern section with 12 million population and 23 LGAs. Then Lagos state in the South with 21 million residents has 37 LGAs while Kano State in the north with 16 million citizens has 44 local government areas. Oke (2020, p.5) then explains that the "number of local government is an important yardstick used in federal allocation of resources". Therefore, instead of the central government (federal government) standing as a neutral promoter of productive plurality and national creativity in diverse trajectories in Nigeria, it has remained a paternal collector of revenues for contentious allocation to states and local government areas in the nation.

Consequently, describing what local government has become in Nigeria, Page & Wando (2022) assert that in reality, no local government in the country works for the citizens. Instead every household in the nation is its own local government, providing its basic needs, healthcare, electricity, water and education, in any way that it can. This is after local government kleptocracy (a system of stealing from the governed by those who govern) has left the people exhausted. Page & Wando (2022, p.4) demonstrate that "local government in Nigeria is fundamentally corrupt, flawed by design, and not fit for purpose, and state and local elites use it to enrich themselves, build patronage networks, and manipulate political outcomes". Page & Wando (2022, p.4) further posit that "monumentally wasteful, Nigeria's local governments have provided barely any public goods and services despite gulping over 16.4 trillion naira (N) (\$76 billion) in national petroleum and tax revenues between 2011 and 2021. At the same time, state governments have spent an estimated N93.5 billion (\$245 million) annually for overseeing local government affairs—a staggering amount to simply administer other administrators".

CONCLUSION

Nigeria's highly hyped greatness can only be firmly hinged on the country's diversities. It is therefore only the effective management of these diversities that can engender development in the Nigerian state and guaranty the continuing relevance of the country in the lives of the citizens. Of course, without being relevant to the people of the nation the purpose of such a state remains perpetually disputable. The state becomes dismissible as dysfunctional. It has accordingly been demonstrated in this paper that structural functionalism is critical to the

envisaged successes of plural Nigeria as the prevailing national tendencies are highly unconstructive and obtrusive. Centralism in federalism needs to be replaced by functional federalism in the country. The currently centralized policing policy in the nation has to be abandoned. Many more states need to be created in the country to catalyze accountable governance and engender commitment on the part of the political elite and the followers. It needs to be culturally and structurally accepted that local governments in the Nigerian space are truly governments at their level of the structural-functional schemes in the nation and not the opportunities for political elite thievery as currently obtainable.

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