

Federal Politics of State Creation and Political Marginalization in the South-East of Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the nexus between federal politics of state creation and political marginalization in the South-East of Nigeria. Specifically, the study's objectives were to; investigate the evolution of Nigerian federalism and state creation, the factors driving the agitation for an additional state in the South-East, the implications of political marginalization on governance and development of the region and interrogate the nexus between the economic viability of the region in state creation, as well as the challenge confronting the realization of the region's aspiration. The study was anchored on Elite Theory propounded by Vilfredo Pareto (1896) and subsequently developed by Gaetano Mosca (1896) and Robert Michels (1911) and complimented by Relative Deprivation Theory advanced by Ted Robert Gurr (1970). The study adopted a qualitative research design based on documentaries and relevant scholarly published literatures of secondary sources. Findings revealed that although federalism is constitutionally intended to promote equity, political inclusion, and balanced development, its implementation in Nigeria has produced enduring structural inequalities. State creation has been influenced by political expediency and elite interests rather, than objective administrative or developmental considerations. The study concluded that South-East quest is for constitutional equity, political inclusion, and balanced federalism, rather than territorial expansion. Therefore, the study recommended comprehensive constitutional reforms, transparent and objective criteria for state creation, equitable resource distribution, etc.

Keywords: *Federalism, State creation, Marginalization, Elite theory and Relative Deprivation Theory.*

Introduction

Federalism is a system of political governance in a government of a sovereign state in which powers are constitutionally shared between the central government authority and the constituent's units or states, as it is contemporarily. Nigeria adopted federalism in a bit to

manage its diversities, ensure political stability and promote unity among heterogeneous ethnic groups (Federalism in Nigeria, 2025). The adoption of federal system of government reflects the need to accommodate Nigeria's complex social-cultural composition, manage its pluralistic nature that is characterized by ethnic, cultural and religious diversities while, preserving regional autonomy (Where, 1963). However, the origin of Nigeria's federalism dates back to the colonial era, particularly during the 1914 amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates. This amalgamation created administrative convenience for the British, but failed to integrate the diverse ethnic groups into a cohesive political system (Elaigwu, 2007). The Richard's Constitution of 1946 introduced regionalism, which laid foundation for federalism. It divided Nigeria into three regions - North, West, and East - each with a reasonable degree of autonomy (Afigbo, 1989). The colonial era marks the beginning of a decentralized system of government. Moreover, after independence in 1960, Nigeria retained the federal system of government to ensure equitable distribution of power. Although, ethnic rivalry, political instability and uneven development led to all the tensions within the federation (Suberu, 2001). Interestingly, state creation emerged as a response to minority agitations and fears of domination by major ethnic groups. The creation of the Mid-Western Region in 1963 was the first attempt to address such concerns, (Osaghae, 1998).

Again, the military government accelerated state creation in 1967 by restructuring Nigerian States into twelve (12) States to Weaken Secessionist tendencies during the Nigerian - Biafran Civil war, (Elaigwu, 2007). At this juncture, this marked a turning point in Nigeria's federalist evolution. Subsequent state creation exercises occurred in the year 1976, 1987, 1991 and 1996, which brought the total member of states created in Nigeria to be thirty-six (36) states. These exercises were aimed to improve governance and as well promote development (Suberu, 2001). Despite these efforts, state creation has remained politically motivated. Some Scholars argue that it has become a tool for elite manipulation and patronage (Osaghae, 1998). The South-East Geo-political zone, consisting of five (5) states, is the least represented zone in Nigeria. This has fueled the demands for additional states to ensure parity with other regions. In addition, historical experiences, particularly the Nigerian - Biafran Civil war, have shaped political dynamics in the South-East, thereby contributing to perceptions of marginalization. Proponents of state creation did argue that it enhances political representation and development. However, critics contend that it increases administrative costs of governance without addressing structural issues (Suberu, 2001). The politics of state creation is intertwined with ethnicity, resource allocation, and power struggles among the powerful elites. Also, the constitutional processes for creating states in Nigeria is very complex, because it involves multiple levels of approval, making it difficult to achieve. More importantly, over time, Scholars argue that state creation has shifted from a developmental strategy to a political instrument. It is increasingly used by elites to consolidate power and influence within the federation (Egwu et al., 2025). Recent empirical studies indicate that agitation for additional states in the South-East is rooted in both historical grievances and contemporary political realities. These include perceived exclusion from federal decision-making processes and unequal distribution of national resources, (Egwu et al., 2025). Furthermore, the ongoing debates about restructuring in Nigeria suggest that dissatisfaction with the federal system is widespread. Agitations for state creation reflect broader concerns about governance, inclusion, and national integration (Onuoha & Okore, 2025). Recent studies on intergovernmental relations revealed that the expansion of states has not necessarily improved governance outcomes. Instead, it has sometimes intensified conflicts and weakened institutional efficiency (Yusuf & Omodia, 2025). Again, the South-East has continued to advocate for additional states such as Adada and Aba, which reflect the persistent dissatisfaction with the current structure. These demands are often framed in terms

of equity and fairness. Economic arguments also feature prominently in the discourse. Some scholars argue that state creation can stimulate local development, while some others contend that it increases dependence on federal allocations without improving productivity (Emenike & Ukwueze, 2025). Moreover, fiscal federalism in Nigeria has been criticized for limiting the autonomy of subnational governments, thereby undermining the intended benefits of federalism (Emoghene & Oluyemi, 2025). The politics of state creation is deeply embedded in the elite competition, ethnic identity, and resource control. These dynamics make the process very highly contentious and complex. The South-East Geo-Political zone, predominantly occupied by the Igbo ethnic group, has been at the center of debates on political marginalization due to historical experiences, including the aftermath of the 1967-1970 Nigerian-Biafran Civil War and perceived exclusion from key national offices, and decision-making process in the fourth Republic. Scholars noted that these perceptions shape regional political consciousness and agitations for structural reforms (Ibukuntomiwa, Chukwudi, & Asom, 2025). Political marginalization in Nigeria generally refers to the systematic exclusion of certain groups from political power, equitable resource distribution, and influence over national policy. This has manifested in debates over zoning, federal appointments, and representation in political institutions (Danda & Hameed, 2025). State creation is a salient mechanism within Nigerian federalism that groups use to pursue greater political autonomy, equitable resource sharing, and increased representation. In the South-East, calls for new states are pitched as strategies to offset marginalization and strengthen regional influence within the federation (Egwu, Okechukwu, Onyebueke, & Nwanoruo, 2025). Historically, state creation in Nigeria has been influenced by military regimes, which wielded significant power to redraw internal boundaries without extensive democratic consultation. This has left legacies of contestation over legitimacy and equitable governance outcomes, (Orlu State Bill, 2024). Among state creations, one prominent contemporary example in the South-East is the Orlu state bill, which in 2024, passed its first reading in the House of Representatives proposing to carve parts of Imo, Abia, and Anambra into a new state. This initiative reflects the ongoing political negotiations around federal restructuring and regional empowerment (Orlu state bill, 2024). Notably, state creation in Nigeria has historically been promoted as a tool for managing ethnic pluralism and reducing conflict by bringing government closer to the people. Yet, some studies found that new states may reproduce similar patterns of exclusion of governance and structures remain centralized and elitist (Chinda, 2023). The South-East's relatively smaller number of States (five) compared to other zones in the federation has been cited as a structural factor that limits its share of federal allocation and political representation, prompting renewed agitations for additional states (Egwu et al., 2025). Political marginalization also intersects with rotational politics, where power-sharing arrangements intended to foster inclusivity may inadvertently entrench elite dominance rather, than addressing structural inequalities (Danda & Hameed, 2025). Failure to address marginalization within the federal system can erode public trust in democratic institutions and reinforce regionalist sentiments that challenge national cohesion (Ibukuntomiwa et al., 2025). In conclusion, the problem is the distinct manifestation of South-East Geo-Political Zone, having only five (5) states compared to six Geo-Political Zones in Nigeria. Therefore, the South-East is widely perceived as structurally disadvantaged within Nigeria's federal arrangement. This problem is complemented with the contradiction between federalism in Theory and centralization in practice, particularly in Nigeria's federalism. However, the Core concern is whether the creation of additional states in the South-East can genuinely address issues of marginalization, development, and political inclusion within Nigeria's federal system. In this regard, there are four objectives which are as thus; to: examine the nature of federalism and historical evolution of state creation in

Nigeria; analyze the factors driving agitation for state creation in the South-East zone; assess the implications of political marginalization of the South-East zone on the development of the region; and interrogate the nexus between the economic viability of the region and its demand for the creation of an additional state. To this extent, federal politics of state creation and political marginalization in the South-East, focusing on its implications for governance and development, within the broader context of political marginalization-provides critical insights into the structural reforms necessary for a more inclusive, equitable, and stable Nigerian federation.

Conceptual Clarifications:

Concept of Politics: Politics is a basic concept that cut across every aspect of life, it is viewed as the processes, activities and influential power relations through which societies and organizational settings make collective decisions and allocate resources accordingly (Heywood, 2022). Politics equally encompasses the mechanisms through which authority is been exercised, governance structures operate, and conflicts are managed, as well as resolved. Politics is not practically limited to government or formal institutions, rather, it includes interactions among individual groups and organizations that influence decision-making. Some Scholars have provided plethora of definitions of politics to capture its complexity. For Lasswell (1936) politics was famously conceptualized as “who gets what, when, and how”, emphasizing the distribution of political/influential power and resources. This definition highlights politics as a contest over Scarce resources, decisions and influence. While concise, it underscores the centrality of power struggles in political life, particularly in diverse societies with competing interests. Whereas, for Easton (1965) defines politics to be “the authoritative allocation of values for a society”, highlighting the role of institutions and legitimacy via governance. According to Easton, politics involves not just who wields power but, also the process through which societies establish rules, enforce their laws, and determine rights and responsibilities. This perspective frames politics as both normative and institutional, focusing on both authority and societal order.

Furthermore, politics is also deeply intertwined with ideology and values. Political ideologies provide frameworks for interpreting society, organizing government and guiding policy decisions (Heywood, 2022). Seriously in Nigerian Context, politics is intricately linked to federalism, state creation, and ethnic representation. Political competition often centers on control over resources, appointments, and policy decisions, reflecting broader struggles for inclusion and influence among different regions and ethnic groups (Odewale et al., 2024). Politics in Nigeria thus reflects both structural constraints and social dynamics.

Concept of Federalism:

Federalism is a system of government in which authority is constitutionally divided between a central government and the subnational units, such as states or regions, as to ensure both unity and regional autonomy (Elazar, 2019). At its core, federalism represents a political compromise that allows diverse societies to coexist under a single sovereign state, while preserving the autonomy of distinct territorial entities. It is an institutional mechanism designed to accommodate social, ethnic, and cultural pluralism by balancing central control with regional self-governance (Watts, 2020). Some Scholars define federalism in various ways, which reflects its multidimensional nature. Elazar, (2019), conceptualizes it as a political system that enshrines dual sovereignty, granting subnational governments legal and administrative authority over designated areas of governance, independent of central interference. Similarly, Watts (2020) emphasizes that federalism is distinguished from other forms of government by its formal allocation of powers, which is constitutionally protected.

This constitutional dimension ensures that subnational units cannot be arbitrarily abolished or subordinated by the central government, making federalism distinct from mere decentralization. Again, federalism is often contrasted with Unitary Systems, where all political authority is concentrated at the national level. In federal systems, power is shared, creating multiple centers of authority that are interdependent yet constitutionally autonomous. This division of power allows for local governance that is responsive to regional needs, thereby promoting political inclusion and participatory governance (Kineaid, 2019). By providing subnational units with independent authority, federalism serves as a safeguard against excessive centralization, which can foster political exclusion and regional marginalization. Moreover, federalism manifests in different models, primarily dual federalism and cooperative federalism. Dual federalism, also known as “layer-cake federalism” is characterized by clearly defined and separate spheres of authority, where national and regional governments operate independently within their respective jurisdictions (Kineaid, 2019). In contrast, cooperative federalism, or “Marble-cake federalism”, emphasizes collaboration and shared responsibilities between levels of government, particularly in areas such as economic planning, infrastructure development, and public services, (Ojo, 2021). The distinction between these models illustrates the flexibility of federalism as a system capable of adapting to the political and social realities of a given country. On the other hand, critics of federalism argue that while it offers opportunities for inclusion, it can also entrench inequalities, when resource distribution is uneven or political power is concentrated in certain regions, federal arrangements may exacerbate marginalization rather than alleviate it (Mianne, 2024). Interestingly, federalism is also associated with political stability, though its effectiveness depends on institutional design. By granting autonomy to diverse regions federalism can reduce the likelihood of secessionist conflicts and political unrest. However, when federal arrangements are poorly structured, they can create competition, deepen regional inequalities, and intensify political grievances (Suberu, 2020). More importantly, federalism is intrinsically connected to issues of political marginalization. When power is unevenly distributed or subnational units lack meaningful authority, certain groups or regions may be excluded from decision-making processes, leading to political and economic disadvantage (Ibukuntomiwa et al., 2025). This dynamic is especially relevant in Nigeria’s South-East, where historical grievances about exclusion and underrepresentation persist.

Concept of State Creation:

State creation refers to the process by which new administrative or political units are established within an existing country, usually to improve governance, enhance representation, and address regional or ethnic grievances (Omemma, 2025). It is often employed as a political tool to manage diversity, promote equity, and reduce conflict in heterogeneous societies. At its Core, state creation involves the redrawing of political boundaries and the establishment of new governance structures, including executive, legislative, and administrative institutions (Suberu, 2020). The process often emerges from pressures from ethnic, regional, or socio-political groups seeking autonomy or equitable participation in the governance system. Moreover, some scholars define state creation in various ways. Aghalino (2020) conceptualizes it as “the political and administrative restructuring of existing territorial units to form new states, primarily aimed at enhancing representation and developmental opportunities for marginalized regions”. This definition highlights both the political and developmental dimensions of the process. State creation is closely linked to the notion of federalism. In federal systems, the creation of new states can serve as a mechanism to decentralize power, distribute resources more equitably, and reduce

ethnic or regional tensions (Watts, 2020).

Furthermore, the historical perspective of state creation shows that it often responds to ethnic or regional demands. In Nigeria, successive governments have created states since independence to address grievances, accommodate minority groups, and manage interethnic competition (Odewale et al., 2024). Each round of state creation has reflected both political negotiation and power balancing among elites and interest groups. State creation is not merely administrative but also political. It involves intense negotiations among elites, political parties, and federal authorities, often mediated by constitutional provisions, referenda, or national assemblies (Omemma, 2025). The process can be contentious, as it directly affects resource allocation, political influence, and regional identity.

Again, critics, however, argue that state creation may exacerbate elite capture and political competition. Newly created states may benefit only the dominant political elites, leaving marginalized groups within the new units still excluded from meaningful participation (Odewale, et al., 2024). This tension underscores the complexity of state creation as a tool for equitable governance. Moreover, the process of state creation often involves popular participation, either through referenda, public consultation, or stakeholder engagement (Watts, 2020). Democratic involvement enhances legitimacy and ensures that the new administrative unit reflects the preferences and aspirations of the affected populations. Economically, state creation can influence fiscal federalism. New states are entitled to allocations from central revenues, giving them the opportunity to invest in infrastructure, education and social services (Odewale et al., 2024). State creation is also tied to political bargaining among elites. Negotiations often occur behind the scenes, with political actors seeking to maximize influence, secure appointments, and consolidate power (Aghalino, 2020). As such, state creation is as much about political strategy as it is about administrative efficiency. State creation is intertwined with federal restructuring debates. Proposals for creating more states or local government units often emerge alongside calls for decentralization, constitutional reform, and power devolution (Ibukuwntomiwa, et al., 2025). These debates reflect ongoing tensions between national cohesion and regional autonomy. Lastly, the process of state creation is inherently political, social and economic, reflecting competing interests, historical grievances, and aspirations for autonomy. Effective state creation requires careful planning, legal compliance, and inclusive governance to ensure that new units do contribute positively to national stability and development (Ibukuntomiwa, et al., 2025).

Concept of Political Marginalization:

Political marginalization is a concept used to describe the systematic exclusion of individuals, groups, or regions from meaningful participation in governance decision-making, and access to political resources. It reflects structural inequalities in the distribution of political power and often intersects with issues of ethnicity, region, class and gender (Ibukuntomiwa, et al., 2025). Political marginalization is a critical lens for understanding the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in multi-ethnic and heterogeneous societies. However, at its core, political marginalization involves the denial of rights, opportunities, or influence to specific social groups, thereby limiting their capacity to participate fully in the political process (Suberu, 2020). This exclusion can be formal, such as through legal or constitutional restrictions, or informal, manifesting in practices that limit representation, appointments, or resource allocation. Marginalized groups often experience both political and economic disadvantages, reinforcing cycles of underdevelopment and inequality.

Finally, scholars have defined political marginalization in various ways. For Nwanne, (2024), political marginalization is “The systematic sidelining of individuals or communities from decision-making processes and governance structures that shape their lives”. Similarly,

Odewale, et al., (2024) emphasize that marginalization occurs when institutions and policies favour certain regions or groups, while excluding others, whether intentionally or as a consequence of structural arrangements. These definitions highlight both the structural and the relational dimensions of marginalization.

Theoretical Framework:

This research adopted two theories; the Elite Theory which stand as the main theory and the relative deprivation theory that stand as the complementary theory.

Elite Theory: Elite theory was propounded by Gaetano Mosca in 1896 in his book “The Ruling Class”. The theory was also developed by Vilfredo Pareto in 1901 and further developed in his 1916 work, “The mind and society”. The theory was later expanded by Robert Michels in 1911 in his work, “Political Parties”. Elite theory argues that political power is concentrated in the hands of a small group of elites, who make decisions that may serve their interests, rather than the broader population (Mosca, 1939; Mills, 1956). Michels (1911/1962) famously argued in his “Iron law of oligarchy” that “who says organization, says oligarchy” (p. 365). This proposition is relevant to Nigeria’s party politics, where internal democracy is weak and decision-making is concentrated among a few actors. Elite theory further explains how national political coalitions often exclude or co-opt South-East elites.

Furthermore, the relevance of elite theory to this research lies in its capacity to illuminate how federal arrangements and state creation processes are shaped by a narrow group of decision-makers. Rather than viewing federalism as a neutral constitutional design, the theory reveals it as a product of political contestation among dominant actors. This perspective is essential for analyzing why the South-East has remained with five states despite persistent demands for parity. On the other hand, Relative deprivation theory was propounded by Samuel Stouffer in 1949, in his book, “In the American Soldier”. The theory was later developed and popularized by Ted Robert Gurr in 1970 in his book, “why men Rebel”. According to this theory, individuals or groups feel deprived not necessarily because of absolute poverty or inequality, but because of perceived disparities compared to others (Runciman, 1966). In the South-East, perceptions of marginalization emerge when residents compare their political representation, resource allocation, or opportunities to those in other regions (Ibukuntomiwa et al., 2025). This theory provides a lens to understand agitation and demands for state creation or restructuring as responses to perceived inequalities.

Moreover, taken together, both the elite theory and the relative deprivation theory provided important analytical lenses for examining the dynamics of federalism, the politics of state creation, and political marginalization in Nigeria’s South-East Geo-Political Zone. In the South-East, the perception of political marginalization is closely tied to the region’s number of states and local government areas, which influence revenue allocation, legislative representation, and federal appointments. The zone’s five states translate into fewer senators, Representatives, and federal ministers compared to other zones with six or seven states. From an elite theory perspective, this structural imbalance reflects historical power configurations shaped after the Nigerian – Biafran Civil War (1967 – 1970), during which the Igbo – dominated Eastern Region attempted secession. The post-war federal arrangement arguably entrenched elite driven calculations that limited the region’s political leverage.

More importantly, while the elite theory focuses on power concentration, relative deprivation theory shifts attention to perceptions of injustice and inequality. Gurr (1970) defines relative deprivation as “actors’ perception of discrepancy between their value expectations and their value capabilities” (p. 24). In the South-East, expectations of equal treatment within the federation contrast with perceived realities of exclusion from key political offices and infrastructural development. This gap between expectation and reality generates frustration

and collective grievances.

Lastly, relative deprivation theory is particularly useful in explaining recurring agitations for additional state creation in the South-East. Compared to other zones, the region's fewer states are interpreted as evidence of systemic discrimination. Although federalism promises equality among federating states or units, the perceived imbalance fuels the narrative of second-class status. Such perceptions have contributed to the resurgence of separatist movements and demands for restructuring. However, the post-war slogan of "No Victor, No Vanquished" was intended to promote reconciliation and national unity. On the contrary, many in the South-East argue that structural inequalities persist. Relative deprivation does not require absolute poverty; rather, it emerges when groups compare themselves to others and perceive disadvantage (Walker & Smith, 2002). The South-East's comparison with other regional zones with regards to federal projects, security appointments, and political offices reinforces feelings of marginalization.

Method of Research:

This research adopted a qualitative and historical research design that focused on an exploratory study on the South-East Geo-Political Zone. Qualitative research focuses on understanding meanings, interpretations, and experiences, rather than quantifiable measurements. The historical research on the other hand, involved the systematic collection and evaluation of data relating to past events. This approach is suitable because the study examines the evolution of federalism and state creation in Nigeria from the colonial period to the present. The South-East Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria is one of the six officially recognized Geo-Political Zones in Nigeria, which comprised five states' VIZ: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States. This particular South-East zone is predominantly inhabited by the Igbo ethnic group and it is commonly referred to as Igboland. There are cities that are densely populated within the South-East major urban centers. Such as Aba, Onitsha, Enugu, Owerri and Umuahia that do function as economic and administrative capitals within their various states. However, data was sourced from a secondary source such as; peer-reviewed articles on federalism, governance, and state creation, standard texts on Nigerian politics and political theory; constitutional documents, official reports, and policy papers; and all published books; included scholarly publication used in accessing credible information online. Whereas, the research employs qualitative content analysis as the method of data analysis.

Politics of State Creation and National Integration:

The politics of state creation in Nigeria are deeply contested. Some Scholars argued that despite state creation's goal of enhancing national integration, the logic of constant fragmentation has tended to undermine collective nationhood. According to Eze, state creation has produced "mixed grills", intended to ensure even development but often exacerbating crisis, alienation and distrust, thereby defeating national integration (Eze, 2025). It is equally argued that without credible democratic leadership and inclusive governance, the creation of additional states will merely institutionalize ethno-regional competition, rather than reduce it. Others claim that it could culminate to improved institutional designs within federalism, as well as channel aspirations into cooperative process, rather than centrifugal pressures.

Political Marginalization and Representation in Nigeria's Federal Structure:

Political marginalization is a recurring theme in Nigeria's federal structure, often intersecting with state creation and quota systems. Recent Scholarly work indicates that the operationalization of the federal character principle – intended to guarantee ethnic balance in

appointments and representation – has inadvertently entrenched marginalization, especially for groups like the Igbo in the South-East, (Ezeani, 2024). This marginalization is not limited to cultural representation, but is deeply structural. Omemma, (2020) highlights how systemic imbalances manifest in lopsided federal appointments, promotions, and educational admissions that tend to benefit dominant coalitions, contributing to a sense of exclusion among less influential ethno-regional groups. Furthermore, some scholars frame marginalization primarily as a function of federal design and electoral engineering, others point to broader political economy dynamics – including elite capture and patronage networks – that distort the redistributive and representational purposes of federalism (Mbon, Titus & Ataire, 2024). There is also a contrast in how marginalization is interpreted; some academic, while others view parts of it as rooted in governance failures at subnational levels, complicating simplistic narratives of centre-versus-periphery exclusion.

The South-East Geo-Political Zone and Demand for Additional States:

The South-East zone demand for additional states is one of the most prominent contemporary political issues in Nigerian federalism. Historically, under-represented in the state count relative to other zones, the South-East currently has only five states despite being one of Nigeria's major Geo-Political Zones, prompting renewed agitations for additional states to correct perceived imbalances (Nazzu et al., 2024). Moreover, in 2024, the Orlu state Bill-seeking to carve out new territorial units from Imo, Abia, and Anambra states – passed its first reading in the House of Representatives, reflecting the political salience of this demand (Wikipedia, 2024). However, proposal has already generated intra-regional pushback from communities preferring to remain in their existing administrative units, underscoring the complexity of carving new federating units. Interestingly, critics have argued that simply creating more states will not resolve the deeper issues of marginalization, economic viability, or governance capacity. Some other Scholars warn that demands for new states can perpetuate cycles of fragmentation and competition, potentially overstressing federal resources and undermining fiscal federalism. On the other hand, proponents claim that additional states in the South-East would improve representation, political economy, and development outcomes for historically disadvantaged populations. Moreover, there are clear contrasts in the literature about the future of such demands: critics see risks of further political balkanization, while supporters frame state creation as essential to equitable federal restructuring and sustainable national integration. In conclusion, there are two major contributions that this study has effectively added to the body of knowledge; the first was the major concerns the limited integration of structural and perpetual explanations of marginalization that were extensively brought to fur in this study. Secondly, the assumption that state creation would address representational imbalance remains insufficiently tested. As public commentary notes, “creating states” (is) not (a) guarantee for development” (The Nation, 2025). Evaluations of past state creation outcomes in relation to political inclusion remain sparse.

Conclusion:

The 1999 constitution of Nigeria as amended, sets a very high threshold for creating new states. This requires Two-Thirds approval of the National Assembly; Two-Thirds approval of State Houses of Assembly and Referendum in affected areas. This makes state creation procedurally difficult. This study examined the nexus between federalism, the politics of state creation and political marginalization in the South-East Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria. Drawing on documentary evidence, constitutional provisions, official government reports, fiscal data, and empirical literature, the study established that although federalism was

adopted in Nigeria as a mechanism for managing diversity, promoting national unity, and ensuring equitable distribution of political power and resources, its implementation has produced enduring structural imbalances among the country's Geo-Political zones. Moreover, the findings demonstrate that although Nigeria formally operates a federal system of government, the practical operation of federalism has deviated considerably from the classical principles of equity, autonomy, and balanced representation. The study established that the politics of state creation has remained one of the most contentious issues in Nigerian federalism because, it directly affects political representation, revenue allocation, administrative opportunities, and access to national resources. Federalism or Nigerian federations are expected to distribute political authority in a manner that promotes unity, while accommodating diversity. Again, the evolution of state creation in Nigeria was influenced more by political calculations than by objective administrative or developmental considerations. And that the South-East Geo-Political zone experiences structural disadvantages because, it remains the only zone with five states, whereas every other Geo-Political zone has six or seven states. The study established that the agitation for an additional state in the South-East is primarily driven by the pursuit of constitutional equity, rather than ethnic expansionism. It was demonstrated that identity politics continues to shape the politics of state creation in Nigeria. Furthermore, the study found that political marginalization has generated profound developmental consequences for the South-East. This indicated that prolonged perceptions of political exclusions have contributed to growing insecurity and separatist agitations within the South-East. Significantly, the South-East possesses sufficient economic potential to sustain an additional state. Contrary to arguments that the creation of new states would inevitably produce financially dependent administrative units. It equally reflected the growing economic transformation within the South-East, where private enterprise has historically compensated for relatively limited public investment. Cities such as Aba, Onitsha, Nnewi, and Awka have evolved into important commercial and industrial centres, demonstrating the capacity of indigenous entrepreneurship to stimulate regional development. In addition, the study equally revealed that state creation would impose significant financial obligations on government. And that elite political interests significantly influence debates surrounding state creation. While, constitutional procedure constitutes one of the greatest obstacles confronting the South-East's quest for an additional state. Section 8 prescribes a rigorous amendment process requiring broad legislative approval at both federal and state levels. Lastly, that the existence of internal disagreements within the South-East over the proposed location of a new state capital, boundary delineation, and competing community interests. In all, these findings reaffirm the central proposition of classical federalism that political stability in heterogeneous societies depends upon equitable institutional arrangements that guarantee fair representation and equal participation.

Recommendations:

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were proposed:

- ❖ The National Assembly should undertake a comprehensive review of the constitutional provisions governing state creating, particularly section 8 of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999, as amended).
- ❖ There is need for additional state to be created in the South-East, as to make it up like the others from five states to six or seven states by the federal Government, in conjunction with the National Assembly as a priority.
- ❖ Future state creation exercises should be based on transparent and objective criteria, such as population size, economic viability, administrative convenience, geographical contiguity, infrastructure, and demonstrated public support, rather than political patronage or

elite bargaining.

- ❖ The Federal Government should deepen fiscal federalism by granting greater fiscal autonomy to states, while encouraging them to diversify their economies and improve internally generated revenue.
- ❖ Federal appointments, strategic public offices, and membership of national institutions should strictly reflect the principles of equity, inclusiveness, and the federal character doctrine.
- ❖ The Federal Government, state governments, civil society organizations, traditional institutions, and regional stakeholders should sustain constructive dialogue on constitutional restructuring, federalism, and equitable political representation.

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