**NAME; ISHIE DESTINY CHINEYE**

**MATRIC NUMBER; 19/LAW01/125**

**DEPARTMENT; LAW**

**COURSE; PEACE AND CONFLICT**

**DATE; 30TH NOVEMBER, 2020**

**Assignment**

Write an essay on the violent conflict on the geographical zone you are from.

**FEDERALISM AND MINORITY AGITATIONS IN NIGERIA: THE SOUTH-SOUTH MARGINALISATION QUESTION**

In having an insight to a better understanding of this view, we shall first report on what violence and conflict is. Conflict can be described as a relational dispute between two or more parties. It is a process in which one party suggests that its interest are being opposed by another party. It is also about opposing ideas and actions of different of different entities. While violence consists o actions, words, attitudes, structures or systems that cause physical, psychological, social or environmental damage/ prevent people from reaching their full human potentials.

The South-South Region is heterogeneous, multi-cultural, ethnically diverse region of about 10 million people according to the 2006 census. It covers an area of about 40,000 square kilometres. About one third of this area is wetland, one of the largest in the world, but certainly the largest in Africa. Over sixty per cent of Nigeria’s mangrove forest, which is the third largest in the world, is also found here, as are the most extensive fresh water swamp forests in west and central Africa. Accordingly, the South-South Region is rich in fishes and wildlife resources, has a high biodiversity with many unique species of plants and animals. More importantly, the region is famed for its large deposits of non-renewable energy resources, particularly crude oil and gas. Most of the country’s oil comes from this region. The Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) alone has more than 90 active oil wells in the area. Production and exports of crude oil from the region is about two million barrels a day, accounting for well over 90 per cent of Nigeria’s total export earnings and around 80 per cent Federal revenue. It is also estimated that the value of natural gas in the region when fully harnessed will exceed the total economic benefits derived presently from the crude oil (Nwachukwu, 1999:106, Ojeifa, 1999:257, Anebunam, 1999:140). Accordingly, Nwachukwu (1999) gives a geo-political definition of the region to include those states of Nigeria that border the coastal waters of the Atlantic. These are the oil producing Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers.

The South-South Region, in spite of its natural resources endowment in oil and gas is still very poor and deprived of some basic necessities of lives and marginalised in certain political office compared to other regions with little or no resources contributing to the wealth of the country. The people in this region are vastly neglected and oppressed not only by the activities of oil exploration by multinational corporations but by the insincerity on the part of government to adequately compensate them for loss of their farmlands, sea, water system, displacement, diseases suffered from oil spillage and gas flaring by the government. An economy of conflict slowly emerged. By September, 1999, about 50 Shell workers had been kidnapped and released Arnold (quoted in Omede and Akhanolu, 2013). Their motive of doing this was very clear, “if they do not benefit from the oil output, then they will stop the oil from being produced.” Then, there began a regime of violent and armed resistance by youth militias and militant groups principally in response to state repression and corporate violence and as part of actions to compel concessions in respect of regional autonomy, resource control and greater oil based benefits. The region has since become the scene of the most extensive military operations since the Nigerian civil war. The essence of these protests and agitations was to show the world the extent of inequity in South-South Region of the Nigerian federal system.

From the foregoing, it can be said that corruption remains as a big problem in Nigerian federal state; it has robbed the minority group of the south-south their rights to community development, as monies meant for the development of some states in the Niger-Delta region have either be misappropriated or siphoned for private benefits by their representatives. In this regard, it is worthy of note that financial scandals exposed in the Fourth Republic involved several political elites and government institutions. For example, former Governor of Delta State and other Governor’s cases of financial frauds involved the laundering of billions of naira under different names in different banks. Similar method was also employed by government officials involved in Niger-Delta Development Commission (a government body created to focus on the acceleration of development in the oil producing states of Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta, Ondo, Abia, Imo, Edo and Cross River) a reference to the shameful fraud involving the looting of funds allocated for development in the oil producing Niger-Delta region, and other financial scandals that rocked the Fourth Republic across the Local, State and Federal Government units, including the Presidency (Adeyeri, 2012).

The South-South protests and agitations is premised on antique dialectics, which implies that the agitations actually predates era of independence of Nigeria, Aghalino (quoted in Oshewolo, 2011). As noted by Lea and Young (cited in Oshewolo, 2011), the agitations stems from widespread marginalisation evidently seen in areas of social deprivations, underdevelopment of the area and injustices including the sharing of government revenue allocation, poor infrastructure or appointment to choice public positions. With this situation, the people began to perceive a profound sense of marginalization and alienation from the realities of a prosperous nation whose wealth is derived from the soil of the South-South people. Akpan (quoted in Oshewolo, 2011) gives an economic dimension to the political question of marginalization by associating with the economic relations that have evolved from the current resource ownership and control regime. The factors underlying how the South-South Region is marginalised vis-à-vis other regions in the country presented below.

Undue deprivation of the host communities where crude oil are derived constituted a major area of marginalisation of the South-South Region. For a very long time this region is known to produce the wealth that keeps Nigeria as a country as one of the leading oil producers in the world, yet this region is denied of all basic necessities of lives such as good infrastructures, health centres, water, electricity and destruction of farmlands belonging to the people of South-South. Corroborating this view, Ifeka (2001) contends that the basis for the struggle is the enormous deprivation been experienced by the host communities. Moreover, the inequalities in the distribution of power, wealth and status, and domination and oppression by bigger groups and their collaborators within the smaller groups have frustrated the minority people of the South-South (Angaye, 2003). Their doggedness to resolve this anomaly has set the country on a keg of gunpowder.

Also, unjust and criminal exploitation of God-given natural resources of the people of South-South to their detriment is one other area of manifestation of marginalisation in the region. It is no more news that South- South Region do not have power to control resources within their territory rather political elites in other regions dictates and determines how these wealth are shared. Ekong (2004), however reiterated that the South-south geo-political zone has over the years remained the goose that lay the golden egg. Paradoxically it also remained the worst developed even by Nigerian standard. Irrespective of its being the economic lifeline of the Nigeria project, there seem to be a deliberate political will to perpetually put the South-South down. Yet, its economic importance which dates back to the colonial era cannot be over emphasised. Its role as the catalyst in the trade of palm produce and groundnut between Nigeria and Europe before independence earned it the Oil Rivers. The South-South Region was therefore an indispensable and vocal entity prior and after the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates, which gave birth to Nigeria in 1914. Though it has also ironically remained an object of political emasculation in the contraption called Nigeria. While the list of deprivation remains inexhaustible, the people of the South-South have continued to wallow in poverty and threat of extinction, following the inhuman exploitation of their resources (Ekong, 2004).

Socially, the South-South Region is also marginalized in terms of poor social facilities, environmental degradation, oil spillage, polluted water system among others. Social amenities in other regions are provided with the wealth derived from the South-South Region, but in spite of these wealth and resources the region remain largely impoverished. Briggs (2013), ask the following questions while explaining the state of marginalization in the South-South Region: where is our East-West Road? Where is the empowerment with oil wells and things that some people got from other governments and things that some northerners got when the North was in position? Where is our own? It is important to note that government and the legislature only sit in far inland (Abuja) to legislate over the affairs of the South-South people without understanding the problems of the South-South territory where communications are so difficult, building so expensive and education so scanty (Ekong, 2004). Despite the presence of huge wealth in this region, infrastructural facilities in most parts of the South-South appear to be at the primordial levels. As Aluko (quoted in Omede and Akhanolu, 2013), sums up the problem: ecological disasters arising from oil exploration have laid the land waste. They make it difficult, even impossible at times to have potable drinking water and passable road network. Pollution from incessant oil spillages, together with other hazards of oil exploration and exploitation, has made fishing, the lifeline of most inhabitants of the area, almost impracticable and unprofitable. Spillage also destroys fishing nets worth several thousands of naira. All these have had a negative impact on the quality of life of the average person in the South-South. The people felt dispossessed and are alienated from the polity (Tell Magazine, March 16, 2009:19). All these goes to show that the South-South Region is marginalized politically, socially and economically in spite of the fact that this region has been the stronghold of the country’s wealth.

In conclusion, the true practice of federalism in Nigerian states has been pervasive and faulted with undue marginalization of the minority groups. The degree of marginalization of this group, however, differed from one state to another. The discriminatory practices of federalism have had considerable impact on minority groups’ rights in the political sphere tilting the pendulum in outrageous disfavour to the minority groups of South-South. Against this background, we examined the importance of the practice of true federal system in resolving frequent minority agitations and group inequity in Nigeria. It is our contention that true federalism can be helpful in this direction. Nevertheless, we observed some challenges and proffered solutions to them.

Finally, we have also argued that for an effective and quick move towards practice of true federalism to address agitations and promote group equity a multi-pronged approach requiring a combination of factors need to be adopted. To this end, emphasis should be laid on, inter alia, creating in political elite’s mind a positive attitude towards true practice of federalism in Nigeria and discouraging practices that are ethnic bias against the minority groups, particularly those that are antithetical to their participation in public affairs and political process. We need to add that the practice of true federalism as enshrined in the constitution requires concerted and sustained effort. Considerable success in a twinkle of an eye may require perseverance considering the multi-ethnic and cultural diversities in the country.