



POLITICAL SCIENCE REVIEW
VOLUME 10 NUMBER 2, SPECIAL EDITION
ON RESTRUCTURING IN NIGERIA, 2022

**A PUBLICATION OF DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL
SCIENCE, FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN, NIGERIA
PMB 1515, ILORIN, NIGERIA**

ISSN 1996 - 4124

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Editorial Comment

Political Science Review is published by the Department of Political Science, University of Ilorin. It is published twice a year and feature articles on issues that are global, national and local both at the theoretical and practical levels within the discipline of political science and related fields.

This edition covers a variety of issues both at the theoretical and practical levels. The first article by Victor Adetula centres on **Qualitative Methods and Perspectives in Political Science Research in Nigeria** where he advocated for the use of ‘mixed methods; that identifies with ‘methodological pluralism’. This is followed by an array of articles that focus on conflict and its dimensions in Nigeria, public policies, domestic politics and international relations. The array of articles makes the edition a stimulating intellectual engagement.

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EVALUATING THE PERSPECTIVES ON NIGERIA'S RESTRUCTURING

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Abstract

This paper attempts an evaluation of the perspectives on restructuring in Nigeria. If there is any topic on the lips of Nigerians apart from the issue of 2023 General Elections is the restructuring of the country. There are some perspectives that have been shared by Nigerians on it. Some of these are political restructuring, social, geographical, economic and others. After reviewing the various perspectives, the paper argues that given the dose of emotions contained in the debate, some policy makers have the problem of appreciating the full import of restructuring. Notwithstanding, its essential features and necessity are not unknown in ensuring the full functioning of the federal system in the country for stability. The paper thus concludes that contrary to the perceptions of some persons on restructuring, it does not seem to be the magic wand that can solve all the national problems being experienced in Nigeria. Although the paper was written in 2019, its main arguments are as relevant today as they were then.

Introduction

If there is any political concept that has dominated the Nigerian political space in the last couple of years especially since the return of democracy to the country, it is the concept of restructuring upon which several perspectives exist on its meaning and how to bring it about. Nigerians have been engaging it to the point that it became a campaign issue in 2019 general elections. Some candidates in the elections invested a lot on it by coming out with robust ideas on restructuring and how to go about it, hoping that their electoral chances would be greatly enhanced by their positions on the testy concept (Abubakar, 2018a). Some went as far as to conclude that anybody who opposed restructuring was lazy (Abubakar, 2016).

Due to the initial aversion of President Buhari to the idea of restructuring the country, his opponents in the elections made it an issue and concluded that Nigeria was not making the expected progress because of the fake federalism it parades as all known attributes of what they called true federalism are not being respected in this country (Abubakar, 2018b). In their view, the centralist tendencies being exhibited by the country's version of federalism are an anathema that are not known to any functioning federalism in the world (Osaghae, 2016).

Perhaps, reflective of its magical attributes, the unrelenting efforts of proponents of restructuring concept appear to be making some impact on persons who were hitherto opposed to it (Buhari, 2019). One finds the sudden change in the tone of President Buhari in engaging the concept as an eloquent testimony to more acceptability of the concept. Although the President has not gone far enough in his embrace of the concept, his public declaration that the country now needs a true federalism to be able to make more progress is heartwarming to the age-long proponents of restructuring (Adebanjo, 2017; Odumakin, 2017).

So far, at a more general level, one can make some remarks on the nature of the debate. There are some Nigerians who still claim that they do not know what the term means despite the ceaseless campaigns that have been stepped up on it. Of course, Akinyemi, (2017) has come up with what it really means. The engagement of the concept so far indicates that it is more evident in urban centres, as the rural Nigeria seems unperturbed about the debate which is more of an elitist affair, which means that it is an instrument in the hands of privileged Nigerians in their contestation for power and relevance. As once noted by Agbaje (2017), the marginalized groups such as women and youths are not yet at the centre of the debate; their position seems to have been appropriated by vocal elites on the two sides of the debate. The debate has also become more of media issue as all the activities around it either in favour or otherwise have centered on the use of the media.

Unfortunately, the manner of proposing it and opposing it has assumed a regional dimension but broadly, it appears to be a reflection of North-South dichotomy. Its vocal advocates are largely based in the south, while its critics are more northerners. This tendency is itself a major setback for the debate that is retarding a national consensus from being developed on the issue of restructuring.

Based on its topicality and the fears that are associated with the restructuring debate in the country, this paper attempts to evaluate the perspectives that have been shared by Nigerians on restructuring. To be able to do this effectively, the next section of the paper examines the practice of federalism in Nigeria that has given birth to the restructuring debate after which it engages the issues in contention in the debate. The next section examines the perspectives on offered suggestions on how to resolve the debate. The last section concludes the presentation.

A Brief Discussion of the Practice of Federalism in Nigeria

Nigeria's journey to federalism began in 1954 under the British rule. Based on the diversity in Nigeria and in responding to agitations by some Nigerian nationalists that led to series of constitutional reforms, the British agreed with notable nationalists that the best political system for the country was

the federal structure. Unlike other federal systems, the Nigerian version did not come about through the desire by the generality of the people. This fundamental evolutionary flaw was to later exert pressures on the country in its practice of federalism (Alli, 2005).

Although the succeeding post immediate independence Balewa government tried its best in operating the federal structure which people now celebrate as a model in the nation's practice of federalism, not minding its imperfections that contributed to the termination of the First Republic in the country. The reality of federal practice under the military was to sack all the redemptive features it contained under Balewa.

Indeed, the decision by General Aguiyi Ironsi's government to jettison it and the partial restoration of the federal principle by the Gowon military government, sowed the seeds for the trouble that Nigeria has in its federal practice. By the time the military finally exited the political scene in 1999, the federal structure had been bastardized and that has led some people to conclude that what we now have in the country is not federalism but a pseudo-federalism (Osaghae, 2016; Ojo, 2017; Elaigwu, 2018).

One of the legacies of the military is the stifling strong centre that dictates the pace for the constituent parts. This is more evident in the nature of fiscal federalism being practiced in the country, whereby the centre takes over fifty-two per cent of the federal allocations. The states and local government councils are left with what is barely enough for them. Also, contrary to what was experienced under the First Republic, major economic activities such as mineral resources are firmly under the control of the centre.

There is also the congestion of the Exclusive List where duties that are supposed to be performed by other layers of government are reserved for the centre. People have raised the issue of agriculture which ordinarily should have devolved to the states and local government councils that own the lands on which farming takes place, but the power over it is being shared with the centre that has no lands based on the 1978 Land Use Act that conferred the control of lands on the states. Yet, there is a big bureaucracy in Abuja that is managing agriculture for all parts of the country.

In the absence of control by the states over some sectors, they are made the appendages of the centre that distributes financial allocations to other levels of government. The ritual of all states going to Abuja for financial handouts distinguishes Nigeria's federalism from most other federations. Ideally, some vital resources are supposed to be controlled by other tiers of government in the federation (Ojo, 2017; Anyaoku, 2017).

The skewed federal practice in the nation has produced some noticeable implications for Nigeria. A few of them are worth discussing in this paper. One, the integrative elements that a federal system should exhibit are missing. Over sixty years of independence, most Nigerians still think in terms of their tribal

roots with the cry of marginalization vibrating across the country. Virtually all parts of the country harbor some resentment against the current constitution of the country.

Thus, we have the Arewa Youth Congress (AYC) speaking for the north; Odua Peoples Congress (OPC) for the southwest and the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB), among other separatist groups, speak for the southeast. With the ever presence of these ethnic champions, the nation-building efforts in the country are not being pushed forward (Abubakar, 2017; Ugwu, Okibe and Eleje, 2018).

Two, Nigeria currently has 36 states plus the Federal Capital Territory, but most of the states are unviable to the extent that they are in arrears in the payment of salaries and allowances to their workers. Gratuities are also in arrears in the midst of decayed infrastructure. It is not an overstatement to say that no development is taking place across the states. Most times, when people analyse Nigeria's affairs, they often forget that the country is a federal state where resources at all levels should be pulled together for the rapid development of the nation. However, with insolvent states and local government councils, all attention is focused on the centre which itself is facing some financial stress, leading to accumulation of debts both local and foreign (DMO, 2019).

Three, it is not surprising that the centre is having a huge financial burden to carry. The contributory role of the constituent parts to the national treasury is not being seen as the states seem to be happy with their on-looker's role. At times, state governors pile up pressures on the centre over issues they should ordinarily handle. Creativity and innovation in terms of generating more wealth for the nation are not being experienced across the land. So many untapped resources are buried under the lands with state governors not challenged to tap them for the overall development of the country.

It is not uncommon to hear state governors arguing that if they try to do anything for wealth generation, the federal will emerge from nowhere to claim control over their efforts. The impact of this development is being seen in illegal mining that has encouraged banditry in Zamfara and other states that leave both the federal and states economically worse-off.

Four, to be sure, the unhealthy federal practice has almost relegated the local government councils to the background. Not sure where they belong in the scheme of things, the local administrations have been elbowed out of functional existence as their basic duties of tax collection and provision of markets have been usurped by the states under the excuse of joint accounts over which the former have no control. Most citizens have therefore, forgotten the desirable role of the councils in the provision of essential services for the people (Mohammed, 2005).

Five, in a way, the nature of political system in the country is the incubator for corruption. As more resources though not adequate, are

concentrated at the centre, the struggle to control it is always fierce with all the country's fault-lines resorted to gain an advantage at the expense of other contenders for the various positions in the legislature and the presidency. Apparently because of the immense resources at the centre, some politicians often resort to selling off their assets in order to be adequate in the struggle for power to control the centre as whoever gains the control automatically becomes the controller and distributor of the resources that are attached therein. With laws on corruption and mismanagement mere decoration items, limited to the centre, pilfering goes on unhindered at the state level to become a major threat to the existence of the country. Thus, politics remains the most attractive business with 'do-or-die' mentality serving as its underlying principle.

Six, federalism is expected to bring governance closer to the people but in the country's experience, that is not easily the case. The operators of the system fancy treating the people with contempt as their basic needs are not usually a top priority. Local harnessing of resources and the spirit of competition in terms of development are not what one can identify with the country's practice of federalism in recent times. The centre is always there to give monthly handouts and other special allocations to other levels of government in the country.

Seven, Nigeria's federalism thrives in an oil economy that sustains it. Although a finite resource, the tendency in the country betrays this reality. Money comes into the federal kitty from it without much consideration for its finite nature. Its springboard role in stimulating development in other sectors is being frustrated by the attitude of a drunken sailor being displayed by successive managers of the country. Diversification is usually mouthed about but not much of it has taken place as virtually all other sectors have been 'killed' by the oil sector that fetches over 90 per cent foreign exchange for Nigeria. It is safer to conclude that the continuous oil revenue though unpredictable at times has compounded the problem of the ideal practice of federalism in the country as economic planning is being paid a lip service to (Osinbajo, 2016; Osinbajo, 2018).

Eight, in another context, the availability of oil and the way it is being managed have another implication for Nigeria's federalism. Agitations over resource control are common with oil-bearing communities still restive over the matter. It has been contended that going by the principles of federalism, constituent parts should be allowed to control their own resources and pay royalties to the centre. In the Nigerian context, the centre controls the main source of revenue, oil, a situation that has turned a section of the country that produces oil to be perpetually restive. The desire of the Niger Delta Zone is to be allowed to control the oil resources in their area or to be given an enhanced percentage based on derivation. This request is not, however, pleasing to other parts that have objected to the request. As the zone that lays the golden egg,

anytime there is an upheaval there, the whole nation feels its impact as oil production will be affected and the amount of money available for sharing will also be reduced. These, will in turn, produce a telling effect on the practice of federalism in the nation especially intergovernmental relations (Mohammed, 2006, Orebe, 2019).

Nine, due to the reliance of Nigeria on a mono-cultural economy, healthy social relations have not developed among the states with those without oil always taking exception to the claim by oil bearing communities that they are sustaining the nation; all non-oil producing states are parasites that are feeding fat on their resources. Of course, some of the non-oil producing states have countered the argument by maintaining the position that their farm produce brought about the oil facilities and installations that are sustaining the nation. As the arguments go back and forth, the smooth operation of federalism is being negatively affected as the co-operative spirit of federalism is not being made a reality among the constituent parts (Report of 2014 Constitutional Conference).

Ten, based on the deep-rooted reservations about the federal practice that cover the security management and is responsible for the slow pace of development in the country, there is an increased level of agitations for fine-tuning the federal structure to make the country a balanced federation. Historically and in comparative terms, all federations are work-in-progress, as everyone of them is always in the mood of restructuring which can take a variety of forms such as secession, revolution, adjustments, self-determination, among others. Nigeria has, no doubt, been restructuring, manifesting in state creations, boundary adjustments, the switch from parliamentary system to presidential system, among others (Saliu, 2017a).

The current wave of restructuring therefore, finds easy accommodation within the country's socio-political history. The only difference is that it is more widespread, as about four of the geopolitical zones in the country would seem to have embraced it and that means it is no more a localized or sectional agitation that was hitherto restricted to southwest of the country. Hardly can one open the pages of notable national dailies in the country without one issue or the other connected with it being raised. Worthy of note also is the fact that the current agitations have embraced virtually all sectors of the political economy as there are economic, social, geographical and political restructurers in Nigeria.

Issues in Contention in Restructuring Nigeria

Nigeria is in the thick of debate for restructuring. Analysts, commentators and political actors have taken different positions on the debate. This section of the paper attempts to present the major issues that Nigerians have raised on the ongoing debate on restructuring. It needs to be noted that the issues are not mutually exclusive as the personalities involved in the debate hold different positions on restructuring depending on the issues under discussion and

the audiences being addressed. Notwithstanding, some discernible perspectives can still be distilled from many concerns that have been expressed. In the main, we have perspectives on the economy, politics, security, devolution of powers, tiers of government, fiscal federalism, geography and others.

Political Issues

Some Nigerians have pitched their tent with the political aspects of the debate. Their concerns are in different dimensions. A few of them are examined in this paper. The first to be noted are the people whose belief is that the country is practicing the improper federalism. Their arguments centre around the breaches of federal principles that are associated with Nigeria's federal practice. One of these is a tendency whereby the federal/centre is too big and unwieldy. It is carrying out functions that are better performed by the constituent parts.

To these concerned Nigerians, there is no way the nation can make progress with its centralist federal system. There are others whose displeasure is with the powers that the federal has over other units in the federation. They are pissed off with the power that the federal has over certain issues. One of these is its power to approve the creation of local government councils. In most notable federations, the states or the second leg of administration has power over the control of local administration.

The argument is that the centre is far removed from the rural areas for it to be effective in controlling the affairs of the councils including their creation. The issue of imbalance in the number of states in each of the geopolitical zones has also been raised. While the southwest has six states, the southeast has only five. For the apostles of this perspective, there is no way the country can be at peace when a geo-political zone has a lesser number of states. We therefore have geographical restructurers whose interest is to have political justice done to the southeast by increasing the number of states in each zone to make it equal (Ekweremadu, 2017).

Appointments and their distributions across the zones have agitated the minds of some other Nigerians. The reality of virtually all the security apparatuses being under the control of the northern segment of Nigeria is detested and therefore, they have called for a fairer regime of distribution of appointments across the country.

Politics is noted for allocation of resources including projects to all parts of the country. There are Nigerians who believe that projects being executed by the federal government are skewed in favour of certain political zones at the expense of the other zones. What is difficult in spreading them across the zones, if not the states? Some restructurers have asked. In demonstrating this concern, the sittings of the 8th National Assembly were characterized by the need to be fairer in the distribution of projects especially to the southeast zone (Abaribe, 2017).

Among others, the Indigenous People of Biafra, IPOB has been unrelenting in its crusade for secession from the federation on account of marginalization of the southeast in the scheme of things. For some, the fact that no citizen of the Igbo extraction has ever had the opportunity of ruling Nigeria since the time of Major Aguiyi Ironsi has been used to strengthen this perspective. There are also calls for the sacking of the presidential system of government and its replacement with the parliamentary system because of the apparent relative cost of running it. The assumption is that with the stress in the national economy, the parliamentary system commends itself for the nation in addition to its less cumbersomeness to operate for the country with its many diversities and a high illiteracy level. More so, the presidential system though elegant, is only best suited for a better organized and developed political environment, not Nigeria.

In strengthening the federal system in the country, some apostles of restructuring have called for the disbandment of local administration in view of the paralysis that currently defines that level of administration in the country. It has been contended that Nigeria is about the only federation with the third tier of government with constitutional recognition. It would be better for the nation to be in the league of other federations with two tiers of government for the smooth operation of its federal system. Happenings in Senegal and Burkina Faso where the Houses of Senate have been sacked, have encouraged some Nigerians to ask for a unicameral legislature for the country. The assigned legislative functions of the National Assembly can adequately be taken care of by one legislative house in place of the two that the country currently has. The Senate in particular has been descended upon for its low productivity, yet being run at a high cost to the nation. Another dimension of this is the call for a part-time legislator in view of the volume of duties that are being carried out.

Specifically, the low level of development being witnessed in the country is a source of worry to some concerned Nigerians. This has been attributed to the nature of federalism being practiced. For now, the states instead of being the real centres of developmental activities, are now distribution centres where their managers do not reckon with developmental aspirations of their citizens. Corruption is unperturbed by the concern of the federal to combat it and mismanagement seems to be the order of the day at the state level where the helmsmen allocate resources in the fashion desired by them, not in the direction of rapid development that people crave for.

This unfortunate situation has been blamed on the long list of items that come under the Concurrent List that provides for sharing of some responsibilities with the octopus federal. Arising from this, apostles of restructuring believe Nigeria needs to restructure to devolve more responsibilities to the states and accelerate the level of development in the country (Odumakin, 2017).

Economic Issues

The impression needs not to be formed that the calls for restructuring are only concerned with the political arrangements in the country. There are economic dimensions to the debate. Although politics is key to it, the economic angle to the debate is equally important. We will therefore, present the major economic dimensions under this heading.

Some agitators have focused their attention on economic issues such as the mono-cultural economy, fiscal federalism, control over economic resources, high cost of governance, federal allocations, among others. Oil is central to the current political economy of the country. Anything that affects it is bound to affect all other sectors. Nigeria walked into and exited from recession in 2017 but again back into it in 2020 due to the unreliability of the oil sector which prices fluctuate according to external developments that are beyond the control of the country. The rampaging Covid-19 epidemic also has a hand in the slide of the country into another recession barely three years of exiting from it. Anytime the prices of oil in the international market falls, the effects are usually felt more in Nigeria due to the twin issues of it being the mainstay of the economy and its exportation in its raw form.

The development is not pleasing to some Nigerians who share the belief that several years after independence, the country should have used oil to get out of oil. Their agitation for restructuring is focused on diversification beyond mouthing it so that the country can walk away from the occasional shocks that come from the sector; the economy needs to be diversified by focusing on other sectors such as agriculture to balance the foreign earnings of the nation (Ahmed, 2017; Agbakoba, 2017; Osinbajo, 2016).

There are others who have joined the restructuring debate on the strength of the high cost of governance in the country. It has been posited that hardly will the country develop when the recurrent expenditure consumes about 70% of the annual budget of Nigeria, leaving the capital project part of the budget at a miserable 30%. They, therefore, want the cost of running government to come down through the act of restructuring of the administrative structures (Agbakoba, 2017; Ogunseye, 2016).

The history of Nigeria's economic management shows a tendency towards private and public sectors-led approaches. Some restructurists want the nation to make up its mind on the direction it wants to go (Ezekwesili, 2018). In view of the wide embrace of neo-liberal economic system, some of them would want the nation to vote completely for the private sector-led economic management. All the impediments or vestiges of public sector-led economic management should be removed to make the national economy more attractive to the elusive foreign investors to come to the country to invest.

There is a counter-argument. The apostles of the public sector approach to economic management are not impressed with the neo-liberal economists.

Based on the level of development in the country, there is no way the gate can be left open for the wholesale adoption of the capitalist mode of production (Aremu, 2015). That will harm the country more than the little gains that will accrue from the private sector-led initiatives.

Nigeria has two chambers of National Assembly, one based on equal representation, while the other is based on population. Some Nigerians are not too pleased with this arrangement. Derived from the cost consideration, the country cannot afford the high cost of maintaining the 469 members of the National Assembly. For example, the annual budget of the Senate of N120 billion which its members considered to be inadequate is offensive to some Nigerians who are not persuaded that the Senate is adding much value to governance in the country as its members have displayed a tendency to be after their own welfare, not issues of utmost concern to the generality of Nigerians (Saraki, 2019).

Also informed by the cost element, the twin issues of merging of states and scrabbling of the Senate are being debated within the context of restructuring of the country. The 36-state structure in the face of low-aching economy is frowned at and the existence of two legislative houses are not fancied by some restructurers who want the states to be merged and senate scrabbled to reduce the cost of running the Nigerian nation (Ogunseye, 2017).

Not only do some Nigerians want more powers to be devolved to the states, they also want more resources to be allocated to them in carrying them out efficiently. These Nigerians are not pleased with the federal government taking 52.2% of the federal financial allocations at the expense of the states and local government councils. Examples have been given of the insolvency of most of the states that lead them to be unable to pay the salaries of their civil servants.

Contrary to the high premium placed on the principle of sustainability in the establishment of a federation, Nigeria's federalism is a negation of the principle as the states cannot perform their duties without monthly allocations from the federation account. A reversal of this situation is being called for (Report of APC committee on true federalism, 2017; Report of 2014 Constitutional Conference).

Social Issues

Another perspective which this paper has recognized is the social perspective. There are Nigerians who have viewed the call for restructuring as an ethnic warfare, i.e., some ethnic champions have been using the debate to advance the cause of their regions at the expense of other ethnic groups. Yakassai (2017) is very strong in his perspective that the southwest is using restructuring as a way of creating problems for the nation. Adebajo (2017) has however countered this perspective on the ground that the southwest has been calling for restructuring a long time before the Fourth Republic and the intention

is not against any other region but for the betterment of the nation. Ethnicity is therefore, an issue in the current debate on restructuring.

The country needs to do something about mutual suspicion that is reigning in the country. Some social groups are not really committed to the goal of Nigeria for development because of the perceived cases of justice meted out to them. The only way to change the tide is to restructure to give satisfaction to such groups (Ohaneze, 2017).

Some conflicts that are going on in the country such as the herders-farmers conflicts though have a long history behind them, their current dimensions have worsened inter-group relations with mutual suspicions across the nation. The failure of all initiatives to resolve the issue has encouraged some Nigerians to call for restructuring of the nation to stem the tide of the conflicts and find a permanent solution to the problem (Soyinka, 2019; Obasanjo, 2019a; 2019b).

Insecurity generally reigns supreme in Nigeria with kidnapping, *boko haram*, herders-farmers and armed robbery serving as manifestations of the state of insecurity in the country. Some have doubted the capacity of the federal government to overcome the seeds of insecurity. Restructuring is therefore being called for to effectively manage them.

Nothing is Wrong with Nigeria

The paper has also recognized another perspective that is dubbed as “doing nothing perspective.” In fairness to some of its apostles, they admit that all is not well with the federal structure in the country but they are not convinced that restructuring is the most urgent antidote to the problems of nation-building in the country (Obasanjo, 2017). The first strand of this perspective is that which is associated with the position that there is nothing fundamentally wrong with the present constitution of Nigeria (Gowon, 2017). There are policies and laws in place to address the concerns that people have with the federal structure in Nigeria (Obasanjo, 2017).

In any case, the concept of federalism is universal but its application varies from one country to another. There are peculiarities associated with every federal system in the world. When people talk about faulty federalism, it is nothing more than peculiarities that require addressing without agitations. The constitution and extant laws can be relied upon in addressing them. They, therefore, maintain no restructuring stance (Gowon, 2017; Obasanjo, 2017).

Another stance which has been identified with Obasanjo (2017) is the belief that if any restructuring is required, it is in the direction of re-orientating the attitude of Nigerians. For him, whatever shape of federalism that Nigerians may want to come up with that does not address the attitude of Nigerians will not deliver the outcome being desired. He contends that the country does not

need any restructuring as the worries of people can still be addressed using the existing structure.

There are others who believe that restructuring is not going to do any good for the nation as there is not yet consensus on it. A perspective thus exists that it will be difficult to start it without dissolving the nation. There are many injuries in the nation that people are emotionally attached to. Addressing some and leaving out some others will create more agitations that may eventually lead to the disintegration of the country. For all these reasons, Nigeria should be left as it is, while efforts are made along incremental lines in adjusting the federal system (Gowon, 2017).

An Evaluation of the Perspectives on Restructuring

Given the many issues involved in restructuring Nigeria, only a few of them have been discussed in this paper. Arising from this, our attention in this section will equally focus on a few of the proposals that have been put forward in confronting it.

The first approach is the path of constitutional engineering which people believe is involved in bringing about restructuring. While some have called for a return to the 1963 Republican Constitution with its flavor for a balanced federation, some others have opposed it. For those who share this view, the 1963 constitution, in comparative terms, is believed to be far better than the 1999 constitution, as amended, in the practice of federalism. Under it, regions were allowed to control their resources and they only paid royalties to the centre. Based on this arrangement, a better developmental climate prevailed then in the country.

Regional governments were solvent to the extent of embarking on developmental projects. Marketing Boards established for groundnut, cocoa, palm oil and rubber were generating revenues for the regions, which made them not to be too dependent on the federal government. Each of them had its own constitution and maintained some presence outside the country. Freedom of actions guaranteed to the regions made them not to be appendages of the centre. For example, while the northern regional government refused any assistance from Israel, both the western and eastern regional governments and the centre had warm relations with Israel. Therefore, for some older Nigerians, the experience of First Republic is a model in federal practice (Abdullahi, 2017).

For this paper, however, there is no doubt about a better practice of federalism under the republic when compared with the present situation but no impression should be created that all was well under the regime. One admits that there was a spirit of competition among the regions in terms of development, but there were also troubling moments in the federal practice.

One clear example that did not project the republic as a model was the western regional crisis that led to the controversial involvement of the centre in

aid of one of the factions of the Action Group that was involved in the crisis. Poor management of the crisis in the form of declaration of a state of emergency obviously contributed to the fall of the republic. People have also not forgotten the constitutional crisis that made President Nnamdi Azikwe to have difficulty in inviting Tafawa Balewa to form his government when it was clear his party, the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC), did not have a majority in the legislature. For some days, the country had no leader of government.

More importantly, the population of Nigeria shows that young Nigerians are in the majority. How are they going to appreciate the constitution and the parliamentary system on which it was anchored? Most Nigerians are more familiar with the presidential system birthed in 1979 with the Shagari government. So, taking them back to the First Republic as being suggested may necessarily run into some problems. Some good sides of the republic may be borrowed but to argue for a wholesale return to the republic may not be the right way to go with the glaring mismanagement of diversities that has made mutual ethnic suspicions to be rife in the country (Soyinka and Ogunwusi, 2019, Masari, 2017).

With the specific reference to the parliamentary system of government, one does not think it is going to be cost-saving in the context of contemporary Nigeria (Anyaoku, 2017). Our politicians do not have the restraint of the past politicians and their commitment to overall development of the nation is at best doubtful. Given the mentality of the country's politicians, it, too, can be made as expensive as the maligned presidential system due to their lack of discipline. Ordinarily, the presidential system in its original formulation is not as expensive as it has been made in Nigeria. What I think need to be tackled is not necessarily the system of government but rather the operators who always crave for the creation of comfort zones.

In the same way, one is afraid that if tomorrow Nigeria goes for part-time legislators, the cost may still be high as unknown expenditure headings may be created by politicians that may make people to wonder if the change to part-time legislators was worth it. Going by what the law says, the cost of running the National Assembly should not be high but the penchant of members to be self-serving has turned the institution into a money-consuming outfit. The real issues to address therefore, are the attitude of members of the National Assembly and the process of recruiting them. Once the process is not made expensive and the demands by their constituents on the members are tolerable, the current regime of high cost can be brought down. The fight against corruption, if extended to the two chambers, can drastically bring down the cost of running the legislative institution. Nigeria, with her diversity, can still make do with two chambers and on full-time basis if the environment is seriously worked on to discourage a parasitic living among their members.

Security management is a federal function which some citizens are not pleased with it (Soyinka,2019; Obasanjo, 2019a; 2019b). Therefore, they want states to be in control of the police. This is a normal practice in federal states but there must be a reason why it is an exclusive federal assignment in the country. Some state governors who cannot pay the emoluments of their civil servants may not be a credible alternative to the less satisfactory performance of the federal on this score too.

The fear of misuse is also there, as opposition elements may begin to experience more challenging moments in the hands of the ruling parties in the states. They are likely to populate the police with their sympathizers. It is therefore, necessary to argue that the control of police can be made a joint responsibility of both federal and the states for the time being until such a time when the country's federalism and the political actors are more mature in the handling of state matters.

Jonathan (2019) and others have canvassed the view that a revisit of the report of the 2014 National Conference convened by his administration represents an angle for the Buhari government to look at in addressing agitations for restructuring. Given the caliber of persons who participated in the conference, its rich recommendations, if considered by the current government in the country, can navigate it away from its tense situation. Indeed, Nigeria had another constitutional conference in 2005 under the Obasanjo government whose report like the 2014 has not been acted upon. My view on these reports is that the administration that empaneled them ought to have actualized their recommendations. There is also the dimension of lack of representation to contend with on the reports. With particular reference to the 2014 conference, the APC, now the ruling party in Nigeria, did not participate in the conference and this partly explains the disdain that President Buhari has for the report.

He has therefore come up with his own preference on how to address the calls for restructuring. President Buhari holds the strong belief that all agitations for restructuring should be channeled to the National Assembly for consideration (Buhari, 2017). Two issues are worth noting in this regard. One, not all issues on the agenda for restructuring are constitutional in nature that will require legislative inputs. Two, the last attempt at amending the constitution that touched on devolution of powers under the 8th Assembly showed unmistakably the dichotomy between the north and south. Based on this scenario, the Buhari government has to show more interest in the debate in finding an amicable solution to it.

On the issue of what economic management strategy to adopt, this paper believes that the wholesale adoption of the private sector-led approach is not best suited for the country at least for now. The economy will come into more danger if the public sector is completely eliminated. A mixture of the two is still necessary as the private sector also depends and feeds on the public sector

through patronage for survival. In the absence of sustainable welfare programmes in place in Nigeria, the only antidote against a worsening human security dimension is to allow some role for the public sector as is the case in western countries. It is theoretical to believe that the private sector is strong enough in Nigeria to take over a commanding height of the economy.

There seems to be a consensus on the devolution of powers to the two lower levels of government and the urgent need to review the federal allocation formula. However, there is need for caution here. With corruption alive in most of the states, the more money that goes to the states, the more the likelihood of irresponsible behavior one will see being displayed. It is not enough to give more money to the states, there is also the need to improve on leadership recruitment at that level of governance. Already, not many people are impressed with what they do with their current allocations. Similarly, one doubts if additional responsibilities are given to both states and local government councils, they can be justified based on their current level of delivery. We think Nigerians should also spare a thought on how to re-direct affairs at those levels of government in such a manner that they can be made to be alive to their responsibilities.

Mere restructuring would not be an adequate antidote for local government councils. They really need re-inventing as their derailment is total and complete in most of the states. We do not see anything changing in their orientation, even if the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) takes over the conduct of elections into the councils. The quality of manpower and the stifling control of the governors are other realities. Judging by the way the Joint Account is being operated, according autonomy to the councils may not do much to change their situation. What we think needs to be done is to encourage people with integrity to serve at that level of governance, while some checks are put in place for judicious use of resources. This paper, however, supports the removal of federal control over creation of local government councils. That should not foreclose the preparation of guidelines on how to create them and what needs to be done in case of aberrations.

Nigeria does not need elaborate restructuring to diversify its economy. This can be done administratively. No Nigerian is opposed to diversification of the national economy to wean it off from the strong control of oil. All that is required is to formulate policies and programmes that can realistically encourage other sectors to improve on their performance in revenue generation.

In the same way, there are in existence copious laws that can be re-activated to address the lumpsidedness in appointments. There is no need for restructuring to bring this about. The federal character and the quota principles are already adequate to address issues connected with unfair distribution of appointments. It only requires sensitivity, commitment and vigilance on the part of Nigerians to allay the fears that people have and solve the problems.

The idea of merger of states is easier to mouth about than to bring it into fruition. No doubt, most of the states are unviable economically, judging by their capacity to generate internal revenues. They are, however, rich in untapped resources. In view of the complications that will arise from merger of states, this author believes that the states can be left the way they are as whatever criteria worked out to address the issue will create more problems than being a solution to the high cost of running government. What is then required is to challenge existing states to discover more mineral resources and the federal should share power over discovery of new resources with the states. The mining laws should also be reviewed further to accommodate the states on the exploration and marketing of the discovered resources.

Other incentive regimes can equally be put in place to encourage state governments to take more risks in revenue generation. No Nigerian will want to forgo the emotional attachment to the existing state structure. Equally laced with dangers is the idea of going back to the regional governments. Nigerians especially the younger ones, are more accustomed to the state structure that it is theoretical to believe that they will easily go with the concept of regionalism at the expense of the states. While the major tribes are pressing for it, areas such as the North-Central geopolitical zone may not be willing to succumb to the bait, as religion and ethnicity are so diverse there that the people's fancy may not be easily teased by the idea.

On the issue of more states' creation that some people have canvassed for, the position of this paper is that the case of the southeast can be isolated and addressed, instead of opening the floodgate for more state creations. Drawing the line would be difficult as every geopolitical zone has arguments for more state creations to address some perceived injustices. All Nigerians seem to have agreed that the existing states are challenged economically and adding more states will not be a wise decision. The current number of states should be maintained, while efforts are made to consolidate on them.

One argues that every hamlet wants to be a state because of the problem of leadership in the country. Once there is a new orientation that delivers fairness and justice to all, there will be little motivation to demand for more states. From the perspective of the national economy and constitutional provisions, the idea of state creation cannot fly, at least for now.

This author does not agree that nothing can be done to the federal system being practiced in the country. Restructuring in whatever form is a kind of lubricant that makes federalism to work better. If the USA is experiencing continuous demands for restructuring, Nigeria with less than 100 years' history of existence cannot but pay attention to it in one way or the other (Saliu, 2017c).

The issue of attitudinal change is important but it can be pursued together with other forms of restructuring. They are mutually inclusive. What I think is unnerving about the debate is the lumping of everything not working in

the country with restructuring. There is need for shifting the wheat from the chaff. Of course, we are in agreement that the issue of restructuring the country should not be equated to disintegration. Some of the issues can be addressed without much noise as it has been done with the granting of financial autonomy to local councils and the judiciary. The two sides in the debate therefore need to develop the spirit of give-and-take. Consensus-building is vital to bringing the apostles of restructuring and its opponents to a point where they can develop understanding for each another's point of view (Masari, 2017).

The federal government must take a lead in creating a platform for ventilating views on restructuring. There is nothing to fear about the concept. There is no truth in the perspective that the agitation for restructuring is aimed at targeting any particular section of the country as what is agreed is likely to get implemented with all the constituents giving the opportunity to air their views on it (Saliu, 2017c).

In the theatre of politics, all views are welcome but not all views can ever be agreed upon. Undoubtedly, there is too much politics in the restructuring debate and that should be expected. For instance, there is nothing wrong with the Niger Delta Zone asking for total control of the oil resources located in its region. It is up to other parts to agree to it or modify their position. That is the beauty of democracy and it should be expected in nation-building efforts.

Conclusion

The paper has evaluated the perspectives on restructuring in Nigeria. Its major submissions are that Nigeria as a federal system has been restructuring its socio-economic structures right from the days of colonialism that birthed federalism in the country, and all the post-independence governments have also restructured the country in one form or the other. The current debate on restructuring is in line with the tradition of the country. However, unlike the previous efforts, the country has been more engaged by agitations for restructuring, covering all spheres and sectors. It has its proponents as well as opponents who do not agree that restructuring is the most urgent national issue to address in contemporary Nigeria. After a review of the contending issues, the paper went into discussing the perspectives on offered solutions to the national issue.

After evaluating the perspectives on it, the paper came down with the conclusion that there is too much politics in the debate which it considered not unusual. However, it submitted that all kinds of issues have featured in the debate and therefore, the offered solutions are equally varied and diverse. It held the view that more responsibilities should be given to states and local councils but with a caveat that something should be done to prepare the states for more responsibilities. The idea of giving states some roles in security provisioning also caught its attention and its view is that it is desirable but it harboured some

fears about the preparedness of the states to discharge this responsibility. The paper therefore, called for a gradual approach in bringing this about.

It further held that in view of the too many perspectives being shared on it, there is need for consensus among Nigerians on which issues and perspectives to consider for implementation. It therefore, concludes that confronting the issue of restructuring as the Buhari government in its second term has started, is commendable. The nation can no longer pretend that the agitation for restructuring is a localized issue. Its wide embrace calls for more attention to be paid to it.

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**THE NIGERIAN STATE AND THE CHALLENGE OF MANAGING
RESOURCE CONFLICT BETWEEN HERDERS AND FARMERS,
2015-2020**

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Abstract

The primary responsibility of the Nigerian State as contained in the 1999 Constitution (as amended) is that of securing human lives and property. Events in the last decade or so have however shown that the Nigerian State has failed to live up to expectations in its responsibility, especially as it pertains to the issue of managing resource conflicts. Human lives are being wasted on a regular basis in this country as a result of the fierce contestations for ecological resources such as land and water sources by herders and farmers. Government's responses through the deployment of security agencies and the use of agricultural policies have not successfully resolved this resource conflict or even mediate peace. While security agents are often belatedly deployed in conflict situations, agricultural policy initiatives are either poorly implemented or abandoned by the government. By way of a qualitative analysis of secondary data, the paper examines the challenges the Nigerian State faces in managing resource conflict between farmers and herders. The paper argues that the capacity of the Nigerian State to resolve the conflict has been weakened by the ruling elite who have certain interests to protect. This explains why the conflict has persisted across the country in recent years with devastating consequences. The paper recommends among others that the State should be relatively autonomous and ensure it does not allow the elite to influence it in such a way that its primary responsibility of securing human lives and property would be jeopardized.

Keywords: Conflict management, farmers, herders, resource conflict, state.

Introduction

The Nigerian State is predominantly an agrarian society that provides employment opportunities for about 30% of its population (Ibrahim & Chaminda, 2017). Before independence in 1960, agriculture was the mainstay of the Nigerian economy; it contributed over 70% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and over 60% of the country's export earnings (Audu, 2017). Agriculture was a dominant sector of the Nigerian economy, but was however neglected with the discovery of oil, since the 1970s during the oil boom era, and today Nigeria's global rating is measured primarily on oil and gas which

accounts for government revenue and 90% of foreign exchange earnings (Audu, 2017).. Even though agriculture was neglected then, it has still remained a major sector in the Nigerian economy.

The agricultural sector is made up of two major groups of people-those who engage in crop farming and those who engage in pastoral farming. These two groups have always complemented each other by providing the dietary needs of the Nigerian populace. Pastoral farming is the most predominant system of livestock farming in Nigeria and livestock owners are basically nomads who travel from one place to another in search of grazing fields for their cattle and ready markets where they could sell their cattle whenever the need arises. The farmers on the other hands are into sedentary crop farming system as against the pastoralists who are always on the move in search of pasture for their cattle. The two groups have always lived peacefully together with each other with little or no problem.

In recent years however, Nigeria has witnessed and is still witnessing increased resource conflicts between nomadic cattle herders and sedentary crop farmers in different parts of the country, especially in the north-central states of Benue, Plateau and Nassarawa, which has a vast arable land suitable for both crop farming and cattle grazing. This explains why cattle herders move en mass from the far north, especially because of the impact of climate change to this region, which is rich in green pasture all year round and the availability of water for the nomads' cattle. The escalation of resource conflicts between herders and farmers has been blamed majorly on the fierce contestations for the shrinking ecological resources such as grazing fields, farming land and water sources.

The conflict has resulted to the loss of human/animal lives, destruction of property, and the displacement of persons among others. For instance on May 13, 2014 Ekwo-Okpanchenyi village of Agatu LGA of Benue state lost over 47 of its people and over 200 houses were burnt down as a result of a resource conflict between Fulani herders and Benue farmers (Genyi, 2017). Similarly, in February 2016, over 300 persons including women and children lost their lives to resource conflict in some communities in Agatu LGA of Benue state (Ibrahim & Chaminda, 2017). Between 2015 and mid 2018, the casualty figure was put at about 2000 deaths. In 2017 alone, over 1, 000 were killed. While there were a total of 67 cases of resource conflicts between herders and farmers between 2007 and 2011; there were 716 cases of the conflict between 2012 and 2018 (Atelhe & Cornelius, 2018). Between January and July 2018 alone, no fewer than 500 lives were lost due to the incidence of resource conflicts between farmers and herders in the north-central geo political zone of Nigeria (Clara, 2018). As at March 16, 2018 a cumulative fatality of 149 persons including women and children were recorded in violent confrontations and attacks arising from the resource conflicts between herders and farmers in Plateau, Benue, Edo, Ebonyi and Kogi states. Several people were allegedly

injured with houses burnt down during the incidents (Zakari, 2018). On Wednesday 21st April, 2021, a traditional ruler and five other persons were allegedly killed in a resource conflict between herders and farmers in Tse-Zoola village in Agan ward of Makurdi LGA, Odugbeho in Agatu LGA and Mbayer-Yandev in Guma LGA of Benue state (Duru, 2021). Three days later, nine persons were killed while scores mostly women and children were injured in Ajimaka, a Tiv settlement in Doma LGA of Nasarawa state on April 24, 2021 in a resource conflict between herders and farmers (David, 2021).

Violent conflicts have continued to define the relationships between crop farmers and cattle herders in most parts of the country, especially the north-central since the 2000s up till date. The conflict poses a challenge to the national security and integration of the country. To curtail the incidents of this conflict and its concomitant consequences therefore, the Nigerian government has attempted different policy measures at different times with little or no success. Instead of reducing the incidents and the concomitant consequences, the conflicts have escalated in recent years despite the various strategies employed by the government (Izevbizua & Izevbizua, 2021).

It is against this backdrop that this paper examines the challenges the Nigerian state faces in managing resource conflict between sedentary crop farmers and nomadic cattle herders in six parts. The first part serves as the introduction. The second part centers on the resolution of conceptual issues. The third part focuses on the theoretical framework of the paper. The fourth part assesses the Nigerian State's response to resource conflict between farmers and herders. The fifth part considers the challenges on the Nigerian State's capacity to resolve resource conflict between farmers and herders. The last but not the least part conclude the paper and make some useful recommendations as a panacea to the problem of resource conflict between farmers and herders.

Conceptual Issues

There are three basic concepts that are germane to this paper. These are conflict management, resource conflict and state

Conflict Management

Conflict management is the process by which conflicts are resolved, where negative results are minimized and positive results are prioritized. In other words, it is the process of limiting the negative aspects of conflicts while increasing the positive aspects of conflicts. It also means the techniques and ideas designed to reduce the negative effects of conflict and enhance the positive outcomes for all parties involved. Ken (2014) sees conflict management as the operationalization and responses to the enforcement of the strategic provisions, goals and ideals of conflict resolution agenda. Boutros-Ghali (1993) sees conflict management to span the broad spectrum of peace processes such as

early warning systems, conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping, peace enforcement, and post conflict peace building for intervention. Conflict management is geared towards capacity building remedies to support peace processes.

Conflict management may also be defined as the process of reducing the negative and destructive capacity of conflict through a number of measures and by working with and through the parties involved in that conflict. It covers the entire area of handling conflicts positively at different stages, including those efforts made to prevent conflict by being proactive. It also encompasses conflict limitation, containment and litigation (Best, 2014). This term is sometimes synonymously used with “conflict regulation” and “conflict prevention” To Burton (1990), conflict prevention connotes the containment of conflict through steps introduced to promote conditions in which collaborative and valued relationships control the behavior of conflict parties. The term “conflict management” confirms the fact conflict is inevitable in all human society, but that not all conflicts can always be resolved; therefore what practitioners can do is to manage and regulate them (Best, 2014).

Resource Conflict

Conflict is the manifestation of hostile attitude in face of conflicting interests between individuals, groups or states. These conflicting interests can be over resources, identity, power, status or values (Onu, 2014). It can also be seen as a situation in which two or more parties strive to acquire the same scarce resources at the same time (Wallenstein, 2002). According to Blench (1996), resource conflicts can be classified into two, namely point resources including mines, farms and reserves and eco-zonal conflicts including water, grazing and hunting rights. The resource conflict that concerns this paper is the latter category, which has to do with conflict between crop farmers and cattle herders over ecological resources such as grazing fields, arable lands, and water sources. In this regard, Okoli and Atelhe (2014) define it as the systematic aggression exhibited by the nomadic pastoralists in the context of socio-ecological struggles with sedentary crop farmers. Okoro (2018a) avers that resource conflicts are conflicts occurring between peasant farmers or subsistence cultivators and nomadic or transhumant live-stock keepers. Hussein, Sumberg, and Seddon, (1999) view this conflict as comprising different types of conflicts, including ethnic conflicts, interest conflicts, political action, evictions, killings, cattle raiding and cattle rustling.

State

A State may be defined as a politically organized body of people inhabiting a defined geographical entity with an organized legitimate government (Dibie, 2018). It may be also referred to a population occupying a

definite territory and subject to a government which is recognized by other states and has monopoly over the use of legitimate force (Olisa, Okoli & Nwabufo, 1999). A State is said to exist where a territory, a government, population, and sovereignty exist. A State must also be recognized by other similar states in the international political system.

Historical Conjecturing of Resource Conflict between Herders and Farmers in Nigeria

Resource conflict between herders and farmers is not a 21st Century phenomenon. This conflict has been in existence since the beginning of agriculture and has either increased or decreased in intensity or frequency depending on economic, environmental and other factors (Blench, 2010; Aliyu, 2015; Okoro, 2018b). Crop farmers are settled agriculturalists who deal in crop production either for subsistence or commercial purposes. The cattle herders who are mostly Fulani depend on nomadic/transhumance cattle herding in which case they move their cattle seasonally from the north to south in the dry season and back to the north in the rainy season. The pattern of relationship between these two agricultural land user groups was symbiotic-while the farmers benefit from the cattle manure to fertilize their crops, the herders benefit from the crop refuse to nutritionally feed their herds. This symbiotic practice tied the wellbeing of the farmers to the wellbeing of the herders and allowed for most resource conflicts between the two groups to be resolved non-violently through traditional mediation mechanism (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2017).

Since 2000 however, the symbiotic relationship between farmers and herders increasingly deteriorated due to climate change induced migration of herders (Ogoh, 2019; Akuva & Yusufu, 2020), increase in both human and animal population (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014), proliferation of small and light weapons (Genyi, 2019), failure of traditional conflict resolution mechanism (Bukar, 2016), politicization/government's lack of political will to tame the conflict (Atelhe & Cornelius, 2018), shrinking natural resources (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2017) and forceful occupation of host community lands without authorization among others. Cattle herders are predominantly Muslims from the Fulani ethnic group whereas the crop farmers are predominantly Christians. Thus, the conflicts sometimes tend to manifest along ethno-religious contours.

Climate change has led to desertification and brought about inadequate arable land water resources needed for crop farming and cattle herding (Abass, 2012; Ogoh, 2019)). As these climatic conditions began to have devastating effects on the herders and their capacity to breed cattle for optimum profits in their locations, it became imperative to move southwards to locations where green pastures could be relatively found all through the year. This migration to the Middle-Belt and the southern region has therefore made the competition for

scarce available land to become very stiff. This thus culminates in violent confrontations by the two groups. Disagreeing with this climate change/resource conflict nexus, Conroy (2014) is of the opinion that no concrete relationship between climate change and violent conflicts. According to him, even a search into the Nigeria Watch database reveals that there is zero result for relation between climate change and conflict.

Also, increase in human population and urbanization has combined to put pressure on the available land. While human population is increasing at a geometrical proportion, available ecological resources are becoming scarcer. The ensuing struggle for access to and utilization of these ecological resources by both groups turns violent in most cases resulting to loss of human lives, forceful displacement of people, destruction of valuable properties including farmlands and harvested foodstuff. According to Nyang (2010), population explosion made the farmers to cultivate more lands thereby leaving little lands for the herders to graze on. This thus made the herders to move to other places where they can have access to pasture (Clara, 2017). In addition, urbanization and industrial development have tended to encroach on lands which were hitherto available for cattle grazing and crop farming. This again put more pressures on available ecological resources and this brings about violent conflicts between the two groups. Another factor that has been blamed for the persistence of resource conflict between herders and farmers is the proliferation of small and light weapons (Genyi, 2019). Some analysts believe that the conflicts in Libya and Mali have resulted to the inflow of all manner of arms and ammunition into Nigeria through her porous borders (Bagudu, 2017).

Furthermore, the influx of foreign herders has been blamed for the persistence of resource conflict between farmers and herders in Nigeria. The former National Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Alhaji Abubakar Kawu Baraje said that Fulani herdsmen accused of wrecking havoc across Nigeria are not Nigerians. In his words:

The Fulani involved in criminal activities are not Nigerians. The Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria do not carry guns. They only have machetes used to clear the bush as they progress with their cows and a stick to direct the animals. Those who carry arms are were criminals who exploited the porosity of the Nigerian borders and came in without cattle. To disguise their intention, they first began with cattle rustling in the north-west to acquire cows and assume the status of herdsmen. This went on for some time in the north. It is now that they spread their nefarious activities to the south that the awareness and condemnation became very prominent and loud (Akinyemi, 2021)

Resource conflicts between farmers and herders pose a lot of challenges to national security in Nigeria, and thus threaten the very existence of

the Nigeria state as well. The general effects of these conflicts includes loss of humans lives, loss of animal lives, destruction of farm crops, poisoning of water sources, destruction of sources of livelihood, and internal displacement of persons among others (Aliyu, Ikedinma & Akinwande, 2018).

Theoretical Framework

Theorizing conflict remains very difficult, because the actors, causes and dynamics are complex and varied (Le Meur & Hochet 2010). A combination of theories is therefore needed to lucidly explain this conflict. The paper therefore finds a synergy of Resource Access Theory and State Fragility Theory as apt in this discourse, because the former explains the factors responsible for the persistence of resource conflict between herders and farmers; while the latter explains the challenges the Nigerian State faces in managing the conflict

Resource Access Theory

The paper adopts this theory to explain the factors responsible for the persistence of resource conflict between farmers and herders. Resource Access Theory was developed in the 1970s by Jeffrey Pfeffer and Gerald Sanannak (Fajonyomi, Fatile, Bello, Opusunju & Adejuwon, 2018). According to this theory, conflict is basically a part and parcel of human society, and that the competition for scarce resources is responsible for resource conflict in all human societies. The ownership and utilization of resources has continued to directly and indirectly define the dimensions of most resource conflicts since the beginning of mankind. Of all the resources in contention world over, ecological resources such as grazing/farming land and water sources have remained the most potent source of resource conflicts between cattle herders and crop farmers.

The theory aids our understanding of the persistence of resource conflict between herders and farmers in different parts of the country, especially in the Middle Belt States of Benue, Plateau and Nassarawa where the struggle for access to and utilization of land and water sources has taken more dangerous dimension with the introduction of sophisticated weapons of warfare such as AK-47s and other assault rifles. To this theory, the struggle for access to resources is behind the violent resource conflict between herders and farmers across the country (Ikezue & Ezeah, 2017)

The impact of climate change has been felt in the dwindling quality and quantity of ecological resources, which are very important to both farmers and herders. Climate change and desertification have resulted in scarcity of land and water resources, and this has intensified the contestations for these resources by the farmers and herders. The cattle herders in Nigeria, majority of who are Fulani wish to always have unhindered access to land and water sources in any

part of the country they find themselves not minding whether or not they are indigenes of those areas. The farmers on their own part also do not wish to share these resources with cattle herders, especially now that these resources have become very scarce consequent upon change in climatic conditions. The herders feel frustrated, relatively deprived and tend to be aggressive as they relate with the farmers.

Applied to the purpose of this paper, resource conflict between herders and farmers across the country has become more deadly in recent years as a result of the intensification of production of food crops necessitated by the ever increasing demand for food stuff by the increasing human population (Adisa & Adekunle, 2010). The relevance of this theory in the understanding of resource conflict notwithstanding, it has been criticized for focusing on groups contending for resources to the neglect of individual members of these groups. Also, the theory was not able to explain why certain feelings of deprivation of access to resources are transformed into collective action, whereas in some other similar cases, no collective effort is made to reshape the society. These criticisms notwithstanding, Resource Access Theory still remains a useful analytical tool in explaining resource conflicts between herders and farmers in Nigeria.

State Fragility Theory

This paper adopts this theory to explain how the Nigerian state has fared in managing resource conflict between farmers and herders. The persistence of this conflict and its concomitant consequences of loss of human lives and displacement of Nigerian citizens in their own country is an indication that the Nigerian State is weak. A fragile or weak State is a country characterized by weak state capacity or weak state legitimacy leaving citizens vulnerable to a range of shocks (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fragile_state). The primary responsibility of government is to protect the lives and property of its citizens, but it has failed woefully in this regard. The failure of the state to tackle resource conflict between farmers and herders in north-central Nigeria, especially Benue, Plateau and Nasarawa States, has led to loss of hundreds of lives (Genyi, 2019) with survivors being forced to seek refuge at Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps (Akuva & Yusufu, 2020).

Also, the failure of the government to promptly respond to the conflicts when called upon by victims shows that the government has failed in its responsibility and goes to prove that the state is feeble and fragile. For instance, the people of Agatu LGA of Benue state were attacked by armed herdsmen in February 2016 for four consecutive days without responses from the state security agencies. A total of about 500 persons including women and children were said to have been killed in the attack (Genyi, 2019). The Inspector General of Police came to the scene of the massacre two weeks after the attacks were

carried out, only to disputes the casualty figures of either 300 or 500 projected by the community leaders and the press. That was the best the IG could do. Also, the Minister of Internal Affairs, whose office is responsible for internal security, visited the affected communities a week after the IG's visit (Undertow, 2016).

The increasing numbers of killings consequent upon resource conflict between farmers and herders in recent years is an indication that government is weak and the Nigerian state is fragile. The Nigerian state has not yet failed; but according to Yusufu and Ilevbare (2021, p.27) "it is gradually transforming into a failed state". A failed state is a state that is unable to meet the needs and aspirations of its masses (Ayanwu, 2005). A failed state as opposed to a capable state is a state which has failed to provide for its citizens such basic needs like adequate security, food, water, electricity, health care and good road networks among others.

An Assessment of the Nigerian State's Response to Resource Conflict between Herders and Farmers

The Federal Government and some State Governments have made attempts to address the problem of resource conflict between herders and farmers in the past. This became imperative because of the protracted nature of the conflict, which does not only pose a threat to national security but also, threatens the prospects for food security in the country. Some of the government's responses to this conflict include the following:

Creation of Grazing Reserves: The passage of the Grazing Reserve Law in 1965 was the first tangible effort by the government towards addressing the problem of resource conflict between herders and farmers (Genyi, 2017). The law was intended to protect herders against intimidation and deprivation of access to grazing field by farmers, cattle ranchers and intruders (Uzundu, 2013). The government's inability to enforce this law led to the encroachment on cattle routes by farmers. In 1976, the government again surveyed land in the country, and by 1980 about 2.3 million hectares of land were officially established as grazing areas, which represents just about 2% of the total areas earmarked for the purpose. Then the government intended to create additional 28 million hectares as grazing reserves out of the 300 areas which were initially surveyed. Of these, only about 600,000 hectares were gazette and this covers only 45 areas. In all, only about 225,000 hectares which covers 8 reserves were fully established by the government as reserve areas for grazing (Uzundu, 2013). The inability of the government to develop a systematic grazing reserve system in the country, in a way, could be blamed for the lingering resource conflict between herders and farmers across various farming communities in Nigeria.

Establishment of the National Commission for Nomadic Education: The National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) was established by the

federal government of Nigeria in 1989 via Decree No. 41. Presently, the law establishing the commission is known as Nomadic Education Act, Cap No. 20 Laws of the Federation. The aim of the program was to economically and socially integrate nomadic herders into the national life, through the provision of relevant, functional, and mobile basic education and livelihoods skills provision. Also, the program is designed to help the nomadic cattle herders embrace modern techniques of breeding cattle so as to optimize their economic potentials, as well as dairy processing and marketing, animal vaccinations, and modern herding techniques. The program on nomadic education has not really been able to achieve the objectives for which it was established in the first place because, according to Alabi (2015), the program is challenged by inadequate funding from the federal government resulting in inadequate infrastructural facilities and inadequate qualified personnel to manage the program.

Deployment of Security Agents: The deployment of security operatives has become a major strategy that the Nigerian state adopts in managing resource conflict between herders and farmers. Any time a resource conflict ensues between herders and farmers, the first conflict management strategy the federal government adopts is the deployment of security officers to the conflict engulfed zones. The Nigerian government often responds to violent resource conflict with the deployment of security operatives under various code names. For instance, the Nigerian Army flagged off Battalion Forward Operation Base (FOB) in Birnin- Gwari, with an operation tagged “Idon Raini”. Also, The Nigerian Air Force has deployed its Special Forces to the newly-established 23 Quick Response Wing (QRW) in Nguroje, Taraba (Vanguard, 2018). Again, the NAF has a 1000-man Special Intervention Force (SIF) deployed to Makurdi to debase armed bandits and criminal elements terrorizing the people of Benue and Nasarawa states. NAF has also unveiled a new base in Kerang, Plateau state, with the aim of reducing its response time to emergencies. NAF has also deployed drones to flash points. The Federal Government deployed 3,000 personnel of Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC) Special Forces, known as *Agro-rangers*, to protect farms and agricultural investment in the country. In the same vein, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) has deployed additional five units of Police Mobile Force, Police Special Forces, Police Aerial Surveillance Helicopters and Special Police Joint Intelligence and Investigation Team to Benue State. Also, the NPF has deployed a surveillance helicopter to Taraba (Vanguard, 2018).

Incidentally, there are concerns that these security measures have not been proactive. Again, there are reports that security agencies who are part of these operations and were sent to protect at-risk farmers and herders communities have committed crimes and human rights violations, such as physical torture, extortion, and other forms of gender-based violence against the communities they were deployed to protect in the first place. In fact, the

deployment of security agencies has often had the unintended consequence of breeding local umbrage and further increasing divides as many communities perceive them to be biased with one side. This “one side” according to Genyi (2019) is the cattle herders, most of whom are Fulani. In a study conducted by Genyi (2019), it was found that the Nigerian state is not neutral in its intervention in resource conflict as it reveals an implied bent towards the herders. This perceived or actual bias risks alienating the communities and people they are meant to protect (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018).

Comprehensive Livestock Development Plan: The federal government through its Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development formulated the “comprehensive livestock development plan.” in 2015. The plan was aimed at curtailing the persistent resource conflict between farmers and herders across farming communities in the country. The plan was also to develop grazing reserves and cattle routes after a review of the existing programs. To ensure that the aim of the program was realized, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) decided to release the sum of N100 billion to the 36 states of the federation. The release of this humongous amount by the CBN notwithstanding, none of these state governments have been able to construct a ranch not to talk of reserve or even stock route owing to lack of commitment to the program (Atelhe & Cornelius, 2018)

The Great Green Wall Initiatives: Climate change had impacted negatively on the environment with concomitant effects of desertification, deforestation and land aridity mostly in Northern Nigeria. Against this backdrop, the African Union (AU) introduced the Great Green Wall Initiative (GGWI) in 2007. The Great Green Wall Initiative set out to create an 8,000km of trees along the southern Sahel, accompanied by rural development and ecosystem management initiatives, to combat the encroaching desertification of the Sahara Desert. However, it was in 2013, that the Nigerian government decided to establish the Great Green Wall Agency (GGWA) saddled with the responsibility of combating desertification, which has been responsible for the mass exodus of cattle herders from the northern part of the country to the Middle Belt region in search of green/fresh pasture and water (Kwaja, 2013). The GGWA aims at creating green shelter-belt (wind-breaking trees) in the frontline states of Borno, Katsina, Kebbi, and Zamfara, to protect the northern part of the country against desert encroachment. The GGWA has established orchards and nurseries in northern Nigeria, as well as solar and wind-powered boreholes, but their activities have slowed down due to funding challenges from the federal government (Fulani, 2017)

The National Livestock Transformation Plan: The National Livestock Transformation Plan is built on six key pillars: economic investment, conflict resolution, law and order, humanitarian relief, information education and strategic communication; and cross-cutting issues. According to the plan, the

economic investment pillar would support and strengthen the development of market-driven ranches in seven pilot states [Adamawa, Benue, Kaduna, Plateau, Nasarawa, Taraba and Zamfara] for improved livestock productivity through breed (genetic) improvement and pasture production, in addition to efficient land and water productivity. The government also said it would rebuild social capital at the community level to promote mutual trust, confidence building and consolidate the peace process, with regards to the conflict resolution pillar. The humanitarian relief pillar focuses on rebuilding and reconstructing of common facilities such as worship centers, markets and individual homes that have been destroyed. The fifth pillar was meant to aid information, education and strategic communication on the development of grazing reserves in the frontline states, and guard against the repercussions of resource conflicts between herders and farmers such as loss of human lives and destruction of properties among others. The cross-cutting issues pillar identifies various cross-cutting issues that are necessary for the realization of the objectives of the program which include among others monitoring, evaluation, research and development.

The RUGA (Rural Grazing Area) Policy: The RUGA project was conceived by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and was approved by President Muhammadu Buhari on May 11, 2019. According to Bankole (2019), the word ‘RUGA’ is not just an acronym for Rural Grazing Area, but a Hausa term which means cow settlement. In RUGA settlement, cattle herders were supposed to graze within defined area and maintain some level of separation since they were to be provided with amenities such as pasture, water, health facilities, schools, road networks, veterinary clinics, markets as well as processing firms that would make refined products from meat, milk and other byproducts (Toromade, 2019). The preliminary project was supposed to cover ninety four locations in Adamawa, Benue, Edo, Ebonyi, Kaduna, Nasarawa, Oyo, Plateau, Taraba, Ekiti, Niger, and Zamfara states (Iyare, 2019). The policy was aimed at addressing the problem of the incessant resource conflict between cattle herders and crop farmers in Nigeria. While some states in the Middle-Belt and southern regions such as Benue state among others dissociated themselves from the RUGA settlement policy, Some others states such as Sokoto, Adamawa, Nasarawa, Kaduna, Kogi, Taraba, Katsina, Plateau, Kebbi, Zamfara and Niger supported the policy and even went ahead to apply to the Federal government promising to making lands available for the take-off of the Ruga scheme.

The Ruga policy is presently suspended because of the criticisms that trail its introduction. The federal government suspended the policy on July 3, 2019 (Ekpo & Bright, 2019). For instance, the policy was criticized as being a grand plan by the administration of President Mohammadu Buhari (a Fulani man) to claim land across the country for his Fulani kinsmen, majority of who

are cattle herders. While kicking against the policy, the Benue state Governor, Samuel Ortom through his Chief Press Secretary, Terver Akase, maintained that:

We find the approach of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture not only as a gross violation of the ranching law but also as an insult to the sensibilities of the entire Benue state. The government of Benue state is willing to support cattle owners to establish ranches as stipulated by the law prohibiting open grazing. We however, wish to reiterate that Benue state has no land for grazing reserves, grazing routes, cattle colonies, and RUGA settlement (Ameh, Nnodim, Charles, Tyopuusu, Casmir & Ekeoma, 2019)

Cattle Colony: The Federal government was to establish cattle colonies across states in the country with a view to curtailing the frequent resource conflicts between farmers and herders in some parts of the country. The announcement of this proposal was made in early 2018 by Chie Aud Ogbe, the then Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development. Sixteen states so far agreed to the establishment of cattle colonies proposed by the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Chief Audu Ogbe as a solution to the incessant resource conflict between farmers and herders in the Nigeria. The Minister explained that:

Cattle colonies are better for the breeding of cows because 30 or 40 ranches can share the same colony. A ranch is usually owned by an individual or a company with generally few cows. In a colony, you could find 30,000 cows owned by different owners. The reason why Government was designing the colonies is to be able to prepare on a large scale, on economy of scale, a place where many owners of cattle can co-exist, and where cows can be fed well, because Government can make their feeds. They can get good water to drink. Cows drink a lot of water. We can give them greater fodder (Afolabi, 2018, p.328).

The Federal government of Nigeria highlighted the expected benefits from the proposed cattle colonies as follows:

- It will ensure safety of lives and properties and a drastic reduction in resource conflicts between farmers and herders.
- It is believed that cattle produce healthier beef when they are kept in colonies, and also produce more milk.
- Farmers do not have to worry about the safety of their crops and thus more production is ensured for the masses, which means more economic activity in the agricultural sector.
- Cattle colonies would put a stop to cattle rustling by thieves and terrorists.

- It would be easy to identify criminals who either masquerade as herdsmen or herdsmen who commit murderous crimes and destruction (Afolabi, 2018, p.328).

These benefits notwithstanding, Benue and Taraba states which have been experiencing perennial resource conflicts between farmers and herders as well as the southern states rejected the federal government's proposals of establishing cattle colonies. However 16 northern states volunteered land for the establishment of cattle colonies in their domains including Adamawa, Kano, Kaduna, Katsina, Zamfara, Kebbi, Nasarawa, Plateau, Bauchi, Gombe, Borno, Jigawa, Yobe, Niger, Kogi and Kwara states. The states agreed to volunteer 5,000 hectares of land each.

Open Grazing Prohibition Law: Open grazing prohibition laws were actually put in place by some state governments with the aim of curtailing the incessant resource conflicts between herders and farmers in those states. The Ekiti state government for instance, under the leadership of Governor Ayodele Fayose, enacted the Prohibition of Cattle and other Ruminants Grazing in 2016, which bans grazing after 6pm in the evening and before 7am in the morning, and it also says that any herdsman caught with firearms and any weapons whatsoever during grazing shall be charged with terrorism (Ogo-Oluwa, 2017). Also, the Benue state government under the leadership of Governor Samuel Ortom, enacted the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law 2017, with the following objectives: to prevent the destruction of farm crops; to bring an imminent end to clashes between farmers and herders; to protect the environment while optimizing the use of land; to prevent, control, and manage the spread of diseases; and to create a conducive environment for large scale crop production among others (Aligba, Omanchi, & Gbakighir, 2020). The law prohibited the open grazing of livestock or the practice of allowing cattle to roam freely in search of pasture and water, and called instead for the establishment of ranches within the state. Similarly, in Taraba state, the Governor signed the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Bill 2017 into law, which took effect on 24th January, 2018 (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018). The implementation of this law has economic, identity, socio-cultural, legal, and security implications (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2017), and does not really enjoy the support of the federal government of Nigeria.

Challenges on the Nigerian State's Capacity to Manage Resource Conflict between Herders and Farmers

Elite Interest: The relative autonomy of the Nigerian state has presently been hijacked by the ruling elite for their selfish interest. Some scholars such as Tativ and Zasha (2020) have argued that the cattle herders who graze herds from one place to the other are not owners of the cattle they tend about; the real owners

are rich men of Northern origin. Subscribing to this point of view, Akwara (2018) stated that “the Fulani elite own large proportions of the cattle been reared by herders. The real cattle owners belong to the upper class citizens from the Northern extracts and have the financial muscles to arm these herdsmen against any perceived obstacle against their interest. This explains why some herdsmen are seen with AK 47s and other sophisticated weapons (Ephraim 2014; Bagudu, 2017) which ordinarily they cannot afford to purchase. Open grazing is cheaper and more economical than modern day ranching. That is why the northern elite whose economic interest are been threatened would do anything within their powers to ensure that any policy against open grazing is challenged either legally or otherwise. For instance in Benue state, when the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Bill was passed into Law in 2017, the Fulani herdsmen under the canopy of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) kicked against it and even went ahead and challenged it in court but lost the case. MACBAN opposed the law on the grounds that it was discriminatory against the herders, and does not provide or support the production of alternative livelihoods and effectively evicts herders from the state (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2017).

Politicization of Resource Conflict: Secondly is the issue of politicization of the resource conflict between herders and farmers by the Nigerian government. The likes of Genyi (2019) and Tativ and Zasha (2020) have argued that it is because the conflict has been politicized that has made it possible for the Fulani herdsmen to operate with impunity while the non-Hausa/Fulani farmers suffer the full wrath of the law, especially since 2015 when Muhammadu Buhari-a Fulani man became the president of this country. For instance, it took President Muhamadu Buhari more than six months to order an investigation into the resource conflict between Fulani herdsmen and crop farmers in Agatu LGA of Benue state in March, 2016 with a casualty figure over 500 deaths (Amaza, 2016). Also, whenever the farmers are attacked by the Fulani herdsmen and an alarm is raised by the victims for the security men to come to their rescue, the security officers would not come to the scene as at when due because an order has not been given from “above”. The delay in deploying security personnel often leads to more killings and destruction of valuable property belonging to the farmers. Even after the carnage might have ended, the Nigerian government would not make attempts to arrest and prosecute the perpetrators because they have strong people in government. And by failing to arrest, disarm, and prosecute these armed Fulani herdsmen for illegal possession of arms and perpetration of violence against defenseless Nigerians is an indication that they enjoy the full support of the Nigerian state (Genyi, 2019), a development that could result to farmers seeking self-help in a vicious circle of violence.

Lack of Political Will: Lack of political will has further exacerbated resource conflict between herders and farmers in Nigeria, which has greatly affected the

socio-economic development of the country (Akuva & Audu, 2018). The governments at all levels have demonstrated absence of needed political will to address the problem of resource conflict between herders and farmers. Political leaders have failed to invoke appropriate legislation backed by action that would define rules and limits of parties/groups involved in the conflict (Izevbizua & Izevbizua, 2021). In the past, the federal government has made efforts to regulate and control pastoral activities, but it appears that the needed political will to enforce these laws is not there. Citizens in the affected areas, especially in the north-central parts of the country, expect the federal government to deal with resource conflict between herders and farmers with the same vigor and determination it demonstrated in similar internal security challenges in other parts of the country (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper examined the challenges faced by the Nigerian State in managing resource conflict between farmers and herders in the country from 2015 to 2020. However, the role played by the Nigerian State in managing this conflict prior to this time frame was also examined. With the aid of documentary data derived from secondary sources anchored on a synergy of Resource Access Theory and State Fragility Theory, the paper found that the resource conflict between herders and farmers is as a result of the fierce contestations for shrinking ecological resources such as farming lands, grazing fields and water sources which are imperative for crop farming and pastoral farming. These fierce contestations have resulted to the loss of a lot of human lives and property as well as the forceful displacement of persons from their ancestral homes who are now residing at Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps. The Nigerian State's capacity to intervene in these resource conflicts has been weakened by the elite, which has hijacked the relative autonomy of the State for its personal selfish interests. Also, the paper found that the conflict has been politicized by the federal government of Nigeria. This conflict does not only threaten the country's prospects for food security but also threatens its national security and national integration.

On the basis of the findings and conclusion drawn in this paper, the following recommendations have been made as a panacea to the problem of resource conflicts between herders and farmers in Nigeria:

- (a) The Nigerian state should be relatively autonomous and ensure it does not allow the elite to influence it in such a way that its primary responsibility of securing human lives and property would be jeopardized.
- (b) The Nigerian state should stop supporting the Fulani herdsmen perpetuating violence in the country but should be neutral in managing the conflict or mediating peace. Both crop farmers and Fulani herders

are all Nigerians and should be given equal treatments and protection by the government.

- (c) The federal government should be more proactive rather than reactive in responding to resource conflict between herders and farmers, especially when intelligence reports have revealed that there is an imminent conflict. However, if the conflict erupts without the notice of the security personnel, the federal government should promptly deploy well armed security response military team to the conflict engulfed locations.
- (d) Open grazing of cattle has become anachronistic and should therefore be jettisoned while embracing ranching which is a modern method of cattle breeding that is recognized worldwide. The federal government should give full support to the anti-open grazing laws as enacted by states like Benue, Taraba and Ekiti. Other states should be encouraged to prohibit open grazing and instead promote cattle ranching.
- (e) The Federal government should ensure that anyone found in illegal possession of arms should be arrested, disarmed, and prosecuted irrespective of their ethnic background, religious and political affiliations. This would serve as a deterrent to others.

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SEPARATIST MOVEMENTS AND SECESSIONIST AGITATIONS IN NIGERIA: THE THEN ... and ... THE NOW

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Abstract

Secessionist movement and agitations are not new to Nigeria. It has had to fight a civil war in order to repulse such agitations before. The paper therefore seeks to interrogate the factors that were used to justify the agitation then with the factors used to justify the agitation for secession now. The trajectory which the paper has set for itself flows from the fact that people see themselves in many different ways that constitute a form of identity which can be fluid, short-lived and insignificant or more permanent and more significant personally and socially. This paper adopted a historical and analytical approach in its reportage of origin, trajectory and manifestations of secessionist agitations in Nigeria relying on archival method of data collection by sourcing information from secondary access including journals, textbooks, reports and periodicals. The paper stressed the importance which people ascribe to different aspects of their identity varies according to context and over time, but where secession movements are mobilised and organised by identity, such identities must be sufficiently important enough to make people prepared to fight, kill and even die in the name of that identity. The oil rich Niger-Delta of Nigeria with its many ethnic social movements-cum-militias has been a persistent problem coupled with the recent call for a separation from the Nigerian state. In summary, this paper interacted with the history of secessionist agitations in Nigeria and how a particular dimension of this agitation has culminated in the call for a separate state of Biafra in the South Eastern region with the potentiality of cutting off the major source of revenue for Nigeria and hence being a major threat to the economy and continued survival of the country. Flowing from the established positions of this paper on cause of agitation addressing the menace will attract a bottom-up restructuring in the federal balance such that will grant distinctive groups not mere sense of identity but sense of group independence within the sovereign reality of Nigeria.

Keywords: Civil War, Ethnic Militias, Federal Restructuring, Secessionist Agitation, Separatist Movement, Underdevelopment

Introduction

The issue of ethnicity is central to many challenges faced by African states irrespective of the political or constitutional formats adopted, whether unitary or federalism. Although it seems to be of a more salient factor in federal states, in spite of the fact that federalism has been conceived as a mechanism for managing diversity and heterogeneity and as a governmental format which provides political accommodation for diverse elements and peoples who are not homogeneous in terms of culture, language, origin and religion. However, it is interesting to note that as useful and valuable the concept of federalism is, it still suffers from a definitional crisis among scholars. For instance, Osaghae (2006:4) alludes to “the expansiveness and seemingly elasticity of the meanings and applications of federalism [which] have [not only] complicated its definition” but has not also succeeded in diminishing its usefulness and adoption as a format for managing diversity.

Despite this conceptual confusion, its usefulness as a mechanism for managing diverse ethnic groups has not diminished. Thus, new addition to the ranks of federal states in Africa, has included Ethiopia, Tanzania and the Comoros Islands while the persistence of ethnic conflicts and escalation of differences among ethnic nationalities have kept salient the federal debate and option in such countries as South Africa, Uganda, Kenya, Sudan, Cameroon and Somalia.

On the other hand, the number of failed federal system is on the increase with Central African Federation, Rhodesia/Nyasaland, West Indies, Yugoslavia, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and Czechoslovakia prominent on the list due to separatist movements, agitations and ethnically-induced violence and conflicts. Among the Third World nations, India and Nigeria have had an enduring federal system. However, several reasons have been given for the failure of these countries to effectively manage the federal system among which domination by one or a few constituent units, authoritarianism, economic underdevelopment, and lack of constitutionalism featured as prominent reasons. In a nutshell, these have fueled the birth of separatist movements and agitations often accompanied by violence and conflicts to drive home the need for reforms and accommodation. The collapse of the federal political format is as a result of the failure to manage these separatist and divisive tendencies.

The adoption of the federal system was in itself a stop-gap measure to find solution to the problems created by the arbitrary partitioning of Africa into colonial territorial units at the Berlin Congress of 1885 which lumped together disparate communities and peoples into an uneasy but convenient administrative entity called a state. It was inevitable that this kind of arbitrary arrangement of peoples would eventually lead to ethno-nationalist wars and secession, which was further aggravated in the postcolonial period by the domination, exclusion and disposition of land and resources of particular communities in the new

political states' configurations. The political terrain of Africa therefore became inundated with many instances of this type of conflicts following on the heels of the secessionist war in Congo (1960–65). Examples of this were Sudan (1955–1972), Nigeria (1966–69), Namibia (Caprivi Strip, 1999), Senegal (1982) to present (Casamance) and Somalia (North West, 1984–89). The majority of these secessionist wars failed because the OAU and the international community withheld support for the secessionists primarily because of the fear of the generalized chaos that would ensue from the contestation of colonial boundaries in Africa. Success of such contestation would have had a domino effect in which case virtually all states would have wanted a fragmentation or adjustment of the colonial borders through secession.

Equally expressive of this colonial arbitrary lumping of disparate and different ethnic nationalities together for administrative ease were conflicts related to or resulting from identity. The prevalence of this type of conflicts has made the issues of ethnicity and contested identities to dominate most of the literature on the analysis of conflict in Africa and have even come to represent the stereotypical images of Africa. Identity issues relate to race, ethnicity, religion, language, nationalism and cultural/common heritage. The growth and intractability of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria, Rwanda, Burundi, Sudan, Algeria and Liberia has re-focused academic and international policy attention on the subject. However, while this academic focus may be recent, ethnic-based conflict and genocide is not a new phenomenon in Africa basically because the exploitation of ethnic differences had been a common feature of colonial rule in Africa. For instance, in Rwanda (1960–64) and Burundi (1970–74) there were outbreaks of ethnic strife and genocide fueled by colonial manipulation of these basic differences. In Rwanda alone, the 1994 genocide claimed an estimated 1 million people. The perception of enmity is fueled by a centrally directed and planned propaganda against the so-called 'enemy.' It starts with the dehumanisation and denigration of the 'enemy' or 'opponent' as sub-humans. A glaring example was the Hutu government and *Interahamwe* militia's propaganda media in Rwanda which described the Tutsis as 'cockroaches' that must be exterminated.

Identity-based violence, in particular ethnically motivated armed conflict, is emerging as a common feature in Africa, with most conflicts been interpreted as ethnically and tribally caused. Furley (1995) asserts that, "ethnicity in fact has often been a major cause of African conflicts and it continues to be so." Entire communities have been exterminated simply for the fact that they belong to certain tribes and ethnic groups. Most appalling were the Tivs and Junkuns in Taraba State of Nigeria, Tutsi in Rwanda, the Khran, Gio, Mandingo in Liberia among many instances. In such frenzy and killing sprees, ethnicity more than any other bounds such as language or even religion, may be the only banner of protection or 'safe haven' as people are killed or spared

simply for belonging to a particular ethnic group, irrespective of political or ideological views. This has always been the case in Nigeria between northern and southern Muslims. The prevalence of this type of killings has not only led to ethnicism been used to explain conflict and genocide in countries such as Nigeria and Rwanda, but also to the conclusion that in ethnically divided societies, of which many societies in Africa, are, ethnic conflict is at the centre of politics and ethnic conflicts have strained the bonds that sustain civility and is often at the root cause of most violence.

But some crucial questions that need valid and critical answers and worth exploring a little in this paper, are; ‘Is ethnicity the root cause of conflict in Africa?’ ‘Does ethnicity kill?’ Why do some multi-ethnic states disintegrate into civil war and others, despite ethnic pluralism, have not? Are all conflicts not in some ways about identity or the contestations over identities? The problematic concerning ethnicity as a tool of analysis itself has led to arguments being generated that it is more than just the composition of language, culture and history, but also about perception of identity by groups, family and community or attribution by outsiders. According to Fowler (1991) and Staub (1989), ethnicity results from mere categorisation of people by others and it is assigned “according to the requirements of the classifiers” (Eriksen, 1996:8). Thus, “ethnic boundaries are between whoever people think they are between” (Fardon, 1987:176). However, among radical scholars, it is agreed and argued that the ethnic and identity-based interpretation of conflict in Africa is not only simplistic, but also problematic because the factors of identity are not just strong enough. For instance, a more toted factor is language, and in fact, this is a poor guide to ethnic or tribal identity because in the deliberate effort to promote good ‘neighbourliness’ among Africans has led to the speaking of several tribal languages in many regions of Africa. Equally, dress mode and skin-colour do not provide objective criteria as to ethnic origin. Eltringham (2004) explains that decades of Tutsi migration at different times from Rwanda and Burundi to neighbouring countries has led to the emergence of a new ‘mixed ethnic group,’ the Banyanwanda, in both Uganda and Democratic Republic of Congo.

The multi-ethnic character of most African states creates the right environment and circumstances for violent politicisation of ethnicity. Rival communities, with the perception of threat to their survival (real or imagined) see the control of the state and its resources as the only means of survival. However, it is important to point out here that the politicisation, exploitation and mobilisation of ethnicity to serve particular interests is not a unique phenomenon in Africa, although it may be more prevalent than in any other part of the globe. To buttress this point are the examples of genocide in the Balkans in the 1990s, the ethno-religious violence in the Indonesian province of Aceh, Nazi pogroms from 1938–44, and the extermination of Armenians by the young Turks in 1915. Consequently, three competing schools of thought have

dominated the interpretations of the link between ethnic solidarity and the propensity of conflict. Firstly, the primordialists see ethnicity as historically rooted and embedded in peoples' way of life and culture, and re-enforced by social institutions, collective myths and memories - developed from early socialisation, and hence likely to persist over time. Secondly, instrumentalists perceive ethnicity as a front for the pursuit, mobilisation, exploitation and manipulation to secure self-serving or vested interests by individuals or groups. Thirdly, social constructionists perceive ethnicity as an invention of the human imagination, an intellectual construct devoid of objective reality.

Our purpose in this paper is clear. We will attempt to historicize the emergence of separatist movements and agitations in Nigeria, the various forms that this has taken in modern times, the issues that gave rise to this and finally the implications for the budding democratic experiment which Nigeria is presently experiencing. This is important basically because this is the first time that Nigeria will be experiencing a prolonged and uninterrupted democratic period. It is our belief that if the separatist agitations and the issues that birthed them can be resolved, democracy and federal structure in Nigeria may become permanent. After all, federalism is an unfinished business (Duchacek, 1970:193) and so lends itself to adjustment and adaptations so as to accommodate and thus silence separatists' agitations and the ethnic clashes and conflicts this has engendered.

The Emergence of Separatist Movements and Agitations in Nigeria

Separatists' movements emerged from the crucible of ethnic majority/minority syndrome which, in turn, can be dated from the attempt of the colonialists at constitutional development and constitutionalism in colonial Nigeria. The attempts by the colonialists at dividing the country into manageable political units led to regionalism. Ironically, the division or regionalization of the country was regarded by the then colonial governor, Arthur Richards, as patterned along the "natural division" of the country. The division of the country along the so called "natural division" offered by the Rivers Niger and Benue; the former entering from the North-West and the latter from the North-East and forming a confluence exactly at the center before flowing into the Atlantic Ocean bisected the country into three areas albeit of unequal geographic space. The North thus had a larger land mass than any of the other two regions. This "natural division" led to the creation of three regions; the Eastern, Western and Northern regions, an event which started in 1939 with the promulgation of The Richards Constitution. From this period on, the lexicon of ethnic majority and minority found itself into the political vocabulary and reality of Nigeria. Subsequent and further divisions of the country into states after independence only heightened the majority/minority problem rather than solve it.

Osaghae (1991:237-238) has pointed out that within the context of the Nigerian state, ethnic minorities are not simply numerically inferior linguistic groups as Morrison et al (1972:311) have conceptualized, but rather, the phenomenon arises as a result of the “dynamic of subjective interactions which follow the objective differentiation”. Thus, it is only within the context of historical precedence and in relations to other ethnic groups that an adequate conceptualization of minorities can be understood. Within a federal system, other considerations would include each group’s relationship and access to political and economic power, or the share of the national economic cake accruing to each state or region, the extent of the federal presence or number of federal development projects sited in the region or state, the number of the group’s members or representatives in federal appointment, cabinet or employment.

A major off-shoot of the colonial regionalization of the country was the political re-configuration of the country and the emergence of dominant ethnic groups’ hegemony politically, socially and economically in each of the regions. This re-configuration made salience and brought to the fore the different ethnic groups’ numerical superiority or inferiority and the innumerable advantages that this may offer especially to the ethnically dominant groups. Numerical superiority and spatial spread therefore became advantages for threatening; negotiating and even demanding for more recognition, more share of the federal resources and domination of the less numerical groups in the region. For example, in 1950, leaders of the northern region threatened to secede if the region was not allocated 50% of the federal legislative seats and revenue. Also, in 1953-54, the Western region equally threatened to secede if Lagos was not added to it. While the dominant ethnic groups could behave as if their individual destiny was better than that of the whole country, the minorities were quick to discover that their destinies were irrevocably tied to the continued existence of the Nigerian federation. Thus, while the dominant ethnic groups at various times threatened the stability and continued existence of the federation, it is ironic to note that dominant ethnic group in the Eastern region, the Igbos, along with the minorities have been firmly committed to “one Nigeria” although the Igbos were later to initiate a civil war aimed at seceding.

The regional division of the country not only negate the equalization effect of the ethnic groups achieved under the Native Authority system of administration established under the principle of local jurisdiction, but also led to the emergence of a dominant ethnic majority group in each region thereby ensuring that each region had a core majority group existing along side with periphery minority groups. Thus, emerged a majority-minority group distinction with the so-called majority ethnic groups actually been formerly disparate and scattered people whose sole similarity or commonality were that they spoke similar language and share similar custom but were now integrated by

regionalization. A good example of this were the different tribes which made up the Yoruba race which was formerly administered as different entities under the Native Authority system and later integrated with the creation of the Western region. The other ethnic groups equally scattered amongst them but of less number or population naturally assumed the minority stigma. This is what had made Ekeh (1983) to argue that ethnic groups in contemporary Nigeria were actually “emergent social formations” which evolved under colonialism. The majority status of the Igbos and the Hausa-Fulani emerged under similar circumstances in both the Eastern and Northern regions respectively. Thus, as Osaghae (1991:239) had observed:

Regionalization was the cradle of ethnic minority problems in Nigeria. The regions not only contained groups of unequal sizes, more importantly, also afforded the elites of the majority groups the opportunities for transforming their groups from groups-in- themselves to groups-for-themselves. They did this because it was clear to them that only groups which was preponderant could hope to control power in the regions and at the centre. It was the ethnic nationalism instigated by the elites in the majority groups, more than the mere fact of lumping together unequal groups that brought about the problem of minorities.

Coleman (1986:386) had earlier expressed similar sentiments when he stated that “the promotion of cultural nationalism among tribal and nationality group also led to political minority movements” in Nigeria. Thus, having become aware of the rather unlimited opportunities available to them to control and monopolize political power at both the regions and the centre and at the expense of the other less numerical groups due to their numerical superiority, the majority groups were quick to organize themselves in order to maximize this opportunity. A way this was done was to form and rally their members under a cultural umbrella which further accentuated the phenomenon of “us” versus “them” mentality (Fardon, 1987:170). Thus, in the West, the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* became the rallying cultural group for the Yorubas, in the East; it was the Igbo State Union which later metamorphosed into *Ndigbo* for the Igbos and the *Jammiyar Mutanen Arewa* for the predominant Hausa-Fulani in the North. The minority groups were slow in catching on to this tactic by organizing themselves along a similar cultural line. Rather, they aligned themselves to different majority groups, seeking political power, accommodation and relevance under the umbrellas of the dominant majority groups of their choices. Even then, this was not done collectively. Rather than uniting the minority groups, this further polarised and fragmented them as they were not all united under any one single majority group.

A distinguishing dilemma of the ethnic minorities in Nigeria is their spatial dispersion within territories (regions and later states) dominated by the major three ethnic groups which made their unity rather impossible. For instance, the creation of the Western region which had a dominating Yoruba ethnic group also contained what Osaghae (1991:239) had called a “periphery” minority group of the Mid-West, the Eastern region included within it the Calabar-Ogoja-Rivers minority groups, and the Northern region encompassed the middle belt, southern Zaria and Borno. The creation of the Mid-Western region out of the former Western region also incorporated a majority and a periphery minority groups. The majority group was made of Benin people with the Ishan, Itsekiri, and Urhobo becoming the periphery minority groups. Although one of the major considerations in state creation in Nigeria has always been to cater for the minority, to carve out a territory for them where they will feel “safe” and can be accommodated politically (Ekekwe, 1986), however, the creation of more states further broke up ethnic groups leading to more instances and emergence of majority and periphery minorities. Thus, the creation of more states, as a means of providing political accommodation and a sense of belonging to minority groups had, rather unfortunately, not been able to provide this assurance, or foresee the “creation” of a special category of minorities, what Ekeh (1972:95-98) had called the “marginals.” The “marginals” are the “accidents” resulting from further states creation and boundaries adjustment. In the real sense of it, they are only marginal minorities because states creation and boundaries adjustment have cut them off from their larger ethnic majority group thereby making them minority in the new state. Examples of these marginals would include the Yoruba-speaking minority elements of Ilorin and Kabba in the Middle belt, western Igbos in the Mid-West, and the Ijaws who are perpetually in minority in virtually all the states along the coastal line of Nigeria.

The present reality, therefore, is that what constitutes the category labeled as ethnic minorities in Nigeria do not constitute a homogenous or unified group and are not in spatial congruity to each other; being widely dispersed over wide geographical areas and belonging to different ethnic groups, with different languages, culture, and religion. However, in spite of all these, a unified front or reaction to their collective fear of domination by the majority could be seen. Okpu (1977:118) had identified three forms of reactions by the minorities namely; the constitutional self-determination policy involving alliance with the ruling party in another region to agitate for a new state; the compromise policy of cooperation with the ruling party in the region usually through the latter’s coercion; and a non-constitutional self-determination policy with demands for separate states through riots, revolts and threats of secession. Osaghae (1991:241) had limited these three to two, namely; formation of opposition groups and agitation for separate states to be created for them.

In all the geopolitical zones in Nigeria where the minorities are located, they have always sought for political accommodation through being in and forming opposition parties to contest for elections and to articulate their minority views. Their *modus operandi* has included aligning themselves with the major party in rival regions or states which may be sympathetic to their cause. For instance, in the Northern region, the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) which represented all the minority ethnic groups did align itself, at various times, with the majority political party; the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroon (NCNC) in Eastern region and the Action Group (AG) in Western region to oppose the ruling and dominant majority group party in the North, the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC). In the Western region, it was the Benin-Delta group that was in the minority and their political front, the Benin-Delta Peoples Party (BDPP) which later metamorphosed into the Mid-West State Movement (MSM), became the mouth organ for the agitation for the creation of a separate region distinct from the Western region, equally aligned with the NCNC to oppose the ruling majority party in the West, the AG. The Eastern region was not left out of this experience also. The National Independent Party (NIP) aligned with AG against the majority dominated political party, the NCNC. In spite of their alliances with other political parties, the minorities were still denied direct access to power at both the regional and national levels. At best, they became electoral pawns in the hands of the majority parties and acted as outlet for any party that desired in extending its political presence and reach outside of its immediate enclave or region.

The second way by which the minorities sought for political relevance and accommodation within a Nigerian federation that was for all practical purposes controlled by the majority ethnic groups was by agitating for their own separate states. Again, this opened up and made the minorities susceptible to further exploitation by the majority political parties because all they had to do to win the support of the minorities was to join them in agitating for creation of more states. The main demand of the minorities was for the creation of Mid-West, Calabar-Ogoja-Rivers, and Middle-belt states. Incidentally, in 1957, prior to independence, a minorities commission that was set up to look into the fears of the minorities and how to allay them did not think that creation of separate states was the way out. Rather, the commission was of the opinion that the solution to the minorities' problems was in constitutional safeguards and political actions and so did not recommend the creation of any new states. However, this situation was reversed by the military under General Gowon. In 1967, Gowon created 12 states to replace the existing four region format. As Osaghae (1991:243) had reported, Gowon did this for two reasons: the first was to woo the minorities to the "federal" side in the eventual outbreak of a war and, in particular, by creating new states for the Eastern minorities, Gowon hoped to create divisions in the Eastern region; a similar move made earlier by the

civilian government of NPC by creating the Mid-west region in order to break the hegemony of the AG in the Western region.

Forms of Separatist Movements

Separatist movements in Nigeria have found expression in the form of social movements usually called ethnic militias. Like virtually all social science concepts, it has become difficult among scholars to agree to what constitutes a social movement. However, in spite of this, to say that social movement is a collective actively involved in promoting or resisting change may posit a good starting point of understanding what it is, but by itself, it is not sufficient. As Barnes (1995:151) has noted, social movements are conventionally distinguished from political parties and from pressure groups, and unlike the latter, they operate not primarily through the channels of insider politics, but by the direct mobilisation of opposition to what goes on within those channels. Other scholars have even questioned the extent to which it is appropriate to describe social movements as a collective. Rather, as Diani (1992) has stated, it may be better to characterise them as constituting a loose connection between “a plurality of groups, individuals and organisations.”

It is in this respect that Hannigan (1991) has attempted to distinguish social movements from other social forms basically because they (1) exist outside of the institutional framework of everyday life and (2) are in some way oriented towards a degree of social change. A precise but more formal definition by Wood and Jackson (1982) and adapted by Harper (1993:140) is that social movements are unconventional collectivities with varying degrees of organisation that attempt to promote or prevent change. The term ‘collectivity’ here is to emphasise that social movements are only partly organised phenomena which are not as structured as a group. Thus, from the functionalist perspective, the existence of social movements implies incomplete system integration and the presence of some degree of dislocation in the institutional structure. For the normative functionalists, social movements also imply a lack of social integration; members of such social movements represent individuals that have failed to internalised the norms and values that would integrate their activities harmoniously into the existing order and to develop the institutional affiliations that would co-opt them as recognised and satisfied participants in the status quo (Barnes, 1995:152).

Modern societies abound with groups of people who organise themselves into social movements to either promote or resist change from taking place. Dwyer and Zeilig (2012: 50) have termed 1945-1998 as an epoch of uprisings occasioned by social movements in postcolonial Africa. Prominent among such social movements but driven by socio-ethnic groupings are the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) and the National Democratic Alliance in Eastern Sudan. In the Congo Democratic Republic are the Congolese

Liberation Movement (CLM) and the Congolese Rally for Democracy (CRD); in Burundi are the Forces for the Defence of Democracy (FDD) and National Liberation Forces (NLF). In Ivory Coast are the Patriotic Movement of Ivory Coast (MPCI), Movement for Peace and Justice (MPJ) and Popular Ivorian Movement for the Great West (MPIGO); the Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone, and the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda. In Nigeria, it would seem as if virtually every ethnic community has its own movement whose sole aim is to draw recognition to the ethnic community's plights and safeguard its interests against real or perceived encroachments, threats and acts of aggression by other rival ethnic movements. Thus, Nigeria can boast of numerous ethnic militias such as the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), the Ijaw National Congress (INC), the Odu'a Peoples Congress (OPC), the Egbesu Boys of the Ijaw of the Niger Delta, and Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB). There are also ethno-regional groupings such as the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) and the Middle Belt Forum. The major reason for their proliferation in Africa and Nigeria in particular has been voiced by Nzongola-Ntalaja (2002) when he noted that "a group's or an individual's identity is not a matter of particular concern in situations of relative calm and security. Solidarity with one's identity is best mobilized when the group faces a threat, real or imagined, to its interests, security or its very existence as a group."

In Nigeria, it would appear that a major feature of our political landscape is the emergence and existence of social movements popularly tagged "ethnic militias groups." The Oxford Learners Dictionary has defined a militia as "a group of people who are not professional soldiers but who have military training and can act as an army". Akaruese (2003:218) has also defined a militia as "properly armed group with overt or covert command structures, enjoying same forms of legitimacy and permanency; and capable of resorting to the use of arms in pursuance of their objectives." The first sets of this type of social movements emerged when Nigeria was under military rule. This fact has a lot to say concerning the nature of military regimes in Africa and particularly in Nigeria, which, according to Asobie (1990);

...breeds violence because they block all chances for peaceful change. The structural inequality that is intrinsic of the socio-economic system of a rentier capitalism state, like Nigeria is compounded by military rule and militarism. Military rule and militarism breed not just physical violence but also structural violence as well (as quoted by Falana, 2003:184).

Basically, two types of ethnic militias can be discerned in Nigeria. The first type is the vigilante groups formed to assist the Police and with the mandate to arrest and prosecute robbery suspects while the second type is the ones that

started with primordial political sentiments and which propagate ethnic objectives. The emergence of the second type of ethnic militia group leads us to argue that, at least, within the Nigerian context, an ethnic militia group can be seen as a militant organization set up for the sole purpose of protecting the interest of a particular ethnic nationality from the perceived aggression and marginalization by other ethnic nationalities. Falana (2003:183) has gone further to argue that such an ethnic militia that makes “the liberation of their ethnic nationality its main pre-occupation may sometimes be described as a guerrilla movement.” Various ethnic groups, especially those from the south and the south-east were of the opinion that the state has not given adequate attention to their demands, considering them non-negotiable; and their authentic representatives are not included in the decision-making processes. All these combined with hurtful or antagonistic political memories of northern dominance led to the emergence and proliferation of ethnic militias groups. Between 1990 and 1999, no less than twenty-four ethnic minority rights groups emerged from the Niger Delta alone. Prominent amongst these are the Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA), Ijaw National Congress (INC), Ijaw Youth Council (IYC), Ijaw Peace Movement (IPM), Isoko National Youth Movement (INYM), Itsekiri Nationality Patriots (INP) and the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP).

In the south-west, among the Yorubas, a major political factor that led to the formation of the Odu’a Peoples Congress (OPC) was the annulment of the June 12 1993 Presidential election result which, for the first time ever, was won by a Yoruba man; Chief Moshood Abiola. This annulment confirmed a belief that the Hausa-Fulani oligarchy was pursuing an ethnic agenda to deprive the south-west of power and to perpetually control political power to the detriments of the other parts of the country. This opinion was further given confirmation by General Abacha who ousted another Yoruba man; Chief Shonekan, who headed the interim government pending a return to a democratically elected government. The continued persecution of NADECO and other pro-democracy groups made up mainly by the Yorubas during General Abacha regime and the phantom coup which threw up many prominent south-western officers in the military as coupists and so condemned to death, only made the people of the south-west to resolve to resist such ethnic cleansing agenda by all means.

The movement for the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) was formed on September 13, 1999. According to its leader, Ralph Uwazurike, MASSOB emerged as an “aftermath of the thirty years of marginalisation of the Igbos, who feel that after thirty years of marginalisation they are still excluded from the governance of Nigeria. So we decided to ask for the re-enactment of Biafra” (Uwazurike, 2000). Of all the ethnic militias, MASSOB was probably the only one that had a political agenda of secession as inclusive to its grouse of marginalisation and exclusion from key federal appointments. Unlike the OPC

which can boast of a wide spectrum of membership, most Igbo political and business elite distanced themselves from being members or supporters of MASSOB probably because of the treasonable consequence of its political demands. Another militias group that made the south-east its political playing ground, especially Anambra and Abia states is the Bakkassi Boys. It is problematic to label this group as ethnic militias primarily because it does not pursue any specific ethnic agenda. Its origin was from being a vigilante group. The Arewa Peoples Congress (APC) emerged in reaction to the perceived role of OPC in communal disturbances that involved the Hausas, a rather nebulous term today but one which represent the whole of the north. The insistent clashes between these two ethnic nationalities predate 1999 but have since increased in intensity and crescendo especially within an environment saturated with virulent partisan politics and made more liberal by democracy as against the period when the military was in power. The APC mandate which has been endorsed by the 19 governors of the northern states and the ACF is to avenge any killing of northern elements in the south.

It is to be noted that the rise and proliferation of ethnic militias and ethnic violence, conflicts and clashes is a function of the palpable sense of insecurity which the ethnic elements felt concerning their interests, future and self-preservation even within the Nigeria federation as it is presently structured. It should also be seen as a function of the failure of the political class, the non-responsiveness of the state to legitimate yearnings of the people, and most importantly, the non-availability of legitimate channels by which such demands and even grievances can be made known. It is also to be noted that the escalation in ethnic clashes and conflicts and the proliferation of ethnic militias or groups guarding one ethnic interests or the other is a reflection of the character of the Nigerian state of which violence; whether religious or political, is a major feature. It is therefore not a wonder to observers to note that the state violence has elicited further counter-violence from the ethnic militias either directed at other ethnic militias or against the state itself as could be derived from the confrontations between the OPC, MASSOB, Bakkasi Boys, Egbesu Boys of Africa and MOSOP and the state forces of coercion, the Police and the Army. After all, in most cases, these ethnic militias started as a mere vigilante non-violent groups but only to be socialized into the culture of violence by the state itself.

Issues for Separatists' Agitations – The 'Then'

As Suberu (2003:xi) has noted "ethnic minority tensions and agitations are an important feature of the ongoing struggles to resolve the "national question"" and re-institute what has been variously termed as "true federalism"; a term that implies that the present federal system is inadequate to accommodate the various ethnic differences and solve the perceived marginalization of the

minority elements. A further implication is that the minorities' do not have confidence in the present federal structure as capable for providing them an egalitarian existence. It is interesting that the most vociferous agitation for separation or accommodation have emerged from areas that were viewed as been in the majority prior to the creation of more states and the commercial exploitation of oil.

However, what could be termed as one of the defining characteristics of most Third World nations are the existence of political/social movements engaging in armed struggles for political accommodation or self-determination on behalf of some minority groups (Agara, 2011, 2014). Among the most common are; in Western Sahara, the Polisario which fights for liberation from Morocco; in Western Somalia is the Liberation Front which aims to restore the Ethiopian Ogaden to Somalia; the Kurds of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria which seeks an independent and united Kurdistan. Others are the National Resistance Council in Iran whose aim is to establish an autonomous Baluchistan; in India are movements struggling for autonomy among the Sikhs, Nagas, Mizos and Tripuras as well as in Kashmir. The Shanti Bahini of Bangladesh are seeking autonomy for the Chittagong tribes; while in Burma, the Federal National Democratic Front's struggle is for a federal union based on self-determination for the Shan, Karen, Mon, Arakan and Kachin peoples. The Tamil minority in Sri Lanka having been waging civil war with the objective of forming a separate state in the north of the island and there are several movements in Indonesia with the objective of attaining independence in West Papua and Aceh. The list seems endless with the Moro National Liberation Front campaigning for independence for the Muslim Moros in the south of the Philippines. Nigeria has had to fight a civil war (July 1967-January 1970) in order to avert an imminent fragmentation of the country. It is interesting that the embers of the Biafran civil war and secession are now being whipped up once again in the name of an ethnic militia social movement.

A number of theoretical postulations have been muted by scholars to explain the emergence of violent social movements agitating for separation from the nation-state. For instance, Brown (1988, 1994) has opined that the key step towards violent separatism is the emergence of ethnic nationalism predicated on the 'monoethnic' orientation of the existing state and concomitant tendencies to assimilationist policies which disrupted 'communal authority structures,' thus displacing local ethnic elites. While this may not be entirely true of the Nigerian experience, however, the emergence of ethnic nationalism was predicated more on the feeling that the federal system in Nigeria was skewed entirely to the north, and which was reflected in the choice and appointment into key political positions. Second and of some relevance to the Nigerian situation will be Christie's (1996) postulation which, taking a more historical approach, pointed to the fact that the process of decolonisation gave credence to certain identity

groups in the formation of new nation-states and in so doing, alienated and undermined other peripheral identities. As a matter of fact, in the Nigerian case, this historical accident can be traced to the period of colonial occupation and specifically to what has been popularly termed the “Mistake of 1914” which was the “anomalous construction of the Nigerian state by the British colonisers” (Osaghae and Onwudiwe, 2002:3). Further to this was the fact that the independence bargain that led to the present Nigerian state was not “among constituent demand-bearing groups” but between nationalists and the de-colonising power (Zartman, 1991). Besides this ‘mistake of 1914,’ the elite governing body that took over at independence was anchored to exclusionary ethnic mobilisation that further stratified Nigeria into three major ethnic regional enclaves paving and preparing the road for grievances that would later challenge the legitimacy of the existing configuration. Thus, it was not surprising that in quick successions grievances arose starting from the breakdown of law and order in Western region, the 1964 federal electoral controversy, followed by the flawed 1965 election in the Western region through the two quick overthrows of the federal government and culminating in the attempt by the Igbo dominant group in the Eastern region to secede from the Nigerian federation.

Third is the contemplation by scholars which focus on the political economy of separatist conflict and questioned whether it is relatively backward or relatively advantaged regions that tend to seek secession. Horowitz (1981) is of the opinion that “backward groups” in “backward regions” are most likely to secede. However, Hale (2002) has questioned this assertion and rather argued that advanced regions are more likely to seek secession and he found empirical support from the Russian regions. In the case of Nigeria, this consideration further raised the question whether what constitute a ‘nation’ are the people or the territory. This question is germane because although the Igbos can be said to constitute a nation in the sense of shared characteristics and commonality, however, the Eastern region territory they occupied also included some ethnic minorities. Erroneously, in their quest for a separate state, the Igbo nation territory became defined to include all the people of Eastern Nigeria. To do this, the advocates for a Biafran state relied on coercion and numerical strength to force, subjugate and coerce acquiescence of the minority groups. The submission of the other minority ethnic elements was necessary and important to the achievement of secession and the continued survival and well-being of the Biafran state when realised. Isumonah (2002:31-40) has elucidated three reasons for this necessity. First was the strategic location of their territory without which Biafra would be landlocked and have no access to the ocean. Second was the fact that the oil found within the minorities’ territory and which held great potentials to the economic sustenance of the proposed Biafran nation. Third is the numerical strength of the entire minorities which stood at one-third of the total population of the Eastern region then.

While there is no blue-print for a successful secession, however, it is generally agreed that secession will require, at least, at the minimum, a cohesive nation either in existence at the time of declaration or has the potential of emerging and growing rapidly in the face of opposition to it by the host nation-state. In the case of Biafra, this was not a reality given the fact that of the three minimum requirements as extrapolated by Heraclides (1991) necessary for separatism, only one was ever present. The first of these three is the birth of an in-group community. The ethnic minorities in Eastern Nigeria, the region from which Biafra was to be carved out, were not in league with the declaration of a state of Biafra basically because they perceived the Igbo majority as being the oppressors and the declaration not in the interests of all but the Igbos only. In fact, the other ethnic minorities were not identified with the Igbos in the least “amount of national consciousness, a sense of shared identity and an explicit will to maintain this shared identity” (Spencer, 2000:34). The second is perceived inequality, past or present between the ethnic nationalities making the secessionist attempt. As Isumonah (2002:36) has noted, “almost irreconcilable ethnic differences with political, economic and cultural undertones existed between the minorities and the Igbos.” The Igbo hegemony over the minorities was expressed with the removal of Professor Eyo Ita, an Ibibio minority, as the leader of the National Council of Nigerians and the Cameroons (NCNC) a political organ that gave voice to the people of Eastern Nigerian at the time. Coupled with this were various instances of perceived acts of discrimination in the dispensation of government benefits dispensed through the dominant party for the region, NCNC and which was controlled solely by the Igbos. The prevailing situation was as Legum (1968:130) observed; “the Ibos did not show any particular interest – any more than did the Hausa or Yoruba (the other two major ethnic nationalities) – in diverting resources to the development of the minority groups in their region.” The only condition met was the third and final one which was territorial contiguity with the geographical division of the country into three and later four regions – Northern, Western, Southwest and Eastern regions respectively.

And Now...What has Changed?

The declaration of the State of Biafra by Col. Emeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu on 30 May, 1967 led to civil war that was fought between government forces and Biafra, lasting thirty months – from July 1967 to January 1970. On the part of the Igbos, the secession was necessary and justified on the grounds of the region’s right to self-determination which was prompted by the 1966 ethnically motivated killing and genocide of Igbos in various parts of the country. On the part of the government, resistance was equally necessary to keep the country one. What becomes important here, in the ‘now’ is the emergence of MASSOB and the new declaration for the resurrection of a Biafra state 46 years

after the first failed. Are there any new grounds for such a movement? Has the situation now changed drastically from the previous? Are there new constellations of forces that can guarantee success this time? Or is this call motivated by selfish means of the so-called leaders or is it articulating the collective will of the people?

Following what we term as the minimalist conception of secessionism, its social movement and content, we proceed first by identifying with An-Na'im's (1989:111) submission that "it is the historical link and subjective identification which makes a group into a people" and Oeter's (1994:164) opinion in this regard is also useful in that he perceive what he called 'peoplehood' as "historically developed consciousness of belonging together and distinguishing between members of the people and 'outsiders,' between inside and outside." For a shared sense of separation to exist, the people involved must have a shared objective. Thus, going by the example of the only successful African secession – Eritrea from Ethiopia – their shared sense of nationhood was developed from a crucible of a long and bitter war and also through the traumas of internal conflict. The most recent example of excision of northern from southern Sudan also followed this pattern of a long drawn out war culminating in a referendum. Thus, as Hoffman and Mzala (1990-91:425) have equally noted "the development of nationhood is bound up with the battle for self-determination and democracy." Of course, for the seceding nation, there has to be popular identification with the national objective of secession by the people. This cannot be said to be in place, the former Eastern region which is now divided into two regions – the South-south and Southeast – cannot be said to have arrived at this crucial agreement of a national objective to secede. While the separatist movement led by MASSOB aims at full political independence, other social movements representing other ethnic groupings within the regions such as INC, IYC, EBA, IPM, INYM, INP, and MOSOP cannot be said to have similar aims, although Osaghae (2001) have plotted their agitations from political accommodation to resource nationalism and now self-determination. Combine with the newly emergent Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), these social movements constitute oppositional autonomism which occurs when a group objective is different from sovereign or national objective.

It may be worthwhile to evaluate the present move by MASSOB against Pearson's (1997) formulation of an analytical framework for assessing the chances of a separatist struggle based on the concept of resources or resource nationalism. This conceptualisation, based on consideration of the costs and risks of separatism, has these specifics; (1) socially mature environment or mobilised population through mass literacy, communication, industrialisation and urbanisation; (2) empowered counter-elite; (3) international support including that of emigrant diaspora and the support of great powers; (4) location within a declining host-state, which expresses its declining strength, and (5) war.

A socially mature environment and mobilised population implies a commonality and an acceptance of an overarching objective for secession. For this to be achieved, it implies the existence of a good formal or informal communication network helped by high literacy level, industrialisation and urbanisation. When compared with the rest of the country, the south-south and south-east regions which comprised of the Biafra claimed territory may compare creditably well with other parts of the country. However, it is in areas of mobilisation that questions may arise. In this respect the situation has not changed from the 1960s period.

In the present call for a Biafra state, other minorities are still not fully mobilized or committed to outright secession. Some are still interested in preserving the present unity albeit, hopefully under a new restructured federal format. The questions raised in the first attempt at secession have not been answered – is there any reason for the minorities to believe that they stand to gain from seceding with the Igbos? Is there any perceived weakness of the Nigerian state's resolution that persuades that a secession attempt will succeed? As Isumonah (2002:34) has equally noted, if the motif of separatism is that the state should be constituted by consent, it behooves us to inquire whether the Igbo dominated Biafran leadership have taken the necessary steps of consulting and seeking the consent of the minorities not even for procedural reasons but for practical reasons before making the clarion call for secession once again.

The issue of an empowered counter-elite is also important. The historical bane of the Igbos has been their inability to come together and put up a concerted political front that speaks with one voice and on behalf of the people especially when it matters most. The two major social movements that professed to represent the will of the so-called Biafra people (MASSOB and IPOB) are not even in agreement as to whether secession should be pursued. While MASSOB is for secession through armed involvement, IPOB is not fully committed to this path. Apart from this, the Igbo elite have never been able to unite when it matters most. A cursory look at the number of ethnic social movements would show that while the Yoruba and the Hausa had one each, the largest number of such movements are from the region planning to secede. The fragmentation and proliferation of ethnic social movements is a pointer to the fact that power is highly diffused with no identifiable and acceptable elite group who can speak on behalf of the people. The creation of more states in the region to cater for the minorities' agitation had further splintered that region solidarity.

In terms of international support, Osaghae and Onwudiwe (2002:3) had echoed the point that had the initial attempt at secession occurred now in this post-Cold War period when discourses of nationalism and self-determination as well as international public opinion have turned full cycle to privilege the rights of the oppressed nationalities and groups, thereby making disintegration of extant states a veritable, if not legitimate, source of new state formations (USSR,

Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia), the story would probably have been different. Even in conceding this point, the issue to consider is that every struggle needs a charismatic leadership behind whom the people are ready to mass up. The first declaration of a Biafran state under Col. Ojukwu met with a general agreement and a shared feeling that Biafra had a just cause and hence enjoyed tremendous support all over the world. This support was harnessed by the widely publicised pogrom against Easterners in the North and West, the regime hatred and hostility against the Igbos and the alleged persecution of Igbo Christians by Hausa/Fulani Muslims. In spite of this, the option of preserving the state at all cost won. Again, basically, things have not changed to give the impression that the call today will lead to a successful secession.

The Nigerian state, presently may be going through financial recessions, but it cannot be said to be weak either in its resolute decision to remain one or in its capacity and capability to maintain this resolve. The resolution of the Nigerian state leadership and its ability to confront any secessionist attempt has made the recourse to an outright war reminiscent of the 1960s improbable. This is further buttressed by the fact that an equally resolute leadership and followership, both agreed on secession is missing. To buttress this, prominent Igbo elite in government have been making their disagreement felt. For instance, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Geoffrey Onyeama in an interview in *The Vanguard* (Monday, November 7, 2016) stated categorically that the pro-Biafra agitators do not have the mandate for speak for the Igbos. In place of outright declaration of war, the pro-Biafra agitators have taken to guerrilla warfare. Government response to this is to raid villages and settlements thought to be harbouring or supporting the pro-Biafra guerrillas and as one of the governors in the region said, this hurt them more than the government.

Conclusion

The paper is an empirical construct although its subject matter is a highly explosive and emotional one dealing with perceived grievances of exploitation, denial of political accommodation, marginalisation and self-determination. These perceived grievances have always led to aspiration for autonomy especially if it is fueled by the presence of rich resources within that region. The crucial economic advantage which the region give to the development of the state also determines the extent to which the government is resolved to deny autonomy to the region. However, the secessionists are idealists because they have a vision of not only an ideal situation but of a better future where they control their resources by themselves. Thus, secessionist struggles are fought within an already independent state but in actually fact is a throwback to the anti-colonial war of independence because the marginalised region seeking secession sees itself as being internally colonised. Like all anti-colonial wars, the nationalists are very myopic, not taking cognisant of the fact that flag independence does not necessarily means that tomorrow will be better

not everyone within the region agrees because some stand to lose if autonomy is granted and more important is the reality of the existence free riders within the social movement championing autonomy and secession. The presence of free riders is a warning against the assumption that movement participants and supporters all act on the same basis, with the same motivations, seeking the same objectives. Because of the free-rider problem, most of the perceived grievances and injustices that have led to the choice of secession as an option will fail to gain full agreement and expression among members of the social movement. Any movement seeking to articulate and remedy a grievance needs to act collectively and will arise where such grievance perception is collectively shared by all. But such a situation is highly idealistic and very rare because according to Olson (1965) free-riding and not collective action is almost invariably the rational strategy. Therefore, strategic plans including defense mechanism to curb or manage secessionist agitation in Nigeria must take critical cognizance of the group dynamics or group ideology driving such movements. Policy makers should be exposed to the fact that apprehension or incarceration or even extermination of secessionist leaders such as Nnamdi Kanu of the IBOP extraction and Sunday Adeyemo “Igboho” of the Oodua Peoples Movement can not end secessionist agitation or group insurrection. Rather, a bottom-up restructuring in the federal balance such that will grant distinctive groups not mere sense of identity but sense of group independence within the sovereign reality of Nigeria should encouraged.

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RESTRUCTURING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR MACRO SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

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[08037455247](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-4552-7)

Abstract

This paper examined restructuring and sustainable development programmes in Nigeria and their implications for macro social work practice. The study relied on secondary data which were collected from journals, textbooks, newspapers, and internet materials. The paper revealed that poverty, increased manipulation of religion and ethnicity, inability to withstand election defeat, dissatisfaction with leadership quality, escalation of insecurities, conflicts over revenue allocation or resource control, armed banditry, bitter politics of ethno-religious and regional identities, ethnoreligious intolerances, herdsman-farmers conflicts, socio-economic and infrastructural deteriorations, and corruption amongst others as the reasons for restructuring of Nigeria. The factors militating against the restructuring of Nigeria include elite interest, fear of domination, political idiosyncrasy, military incursion, corruption, fear of suppression, nature of the existing structure, ethno-regional rivalry, leadership problem, constitutional issues, weak institution, and issues of federal character and its principles. The paper also discussed restructuring Nigeria to attain sustainable development and the implications for macro social work practice. The paper recommends, that there is a need for a national conference legally backed to draft a working constitution that would create a true federal system where the federating units have fiscal autonomous, and responsive to the central government, there is a need for professionalization of social work in Nigeria, and that the central government and all federating units (states) of the Nigerian federation should create enabling environment for active citizen participation in development programmes.

Keywords: Restructuring, Sustainability, development, Macro social work, Programmes

Introduction

The agitation for restructuring of Nigerian polity could be seen as asking for an operational true federalism as the country is known (Federal Republic of Nigeria). That is, devolution of powers to the federating units (states and local governments) as expected in a federal system of government as against

concentration of too many powers in the central government. Nigeria is a sovereign entity that came about by amalgamation of the Southern and Northern Protectorates by the colonial masters on January 1st, 1914 (Annual Colonial Report, 1914). This enabled them to attain their exploitative economic and political ulterior motives. Nigeria was a multi-ethnic nation with over 250 diverse ethnic groups brought together at independence as a nation. This is why Nigeria operated a federal constitution which ensures that political, administrative, and economic powers and functions are shared between the central government and its component units (Alsamee, Abdul-Wahab & Yusuf, 2016; Babalola, 2016; Chukwuemeka & Amobi, 2011; Elekwa, Mathew & Akume, 2011; Ewetan, 2012).

The 1960 Independence Constitution made Nigeria a Federal State with three federating units and later by 1963, four federating units with adherence to true federalism. The persistent agitation was due to issues of disunity between the north and south, seat allocation in the central legislature based on population, revenue allocation on per capita, Electoral College System, and establishment of the Houses of Chiefs and Assembly since the pre-independence Constitutional Conference during which the then three regions (East, North, and West) reached an agreement to adopt federal system (Amaechi & Muoh, 2017; Oyadiran & Toyin, 2015). Nwabueze (2013). It was for this reason that Agidi (2020) observed that Nigeria, having a large territorial size and more confounding ethnic nationalities of inherent diversities, settled for federalism as an antidote to the myriad of historical and geographical problems. That is, the struggle for restructuring has been persistent since the amalgamation (Momoh & Adejumbi, 2017).

The subsequent years of military rule changed the true federalism to principle federalism where the centre has overbearing power over the federating units. The overbearing power structure of the central government has resulted in the issue of resource control vis-à-vis political restructuring as a contentious issue in Nigeria's body politic, and now a major problem facing the Nigerian state since the onset of ethnic politics (Anugwom, 2005; Dickson & Asua, 2016). Also, Yaqub (2016) noted that the issue of restructuring has polarised Nigeria into north and south divide with the southerners being the protagonists and the northerners being the antagonists. The protagonists argue that by the virtue of their contribution to the general purse, the principles of justice and equity demand that they should be allowed to control and manage their resources since they bear the impact of oil exploration while the antagonists maintained that oil exploration activities in the south were funded from the agricultural proceed from cocoa, groundnut, cotton, hides, and skin got in the north (Ahmed, Norafidah & Knocks, 2017). The failure of governance at all levels of democratic structure is due to bad leadership and corruption over the

years that have further escalated the agitation for restructuring of the Nigerian polity (Anugwom, 2005). This article seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- (a) To identify the reasons for restructuring Nigerian political structure,
- (b) To identify the factors militating against the restructuring of Nigeria,
- (c) To examine the nexus between restructuring of Nigeria and attainment of sustainable development programmes in Nigeria,
- (d) To discuss the implications for macro social work practice in Nigeria, and
- (f) To suggest solutions that would enhance hinge-free restructuring towards the attainment of sustainable development programmes in Nigeria.

Conceptualising Restructuring and Sustainable Development

The restructuring of Nigerian polity portrays different meanings to different people based on their disciplines, political, religious, or regional perspectives. In all of the perspectives, there is a demonstration of dissatisfaction with too many powers at the disposal of the federal government compared with the federating units. Restructuring, for Nwosu, (2016), means divesting the central government of certain powers and limiting its area of influence to such areas as fiscal policies, military defense, foreign policy, immigration, and national elections.

Bello (2017) described restructuring as the process of increasing or decreasing the number of component parts that make up a system and redefining the inter-relationship between them to ensure the efficiency of the entire system. It is in line with this view that Babangida (2017) advocates for devolution of powers to the extent that more responsibilities be given to the states while the central government is vested with the responsibility to oversee foreign insurance, defense, and economy. According to Shonibare (2017) and Idemba (2018), the restructuring is ensuring that the federating units (states, ethnic nationalities, and regions) are self-sustaining, able to develop infrastructure, critical amenities, undertake other developmental projects, such as education and health without a centre body interfering. It also means the creation of more states or consolidating of existing states/LGA, resource control, territorial independence, control devolution (Gana & Samuel, 2003). To restructure, for Okonkwo (2018), is to change an existing status quo in order to make it more functional or effective; it is the re-organisation and re-arrangement of the nature of resource control by the various governments and to foster unity and development.

Therefore, restructuring would help to solve the major challenges inhibiting the nation's growth and development and posited their strong belief in the restructuring and devolution of power in Nigeria believe in the respect for the constitution, rule of law, human rights, and the federal character (Anakwenze, 2019). In most cases, restructuring facilitates a substantial amount of cooperation among the various segments and institutions all in a bid to

achieve a better life for the citizens (Akinrinade, 2006; Alsamee, et al., 2016; Ozor, 2004).

On the other hand, sustainable development is the capability of a development programme to provide the needed services continuously to its target population or users. In order to attain sustainability in a given development programme, there is a need for the target service users to participate actively in its development process. Active participation enables consideration of a wide range of relevant choices, identification of felt-need(s), adequate planning, successful implementation, evaluation, utilisation of the programme's outcomes while maintaining the programme. World Commission on Environment and Development [WCED], (1987) defined sustainable development as a development that meets the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development can be attained through the integration of environmental, economic, and socio-cultural concerns in decision-making processes (Kolk (2016). In other words, the achievement of sustainable development calls for creating of enabling environment for active participation of the target service users, and a peaceful or harmonious atmosphere. Sustainable development means a development that can be continued either indefinitely or for a given period of time (Dernbach, 2003; Stoddart, 2011).

According to Browning & Rigolon (2019), sustainable development means improving the living standards of the citizenry without jeopardising the earth's ecosystems or causing environmental challenges such as deforestation, water, and air pollution that can result in climate change and extinction of species. Thus, the major target of sustainable development is to attain environmental equilibrium and continuous socio-economic growth of a people (Taylor, 2016; Zhai & Chang, 2019).

Reasons for Agitations for Restructuring of Nigeria

The agitation for restructuring of Nigeria's polity in recent times has increased, and the call is coming from different ethnoreligious groups across the country due to various reasons. In the views of some scholars (Adagbabiri & Okolie, 2018; Baba & Aeysinghe, 2017; Mohammed & Aisha, 2018; Oyadiran & Toyin, 2015), the causes of the agitation for restructuring include poverty, increased manipulation of religion and ethnicity, inability to withstand election defeat, dissatisfaction with leadership quality, escalation of insecurities, conflicts over revenue allocation or resource control, cattle rustling, kidnapping, cultism, armed banditry, attacks on oil facilities and installations, bitter politics of ethno-religious and regional identities, ethnoreligious intolerances, herdsman-farmers conflicts, unemployment, socio-economic and infrastructural deteriorations, and corruption. The agitation for restructuring and true federalism has been right from the forceful amalgamation of the southern and

northern protectorates based on dissatisfaction with inadequate representation (Oyadiran & Toyin, 2015). The militarisation of governance increased the persistent demand and agitation for resource control and return to balanced federalism in Nigeria (Anyadike, 2013; Ugwueze, 2019).

In addition, Abbas and Wakili, (2018), discovered that the agitation for restructuring of Nigerian polity revolves around resource control, review of the revenue sharing formula, devolution of power, return to a regional federal system of government based on the existing six geopolitical zones, return to parliamentary system of government, removal of immunity clause from the constitution, creation of state police, and the role of traditional rulers. This shows that there is great dissatisfaction among the constituting units of the Nigerian federal system which is prone to various demands and interests. This becomes a situation, as described by Igboke (2020), of threat to national integration and development, citing the case of Indigenous people of Biafra popularly known as IPOB, and the Niger Delta militant who are strongly agitating for restructuring of the Nigerian polity. Similarly, Zakari, et al. (2018) in their study revealed that the underlining reason behind 70% of all agitations for restructuring is centred on resource control either directly or indirectly because Nigeria is operating an oil-based economy. In other words, Nigeria needs diversification of its economy to pave ways for competitiveness amongst the federating units.

Moreover, the agitation is due to the failure of Nigeria's federalism which has too much power concentrated at the federal level while other levels of governments continue to exist as appendages; this runs ultra-vires to the federal principle and poses a serious threat to the Nigerian State and its federal practice, this lop-sided and imbalance nature of Nigeria's federal practice have degenerated into national challenges symptomized by perpetual domination of minority by the majority ethnic groups, ineffective leadership, ethnic rivalry, unequal distribution of national wealth, as well as long term military incursion into the nation's politics (Victor, et al., 2019), and reduction in federal government exclusive list (87) in favour of concurrent list(15) (Onuigbo, 2019). Thus, the calls for restructuring is borne out of some perceived levels of injustice, inequality, and discontentment, witnessed by Nigeria society as a result of bad leadership and faulty federalism which has brought myriads of socio-political and economic problems and has resulted in incessant fallouts between various regions, ethnic groups and federal government (Ebiziem, & Onyemere, 2018).

The agitation led to a conference that was held from 1994 to 1995 and resulted in the division of the country into six geopolitical zones namely south-south, south-east, south-west, north-east, north-central, and north-west (Enogholase, 2013). According to Adeosun, Ismail, and Zengeni (2017) the South-South, South-East and South-West position on resource control is that

each federating unit should be allowed to manage resources found within its territory, and pay agreed percentage of its income to the central government for the purpose of financial autonomy of the federating units.

Contrarily, the federal government controls all the resources in Nigeria and shares the same using a formula that benefits it more while starving other tiers of government such as the state and local government. As such, the federal government gets 52.68% monthly share of the country's revenue while the 36 states and 774 local governments are left with 47.32% (that is, 26.72% for states and 20.60% for local governments) (Onuigbo & Eme, 2015). In view of this sharing formula and inadequate financial status of the federating states, Adeniran (2017) argued that there have been several calls for restructuring of the Nigerian political structure as the current overbearing power of the central government has been described as defective and impediment to sustainable development in the country.

Factors Militating against the Restructuring of Nigeria

In spite of the agitations or calls for the restructuring of Nigerian political structure from various regions, decisions reached on the matter, particularly from the 1994 to 1995 conference on restructuring of Nigeria, have not been implemented. This is due to several factors militating against the implementation of decisions on the restructuring. Baba and Aeysinghe (2017) stressed that politics in Nigeria in both orientation and character, the calls or agitations for restructuring Nigeria and resistance of same, and the calls for national unity are mostly dishonestly driven to achieve certain personal interests of the few. Agamuo (2014) opined that the 2014 National Conference was made up of weak men and women, failed politicians, retired military officers who have over the years been recycled in such conferences and constitutions making, ethno-regional loyalists who are largely responsible for the failures of the Nigerian state and whose major concern was how to share national resources, but not leading Nigeria out of the troubles they had embroiled her into. Similarly, Baba and Aeysinghe (2017) pointed out that the political class whose supports are required to make the devolution of power possible are strongly united because the federalism in principle (unity) of the country is fetching them serious fortunes through corruption and injustice at the expense of the ordinary citizens.

Furthermore, Harry (2020) revealed that the challenges facing the restructuring of Nigeria include the issue of the definition of restructuring among groups across the country, elite interests in the present structure, fear of discomfort amongst some ethnic nationalities, political docility of the citizenry who have resigned their fate to the dictates of the elites, and ethno-regional rivalry or consideration. For Idoko and Umeh (2021) implementation of the restructuring of Nigeria is being hindered by selfishness, lack of political will,

ethnic considerations, lack of agreement among agitators, and constitutional limitations. This means that there must be a concerted effort of both the citizenry and the elites for a successful restructuring of Nigeria to attain the needed development.

The major factors militating against restructuring Nigerian polity could be summarised to include: elite interest, fear of domination, political idiosyncrasy, military incursion, corruption, fear of suppression, citizenry laissez-faire attitude, nature of the existing structure, ethno-regional rivalry, leadership problem, constitutional issues, weak institution, and issues of federal character and its principles (Ideobodo, Okolo & Eze, 2018; Ita, Ebong & Inimo-Etele, 2019; Ogoh, Halilu & Vandi, 2020).

Restructuring Nigeria to Attain Sustainable Development Programmes

The nature of fiscal federalism currently practiced in Nigeria where the Federal government dictates the tax, the tax base, and sharing formula within the three levels of government and expand its fiscal jurisdiction with little or no fiscal responsibilities, left the lower levels of government with enormous responsibilities without fiscal power (Odigwe & Aibieyi, 2015). This arrangement has hindered the federating units from implementing adequate sustainable development programmes across their jurisdictions. In most cases, they lack access to quality education, health services, mechanized agricultural programmes, and other infrastructural development. In view of the foregoing, Ajibola (2008) identified the following as the major challenges to Nigerian fiscal federalism, which lead to unsustainable development programmes in Nigeria:

(a) Mismatch between revenue sources and functions of the various tiers of the Nigerian government. The revenue allocated to the lower tiers of government is lower in comparison to the enormous duties expected of them. This has impeded sustainable infrastructural development in the country.

(b) Frequent change in government and incessant military coups reduce the operations and effectiveness of the Nigerian fiscal federalism. This is because, during the military intervention, the constitution is usually suspended in favour of decrees and edicts. In this situation, the principles of fiscal federalism were affected and this, in turn, affected development in the country, particularly within the federating units (state and local government areas).

(c) Dwindling revenue due to reduction in the country's export and fluctuations in the prices of the nation's commodities in the international commodity market are among the challenges of fiscal federalism in Nigeria. This, also, has hampered the pace of sustainable development in Nigeria. This is because the federating units would not get enough sources to fund required sustainable development programmes.

(d) Economic and financial mismanagement which is reflected in corruption and financial impropriety of government functionaries have actually affected development in Nigeria, especially where the leaders are corrupt and self-centred.

(e) The sharing of federally revenue reflects political applications rather than socio-economic consideration.

(f) Rapid increase in fiscal unit thereby reducing the funds allocated to each state and local government in the country.

In view of the foregoing, Nwosu (2016) argued that restructuring Nigeria will stem the tide of restiveness in many parts of the country to a large extent as it is capable of resolving the problems of citizenship, religion, resource control, and fiscal federalism; and this will bring about rapid sustainable development across Nigeria. Thus, restructuring in its true meaning would be beneficial to all Nigerians from all the geo-political zones; because every geopolitical zone would have adequate resources that can sustain them and it would be the best way for diversification of economy and education (Akande, 2018; Atuma, 2018). In support of this view, Odigwe and Aibieyi (2015) stressed that sustainable development could only be achieved through proper policies implementation in an atmosphere where the federating units manage and are in full control of their resources to enable them to develop at their own pace.

Olaleye and Olowu (1989) opined that restructuring would not only produce efficient and equitable services through the assistance of local understanding but will also lead to greater participation and democracy that would result in popular consent to government and improve political stability, increased resource mobilisation, and reduce dependence on the central finance, give room to greater accountability and more responsive government that would attain the aspirations of its citizens. True federalism based on restructuring demands cooperation between each level of government in order to promote the welfare of the people through their combined powers towards attaining sustainable development (Nwabueze, 1982).

Implications for macro social work practice

There are several factors, such as elite interest, fear of domination, political idiosyncrasy, military incursion, corruption, fear of suppression, nature of the existing structure, ethno-regional rivalry, leadership problem, constitutional issues, weak institution, amongst others, hindering the restructuring of Nigerian polity at the detriment of attainment of sustainable development programmes that would improve the standard of living of her citizens. This calls for the inclusion of macro or policy social work practice in Nigeria. Macro social work practice involves formulation, implementation, and evaluation of social policies to enhance adequate delivery of social services to

all and sundry, particularly, the vulnerable group. It implies extending from an individual-based practice (micro) to community and or organisational practice, to promote social change and development by following certain values and principles such as social justice, human rights, and collective responsibilities (Jansson, 2018). Social workers at this level of practice, are involved in analysing and contributing to existing social policies, formulating and implementing favourable social policies at community and legislative levels that could enhance restructuring of Nigeria's political structure. Social work practice at this level has an influence on the devolution of governance and fiscal powers to the federating units of true Nigerian federalism.

Macro social work practice involves purposefully participating in and contributing to policy formulation and implementation with a view to amending policies that are unfair, oppressive, discriminatory, or unsuitable to people, and policy evaluation leading to formulations of new policies and or changing existing policies, all leading to the achievement of social work goals with adherence to values and principles (Jansson, 2018). Thus, the interventions of macro social work practice in Nigeria will bring about the understanding of restructuring that would lead to the implementation of sustainable development programmes in Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, this paper examined restructuring and sustainable development programmes in Nigeria. implications for macro social work practice. The study relied on secondary data which were collected from journals, textbooks, newspapers, and internet materials. It conceptualised restructuring and sustainable development, identified reasons foragitations forrestructuring of Nigeria, factors militating against the restructuring of Nigeria. The paper also discussed restructuring Nigeria to attain sustainable development and the implications for macro social work practice.

Furthermore, to enable effectively and hinge free restructuring of Nigerian political structure, this paper, made the following recommendations:

1. There is a need for a national conference consisting of an equal number of representatives from each of the existing geopolitical zones of Nigeria. This body should be legally backed to draft a working constitution that would create a true federal system where the federating units have fiscal autonomy, and as well responsive to the central government by contributing a required percentage of their incomes.
2. There is a need for the professionalisation of social work in Nigeria. This would allow professional social workers to be involved in the analysis, formulation, and change of social policies to enhance the

provision of social services and sustainable development programmes in Nigeria.

3. The central government and all federating units (states) of the Nigerian federation should create enabling environment for active citizen participation in development programmes. This will enhance the implementation of sustainable development programmes across the nation.

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THE IMPERATIVE OF ATTITUDINO-INSTITUTIONAL 'RESTRUCTURING' FOR COOPERATIVE FEDERALISMIN NIGERIA

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Abstract

It amounts to saying the obvious that the call for restructuring is a persistent currency in Nigeria. This is a symptomatic of the fact that, after more than 66 years of adoption of federalism and 60 years of political independence, federalism has not translated to development of the diverse groups that make-up the polity. The experience so far reflects a gyration from dividends' optimism to dashed hope. Though as loud as the calls for restructuring are, they are devoid of consensus on what to restructure. While some call for creation of more states, some advocate for the reversal to regionalism. While some call for reversal to parliamentary democracy, some canvasses for the continuation of presidential system with modification. While some call for devolution of more power and resources to the component states, some express fear of possible abuse of this by the states. This paper, however, argues that whatever dimension political restructuring takes, very crucial to the survival of Nigerian federation is attitudinal and institutional reorientation. Premising its argument on pluralist perspective, it submits that changing the mindset of Nigerians on Nigeria from a 'mere geographical entity', where groups compete to outwit one another in resource contestation, to a 'political entity' that needs the will, contribution and cooperation of all in exploiting its diversities for inclusive development. The dominant perception of Nigeria as an 'accidental creation' of Britain in fulfilling her imperialist ambitions must be discarded while the spirit of collectivism must supersede that of micro-nationalism.

Keywords: Pluralism, Federalism, Restructuring, Value-reorientation, Micro-nationalism Nationhood.

Introduction

As one of the end-products of British colonial incursion in Africa, Nigeria is a complex country with interwoven diversities. The persistent and loud calls for political restructuring, from almost all segments of Nigeria, pinpoint to the fact of dissatisfaction on the current state of the country by

different groups that make up the country. As a federation of multiplicity of ethnic groups, diverse languages, variegated cultures and religions, Nigeria is undergoing a lot of difficulties in transforming her diversities into development. A combination of diversities coupled with decades of mis-governance is engendering systemic stress, culminating into outcries for political restructuring. Political restructuring, as being called for, is however amorphous. Apart from the fact that the country had, since amalgamation in 1914, being undergoing restructuring in one form or the other, there is patent lack of consensus on what to be restructured.

Given her diversities, the systemic stress being witnessed by Nigeria is natural and not unexpected. What is not expected, however, is the failure of federalism to engender ‘unity in diversity’ in the country. The founding fathers of Nigeria were unanimous in their preference for federalism as the most suitable governance system for the country, largely due to their avowed conviction that federalism has all what it takes to glue the diverse groups that make up the country together without jeopardizing their separate identities. However, close to seven decades of formal adoption of federalism, Nigeria, as rightly observed by Ojo (2009), “is still convoluting” (p. 385). Federalism is finding it extremely difficult to foster unity without uniformity in the country as the character of its ethnic composition portrays what Furnival (1948) described as “... a medley (of peoples), for they mix but do not combine” (Quoted in Ojo, 2009, p. 385).

As such, it is our conviction that the fundamental problem faced by the Nigerian federation is the paucity of corporate interest in Nigeria, as a corporate body, on the part of various groups that make up the country. We share Ojo (2009)’s view that the problem of Nigeria is “that of achieving solidarity in action and purposes in the midst of hundreds of ethnic nationalities each exerting both centrifugal and centripetal forces on central issues” (p. 384). As observed elsewhere, “each group is like an individual mechanically existing in a group to which he has no sense of belonging. Such individual will find it extremely unattractive to work to sustain or improve the fortune of that group” (Hassan, 2013, p. 41). It is in this regard that this paper argues that, beyond structural restructuring, the most pressing restructuring that Nigeria needs at this moment in time is the change of mindset. Adopting expository approach with heavy reliance on documented information and personal experience, it is argued that whatever dimension political restructuring takes, very crucial to the survival of Nigerian federation is attitudinal and institutional reorientation.

Structurally, the paper is divided into six sections. Following this introduction is a brief excursion into the root of the crisis i.e. colonial incursion and adoption of federalism. The third section examines the theoretical basis of the adoption of federalism in a heterogeneous polity. The fourth section examines political restructuring as a continuous art of state-crafting in Nigeria.

The fifth section argues for the attitudinal and institutional reorientation as the basis of restructuring in Nigeria. The last section concludes the exposition.

A Brief Excursion into the Genesis of the Crisis

The root of Nigeria's current problems lies in the course of her evolution as a country. Traditional oral histories and literatures attest to the fact that contact between various groups that later make up the country had been constant and continuous from time immemorial (Iweriebor, 1982; Osuntokun, 1979; Tamuno, 1998). British colonial conquest, however, altered the pattern of independent existence of these groups. Between 1861 (when Lagos was annexed with the imperial state) and 1914 (when the Northern and Southern protectorates were amalgamated) these peoples were brought together under colonial authority as a result of conquest, rather than the desire to develop the existing linkages of pre-colonial inter-group relations (Osadolor, 1998; Hassan and Lamidi, 20014; National Conference, 2014). The submission of Osadolor that "the decision of Lord Lugard to amalgamate the Northern and Southern protectorates on January 1, 1914 did not result from the pressure of local groups; it derived from considerations of administrative convenience as interpreted by the colonial power" (1998, p. 35) is apt. The same opinion is expressed by Tamuno (1998, p. 15) that: "Pragmatic, economic-based consideration... provided the *raison d'être* of the 1898-1914 schemes concerning amalgamation of Nigeria. Local public opinion... was neither sought nor given. The prime-movers were British; their own interests... mattered most to them". Consequently, more than ten decades after the exercise, the contestation of Nigeria as a corporate entity still rife in the polity.

This is not unconnected with the fact that Britain emphasized rather than de-emphasized particularistic tendencies of the different ethnic groups in the country (Osuntokun, 1979). For instance, in spite of the amalgamation proclamation, the Northern and Southern administrations remained separate. Inter-ethnic contact was not encouraged as public servants were hardly transferred from the North to the South and vice versa. Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (who later became the Prime Minister) lamented in 1947 that: "since the amalgamation of southern and northern provinces in 1914, Nigeria has existed as one country only on paper... it is still far from being united. Nigerian unity is only British intention for the country" (Balewa, 1947, quoted in Osuntokun, 1979, p. 99).

Series of advocacy by the nationalists for a unified Nigeria were rebuffed by the colonial authorities. Sir Hugh Clifford, Lugard's successor, dismissed the idea of a unified Nigeria as inconceivable (Osadolor, 1998). This explains the exclusion of the Northern Nigeria from the Legislative Council established by his constitution introduced in 1922. As a result, was emerged up till 1946 was a country and two different administrations and a growing schism

in tradition, character and orientations. However, when the British finally decided to bring the North and South together, through the Richard Constitution of 1946, the two protectorates had developed different characters of their own and these became very difficult to reconcile (Osuntokun, 1979; Tamuno, 1970; Tamuno, 1998; Osadolor, 1998).

As such, decades of British rule and divide-and-rule strategies prevented 'Nigerians' from developing interest in corporate existence of Nigeria. It is in realization of the arduous nature of national unification in Nigeria that Sir Arthur Richard, in his address at a joint meeting with the Royal Empire Society in London on 28 January 1948, affirmed that:

...it is only the accident of British suzerainty which has made Nigeria one country. It is far from being one country or one nation socially or even economically... socially and politically there are deep differences between the major tribal groups. They do not speak the same language and they have highly divergent customs and ways of life and they represent different stages of culture (Lord Milverton, 1948, quoted in Osuntokun, 1979, p. 99).

It is therefore natural that the period between 1947 and 1954 witnessed intense political competition between and among major ethnic groups on one hand and between them and the minorities on the other. The opinion expressed by some nationalist leaders show the degree of distrust between various groupings and that Nigerian unity was on a shaky footing. For instance, in his *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, Chief Obafemi Awolowo opined that:

Nigeria is not a nation: it is a mere geographical expression. There are no 'Nigerians' in the same sense as there are 'English' or 'Welsh' or 'French'; the word Nigeria is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not (Awolowo, 1947, pp. 47 - 48).

What all these point out is that the persistent calls for restructuring is largely hinged on the historical faultiness of the evolution of the Nigerian state. Since the amalgamation exercise of 1914, latent forces of disunity and disbelief in Nigeria as country are rife. The situation in the country is that of cut-throat competition for political power and perquisites, inter-ethnic antagonism and mutual distrust, with national aspiration sacrificed on the altar of sectional interest. Given that British colonial authority did not conscientiously try to integrate the diverse groups that make up Nigeria, the amalgamation of 1914 was merely an ambivalent integration which imposed on the various groupings in the country some sort of parochialism based on their ignorance of one another. As observed by Elaigwu (comments on Osuntokun's paper), it was parochialism of ignorance in a colonial regime that changed to parochialism,

based on awareness of one another in a competitive setting, where one has to turn to one's own ethnic group and organize it in order to counter the other groups.

Adoption of Federalism in a Heterogeneous Polity: Theoretical Underpinnings

The adoption of federalism is often hinged on cultural pluralism. As such, the theory of political pluralism can best be used to explain the adoption of federal system of government in a heterogeneous polity. A plural society exists where political divisions follow very closely social differentiation, especially those particularly salient in a society. This is represented in the mold of religious, ideological, linguistic, regional, cultural, racial or ethnic differentiation. Pluralism denotes "a condition in which members of a common society are internally distinguished by fundamental differences in their institutional practices" (Omoruyi, 1979, p. 373). The foundation of pluralism, as a political theory was laid by M. G. Smith. Smith advocated for a theory of plurality to be set against the general theory of functionally integrated society. He emphasizes the role of political institutions in binding divergent groups in a society together. He argues that a heterogeneous society has two structural aspects. On one hand, there is a set of institutions binding all individuals together in a single continuum, on the other, there are those which bind together the members of each and separate communities (Smith, 1965). The political features of social pluralism, as submits by him, "...center in the corporate constitution of the total society... The basic corporate divisions within the society usually coincide with lines of institutional cleavages..." (Smith, 1965). Be that the case, pluralism entails the incorporation of groups from diverse origin, background experiences and cultures within a political system. It encourages the development of a common tradition while preserving the right of each group to maintain its cultural heritage.

The plural character of societies often necessitates the adoption of federalism. This was recognized by Osaghae by submitting that "the nature of the articulation of the problematics of diversity ... made federalism an appropriate contemplation" in plural societies (Osaghae, 2004, p. 162). Federalism, according to Jinadu (1979, p. 15) is a form of governmental and institutional structure, deliberately designed by political "architects" to cope with the twin but difficult task of maintaining unity while also preserving diversity. Federalism is, therefore, meant to ensure peaceful cohabitation of diverse groups in a plural society. As succinctly puts by Omoruyi, the nexus between federalism and plural society is seen in the fact that the component units:

... are at one and the same time well integrated parts of an overall society and also separate civil societies in their own

right with their own political systems (para-political systems). That the individual units (social groups or states) have preserved their integrity not through a sharp separation of their political system from the national or general political system but within an intricate frame-work of co-operative relationships that preserve their structural integrity (1979, p. 373).

Hence, the potential of federalism to accommodate diversities, through the management of social cleavages and the schisms that often occur, provides a suitable option for plural societies. Its mechanistic character of shared and separate rule provides a kind of assurances for political stability and peaceful coexistence amongst the variegated segments of plural societies. A well-organized federal state can boost national unity while preserving the peculiarities of cleavages within the federal arrangements in the overall interests of stability and socio-economic development (Osadolor, 1998).

Historical accounts on the adoption of federalism in Nigeria attest to the symmetric relationship between pluralism and federalism (Tamuno, 1998; Osadolor, 1998; Osuntokun, 1979; Nnoli, 1980). As Ojo (2009) rightly observed, the need to weld together the disparate ethno-religious and linguistic entities in Nigeria warranted the adoption of a federal constitution in 1954. The discourse on federalism as the most suitable governance system for Nigeria dates back to the 1940s. Given the North-South dichotomy that polarized the polity after the introduction of Richard Constitution of 1946, the general trend was a bias for federalism. For instance, during the Central Legislative Council Debate on March 10, 1948, Sir Tafawa Balewa argued for federalism. In his words: "I am beginning to think, Sir, that Nigeria's political future may only lie in a federation..." (Quoted in Osadolor, 1998, p. 37). It is also noteworthy that various delegates from the three regions that participated in the Ibadan Constitutional Conference of 1950 were unanimous in the preference for federalism.

However, the socio-political conditions in which federalism was adopted in 1954 were not suitable for its effective functioning. Ideally, federal structure should be built from the bottom of a given political system i.e. from the consensus of the various ethnic nationalities that make up the system. In Nigeria rather than ethnic nationalities, regions or states had been the focal-points since 1954. Meanwhile, the idea of a plural society *a la* federalism, as observed by Omoruyi (1979), presupposes that the component units i.e. ethnic nationalities form the basis of the federation. It is on this note that Chief Obafemi Awolowo described the federal system instituted by the British colonial authorities as an "abominable, disrupting and divisive British heritage" (Awolowo, 1968, p. 69). As such the federal structure laid in 1954 and the nature of competitive relationship between the diverse group that make up Nigeria since then

contribute largely to the weak national orientation and commitment on the part of these groups. Woven into the fabric of suspicious relationship, competitive federalism rather than cooperative federalism thrives in Nigeria. This situation adversely affects the attitude of various ethnic nationalities in Nigeria towards the country as a unifying entity which deserves the loyalty of all. This largely explains the persistent clamour for political restructuring since colonial period.

Political Restructuring: A Continuous Art of State-crafting in Nigeria

It is our contention that political restructuring is not a new vocabulary in the Nigerian political lexicon; it even predates the birth of Nigeria as a colonial entity. The country itself can be said to be a product of British colonial restructuring and since the historical amalgamation of 1914, the country has undergone series of restructuring both vertically and horizontally.

The process of structuring and restructuring of the territory that later became Nigeria commenced immediately after the Berlin Conference of 1884/5. Following the recognition, during the conference, the supremacy of the British interests on the Lower Niger and in the Oil Rivers, the British declared the coastal regions of Nigeria (excluding Lagos) the Oil Rivers Protectorate. Expansion of the protectorate northwards warranted its change of name to Niger Coast Protectorate in 1893 (Ejimofofor, 1987). As of 1900 (when colonization of the territories that later form Nigeria was completed), there were three distinct administrative entities i.e. the Protectorate and Colony of Lagos, Niger Coast Protectorate and Northern Protectorate (Ejimofofor, 1987; Tamuno, 1998; Fage and Alabi, 2017). The need for further restructuring brought about the setting up of the 1898 Niger Committee (popularly known as Selborne Committee) which recommended piece-meal amalgamation of the territories. Hence, the merger of the Protectorate and Colony of Lagos with Niger Coast Protectorate as Southern protectorate in 1906 thereby restructuring the British colonial territories in the Lower Niger and Oil Rivers into two – Northern and Southern Protectorates. The need for further restructuring culminated in the amalgamation of the two protectorates in 1914 signaling the birth of Nigeria as single colonial entity (Tamuno, 1998).

Nigeria also underwent a lot of restructuring during colonial period, mostly due to the pressure mounted on the colonial authorities by the nationalists. The colonial territory metamorphosed from a Southern-based Legislative Council set up by Clifford Constitution of 1922 to an inclusive one under Lord Milverton (later Arthur Richard). The process of restructuring the territory from a single administrative entity to three provinces of East, North and West started during Sir Bernard Bourdillon and institutionalized by Richard Constitution of 1946. The series of events that trailed the introduction of Macpherson Constitution in 1951 led to agitation for further structural changes that climaxed in the shift from unitary system to federal system in 1954. The

1957, 1958 and 1955 Constitutional Conferences also brought about some structural changes in the territory in preparing it for political independence (Fasua, 2018b; Fage and Alabi, 2017; Osuntokun, 1979).

Since independence in 1960, Nigeria has undergone series of restructuring as regard to the dominant demands of the proponents of restructuring. Reforms have been introduced in the areas of revenue allocation, placating itchy ethnic groups, state creation, administrative and governance system among others. With 1963 Constitution, Nigeria was changed from a state under the British monarch as titular head of state (by the 1960 Constitution, Queen of England still remained the Governor-General of Nigeria but was represented by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe) to a republican state. The country was also restructured from a federation of three regions to a federation of four regions with the creation of the Mid-Western Region on August 9, 1963 (The National Conference, 2014). In his attempt to tame the monster of ethnic sectarianism, General Aguiyi-Ironsi, reverted Nigeria back to unitary system with the Unification Decree (Decree No. 34) of 1966. This reversal, however, created an atmosphere of fear and suspicion which snowballed into further political crises (Hassan, 2013). As part of his effort to prevent the secession of the Eastern Region from the federation, Gowon administration restructured the country from a federation of four regions to a federation of twelve states. His States (Creation and Transitional Provisions) Decree (No. 13) of 1967 changed the administrative structure of Nigeria and considerably altered power configuration between the then regions and the central government (Elaigwu, 1979; Alabi and Fage, 2017).

The military regime of Murtala-Obasanjo also restructured Nigeria in various dimensions. It set up the Aguda Commission that recommended the relocation of the Federal Capital Territory from Lagos to Abuja. It created additional seven states thereby making Nigeria a federation of nineteen states. Obasanjo embarked upon a comprehensive local government reforms (1976 Local Government Reforms) which introduced a uniformed local government system in Nigeria. Notable among the restructurings done by the regime is the adoption of presidential system of government in place of the parliamentary system inherited from Britain. Under the Babangida military administration, Nigeria was restructured first from a federation of nineteen states to twenty-one states, and later to thirty states. The country also transformed from multiparty system to two-party system. Other notable restructurings during done by the regime include: the establishment of Traditional Councils and conferring on States the powers to create Local Government Development Areas (LGDAs) and part-time legislative system (Adejumobi, 1997). Restructuring of the country continued under General Abacha. His administration created additional six states making Nigeria a federation of thirty-six states. The 1995 National Conference organized by the regime also came up with new initiatives of six

geo-political zones and power rotation among the zones that have now been entrenched in Nigeria's political landscape (National Conference, 2014; Dan-Azumi, Jega and Egwu, 2019).

The transition to civil rule in May 1999 has brought about the intensification of the clamour for restructuring of the polity. Against the backdrop of widespread pressures and agitation by Nigerians for opportunities to rethink the historical evolution, context and basis of their continued existence in one Nigeria, President Olusegun Obasanjo convened a National Political Reform Conference from February-July 2005. Among the issues of political reforms were: the federal structure, fiscal federalism (especially in relation to resource control), form of government, citizenship, accountability and ethics in government, the Independent National Electoral Commission, political parties, reform of the electoral system, the economy, foreign policy and the environment. Premised on further agitations over a number of issues on federal structure such as devolution of powers, fiscal federal arrangement; and other specific issues of governance such as public accountability, electoral reform, strengthening of political institutions, federal character and state creation, President Jonathan inaugurated the National Conference on March 17, 2014, as an attempt in re-engineering of the country (National Conference, 2014). Though, key resolutions of these Conferences were not implemented, but some of the issues discussed influenced most legislative acts enacted and the amendments made on the 1999 Constitution.

It must, however, be reiterated that although restructuring had been within the Nigerian political lexicon since the colonization period, there has never been any time that its demand in the country has been audibly and persistently pronounced. The amplified, cantankerous and edgy nature of the clamour for restructuring has a strong connection with the unanswered question of 'national questions'. Past restructuring efforts have not succeeded in creating a polity characterized by mutual trust, national identity and consciousness. This is imperative given the fact that the need for a more effective national political order and national integration amidst political pluralism informed the political restructuring which led to the formal adoption of federalism in 1954.

The Imperative of Attitudinal and Institutional Restructuring for Cooperative Federalism

In trying to explain our development conundrum, several factors have been put forward. However, it appears to me that the fundamental challenge is that we have all along positioned the cart before the horse. Before we can think of development, the first task that we have is that of nation-building. You cannot develop what you do not have... The development of a nation necessarily derives from "elite consensus". However, this consensus can only be forged after some fundamental questions, what we call national questions, have been

settled. Where the very existence of the nation is easily brought to question at the slightest provocation, then it becomes clear that our primary task is to build a nation first, as a fundamental basis for development (Fayemi, 2020, p. 5).

The above submission by Governor Kayode Fayemi of Ekiti State and the Chairman of Nigeria's Governor Forum sums it up on the imperativeness of resetting Nigerians' attitude and institutional patterns for the country to transit from competitive to cooperative federalism. Very central to this transition is the mutual trust between and among the various groups that make up the federation. Attitude connotes peoples' beliefs and feelings about objects around them which shape how they relate with those objects. It is a fixed mental disposition that predetermines a person's response to, and interpretations of situations. By attitudinal restructuring, we mean changing of mental attitude from the current hostile disposition towards other ethno-religious groups. Though institutions are widely understood as controlling, organized organs of a state and formal norms and principles of political process (Lauth, 2000), we use the concept as informal norm patterns which shape behavior, and which in turn structure societal action and enhance the confidence with which citizens can expect reciprocal behavior from fellow citizens (Helmke and Levitsky, 2004). By institutional restructuring, we therefore, mean rejigging the behavioural norms and pattern of relationship between Nigerians in such a way as to ensure inclusiveness and mutual trust. This is necessary as the real-life processes and empirically observed behaviour and disposition of Nigerians towards one another are diametrically opposed to the formal rules.

In spite the amplified nature of the call for restructuring of the superstructure of the Nigerian federation, very little is said about the need to restructure its 'infrastructure' i.e. the reorientation of the attitude, mindsets and informal pattern of relations between and among various groups that make up the polity. The problematic nature of Nigerian citizenship within Nigeria glaringly attests to the unfriendly 'you-are-not-part-of-us' disposition of Nigerians towards one another. Contrary to the practice in most federal states such as US, Canada, Switzerland and India, where 'state of origin' is synonymous with 'state of residence', in Nigeria 'state of origin' connotes 'indigeneity'. The implication of this is seen in the discriminatory practices and behaviour against those who are regarded as 'non-indigenes' residing, and carrying out his duties and responsibilities as a citizen, in another state. In most states of the federation, 'non-indigenes' hardly get permanent and pensionable appointment with state government rather; contract appointment. Most state-owned tertiary institutions charge differential fees. Table 1 for instance, shows the discriminatory school fees charged by tertiary institutions in Kwara State. Even in some federal government owned institutions, there are covert discriminatory practices against members of staff from non-hosting states or

communities. This category of employees is often treated as ‘second-class’ staff in both attitude and conducts.

Table 1: Schedule of Fees by Tertiary Institutions in Kwara State (2020/2021 Session)

Institution	Category of Student	Indigene (Amount in ₦)	Non-indigene (Amount in ₦)
Kwara State University, Malete	New Students	99,500	200,000
	Returning Students	109,500	210,000
*Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin	ND I	50,000	70,000
	ND II	38,000	53,000
	HND I	55,500	75,500
	HND II	43,000	58,500
Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin	Year I	55,950	57,950
	Year II	43,800	45,800
	Year III	40,800	42,800
**Kwara State College of Education, Oro	New Students	35,000–	45,00-60,000
	Returning Students	50,000	20,000-25,000
		15,000-20,000	
Kwara State College of Nursing, Ilorin	Basic Nursing	121,000	136,000
	Post-Basic Nursing	121,000	144,000
Kwara State College of Health Tech., Offa	-	58,000	63,000
Kwara State Coll. of Arab. & Isla Studies	ND Arab. &	40,500	45,000
	Isl. Std.	81,500	86,500
	B.A. Arabic	81,500	86,500
	B.A. Islamic Studies		

*Full Time Students

**This depends on the course being offered

Source: Compiled by the Authors

There is thus a conscious and nostalgic feeling of ‘my state’ on the part of most Nigerians who work and reside outside his or her state of origin. Consequent upon this, some of them prefer to build house in their home town, marry from there and encourage children to do same, get vehicle plate number from their state of origin, go there to vote, and be buried in their villages. This is

in spite of the fact that some sections of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) prohibit discrimination. For instance, Section 15(2) states that, "...national integration shall be actively encouraged, whilst discrimination on the grounds of state of origin, sex, religion, status, ethnic or religious association or ties shall be prohibited". Sub-section 4 of the section further states that, "The state shall foster a feeling of belonging and of involvement among the various peoples of the Federation, to the end that loyalty to the nation shall override sectional loyalties". However, when it comes to assigning equal status to citizens in a state, indigene/non-indigene dichotomy often sets in.

This problem, as points out in the second section of the paper, has been with the various groups that make up Nigeria since colonial age. Since then, whenever a group felt aggrieved over issues, the threat to secede from the federation follows in quick succession. During the 1950 Ibadan Conference, the delegates from the North threatened to secede if the North and South do not have the same number of representatives in the proposed Central Legislative Council. The same threat was issued by the Northern caucus in the Central Legislative Council in 1953 following their humiliation by the Lagosians for their objection to motion for independence in 1953 moved by Chief Anthony Enahoro. Chief Obafemi Awolowo also openly threatened in 1954 that the Western Region would secede due to the proposal of making Lagos the federal capital (Osuntokun, 1979). The Eastern Region also threatened to pull out of the 'forced' union given the failure of Chief Nnamdi Azikwe to win a seat in the Central Legislative Council in 1952 due to what the Igbos perceived as the Action Group and Yorubas gang-up against him (Awofeso, 2017). The post-independence years have witnessed several and sometimes volatile secessionist attempts. On February 23, 1966 the Niger Delta Volunteer Force, under the leadership of Major Isaac Adaka Boro, declared the Niger Delta Republic as an independent state. He was however suppressed by the federal forces in a battle that lasted for twelve days. The historical Nigerian Civil War was also fought to tame the secessionist ambition of the Biafrans.

Since the transition to civil rule in 1999, Nigeria has witnessed unprecedented cases of separatist groups agitating for self-determination or greater autonomy (see Table 2 below). In the South-eastern part of the country, there are Biafra resurgent groups such as the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Biafra Zionist Federation (BZF) and the Indigenous people of Biafra (IPOB) agitating for the sovereign Republic of Biafra. In the South-south, militant groups such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) have also agitated for the Niger Delta Republic. In the South-west, O'odua Nationalist Coalition, in September 2020, called on Yoruba people to prepare for sovereign nation i.e. O'odua Republic (Olumide, 2020a). In furthering the agitation, Yoruba One Voice, a

Diaspora group, carried out rallies in 176 countries across six continents in September 2020 (Oluhide, 2020b).

Table 2: Major Separatist Groups in Nigeria since Transition to Civil Rule, 1999 – 2021

S/N	Group	Formation Year	Leader(s)	Demand/Vision
1.	Movement for the actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB)	1999	Ralph Nwazuruike	Biafra Republic
4.	O’odua People’s Congress (OPC)	1999	Dr. Fredrick Fasehun & Aare Gani Adams	O’odua Republic
11.	Middle Belt Forum (MBF)	1999	Dr. Pogu Bitrus, Air Com. Dan Suleiman (rtd)	Middle Belt Republic
10.	Arewa Youth Assembly (AYA)	2001	Mohammed Salihu Danlami, Muhammed Shuaibu	Arewa Republic
5.	Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)	2004	Henry Okah, Mujahid Asari-Dokubo, Ateke Tom, Godswill Tamuno, John Togo etc	Resource Control and Niger Delta Republic
6.	Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF)	2004	Mujahid Asari-Dokubo	Resource Control and Niger Delta Republic
2.	Biafra Zionist Movement (BZM)	2010	Benjamin Onwuka	Biafra Republic
3.	Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)	2012	Nnamdi Kanu	Biafra Republic
8.	O’odua Nationalist Coalition (ONC)	2013	Oluwole Suleiman, Michael Popoola, Aduke Fadahunsi	O’odua Republic
7.	Niger Delta Avengers (NDA)	2016	Brig. Gen. Mudoch Agbinibo	Resource Control and Niger Delta Republic
9.	Coalition of Northern Groups (CNG)	2016	Balarabe Rufai, Abdulazeed Suleiman, Yerima Shettima, Dr. Muhammad Nawaila,	Safeguarding the interest of the North and Arewa Republic

Source: Compiled by the Authors

Alongside the secessionist agitations is the menace of quit notice by the dominant group in a particular region to another group from other part of the country. On 6 June 2017, sixteen Northern youth groups gave people of Igbo origin residing in the North a three-months quit notice to vacate the North. The

Coalition also called on the Northerners in the South-East to get prepared to come home before October 1, 2017. It further called on concerned global bodies to expedite actions on the dissolution of Nigeria (Ojoye, 2017; Akhaine, Alabi, Njoku and Olumide, 2017). This was a reaction to the sit-at-home order by the IPOB as part of its campaign for the actualization of Biafra Republic. On 16 January 2021, Mr. Sunday Adeyemo, popularly known as Sunday Igboho, issued a seven-day quit notice to Sarki Fulani of Igangan and his people on the allegation that the Fulani were behind rising cases of insecurity in the Ibarapa axis of Oyo State. Backing his notice with action, he stormed the Sarki's residence on 22 January forcing the Sarki and his people out of Igangan. In February 2021, Igboho extended his Fulani eviction expedition to Ogun State (Adejumo, 2021). The climax of Igboho's separatist expedition was his announcement, on 18 March 2020, the birth of O'odua Republic. In reacting to this, the Arewa Youth Assembly, gave Yoruba residents in the North 72 hours to vacate the region. All these incidents point to the reality of fragility of Nigerian federation and that the fact that Nigeria's federation remains so only in name.

Consequent upon this reality, one cannot rule out the fact that, many who call for restructuring use the term as a euphemism for negotiating the dissolution of Nigeria. As observed by Fasua (2018a), many are of the belief that Nigerians are different people from North to South, and there is no need trying to stitch and glue them together. Thus, the current cognitive doubt about the survival of Nigeria as a corporate entity needs to change to certainty as a foundation for any meaningful restructuring. Though restructuring the geo-political configuration, revenue sharing or resource control, and the powers of various levels of government is desirable, changing the 'marriage-of-inconvenience mentality', 'cake-sharing mentality', 'it's-our-turn mentality', and 'government-as-the-means-of-personal-enrichment mentality' of average Nigerians is fundamental.

For instance, while devolution of more powers to the state governments is desirable, we cannot ignore the fact that some of them have not been accountably and transparently utilized the 'little' power at their disposal. With the current state of mind of most people at the helm of affairs in most states and the general rent-seeking mentality of average Nigerians, devolution of more powers to the state government will further deepen the agitation for more states. Also, as desirable as fiscal restructuring is, it will only be impactful meaningfully on the generality of the people if those at the helm of affairs in the states have a mindset of frugality, innovation and service. With the worsening security situation in the country, the desirability of state or community police should not be contested. But the danger of such force being used as instrument of vendetta is still rife. This is attested to by the activities of the recently created Western Nigeria Security Network (Amotekun).

Amotekun was inaugurated on 9 January 2020 as a regional security outfit in the South-West. Its *modus operandi*, most especially in Oyo State, has attracted public criticism. On 24 December 2020, the National Association of Nigerian Student accused members of Amotekun deployed in Oyo town of killing a 400-Level student of University of Ibadan, Akolade Gbadebo. On 3 January 2021, a member of the corps, Ibrahim Ogundele, allegedly shot and wounded a police officer, Fatai Yekini, who was attached to the corps on a joint operation. Another 21-year-old student, Thomas Tosin, was shot dead in Ibadan on 15 January 2021 by an operative of the corps. This was confirmed by the Commandant of Amotekun, Col. Olayanju Olayinka (rtd) who said that the erred operative was dismissed and handed over to police. Also, three Fulani residents were allegedly killed by the corps in Okebi, Tapa area of Ibarapa Central Local Government Area of Oyo State on 16 January 2021 (*Daily Trust*, 15 January 2021). This points to the fact that state policing might compound rather than address the issue of police brutality.

It is therefore worthy of reiteration that super-structural or what we termed ‘hardware’ restructuring would only be impactful if done concurrently with attitudinal or ‘software’ restructuring. A virus invested software would make a hardware useless no matter how strong and neat is the hardware. We therefore associate fully with the views of Barrow (2021) that, without an intensive, persistent and massive investment in values reorientation programmes to ‘restructure’ the attitude and mindsets of the various groups that make up the country, especially around our common humanity – the fact that we are all human beings created by God with equal abilities and aspirations – whatever physical, fiscal, geo-political or socio-economic restructuring effected would only grant an ephemeral succor.

Conclusion

Political plurality informed the adoption of federalism as a system of government with capability of building unity in diversity. This fact was given recognition by a line of the old national anthem: “Though tribe and tongue may differ, in brotherhood we stand”. However, more than 66 years of adoption of federalism and 60 years of political independence, the nationhood of the country is still being contested by majority of the people that make up the country. As such, the central argument of this paper is that the primary challenge faced by the Nigerian federation is getting the fabric of the country together rather than structural restructuring. While accepting the reality of the structural imbalances in the federation, we are of the opinion that most groups that make up the federation lack commitment to the ‘Nigeria Project’; tribal and religious sentiments have taken pre-eminence over national brotherhood.

‘Nigerians’ are only mechanically, legally and materially attached to the state without patriotic feelings. The implication of this is that Nigeria

remains an assemblage of nations with each nation struggling to grab as much as possible for itself. Harmonizing the ethnic, religious and cultural divisions in the country and changing their mindset and disposition towards the state and other groups should thus prerequisite or go *pari passu* with structural restructuring. Though the challenges confronting Nigeria as nation are multifaceted and multidimensional thereby requiring multi-prong and persistent solutions; but as a pre-condition, there must be a concerted effort in building trust and confidence among the various groups that make up the country. In the words of Fayemi (2020), “We have to start by first conquering the demon of mutual suspicion and distrust that has poisoned our politics and subverted our will to forge the necessary consensus that is so crucial in marching confidently towards our destiny as a great nation”.

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NIGERIA'S FEDERALISM AND THE RENEWED AGITATION FOR POLITICAL RESTRUCTURING: ISSUES, PERSPECTIVES AND THE WAY FORWARD

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Abstract

The governmental framework of the Nigerian state – federalism was officially adopted in 1954. Then it was two levels of government; the federal government and the three regional governments. Previous administrations especially the military regimes tinkered the structure of Nigerian state from the three regions to the present 774 local government areas and 36 states federation. Despite the changes in the structure of the state, there have been pockets of demands for political restructuring of Nigeria to ensure equitable distribution of national resources and good governance. However, since the inception of the present administration in 2015, there have been upsurge in the agitation for restructuring of the Nigerian state. Sadly, the proponents of the renewed agitations for restructuring Nigeria have divergent views on what should be restructured. Therefore, this paper explores the reasons and perspectives of the renewed agitations for restructuring, the challenges and prospects of political restructuring of the Nigerian state, with a view to understanding what should be restructured. Data for this study were generated mainly from secondary sources and they were content analyzed. The paper reveals that the high level of centralization of political power, nepotism, bad leadership and marginalization of some ethnic groups in the present administration led to renewed agitation of restructuring. The paper recommended that the federal government should heed to the calls of restructuring in Nigeria and if this is granted it would engender the institutionalization of true federalism, give more powers and resources to the states, enhance political stability, competition and balanced development among states.

Keywords: Federalism, Political restructuring, Renewed agitations, Nigeria

Introduction

The issue of restructuring is not new in Nigeria. Right from 1960 when Nigeria gained independence from Britain, there have been one form of restructuring to another. For instance, at 1960, Nigeria had only 3 regional structures. In 1963 another region was created making Nigeria 4 regions. In 1967, these 4 regions were balkanized into 12 states structure. Since then, they

have been agitating for creation of more states. Hence, in 1976 the states were expanded to 19 by creation of 7 additional states. The states were further expanded to 21 in 1987 by creation of 2 additional states and to 30 states in 1991 by creation of 9 additional states respectively. Lastly in 1996 the states were further expanded to 36 by creation of 6 additional states. The more states that were created the more local government areas that were also created. Currently, there are 36 states and 774 local government areas in Nigeria. Thus, the agitations for restructuring continue to be on course up to 1990's when more states were created, to the present 36 States (Mohammed & Sulaiman, 2018).

Sixty (60) years of the Nigeria's independence, there are still strong and persistent agitations by some interest groups in the polity demanding for the immediate restructuring of the existing political arrangement (Kolawole, 2020). Their agitations are coming on the heels that the Nigerian federalism has totally assumed the attributes of a unitary system of government. Pundits have also agreed with the above line of thought, describing the federalism in practice as a proxy unitary because Nigeria being a Federalist State is in character with a unitary system (Ikemitang, 2017). Thus, Nigeria operates a federal system of government but in reality, the country is actually practicing a unitary system of government (Olakunle, 2017). For instance, in the legislative list of jurisdiction 68 items are exclusively reserved for the federal government to the detriment of the federating units, which are the states and local government areas.

The military administration imposed unitary system of government in Nigeria in 1966 when the military took over political power through coup. Due to the military hierarchical command nature of administration, since the military involvement in politics, Nigeria's federalism has been operated essentially as a unitary system where central government dominates other levels of government. Thus, Nigeria's federal system, its' characteristics are more unitary than federalist (Nwaeze, 2017). In fact, as stressed by Nwaeze (2017:30) "virtually all the elements and characteristics that define true Federalism are absent in Nigeria's version of 'federalism'; power sharing between the centre and the 'federating' states is skewed; separateness and independency of constituent units is nonexistent; and most importantly, economic powers and resources are concentrated at the centre"

As observed by Abah & Nwoku (2017:1518) "the age long rape on the federalist principles coupled with apparent abuse of federal character principle enshrined in the Nigerian constitution by the current president Buhari led administration in areas of appointment into key positions and alleged marginalization and neglect of some sections of the country may have awakened the consciousness of Nigerians on the need for urgent political restructuring of the Nigerian federation" In same vein, Ekwere-madu, (2017) asserted that the renewed and aggravated agitations across the South-east, the growing pro-Biafra sentiments in the South-east, and the widespread feelings of alienation and

disgust with the Nigerian project since after the 2015 general election could be traced to the mistreatment of the region, which graduated from marginalization to exclusion, based on the 97 percent and 5 percent policy of the present administration (Ekweremadu, 2017).

Apparently, different factors have necessitated the reoccurring clamour for restructuring. Currently, restructuring is a topical issue that is making news headlines in Nigeria. There are so many advocates of restructuring. The restructuring debate has divided the Nigerian political elites into different groups (Niworu, 2018). There are those who perceived the system of governance in practice as unitary, contrary to their yearnings for federalism, hence Nigeria should be restructured to reflect ideal federal structure (Usman, 2017). There are those advocating for devolution of powers to the component units. There are those agitating for creation of more states. There are those advocating for Nigeria to revert to 1963 regional political structure. There also those advocating for self-determination and separation from Nigeria (Abah & Nwokuwu, 2017; Ekweremadu, 2017; Usman, 2017; Ikemitan, 2017; Ola-David, 2018; Ita, Ebong & Inimo-Etele, 2019). Indeed, there are contending views regarding the on-going restructuring debate. However, most of them have divergent view on what should be restructured while some of them don't even know what restructuring is all about. In all, there is a consensus that Nigeria should be restructured. But how, when and what should be restructured? This paper intends to answer the preceding question.

Therefore, this paper explores the reasons and perspectives of the renewed agitations for restructuring, the challenges and prospects of political restructuring of the Nigerian state, with a view to understanding what should be restructured. The paper consists of seven sections. Section one provides a general introduction. Section two focuses on the conceptual discourse of federalism and restructuring. Section three discusses the Nigerian political structure: Origin and structure of Nigerian federalism. Section four examines the reasons and perspectives for the current clamour for restructuring Nigeria. Section five explores the need for political restructuring of the Nigerian State. Section six dwells on the prospects of political restructuring while section seven concludes the paper and makes some recommendations. This study is qualitative in nature and documentary method was adopted to generate data through secondary sources such as newspaper, internet, journal articles, government publications and text books. Data generated for the study were content analyzed

Conceptual Discourse

a. Federalism: There are divergent views in conceptualizing the term federalism. However, etymologically the term federalism is derived from the latin word "*foedu*" which means covenant, agreement, alliance, association, treaty or union. This signifies that it is a marriage or partnership of persons or

groups consent to unite for common purposes without giving up their fundamental rights or identity (Aghedo and Osumah, 2009; Ogunnoiki, 2017). It is most commonly employed to denote an organizational principle of a political system emphasizing power-sharing across different levels of government such as centre/federal and regions/states or even local governments as the case may be; and at the same time, the integration of different territorial and socio-economic units, cultural and ethnic groups in one polity (Ita, Ebong & Inimo-Etele, 2019).

A foremost authority on federalism, who is widely regarded as the doyen of federalism, K. C. Wheare defined federalism as a method of dividing powers so that the central and regional governments are each, within a sphere, coordinate and independent. He further noted that each government should be limited to its own sphere and, within that sphere, should be independent of the other (Wheare, 1963). Wheare also set out conditions that can make a federal system succeed. According to him the component units must be fairly equal in size and population so as to prevent one unit from dominating the other or a combination of two or more units, from dominating the entire federation. However, K.C. Wheare's view of federalism seems to have placed more emphasis on the institutional criteria in his definition, a position which other scholars have criticized as being too legalistic because it has neglected other cultural factors that help define some federal states.

According to Appadorai (1975) a federal state is the one in which there is a central authority that represents the whole and acts on behalf of the whole in external affairs and on such internal affairs as are held to be of common interest and in which there are also provincial or state authorities with powers of legislation and administration within the sphere allotted to them by the constitution. A state is therefore regarded as federal when there exist more than one level of government and each level having its own constitutionally proscribed powers and responsibilities (Avbuere, 2019). To Bin (2011) a federation, also known as a federal state, is a type of sovereign state characterized by a union of partially self-governing states or regions united of the component states is typically constitutionally entrenched and may not be altered by a unilateral decision of the central government. The form of government or constitutional structure found in a federation is known as federalism.

From the foregoing, federalism can be simply refers to as a form of political arrangement characterized by division of political powers in the state between the central government and other component units. Federalism has to do with distribution or sharing of powers among the various units in a federation. These units could be two levels of government such as the central and regional governments or three levels of government in the case of Nigeria that comprises the federal, state and local government. Examples of some of the

countries practicing federal system of government include; U.S.A, Canada, India, Switzerland, Brazil, Russia, Australia, Mexico, etc.

It should be noted that all over the world, there is no distinctively federal pattern of relations between the national and regional level of government. In other words, there are no two federations that are structurally alike since the nature of communities that come together to form a federation differ. However, there are some basic features of an ideal federation as follows:

- i. **Division of Powers:** There is constitutional division of powers between the central government and component units (regions, provinces, states, local governments). Both levels of government have their separate powers and responsibilities.
- ii. **Supremacy of the Constitution:** The Constitution is regarded as the supreme law of the land. No law can be made which will go against the authority of the constitution and all the arms and levels of government derive their powers from the constitution. The constitution allocates powers and functions to each level of government.
- iii. **Written and Rigid Constitution:** The constitution is always written and rigid and therefore cannot be easily and simply be amended at will by either the central government or component states. The method of amendment is contained in the constitution and it often involves a cumbersome process.
- iv. **Supreme Court** – There always exist Supreme Court in a federation that interpret the constitution and adjudicate cases between the levels of government. In case of any disagreement or ambiguity on the contents of the constitution, the judiciary is the final arbiter.
- v. **Bicameral legislation** – There is usually two chambers legislature in a federation. A bicameral legislature is one in which the law-making body is made up of two legislative chambers, for example, in Nigeria there is the Senate and House of Representative

b. Political Restructuring

There are varied perspectives on what restructuring or political restructuring is all about. However, to restructure entails changing the way that organization or system is organized in order to make it work more effectively and efficiently (Ita, Ebong & Inimo-Ete, 2019). Simply put, Bello (2017: 10) defined the term restructuring as “the process of increasing or decreasing the number of component parts that makes up a system and re-defining the inter-relationship between them in such a way that the entire system perform more efficiently” According to (Dimeji (2017) restructuring in the context of a nation requires redefining the relationship between the people and the government,

including taking another look at the structures and systems of governance as encapsulated in the constitution. Restructuring has political, social, economic, administrative, geographical, structural and institutional dimensions. However, the focus of this chapter is political restructuring.

Political restructuring may be necessitated when there are fundamental flaws in the structural arrangement of a political system. That is, when power and authority configuration of a country is visibly lopsided in favour of the central government to the detriment of the component units (Avbuere, 2019). Kolhi (1996) cited in Olu-Adeyemi (2017) considers political restructuring as fallout of the desires of how to create effective political institutions that can both accommodate diverse interests and provide effective government. Succinctly stated, Ikemitang (2017) refers to political restructuring as an arrangement whereby a decision on public policy issues is shifted from one level or tier of government to another. It connotes the devolution of power on the federating units. It also presupposes fiscal federalism or resource control whereby states are allowed some measure of control over the resources in their domains and contribute a percentage to the government at the centre. Similarly, Adeosun, Ismail & Zengeni, (2017) see political restructuring as both political re-configuration of the country and devolution of powers to the constituent units as it is practice in other climes. It involves ownership, control, and management of mineral resources located in a state by the state and power to establish its own police as against the present system where the police is under federal control.

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that when political power is not adequately devolved among the federating units in a federation, there will always be agitation for restructuring. Therefore, restructuring in the context of Nigeria is regarded as a consistent call and move for the political reorganisation of Nigeria's federal structure, the system of government as well as other aspects desired for a constitutional amendment (Abbas, & Wakili, 2018). In other words, it is the decentralization of political power in the country to ensure political balance among the levels of government and or among the diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria. Therefore, the on-going clamour for political restructuring in Nigeria is intended to achieve objective aimed at reducing the powers of the center, thereby encouraging the component units through the constitutional provisions on their role as partners in progress. It will serve as a steering mechanism to properly give focus and locus to attempts of collective identity and distributive politics (Abada, Okafor & Omeh, 2020).

The Nigerian Political Structure: Origin and Structure of Nigerian Federalism

The Nigerian state came into being on 1st January 1914 when the former Colonial Governor General, Lord Lugard amalgamated the Northern and Southern Protectorates for administrative convenience. The country was more or

less run as unitary colony with twenty four provinces (12 in the North and 12 in the South) until the establishment of the federal order via the Richards constitution of 1946 (Okadigbo (1987). Thus, the Richard's constitution introduced the concept of regionalism into Nigerian state.

However, in actual practice, Nigeria formally became a federation in 1954 through Lyttleton constitution of 1954. It was the Lyttleton constitution which came into effect on 1st October, 1954 that introduced real structure of federalism in Nigeria. The constitution specified and guaranteed the sharing of power between the central and the regional governments. The constitution entrenched the Exclusive and Concurrent list of powers by giving out details on issues which were exclusive to only one level and those on which both could legislate (Oyeneye, 2001; Mohammed & Sulaiman, 2018). This followed the Independence Constitution of 1960 which further incorporated the federal structure earlier established by the Lyttleton Constitution. In August 9, 1963, Nigeria was further divided into four regions by creation of the Mid-western region (Aghedo and Oarhe, 2009; Mohammed & Sulaiman, 2018).

The first military coup that took in January 15th 1966 brought General Aguiyi Ironsi to power, as the military head of state. Thereafter, Gen Aguiyi Ironsi introduced/imposed a unitary state structure by via Decree No.34 otherwise known as the unification decree on 30th, May 1966 which abolished the regions and unified the public services (Auwalu & Ndaliman, 2014; Mohammed & Sulaiman, 2018). However, Gen Ironsi was overthrown in July 29 1966 and Gen Gowon became the next military head of state. Thereafter, Gen Gowon promulgated a decree abolishing the unification decree of Gen Aguiyi Ironsi, created 12 states out of the four regions in May 27, 1967 in order to forestall the secession of the East as republic of Biafra and restored Nigeria to federal system of government. However, it should be noted that General Gowon returned the Nigerian state to a federal structure but with a stronger center (Auwalu & Ndaliman, 2014).

In February 3rd, 1976, additional seven states were created by General Murtala Muhammed making Nigeria 19 states federation and local governments were constitutionally recognized as the third tier of government. Thus, Nigeria became three-tier federation in 1976 and this was enshrined in the 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. In September 23, 1987, the Military Head of State, Gen Babangida created additional two states making Nigeria 21 states federation. Also in August 27, 1991 Gen Babangida created additional 9 states making Nigeria 30 states federation. In October 1, 1996, Gen Abacha created additional 6 states making Nigeria 36 states federation. It should be noted that the creation of more states led to the creation of more local government areas. At present, the federation of Nigeria is made up of the Federal Government, State Governments of 36 states and 774 Local Governments, including the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja. Thus, since

1914 to date, the structure of Nigerian federalism has dramatically transformed from the level of provinces and regions to the current structure of 36 States and 774 Local Government Areas as well as the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja (Auwalu & Ndaliman, 2014)

Currently, the Nigeria federal structure has the semblance of a federal state by the fact that it is composed of three levels of government, the federal government, 36 states and 774 local government councils with their constitutionally assigned powers and responsibilities. However in actual practice, the Nigerian system operates more or less like a unitary system because of the enormous powers the constitution confers on the federal government (Osisu, 2015). Apparently, Nigeria operates a federal system government but in reality, the country is actually practicing a unitary system of government (Olakunle, 2017). For instance, in the legislative list of jurisdiction 68 items are exclusively reserved for the federal government to the detriment of the federating units, the states and local government areas.

Drawing from the above, Nigeria's federalism is over-centralized in terms of the area of sharing of functions and resources available in the country between the central government and the component units on the one hand and between the government and citizens on the other (Ajagun, 2004). There has been a gradual increase in the powers and functions of the centre and a corresponding erosion of powers and functions at the state level. This has led to the continuous clamour of restructuring in Nigeria.

Reasons and Perspectives for the Current Clamour for Restructuring Nigeria

The agitations for restructuring have increased momentum in recent times. Consequently, there are myriads of perceptions and arguments for the current agitations for restructuring Nigeria. However, most of those who subscribed to restructuring have divergent view on what should be restructured while some of them don't know what restructuring is all about. Notably, most of the advocates of restructuring are from the southern part of Nigeria. This may be as a result perceived marginalization and imbalance in distribution of resources and or imbalance in the federal structure as currently constituted (Niworu, 2018).

Even within the southern part of Nigeria, some sections want the country balkanized on the ground that the situation in the country today is so bad that it has gone beyond restructuring. For instance, based on the current situation of the country, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) wants the Igbo to exit the Nigerian state. There is a clamour for Oduduwa Republic by those who say the Yoruba need to be rescued from the shackles of the federation. The Niger Delta region, where the oil money comes from, has been fighting for resource

control and some of its groups want out of the federation. It would appear only the core north is not intensely agitating against the union, at least for now (Kolawole, 2020). The Northern political elites have been silent over the issue of restructuring. Their silence is occasioned by the oil wells they primitively acquired in the Southern part of the country (Niworu, 2018). From all indications, North reject the current clamour for restructuring as the current system favours them (Adebanjo, 2020).

In fact, Okorocha (2017: 17) cited by Paul et al (2017) captured the different views thus;

“Every geographical zone has its own interpretation of restructuring. To the South-East, restructuring means creation of an additional state. For the South-South, restructuring means resource control. For the South-West, it means devolution of power and the North may see it as differently, but whatever is the case, we are better off as a united Nigeria”

Indeed, there are contending views regarding the on-going restructuring debate. Furthermore, some of the views of the advocates of restructuring are captured below. According to Nwabueze (2017) the clamour of restructuring Nigeria is to reform the governmental systems and structures for effective and efficient governance. He stressed that:

The object of re-structuring for which there is a widespread clamour among Nigerians, is not to break up the country or to enable agitators to secede from its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Far from that, the object is, by reforming the governmental structures and attuning them to the needs and wishes of the people, to ensure that the immense diversity of ethnic nationalities comprised in the state will continue to co-exist together in peace, prosperity and progress as citizens of one country united by common interests, common aspirations and a common destiny. The clamour for Re-structuring must therefore be seen as a clamour for the setting up of appropriate platforms or fora to renegotiate suitable governmental structures for the pursuit and realization of our common needs for development, good governance and national transformation (Nwabueze (2017).

One of the leading voices challenging the current political structure is current-president Muhammdu Buhari’s running mate in the 2011 election Tunde Bakare. Bakare emphasizes that the time has come for decentralization to improve regional capabilities and increase local abilities to generate revenues. Currently, Nigeria’s centralization of political power distorts its political economy by encouraging redistribution instead of productivity. By themselves, most of the constituent parts of the country are not economically viable. Nearly

70 per cent of Nigeria's state revenue comes from an oil-rich region about the size of Ireland (Ola-David, 2018). According to Olu-Adeyemi (2017; 43) the intention of the restructuring currently clamoured for in Nigeria is:

The reorganization or rearrangement of the constitutional, operational, fiscal, functional, structural, attitudinal, resource management and the other national-question concerns of the ethnic nationalities that constitute Nigeria for the purpose of making Nigeria to be more efficient, more acceptable, more productive, more functional and above all, more equitable. This restructuring is expected to devolve powers from the central to the constituent units, respect resource control, structurally balance the number of states per region, allow for State Police, encourage comparative advantage of natural endowments and among other things, allow the government at the center and each constituent units to function as co-ordinate and independent entities (Olu-Adeyemi, 2017; 43)

In similar view, Olatunji in a comment to online newspaper article stated that:

Generally, Nigeria has a serious problem that must be addressed. Nigeria was better off when it operated a parliamentary system of government because the regions were autonomous, controlled their resources, had their own Police and only contributed to the central government. The challenge confronting Nigeria today goes beyond governance. If you bring angels to operate the system we have today, it would fail. The system is one that can never succeed. Nigeria needs to be reborn through restructuring. Let's give it a new birth, let it become what it was always supposed to be a federal system, not a unitary system imposed on us by the military. This unitary system of Government will never work for Nigeria. The presidential system copied after America has become very oppressive and expensive for Nigeria. Does it make sense for a Senator who is supposed to be on a part time job to earn #15 Million per month in a Country where the minimum wage is #30,000 per month? Just very few Nigerians (1%) are benefiting from the core resources of the Country, while 99% of Nigerians are living in abject poverty (Olatunji, October 23, 2020).

Furthermore, General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Pastor Enoch Adeboye recently added his voice to the growing clamour for restructuring of Nigeria. He stated that:

Why can't we have a system of government that will create what I will call the United States of Nigeria? Let me explain. We all know that we must restructure. It's either we restructure or we break, you don't have to be a prophet to know that one. That is certain – restructure or we break up. Now, we don't want to break up, God forbid. In restructuring, why don't we have a Nigerian kind of democracy? At the federal level, why don't we have a President and a Prime Minister? If we have a President and a Prime Minister and we share responsibilities between these two so that one is not an appendage to the other. For example, if the President controls the Army and the Prime Minister controls the Police. If the President controls resources like oil and mining and the Prime Minister controls finance and inland revenue, taxes, customs etc. You just divide responsibilities between the two. At the state level, you have the governor and the premier, and the same way, you distribute responsibilities to these people in such a manner that one cannot really go without the other. Maybe we might begin to tackle the problems. Without any doubt, we must restructure and do it as soon as possible. A United States of Nigeria is more likely to survive than our present structure (Soniya, 2020).

Sadly, in a swift reaction to the various calls for restructuring, the presidency in a statement described the calls for restructuring as recurring threats to the corporate existence of the country. The statement read:

The Presidency responds to the recurring threats to the corporate existence of the country with factions giving specific timelines for the President to do one thing or another or else, in their language, 'the nation will break up. "This is to warn that such unpatriotic outbursts are both unhelpful and unwarranted as this government will not succumb to threats and take any decision out of pressure at a time when the nation's full attention is needed to deal with the security challenges facing it at a time of the COVID-19 health crisis. This administration will not take any decision against the interests of 200 million Nigerians, who are the President's first responsibility under the constitution, out of fear or threats especially in this hour of a health crisis. The President as an elected leader under this constitution will continue to work with patriotic Nigerians, through and in line with the parliamentary processes to finding solutions to structural and

other impediments to the growth and wellbeing of the nation and its people (Adetayo, 2020).

As can be gleaned from the above, the proponents of restructuring had argued that the current political structure of the country should be changed. This is because the current political structure of the country can no longer serve the purpose of encouraging unity in diversity in Nigeria (Abah & Nwoku, 2017). Again, given the present economic realities, the hitherto political thermostat of the nation is not only weak, but lacks the propelling force to regulate the political temperature of the country. Nigeria, as it stands currently is not working, and cannot experience development unless a fundamental political restructuring is first addressed (Ikemitan, 2017).

However, on the contrary, those that are averse to the restructuring idea have equally posited that Nigeria has since the First Republic, undergone series of restructuring journeys without commensurate progress. Besides, the country has also failed to consolidate on the gains of restructuring and or making a conscious effort to improve on the challenges. Therefore, they opined that those clamouring for restructuring are perhaps, looking for avenues to position themselves for relevance and wait for the opportunity to milk the country dry (Ikemitan, 2017). According to Sani cited Nuhu (2016) the North is opposed to restructuring of Nigeria because there is nothing to restructure. In same vein, Yakassai, (2016), one the Northern elites argued that those who call for restructuring in Nigeria today are doing so with some kind of hate in their minds against the North. For them, the proponents of restructuring are trying to find a way of denying states from the North the opportunity of getting the kind of shares they are receiving from the federation account

From these opposing stands of restructuring, the clamour for restructuring might in the short term, trigger upheaval, upset entrenched power arrangements, and exacerbate existing tensions in Nigerian polity. However, in the long-run, political restructuring would be beneficial for both the northern and southern parts of Nigeria (Ola-David, 2018).

The Need for Political Restructuring of the Nigerian State

There is no doubt that the current political structure of the country, in which the federal government wields overriding political powers to the disadvantage of the federating units, is not healthy for national development and peaceful coexistence. The country should therefore be restructured in such a way that there will be an equitable distribution of political power and resources among the different federating units (Ede & Chiaghanam, 2018). According to Abah and Nwoku (2017) the kind of restructuring that can reduce to barest minimum the high level of agitations and protests in the country is that which is based on devolution of more powers and resources to the constituent states.

Drawing from the perceptions of the advocates of restructuring, a lot of issues needs to be addressed in Nigerian polity. Some of these issues that needed to be restructured include:

- a. **Resource Control:** Resource control in Nigeria has been concentrated to exclusive reserve by the Federal Government of Nigeria. The Federal Government is in charge of all the mineral resources in Nigeria. The undue control by the Federal Government over the mineral resource is oppressive because it is being exercised without due regard to the requirements of justice, fairness and equity among the federating units. It negates the principle of true and fiscal federalism. Thus restructuring, as it is presently being demanded, seeks to revert our federal system to the true federalism where the federating units have access and control over the resources in their domains (Nwabueze (2017).
- b. **Security Challenges:** Federating units in all federal states in world have their coercive agencies to maintain and enforce law. In Nigeria, the state government does not have control over coercive force to maintain and enforce laws in its domain. Therefore, the federating units in Nigeria need to have their separate and independent police force to conform to the requirements of federalism (Nwabueze (2017).
- c. **Structural Imbalance:** Structural imbalance refers to political domination of some segments of the country by dominant geopolitical zones by unequal number of states and local government areas (Ugwu, Okibe & Eleje, 2018). For instance, there is existence of six geopolitical zones in Nigeria namely: South-east, South-West, South-South, North Central, North-East and North-West. Out of these zones, only South East has 5 states, North-west has 7 states while the other zones have 6 states each. Therefore there is the need to ensure that the zones have equal number of states. Again, there is also the need to balance the skewed nature of local government areas across the zones. For instance Lagos and Kano states were created in 1967, and later in 1991, Jigawa State was carved out of Kano. No state has been carved out of Lagos, yet Kano has 44 while Jigawa has 27 Local Government Areas. Put together, Jigawa and Kano now have 71 Local Government Areas, while Lagos still has 20 Local Government Areas.
- d. **Over-Centralization of Power:** Nigerian state is a federation but her governmental structures and operations are tilted towards unitary form of government. Governmental structures and powers are highly centralized. For instance, the powers and functions of each level of government are clearly spelt out in part 1 of the second schedule of the 1999 constitution, the exclusive legislative list contains sixty eight items instead of eight that it should. Likewise, the concurrent list

detailing responsibilities shared by the government at center and the federating units, has thirty items, fifteen of them are similar to those contained therein in the exclusive lists which include but not limited to education, agriculture, information, etc (Abada, Okafor & Omeh,(2020). Thus there should be devolution of powers. At least 50% of the items on the exclusive List should be moved to the concurrent List that will enable both the states and the federal government to legislate on them.

- e. **A New Constitution:** The Constitution, upon which Nigeria's democracy is based, was bequeathed to the nation by the past military regimes that were headed and dominated by Northern Muslim military officers. The constitution was drafted to favour the northern section of the country to the detriment of other sections. Hence, the constitution is full of defects and needs to be entirely repackaged. For instance Nigeria is a secular state but Sharia Law and the political autonomy to establish a Sharia Court of Appeal in Northern States with civil jurisdiction were enshrined in the constitution thereby violating the basic secularity or religious neutrality of the federal government (Agbiboa, 2015). There is no point in reviewing, amending or revising the 1999 constitution that was imposed on Nigerians by the military. So, it is a total cancellation and production of a new constitution.

The Prospects of Political Restructuring

Any further attempts to turn deaf ears to peace moves at restructuring the nation in terms of devolution of more economic powers to the federating states will not augur well to the continued peaceful co-existence of Nigeria (Olakunle, 2017). Restructuring will no doubt make the country more stable politically and bring more economic progress. A properly structured Nigeria will encourage hard work and competition among the federating units, thereby allowing each unit to develop at its own pace (Ede & Chiaghanam, 2018).

Nigeria's federalism, as it exists today, encourages parasitism, dependency and laziness, it encourages injustice, corruption, marginalization and is not only antithetical to growth and development, but also breeds needless tensions (Ita, Ebong & Inimo-Etele, 2019). Therefore, the restructuring of the Nigerian state, with regards to its federal practice is long overdue and inevitable. The present structure is a pointer to the tension at the heart of the agitations by many right thinking Nigerians calling for a restructuring and a renewal of the federation to make it less centralized, less suffocating and less dictatorial in the affairs of the country's constituent units and localities (Abubakar, 2018). As stated by Ita, Ebong & Inimo-Etele (2019:14) "there is imperative for restructuring the Nigerian federalism and this would bring the following benefits to the Nigerian polity":

- (i) **Promotion of National Integration and Stability:** Restructuring will bring about cohesion among the people, which will in turn foster stability and unity among Nigeria citizens. Integration is very important in nation building, as it examines the problem of diversity and inter-ethnic rivalry and breeds peace and unity among people (Ita, Ebong & Inimo-Etele, 2019:14).
- (ii) **Fairness among Ethnic Groups:** Restructuring will bring about fairness and justice among ethnic groups which will in turn eliminate the issue of favouritism in Nigeria. A good example of this is the government of the late president Umaru Musa Yar'adua that was able to solve the Niger Delta issues (Ita, Ebong & Inimo-Etele, 2019:14)..
- (iii) **Economic Stability:** Federalism, if properly practiced will bring about economic stability in Nigeria. The idea behind the creation of federalism in Nigeria was to bring about economic development and established an effective administration. Therefore, restructuring will bring about stability in the economy, and would eliminate any form of crisis which could emanate from ethnic rivalry. Each region would be forced to manage its resources more prudently and judiciously giving little or no room for wasteful spending (Ita, Ebong & Inimo-Etele, 2019:14)..
- (iv) **Political Stability:** The motive behind restructuring is to promote unity and to bring the government closer to the people. Federalism was borne out of idea of peaceful coexistence among citizens where government is brought closer to the people, stability and cohesion in order to promote national integration (Ita, Ebong & Inimo-Etele, 2019:14)..
- (v) **Eliminate the Problem of Uneven Distribution of Government Allocation:** Restructuring Nigeria's political structure will address the problem of uneven distribution of budgeting allocation by the federal government by ensuring that allocation of revenues to different regions are not politicized. A restructured Nigeria will be a Nigeria in which the Central Government will no longer be able to automatically pool funds un-evenly from different parts of Nigeria, while re-distributing the same funds unfairly and inequitably (at the expense of the larger contributors) among the various states and local governments - regardless of the quality of policy choices and good governance efforts by State and Local Government leaders (Ita, Ebong & Inimo-Etele, 2019:14)..
- (vi) **Effective Policing of the Country:** The current Nigerian national security configuration especially the Nigerian police force is too rigid, ineffective and slow in quick decision-making and prompt

action especially during security emergencies (Thomas & Aghedo, 2014; Ebonyi, 2021). Therefore, decentralization of the police force will enable effective security of lives and properties of citizens of Nigeria.

Conclusion and the Way Forward

As can be deduce from the preceding sections of this paper, it is obvious that Nigerian federalism is faced with a myriad of problems which have precipitated the clamour and renewed agitations for political restructuring (Ita, Ebong & Inimo-Etele, 2019). Without doubt, most of those agitating for restructuring at present are not calling for secession or break up of the country. Rather they are demanding for the operation of ideal federalism where powers are evenly distributed among the levels of government. In other words, they are demanding for devolution of powers especially political and economic powers among the federating states so that the federating units can have access and some level of control over the resources in their domains (Nwabueze (2017; Olakunle, 2017). Thus, there is overwhelming consensus among Nigerians that the country needs political restructuring (Epelle & Nweke, 2019). Perhaps, if restructuring is granted, it would engender the institutionalization of true federalism, give more powers and resources to the states,, enhance political stability, competition and balanced development among states. It would also improve the national unity and peaceful co-existence among the diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria (Abbas, & Wakili, 2018). However, some opponents of restructuring believed there is nothing to restructure in Nigeria. This is because they are blindfolded or they are benefiting from the skewed political, economic and geographical structure of Nigeria. The current situations in Nigeria are dire need for restructuring. Therefore, the federal government should heed to the calls of restructuring and do the needful. To avoid the crisis of break-up of the country, structural, governmental, economic and political restructuring should be initiated and carried out now by the federal executive and legislative arms of government.

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POLITICAL RESTRUCTURING AND IT'S VIABILITY FOR NIGERIA'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This paper assessed the defects and imbalance that has arisen in the Nigerian polity as a result of the present conditions of co-existence. The study was aimed at exploring the viability of restructuring as an option to the development of Nigeria's political economy. It adopted Karl Marx's socio-economic formation theory to explain the reason behind the present political structure in Nigeria which has been the bane in achieving economic development by the component units. A descriptive/historical method was adopted for the study. The findings revealed that the present socio-economic structure of the Nigerian state is over centralized with so much power at the center, the effect of which impedes the growth and economic viability of the component units (states). Thus the States are weak and dependent on the Central Government for their existence. This situation negates one of the fundamental principles of federalism which posits that no component unit should be powerful as to pose a threat to other federating units. This paper recommends that the present structure should be decentralized such that powers are granted to the federating units to ensure that they can harness their human and natural resources to develop at their pace and ensure their viability.

Keywords: Restructuring, Viability, Development, Decentralisation, Component Units

Introduction

The political and economic development of Nigeria has been of interest to many Scholars as is viewed as one of the leading nations in Africa. The country is a great example of a post-colonial developing nation and its developmental history contains very important lessons on the political and economic retardation of the developing world. Nigeria, in the colonial era embraced, relied on and enjoyed boom in agricultural production and in the mining of mineral resources such as iron ore, tin and coal. Foreign exchange was earned from these resources. Each region had a comparative advantage

through which it made its contributions to the center. The North for instance, was known for groundnut production, the West for her cocoa while the East produced palm oil. During the colonial period, the politics of development was already manifested even with the construction of railway line through those areas that had agricultural products that could yield some revenue for the centre.

Njoku (1998) opines that the British political economy in Nigeria was along the line of economic exploitation of the colonized surreptitiously into the orbit of the European capitalist economic system. The operations and activities of the colonial authorities had no potential for stimulating economic development except to drain Nigeria's array of untapped resources unabated. He added that British colonial "development" of indigenous palm produce industry was designed to meet increased demand by the international economy for vegetable oils for industrial use. Ezeanyika (2010) maintains that the overall subordination of colonized nations by dominating foreign power is to "keep the colonized people in complete political subjection, and to maximize local human and natural resources". By 1960, the production of oil had not changed the dynamics of the Nigerian political economy. At that time, it was still at an embryonic stage. Oil production is now the mainstay of the Nigerian economy.

Luqman and Lawal (2011) posits that one could hardly find anything written about the political economy of Nigeria without reference to its history of oil production. While the oil industry remains the mono-economic fulcrum of the Nigerian economy, its contribution to development and improvement of the living standards of Nigerians remain doubtful. The Nigerian case is simply a situation of poverty amidst plenty (Osita-njoku 2016). Instead of reinvesting the resources from excess crude oil sale into development of infrastructure like power, education, health, public transportation, water, housing and national security, among other sectors, what is witnessed is a political class deeply entrenched in corruption. Nigeria has embarked on a plethora of post-colonial developmental plans which equally have not achieved its desired objectives as stated in the second national development plan. This unpleasant situation cannot lead to the development of a stable political and economic institution necessary for building a strong and successful nation.

It is against this backdrop that this paper examines the issues of resource control and political restructuring of the polity. It poses two questions including what is the rationale behind the demand for resource control and what is the way forward in addressing resource control and political restructuring of the country? The paper is structured into parts of which this introduction is a part.

Statement of the Problem

Since independence, Nigeria's leading politicians and military leaders have gradually destroyed the structure of government and replaced it with a

structure in which the federal government is the controller of virtually all power and all resources as well as the power to develop all resources, while the states have no control over their resources and must depend on federal allocation of funds to exist at all. The federal government is over-burdened, controls too much money, has become grossly inefficient and corrupt and essentially is destroying Nigeria. The cumulative effects of all these are that Nigeria and Nigerians have become horribly poor, that make public facilities (roads, electricity, water, installations, public administration, etc) are not working or have become moribund and that most Nigerian youths are unemployed and hopeless. Restructuring means that all these must be changed (Amasike, 2017).

Nuhu (2014) stated that restructuring has been used in many occasions in the country to imply divesting the central government of certain powers it wields and limiting its influence in such areas as fiscal policies, military defense, foreign policy, immigration and national election. If this deformation is anything to go by, restructuring presupposes that there are some imperfections in Nigerian federalism, which must be given priority attention to bring the version of Nigerian federal system as close as possible to what is obtainable elsewhere. Nwosu (2016) stated that the Nigerian political structure should be changed, stating that there is too much power at the centre. He maintained that the federal government has too much power and too much responsibility, too much money, much to waste. He further added that Nigeria's current political structure is anti-development.

Nwankwo (2017) argued that the concept of restructuring does not entail merging of states, rather it is a thorough-going process that allows each region to control its resources and pay royalties to the federal authority. He also stated that restructuring to a large extent will stem the tide of restiveness in many parts of Nigeria as it is capable of resolving the problems of citizenship, religion, resource control and fiscal federalism. On socio-economic development, former vice president of Nigeria, Atiku Abukakar, believed that the current structure of Nigerian federation has been a major impediment to the economic and political development of the country, insisting that Nigerias' version of federalism should be made less centralized, less suffocating and less dictatorial in the administration of the country. This paper reviews political restructuring by looking at the various impacts it has on Nigeria's socio-economic development.

Nwaeze (2017) observed that despite the fact that Nigeria prides herself as a 'federal' state, evidences show that it is far from what federalism entails. The concept of 'true' federalism relates to a political order where power is divided between a central government and other regional or constituent units. Such devolution of powers are entrenched in the constitution; well spelt out and unambiguous. Such powers may be shared in different ways; sometimes with a stronger centre like in Canada, or weaker centres like in the United States of

America and Australia. In the case of Nigeria's federal system, its characteristics are more unitary than federalist. Therefore, proponents of 'true' federalism have argued that such distortions in political order and/or arrangement are in fact antithetical to development as they slow down or stagnate development. As observed by Okowa (1994)

"....the Nigerian political economy has been structurally damaged and deformed by systemic corruption financed by oil. What has been left behind can no longer be said to be true capitalist system. Rather, we now have a system in which more and more people have come to realize that hard work does not pay; wealth is to be made by being well connected to the state. It involves a social bend of mind that is anti-production. It is Abdulistic. Hence, we have Abdulistic capitalism.....the link between the input of factors of production and output is damaged, for the politically connected get all the money without working".

In spite of the major attempts to restructure the Nigerian federation by several measures such as state creation in order to correct the imbalance in the lopsided size of the federating unit, the issue of intense elite struggle for power has continued to be a common feature of Nigerian federalism. The political implication of this is that the political class has continued to be pre-occupied with the acquisition of power, centralization and control of state power. Political power has become so enticing because it is the quickest access to wealth, status and a guarantee to social well-being. The resultant crisis of this struggle is acrimony that is created between the elites of the North and South. The south believes that the north is likely to have upper hand when it comes to electoral contest because of their size and land mass, while the north sees the more educated south as dominating the institutions of the of the state. (Luck and Olarenwaju, 2014)

Research Methodology

Data for this study were essentially gathered from secondary sources. In other words, its methodology is narrative, descriptive and analytical. It adopts an eclectic explanation of the concept of political economy and definition of development. It also explores the politics of development by the colonial authorities in Nigeria, post-colonial Nigeria development, conclusion and the way forward.

Theoretical framework

The work is anchored on the postulations of Karl Marx on the socio-economic formation. That is, Mark Political Economy. The theory maintains that there is a tendency for the economic system through the mode of production to determine other aspect of social life such as the political system, legal system, ideological system and social life. This economic system that shapes other aspects of social life is referred to as the sub-structure. Those factors that are

conditioned by the economic system (sub-structure) are collectively known as the super-structure.

The conventional Marxist theory espouses that the economic mode of production in any given society constitute its base and as such the legal and political structure, coupled with the various expressions of social consciousness and existence which includes religion, morals, social customs and practices makes up the super-structure. It is viewed that the character of the super-structure determines the prevailing character of the base. Antonio Gramsci (1891 - 1937) particularly observed that the changes in the base leads to the corresponding change in the super-structure (Gaub, 2003)

The suitability of this theory in explaining the problem of restructuring and development can be seen in various issues that have plagued the Nigerian federation since its creation in 1954 by the Lyttleton Constitution. The Nigerian federal system has been burdened by many contradictions that have negated the federalist principles laid down by K.C Wheare, 1963. Apart from the imbalance in the structure of the federating units, there has been an intense struggle for power by the elite after independence. This has been observed by Lucky and Olarewaju (2014) who noted that the struggle for power became so absorbing that everything else including development was “slaughtered” on the altar of the struggle for political power. Power politics became quickest access to wealth and also the means for security and the only guarantor of well being in the Nigerian state.

At the inception of the Nigerian federalism in the 1954, the component regions were allowed to control their resources and send agreed percentage to the centre. The regions were specialized in the production of various cash crops, thus groundnut was produced in the North, Cocoa in the West, and Palm produce in the East. This was when agriculture was the main source of foreign exchange. With the discovery of oil in 1956 as a major revenue earner for post-independence Nigeria, successive military regimes coupled with the Northern feudal oligarchy, had succeeded in taking up so much power in the centre (Ikpe 2000). Thus, the resources of the regions and component units were taken over by the central government who controls the resources and shares them to the component units. The resultant condition was a situation where the centre becomes very strong while the component units are weak. This of course calls for re-organisation which brings about the clamours for restructuring.

Historical Overview of Federalism in Nigeria

Nigeria's quest for federalism dates back to the period under colonial rule when the Northern and Southern protectorates were amalgamated though with a unitary form of administration. The amalgamation led to the sharing of powers between the central government headed by the Governor-general and the governments of both the Northern and Southern protectorates headed by the Lieutenant-governors. The recognition of these two autonomous parts of the

North and South gave the administrative system of Nigeria a somewhat appearance of a federation. It should be noted that the decision of the colonialist to annex, colonise and subsequently amalgamate Nigeria was by force. It did not arise out of the consent of the local political and ethnic groups, but as a result of administrative convenience at least, as interpreted by the colonialist.

The introduction of the Richard's Constitution in 1946 led to the introduction of quasi-federal structure. In the course of writing a new constitution for Nigeria in 1959, Sir John Macpherson made a wide range of consultations. This was to allow Nigerians to choose the system of government they wanted for the country. In one of such memoranda submitted to the Constitutional Conference in 1950 by the Nigerian Youth Movement, it was stated that as a matter of general agreement that a lasting unity of the people of the country can only be achieved through a federation and not fusion. This position was unanimously accepted by Nigerians and as such, there emerged a federal system of three regions including the Northern Region, the Eastern Region and the Western Region with Lagos as a Federal Capital by both the 1951 and 1954 Constitution. The 1954 Constitution promoted regional autonomy which took cognizance of the diversities of the various groups. The regions organized their government as permitted by the constitution and mobilized their resources to develop at their own pace. (Chiwendu, 2017)

The regional autonomy which gave credence to true federalism was jettisoned by the military coup of 1966 which brought Major-General Aguiyi Ironsi to power. There was an attempt at unitary state structure through the infamous Decree No. 34 of May 1966, which purportedly abolished the regions and the unified public service. This of course were the reason for the July 1966 counter -coup which led to the overthrow of Major-General Aguiyi Ironsi. With the subsequent military governments, there have been attempts to deal with agitations for true federalism as the present political structure clearly tilts in favour of the federal government at the expense of the states.

One of the attempts came with the state creation. The Mid-Western Region was created in 1963. With abolition of the regions to states, twelve states were created in 1967 by the Gowon administration. This was later increased to nineteen states in 1976 by the Murtala-Obasanjo administration. In 1987, the states were increased to twenty one and by 1996 it had been increased to thirty six. The purpose of this according to Rotimi and Joseph (2014), was to solve the primary problem created by the disproportional size of the Northern Nigeria which was bigger than Eastern and Western Nigeria put together. There were also efforts to allay the fears of minority ethnic groups through the creation of local governments areas to bring government nearer to the people. It should be noted that the state creation as a strategy for national integration and balance has left more to be desired.

Restructuring in Nigeria

The term “restructuring” has gained popularity among Nigerians especially the elites who are outside the corridor of power. According to Najakku (2016), the term is a buzzword used by a segment of the elites who have been shut out of government at the centre. Put differently, it is a bargaining chip for the nation’s political elite, to negotiate their way into lucrative positions of power (The Politico, 2016). There is no agreement among the advocates of the restructuring of the polity on what constitutes restructuring. There are different interpretations or meaning of restructuring. Restructuring has been seen as synonymous with resource control. Nwankwo (2016) defines restructuring as “thoroughgoing process that allows each region to control its resources and pay royalties to the central government. It is a process that is anchored on the principle of “from each according to each according to his needs”. This definition likens restructuring to resource control but restructuring encompasses resource control.

Is restructuring about the jettison of presidential system for parliamentary? Is restructuring the same as state creation? Is restructuring about the fiscal autonomy of the component units? These questions capture the various perceptions or views of political restructuring. However, restructuring is reorganisation, rearrangement or reformation (Najakku, 2016). Thus, political restructuring entails both political re-configuration of the country and devolution of powers to the constituent units as it is practised in other climes. It involves ownership, control and management of mineral resources located in a state by the state and power to establish its own police as against the present system where the police is under federal control. In short, political restructuring concerns the practice of what Nigerians call true federalism.

According to Ako (2011), resource control refers to the “desire that the region is left to manage its natural resources, particularly its oil and pay taxes and or royalties to the federal government”. For Ikeji (2011, p.29) resource control refers to “direct management of resources within a geopolitical entity.” Resource control has been described as a process by which component units in a federation are allowed to control their human and material resources for the purpose of accomplishing sustainable development for their people (Arowolo, 2011). It also refers to a political arrangement that permits a control over a substantial percentage of the resources (Arowolo, 2011).

For Ifedayo (as cited in Atoyebi, Lawal, Adekunjo, & Ibrahim, 2013) resource control entails the access of communities and state governments to natural resources situated within their frontiers and the liberty to develop and utilise these resources without control by the central government. On the other hand, Henryik (2009) defines resource control as the control and management of resources by the state or local government where the resources are found, under the guidance of the central government and then pay agreed percentage to the

central government. Sagay, (2001) sees resource control from three different angles namely:

The power and rights of a community or state to raise funds by way of tax on persons, matters, services and materials within its territory; exclusive rights to ownership and control of resources, both natural and created within its territory; rights to customs duties on goods destined for its territory and excise duties on goods manufactured in its territory.

Dickson and Asua (2016) argue that the federal government dominated by the majority ethnic groups has used the central government ownership of oil and its utilization of the proceeds to develop their regions instead of the oil-bearing communities. Similarly, Arowolo (2011) examines the nature of agitation for resource control in relation to a federal political system and argues that the majority ethnic groups' centralisation of power and resources at the centre and use of these resources to develop their respective region accounted for the agitation for resource control. In a like manner, Nwogwugwu and Kupoluyi (2015) assert that the demand for resource control has arisen because of the central government's control of a large portion of the oil wealth and submit that unless the central government empowers the constituent units to enable them to develop their domains, the agitation for resource control will continue. By the same token, Yaqub (2016) argues that the de-emphasis on derivation as the basis for revenue sharing, lack of equity in revenue distribution to states that contribute more to the federation purse and the recklessness and corruption that characterized the utilisation of these resources by the central government accounted for the agitation for resource control and political restructuring.

This paper was based on a descriptive and qualitative analysis, as such the study relied heavily on secondary sources of data such as the use of text books, journals, internet materials as well as newspapers and magazines. The paper also adopted the historical method in the bid to examine and establish the previous conditions as regards the situations of evolution, political restructuring and economic development in the history of Nigeria's federalism.

Political Restructuring and Socio-Economic Development: The Link

Development has been defined as a process of growth, expansion or realization of potential bringing regional resources into full productive use. In the series of studies by UNRISD (1980), development identified with the levels of standard of living and levels of welfare. These in turn are identified with the presence of better conditions of nutrition, housing, health, education, transport and so on. The objective of development is to raise the level of living of the masses and to provide all human beings with the opportunity to develop their potentials.

Ukpong and George (2012) defines socio-economic development as the sustained or concerted actions of policy makers and communities aimed at

promoting the standard of living and economic health of a specific area. Such actions include the development of human capital, critical infrastructure, regional competitiveness, health, safety, literacy and other initiative (Ukpong & George, 2012).

Drewnouski (2016) stated that development is a process of qualitative change and quantitative growth of the social and economic reality which we can call either society or economy. Quality of life can be improved by improving the conditions of health, nutrition, education, transport and communication. In a broader perspective, development is viewed as the evaluation of the economy from a stagnant, pre-industrial state, characterized by low incomes with a predominance of the primary sector and the physical proximity of production and consumption to a dynamic diversified and integrated industrial economy.

Restructuring will bring about a situation where the federal government and other levels of the federating constituents where (every area, region or zone) of the country will be able to devote more thinking time, conceptualization, research, exploration and analysis to their mineral and agricultural resources. With a view to developing an economic value-chain for them, this is the first serious step towards development of a manufacturing capacity across the country.

Restructuring encourages innovation and creativity, where there can be sustainability, transparency and accountability in fiscal governance and federation states will be encouraged to bring more of their people into the tax net as taxation will become the basis of expression of citizen's rights. Increased tax revenue must be anchored on governance structures that are very transparent and accountable because no one will like to part with their hard earned money for the kind of structures we currently run.

Presently, the Nigerian federal structure or arrangement is best described as unitary, unbalanced and unsustainable as power is highly concentrated at the centre and the struggle for power is not motivated by service delivery but rather by agreed and self-accumulation of wealth and greed by the elites. Economically, production is what drives conventional capitalism but Nwaeze (2017) stated that in the case of Nigeria politics, corruption, political patronage and unproductive consumption are the driving forces of our economic system. Quoting Usman (2009) in Nwaeze (2017,P):

Growth, wealth creation and poverty reduction are all undermined when public financial management and taxation are weak. Fiscal policy's full potential will not be realized until good and accountable expenditure and taxation systems are put in place. Overall, fiscal policy reveals more about the political priorities underpinning a country's development strategy than any other area of policymaking. The problem with Nigeria is that we have concentrated more on how to share poverty than how to

create wealth. The intensity of the struggle, moreover, has been so fierce, divisive and selfish that we have merely succeeded in further impoverishing ourselves.

Nwaeze (2017) also observed that a situation where the existence of the federating states and the federal government is dependent on sharing oil rent monthly is far from being an ideal situation that stimulates economic growth as well as sustainable development.

Political restructuring will bring about socio-economic development also in the area of natural resources where it will improve the harnessing of our natural resources. As for the natural resources map of Nigeria, no region is left unblessed by God; each region has its fair share of resources which can be sustainably tapped for development. This harnessing will be done in a more sustainable and environmentally friendly manner if the locals will be involved; with full knowledge of the impacts of the activities on their future and livelihoods, safer and saner methods of extraction will be employed (Punch Newspaper, 17th July, 2017). More powers over natural resources will be devolved to the states and regions and the centre will be fairly lean. This will engender competition and growth as a few states and regions can move faster than others and therefore be seen as leaders. The spirit of emulation will set in so that the race will no longer be a race to the bottom as is currently the case. Rather, it will be a race to the top. There will be irreducible, minimum core state obligations which translate into rights for Nigerians across all the regions; no region will be permitted to detract from these obligations in their constitution. This will include universal health coverage, basic education as a right and a minimum floor of social security.

Conclusion

For a proper functioning of the Nigerian federalism, there is need for a proper restructuring of the federal structure of Nigeria starting from a constitutional amendment that will inculcate the basic requirements of federalism. There should be a proper balance in the sharing of governmental powers, functions and in allocation of resources between the federal government and the governments of the federating units to ensure that each of the governments of the 36 states of Nigeria is equipped with every paraphernalia of government to be able to stand as an independent autonomous entity as is required for the practice of federalism. Nigeria's version of federalism, having been distorted, breeds instability, corruption, unproductive consumption and laziness in her political economy as well as a sense of deprivation and inequality between the federal government and the 'Federating' States on the one hand, and the different ethnic nationalities or regions that make up the Federal

Republic of Nigeria on the other as a consequence, therefore, conventional or orthodox economic theories and policies may not be effective to remedy the enormity of Nigeria's developmental challenges, without pulling down the entire architecture of her current political economy, given that it is structurally deformed and therefore, constitute impediments to development.

No matter how much restructuring is done in constitutional and structural terms, if the basic ingredients and values of development administration – such as honesty of purpose, dedication to duty, absence of corrupt practices, discipline, decisiveness in taking and implementing acceptable options then restructuring of the country will be a waste of time and no positive outcome will come out of it. Restructuring should therefore be viewed as the beginning of the solutions to the problems of Nigeria which have a diversified dimension and must be handled in such a way to accommodate and reflect the wishes and aspirations of everybody concerned. Restructuring efforts should be geared towards creating a system that will make Nigeria work despite her diversity.

Recommendations

1. There is need for the central government to devolve some of its powers to the component units, for instance, powers over mines and minerals, labour (wages) and primary education and taxing powers like mining rents and royalty as well as value-added tax (VAT) to the states. A situation in which component units have no control and management over mineral resources found in their domains would not augur well for the country.
2. The existing structure should be pruned and the federal government should divest itself of some unwarranted administrative responsibilities.
3. Ministries should be reduced and functions merged. More responsibilities should be devolved to states to allow for more private sector involvement in the economy.
4. For the purpose of equity and fairness, there should be further physical restructuring of the Nigerian federation so that each geo-political zone will have relatively equal number of states and local government areas.
5. It should be true that restructuring that will produce a shared community of understanding as the bedrock of democracy as this will help in resolving grievances, marginalization, exclusion, etc of the past.

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CHALLENGES OF SECESSION AND INSECURITY IN NIGERIA: THE QUEST FOR RESTRUCTURING AND NATION – BUILDING.

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Abstract

This paper seeks to examine secession issue and insecurity challenges as critical factors in the promotion and preservation of Nigeria, while it interrogates the efficacy of restructuring for nation-building as tool for corporate identity in an heterogeneous societies. Nigeria is facing secession and insecurity challenges due to some destructive and unwarranted agitations from few segments of the society that formed part of the corporate entity called Nigeria in recent times, which have snowballed and added to the existing unstable atmosphere the country is already battling with to resolve politically, militarily, socially and through other associated measures. Secession knows no bound to states' developments, underdevelopment, democratic, autocratic, pluralist, unitary systems or ethnically fragmented societies. It manifests as a results of unresolved issues/and deprivation or marginalization from the commonwealth of the collective association of their existence in a country with resultant effects from instability, insecurity, state fragility, vandalism, economic sabotage and lawlessness. The paper posits to x-ray the challenges of secession and insecurity from the prism that agitations and its consequences could be addressed through constitutional means, devolution, resource control and power sharing among various ethnic groups of the country. The paper makes use of secondary source to collate data that relates to the Nigerian environment, while it therefore adopts theories of integration and devolution of power as theoretical frameworks to midwife the study as the paper explores the correlation between secession and insecurity on one side of the dimension, while it proposes the intervention of restructuring, federalism and consociational democratic ethos as possible variables to social unrest, fragmentation and political crisis in Nigeria on the other side of the analysis.

Keywords: Agitation, Fiscal Federalism, Insecurity, Nation-Building, Restructuring, Secession.

Introduction

Secession possess great and imminent threats to any country in the world as leaders usually ignored and forcefully downplay the secessionists bid without given them fair hearing and equitable attention which eventually leads to war (Alex & Nombulebo, 2019:246). Growing secession exists even in the face of high uncertainty and the economic implication of it is with high cost. Secession is the creation of a new state by the withdrawal of a segment of a territory and its people from an existing country which might take the forms of a force or withdrawal sequel to the rational choice of the proponents, the host states or the threat with permissive and restrictive perspectives to their withdrawal (Aleksander 2015:13). Though secessionists agitations are increasing in strength in Nigeria with the hope of restrictive, it doesn't equate collapsing the nation for parochial interest of a segment of the country where many other component parts are unwilling to leave the country for whatever reasons (Adedimeji, 2021:15). To Oyewo (2019) there is a significant widespread notion of exclusion and perceived feeling of injustice among many segments of the Nigerian nation which have resulted to fear, worry and anxiety with different separatist groups nursing the drive to move out of Nigeria for their own course of action. Groups like Biafra, Ogoni and few others between 1967 and 1970 and recently for the actualization of their ambitions (Oyewo, 2019:2; Ugwuze, 2021:208).

The crises on secession have been attributed to self-determination occasioned by perceived exclusion from the mainstream economic, political and social arrangements of the society which have led to oppression and marginalization. As such, it is usually defeated by military clampdown or force, internal crisis, and unsympathetic attitude of the rest of the society to breakaway activities have added to the voice on nation-building (Ayele, 2015:3) and the disassociation or denial from their own people whom they claimed they are fighting for by the secessionist are usually counterproductive (Ogunmupe, 2021:4).

To Antic (2014) secession does not create the same successive nation as their people would want it to manifest, nor does it stop crisis, violence or minority marginalization once it takes control to be established; secession's rights to exist dampers the efforts of co-existence in the undivided nation and its aspirations for breaking away from the state is not in conformity with democratic principles because it abhors to be rule by the majority central government (Antic, 2014:15). To Muro (2018) "the majority of the world's states are heterogeneous, multi-ethnic or multi-national and the indiscriminate application of the principle of self-determination could result in an anarchical international system where states breakup becomes the norms" (Macro, 2018:20).

Gadu (2021) commented that:

The principle of self-determination as enshrined in the UN charter and which our secessionists latch on to was enacted at a time when many people of the world were under colonial yoke or other forms of domination by outside powers. The principle was to give fillip to independence and liberation movements in order for them to gain their freedom and determine their path of future development. In our world today, this principle applies only to a handful of peoples as an overwhelming majority of peoples of the world are now free from colonial subjugation and self-governing (Gadu,2021:2).

Harbo (2008) noted that the secession right has not been compatible with federalism as federal system and even not all confederation allows secession rights in their treaties of union (Harbo, 2008:2).According to Adedimeji (2021):

In practical terms, few of the new countries in the world have been greater than the old countries for people to be contemplating or romanticizing new nations. For example, South-Sudan, 10 years after its creation in July 2011, is still a sad country. It has been war without end in the midst of man's inhumanity to man. There is no proof that breaking away from Nigeria will be different. Kosovo became independent in February 2008. Montenegro and Serbia went their separate ways in 2006. East Timor, also known as Timor-Leste, declared freedom in May 2002. Palau became independent in October 1994 while Eritrea broke free in April 1993. None of these countries are notable for anything significant in the world...It is the new countries that are trying to find their feet. (Adedimeji, 2021:21).

Challenges of insecurity has become an emerged issue in the contemporary Nigerian society as security of lives and properties which are imperatives for the sustainability of the country are no longer obtainable. Paul & Chinescherem (2015) observed that insecurity has taken a new dimension where it employs sophistication for the methods it uses and has no barriers. More so, when insurgent groups like Boko Haram, IPOB, Biafran agitators which are non-state actors have identified their struggles to ethnic or sectarian agitations (Paul & Chinecherem, 2015:3). Also, Adejumo (2011) noted that the effects of security concern on the economic gains of the nation, the characters of the perpetrators and nature of security challenges facing the country have implications for political system as social cohesion among various groups and interests have been grossly affected (Adejumo, 2011:6)

The rising wave of security challenges in form of crime, arson attacks, wanton killings, kidnapping, banditry, terrorism and hijacking are just too alarming and call for serious concern as it has fuel the demands for new Nigeria from the existing matra, demand for secession and demand for fiscal federalism. Noted also is the agitation and conflicts among ethnic group that have become threats to national integration and development which its non-observance amounted to insecurity challenges (Shedrack, 2020; Tyungu & Koko, 2018:3).

Conceptualization

1. The concept of Federalism

It has become imperative to note that federalism means the union of independent states for the purpose of achieving general goals and objectives. These states forming such union need greater power and autonomy to enable them discharge their constitutional responsibilities under a federal system. The condition for autonomy and independence for lower levels of government is necessary to actualize the objectives of governance through local participation in decision making exercise and process (Nna & Pabon 2017:20). It means respect and powers for the principles of federalism in which functions are delegated/devoluted down to the federating units (Gana, 2020:6)

It signifies the type of government in which the components units of a political community join in the sharing of functions and powers in a cooperative way. It connotes a political system where there are at least two and other lower layers usually called regions, states, cantons, provinces, republics or unions which form the federating parts in the federation (Omotoso, 2014:141). It is a constitutional sharing of power among the various organs/levels of government where some power of actions and decisions are conferred to provincial government for administering their localities (Chaturvedi, 2006:116). It is a federal system where responsibilities are exclusive to either the centre or the components units or while the rest assignments of government are made concurrent to both (Momoh, 2013:23).

According to Mengie (2016) that:

Accommodation of differences is used by federal systems to hold their units together. Lack of accommodation of diversity could lead to conflicts and pose dangers for a union, particularly in multicultural federal systems... federalism is a form of government structure which can address such concerns like unity, regional autonomy, protection of minorities, conflict management and establishment of a civilized and democratic community is a political arrangement

shaped by long historical, political social and economic factors (Mengie. 2016:267).

While Kalu & Bing (2016) noted that federalism is the method of governance that aims towards the unification of entities and the strengthening of component units of independence among geographical units (entities) in a stated political community (Kalu & Bing, 2016:58). Babalola (2017) observed that Nigeria emerged from unitary state in the post-colonial era of her political journey, when it eventually became a federal state with the tendency to accommodate diversities in her heterogeneous society and regulate the struggle for national endowment with strong federal government (Babalola, 2017:4). It is on this structure that both the federal and states governments derived their powers and functions straight from the constitution and are equally independent of one another to the extent of the degree of the federal arrangements (Obidimma & Obidimma, 2015:148). However, in the Nigerian Federal practical context, hegemonic control and overbearing control of the country by the North is observed as a structural problem and imbalances where the dominance and monopoly of one group is manifested to the disadvantage or exclusion of other groups within the polity which could inhibit cohesion and integration (Oladeji, 2006:285).

2. Restructuring

It is a means to readdress the imbalances in any political community that has been involved in political, economic, ethnic, social and religious conflicts as a results of the national question arising from the disequilibrium in the polity. Restructuring has two models – the conservative one that aims to maintain the status quo by making the central government share parts of its exclusive powers and the radical model that calls for a fundamental devolution of powers to the federating states with a lean federal government that has to manage few exclusive powers like external relations. The correlation between the two model is that the centre is over centralized and has brought structural defect to the political system (Unya & Eni, 2018:8).

According to Adegboruwa (2021):

Restructuring, therefore, means fiscal federalism or resource control, state police and devolution of powers to the states and local governments, which will empower every part of the union for greater productivity. Before the 1966 military incursion, Nigeria was practicing true federalism, whereby the regimes controlled their resources as autonomous political territories. With over 250 ethnic nationalities, diverse cultures, multiple faiths and irreconcilable historical experiences,

federalism is the only suitable form of government for Nigeria (Adegboruwa, 2021:6).

It means to re-organise, re-orientate and re-arrange the existing social, economic, educational, political and structural systems for profit and accommodate new platform and repositioning. It amounts to a change of the existing status quo to make more structures functional and better organized operational mindset. It refers to the notions of allowing components states to control their resources and execute projects without the interference of the central government through evolutionary or revolutionary manners in order to exhibit federalism in a multi societal political community (Pally, 2020:37). It implies therefore that effecting changes to the current federal structure is to bring nearer to what the political leaders built in order to address the very issue and challenges that brought them to bear (Efeurhobo & Fredrick, 2020:120).

Theoretical Framework

The study adopted theories of devolution of powers and integration to analyse and link the paper to the findings and recommendation. Devolution of power theory and its practices have manifested in many countries in Africa and Europe where it has been adopted to improve good governance of local participation and at the same period increasing local development initiative (Nhede, 2013:36). It is the theory that explains the constitutional transfer of powers to make decisions regarding finance and management of affairs from the government at the centre to lower levels of government. It is transfer of rights and assets from the federal to the local units or communities as the procedure exist within the national laws that make the limits. The theory evolved during political agitations in France and Britain in the 1960s where powers were given to local authorities in order to reduce the scope of functions performed by the federal government. For example, people in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland but still remain part of Britain started to demand for greater control over their own matters as devolution has been noted to mean mechanism that deepens regional or other cleavages in the local areas and has grown the tendency for federal governments to centralize power while the local level of government enjoys devolution of power to the unit for grass root governance (Hauss, nd:5). The process of devolution distributes powers to territories that want more authority over their own ways of life. Any form of devolution means greater degree of sub-national legitimacy and some form of decentralization of powers, authority and resources (Ndang'u, 2014:11; Orji, 2008:163).

According to Sick (2003) that the basic principle of power sharing are the followings:

- i. grand coalition government in which nearly all political parties have appointments;
- ii. protection of minority rights for groups;

- iii. decentralization of power;
- iv. decision making by consensus;
- v. consociationalism; and
- vi. autonomy (Sick, 2003:6)

The linkage of the theory to the study is that devolution has become a necessity for people to get closer to the components units in term of delivery of goods and services, it has been used to empower the local people for social, political economic management technology and administration as it increases local participation in governance, decision and implementation of public policies by expanding the roles of sub-central government (Mudalige, 2019:116). Devolution was designed to not just to bring governance to the people but also to bring a better type of politics to them (Paun & Maddox, 2019:12).

Despite its utility value of the theory to the study, it has its own shortcomings.

- i. Power transferred is power retained in that the federal/central can usually take it back depending on the political atmosphere.
- ii. It is inherently heterogeneous or centrifugal societies that the federating units will compete with one another to acquire more powers.
- iii. A great radical type of the above critique is that devolution tends to slope towards secession if the component parts do not get more from the central of their demands and expectations.
- iv. Devolution are in permanent state of creation as some might move towards stable federations, while some are unwillingly (Keating, 2009:8)

Integration Theory

The second theory is integration theory of nation building to the study. It seeks to highlight out why nations embrace supranationalism which attracts the attention of realism. It refers to the process through which supranational institutions gradually take the place of national ones. The merging of many states into a single state would be the ultimate reality of integration. The theory is connected with the development of new states through the integration of existing states, typically on a regional, states basis and in the long term, a single global type which evolved after the World War II where security was connected with integration amongst nation states. (Domonkos, 2010:2).

The main features of the integration theory rest on the strength that it originated in the western tradition of pluralists, interest groups (politics) and in the theoretical assumptions about the political impact of aggressive economic interdependence based on liberal capitalist international policies and practices, it manifested in the combination of steel and coal sectors of France and Germany

into a united framework for Europe's economic recovery and prosperity (Kent & Nielsson, 2012:358).

The linkage of the theory to the study lies on the survival of the entire Nigeria political system, the components states in Nigeria are integrated, interconnected, interrelated and interdependent to one another for the stability, continuity and progress of the Nigerian state. Notwithstanding the advantages in the theory of National integration to the Nigerian entity, it has the following shortcomings:

- i. The theory has failed to integrate together very many different tribal and ethnic nations together especially at the grassroots.
- ii. It has failed to reduce the gap between the masses and the elite groups.
- iii. The theory has not succeeded to close the widening gap between structural lives in the rural areas and the urban areas together (Odetola, 1978:12; Babalola & Onapajo 2019:49).
- iv. Hang-over of early creation of different kingdoms and empires.
- v. Unhealthy creation and growth of political parties in Nigeria.
- vi. Unwarranted drive for states creation in Nigeria (Bakari, 2017:362)

Challenges Associated with Secession and Insecurity in Nigeria

If federation has fifty dark images, secession is correctly one of them. The long shades of disintegration hangs over every present or previous federation in the world. The emergence of autonomous countries or past federal units has been a general result of collapsed federation. Though, it is due to these historical precedents, federalism and secession are commonly noted as antithetical trends since they are observed to be pushing in different ways (Sanjamc-Calvet, 2018:6). Failure to address significant challenges such as socio-economic, security, infrastructural integration, capacity building problems that often follow conflict and break away tendency. Other forms of challenges include the followings:

- Marginalization within the federal structure and political system in Nigeria.
- Poor leadership to integrate and harness the differences among ethnic groups together for national cohesion.
- Proliferation of illegal arms as major ethnic groups militia are heavily armed to support their ethnic cause for breakup of their people from the rest of the political community.

Terrorism and Insurgency – They have posed as monumental threats not just to life, properties, human rights, dignity and democratic principles, but also to the very fabric foundation and existence of Nigeria as they have attacked both civilian and security targets with

severe casualties and losses (Mustapha, Musa &Enikanoselu, 2020:296).

- Porosity – Nigeria’s borders with our neighbours are porous, in all manner of measures as its extent has threaten the security of lives and properties.
- Kidnapping/Banditry are regular occurrence that have caused huge humanitarian crisis, damages and death to the nation through their nefarious activities
- Religious and ethnic cleavages are often used as weapons by leaders to cause crisis.

Consequences of Secession and Insecurity Challenges in Nigeria

- (i) Violent attempt had brought crisis and conflict which have been employed with force and war with great loss.
- (ii) They have created distrust and animosity between the secessionist group(s) and the rest of the political community (Disloyal or divide loyalty).
- (iii) They have hindered foreign investment into the corporate existence of the nation as no investor will put his money in an area that is volatile, hostile and unstable.
- (iv) They have led to financial, human and material loss as death, injuries and collateral damages to the nation
- (v) Displacement, refugees crisis and the eventual result of food insecurity among affected areas due to fear, scarcity and intimidation.
- (vi) Political and social activities are deeply affected among the constituent units of the system for political survival and relevancy (Kofa study, nd:3)

Table 1: Empirical reports of names of Agitators in Nigeria over few period of time.

S/N	Name of Agitators	Agenda/Issues associated with their Agitations
1.	Oduduwa Republic	It champions the agitation for a separate Oduduwa Republic from the South-West including part of Kogi speaking Yoruba areas from the Nigerian state.
2.	Arewa Republic	The agitators are calling for a separate country especially the core North from the Nigeria state.
3.	Niger Delta Republic	Due to perceived notion of marginalization and alienation the section of the South-East and South-South felt agitated for a creation of a separate entity of independence status from Nigeria to go on their way as sovereign country.
4.	Republic of Biafra	Its agitators are mostly Igbo sections from the Eastern part of Nigeria with network group like Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB)

Source: Adibe, 2017;6

Mechanism/Quest for Restructuring and Nation-Building in Nigeria

It is essential that Nigeria has to continue to foster social, political and economic cohesions towards nation-building that will guarantee suitable restructuring in order to reduce agitations and tensions in the polity from those proponents of secession by appropriating powers to the federating units and sufficiently remodel the constitution in tune with federalism as it will bring greater accountability and good governance to the nation. It includes other indicators like:

- Fiscal federalism and revenue allocation where the federating units should have independent assess to finance that is not under the control of other level of government, which should be allowed to come into operation, while revenue allocation should reflect and be transferred from higher to lower levels of government in order to re-address imbalances within the system as well as states controlling natural resources within their jurisdictions.
- Legalisation of the creation of state police to complement the Nigerian federal police force in security matters and civil cases.
- Creating a new constitution to eject new initiatives, reduce powers in the federal level in terms of Exclusive power list.

- Local government autonomy to be effective, restored and also reviewing land use Decree operations,
- For economic transformation to the states from centre as it will foster healthy competitions among states.
- To achieve better governance by making the central less powerful though not weak as it will still retain some fundamental/critical powers.
- To reflect, review and accept the models of 1960 and 1963 constitutions which place much approach on balance of powers between the federal and component states.
- Minority rights to be observed and guarantee in a multi ethnic political system.
- The power of taxation should remain in the concurrent list while states exercise devolved powers.
- Creation of more additional states.
- Fairness, justice and accommodation for all ethnic groups.
- Devolution and autonomous regions should be considered to administer their localities.
- Financial autonomy for state legislatures and the judiciary within the Nigerian federation be maintained.

Recommendations

1. Given the pervasive drive for secession, Nigeria as a country needs to boost its quest for re-national integration to create greater space for minority solutions in order to address cultural ethnic, social and political grievances and differences.
2. To ensure inclusive and equal political participation by identity groups in the national polity. Exclusion, marginalization and neglect of identity groups agitations increase the drive for secession as adequate means to check such quest will reduce the zeal and aspiration to secede from the federation.
3. Reviving, revitalizing and renovating projects in the concerned areas of secessionist parts (areas) will douse the tension, low for self-determination and secession.
4. As there is ambiguity surrounding the intervention principle guiding recognition, such international bodies have the responsibility to enact and promulgate clear principles that will safeguard the territorial integrity of Nigeria from disintegration, war, secession and collapse as obtainable in the United Nations organization system.
5. Political power should be decentralized among the levels of government as well as the revenue reserve of the central government be reduced to considerable level.

Conclusion

It is therefore the thrust of this study that the agitation for secession be thrashed through devolution of states and local government autonomy to use their resources for their growth and development. Nigeria will certainly survive structural, political insecurity challenges by restructuring the political community for nation-building, fiscal federalism with autonomy and powers granted to lower levels of government. Agitations for breakaway from a state will lead to more agitations from within that secessionist groups as the demand is on ending except true federalism, national integration, nation-building and devolution where all grievances will be attended to and adequately managed for sustainable corporate existence of Nigeria.

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FEDERALISM AND THE POLITICS OF RESTRUCTURING IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Political structures are forged by nation-states for a convenient arrangement that will foster unity, progress, cohesion and development. In a global context, most countries adopted either federalism or a unitary arrangement of political structures based on their history, culture, geography and other considerations. Nigeria is one of the countries that operate a federal structure of government since the colonial period. However, the Nigerian federalism has never been a smooth or acceptable system for the components entities of the federation. Political agitations and the call for restructuring have been dominating the arena of Nigerian political discussions in recent years. This study examined critically the politics behind the call for political restructuring and the possible attendant consequences. The study utilised secondary sources of data. Materials from books, journal articles, media sources and the internet were consulted. The data collected were discussed and interpreted using content analysis. The study discovered that most of the calls for political restructuring in Nigeria are not genuinely intended for national wellbeing but rather a platform that some sections of national elites is utilising to press home for the transfer of political power. There is no specific practicable blueprint presented by the agitators except political statements in convenient gatherings. The study recommends among several others that the current federal arrangement in the country might not be satisfactory and is inclusive of many loopholes, therefore, there is a need for authentic national dialogue to design a more acceptable framework for the federating units.

Keywords: Constitution, Federalism, Nigeria, Politics, Restructuring.

Introduction

Federalism is one of the modern political structures adopted by many nation-states worldwide as a panacea for a society that is composed of diverse socioeconomic, political, social, cultural and geographical interests (Powell, Dalton & Strom, 2015). Countries design a political arrangement based on their history, culture, economic consideration and political viability with an insight

into a long lasting provision that are expected to serve as shock absorbers of any future potholes of political turmoil (Johari, 2011). In the process of designing a political structure for any state, certain issues taken into consideration are the type of constitution that is practically workable, political institutions such as executive, legislature, judiciary, political parties and governmental structures and an economic formula that is sustainable for wealth allocation and redistribution (Johari, 2012). Federalism is not a political system that is devoid of challenges despite being identified as the best political setting for managing diversities and social complexities, especially where a state is heterogenous with multi-ethnic, multi-religious and a large contiguous geographical or proximity of an environment of the associates (Hix & Whiting, 2012). Federalism is operated by several countries in the world in different forms, structures and practices. Nation-states including the United States of America (USA), Australia, Canada, Germany, Brazil, Malaysia, India, Nigeria and several others contemporarily operate federalism. The nature and pattern of the operation of federalism in the practising countries vary from one country to another except in a few cases where the structures come closer to a synonymous system as in the case of Nigeria and the USA (Appadorai, 2005).

Nigeria is one of the biggest federalism in the world being the seventh most populous country in the world, the biggest country in Africa and the largest black nation on earth. Nigeria's experience with the operation of federalism dates back to three major historical antecedents that are reminiscent of the current state of affairs in the country (Dudley, 1976). Before 1900, there was no country called Nigeria as a political or even a geographical entity. Components units that formed present-day Nigeria were hitherto, kingdoms, chiefdoms, societies, organisations and stateless areas that interacted at variant levels in terms of political rivalry, economic interdependence through trade partnership, sociocultural relationship through intermarriage, migration and resettlement (Coleman, 1960). These various kingdoms were merged and forced into a union by the British colonisers in 1902 after successful expeditions that led to the suppression and emasculation of the different kingdoms. This scenario set the foundation for the emergence of Nigeria in 1914 by Lugard's Administration. Several reforms and constitutional provisions advertently or inadvertently handed over a federal structure to Nigeria during colonialism specifically in the 1944 Richard Constitution that introduced regionalism as a form of political arrangement (Crowder, 1978). After political independence, political upheavals and a fierce rivalry among the competing regions and nationalists carelessly threw Nigeria into various forms of conflicts from bloody military coup to counter-coup and civil war, prolonged exacerbated military rule and different structures of governance led to a federal structure in Nigeria with a Federal Government and its adjuncts, 36 states and 774 local governments (Adejumobi, 2010).

Like any other federal system in the world, various considerations defined Nigerian federalism. Such provisions include fiscal federalism or revenue allocation structure, political arrangement, issue of minority-majority concern, political and economic imbalance in addition to many other related hotspots that are not seem satisfactory to the federating units (Adamolekun & Osuntokun, 1977). Not long after political independence, in essence, during the tumultuous journey toward political freedom from the British colonisers, Nigeria witnessed unending agitations, dissatisfactions and disagreements with the operating structures and the inherited ones. The situation or discontents was regarded as the boiling point that heralded the civil war of 1967-1970 after a bloody coup that was perceived by the Northern part of the country as an orchestrated conspiracy against its founding fathers (Joseph, 1981). From the 1970s to date, even though, there were several restructuring to appease the insatiable aspirations for another political arrangement, agitations continued unabated (Diamond, 1988). The economic and population imbalance in Northern and Southern Nigeria is regarded as the magnum opus of the agitations. The country heavily relied on oil as a major source of foreign exchange which the South possesses particularly the Niger-Delta and that has been used as leverage for an economic and political bargains by the South. In another perspective, the North wields its muscles in a demographic advantage being more populous than its Southern counterparts which offer the region a political advantage, especially in a democratic system (Maier, 2000). Most of the calls for restructuring of Nigeria are seen as politically motivated with a motive for gaining access to power by the elites of the contending regions than a genuine desire for a holistic approach that will usher in a satisfactory structure which can contain the volatile components of the existing federalism in Nigeria. This study is a critical examination of the politics behind the continuous calls for restructuring in Nigeria despite several efforts made towards that some years back such as state creation, local government reforms and revisitation of the revenue allocation formula (Campbell, 2011).

Nature and Concept of Federalism

Federalism is a political setting that enables people with different backgrounds or diversities to live together under one political entity. In a federal system, there are at least two levels of government, central government and component units depending on the structure of the federal arrangement such as regions, states, provinces and local governments. Federalism promotes the process of identifying and unifying the common goal of all the divergent interest groups while taking into consideration the autonomy of the levels that comprise the federation. Federalism is instituted with a constitutional backing that protect the federating states regarding power-sharing, revenue allocation and powers and responsibilities of the central government, regions, provinces, states and

local governments. Both the central government and the constituent governments have some constitutional level of control of power and policymaking in a federal structure (Hague, Harrop & McCormick, 2016).

For federalism to be arranged, countries unite in all shapes and in different political forms including people of various ethnic, religious and political backgrounds. To make diverse people get adequate and satisfactory political representation, federalism is readily presented as a plausible alternative. Several factors lead many states to establish a federal political arrangement. Proximity is a major factor. For security purposes, states that are geographically closer unite into one political entity to secure their vulnerability as the process will make them stronger. The economic benefit is a contributing factor. In some cases, states possess different comparative advantages economically some agriculture, some industries, some natural resources while some military might. All these aids the process of nation-states coming together to form federalism. From another perspective, ethnic compositions, religious complexities and regional differences can facilitate the process of some states becoming a single entity back up by a federal constitution (Dobratz, Waldner & Buzzell, 2012).

There are many types of federalism in operation worldwide. *Asymmetrical* federalism is when different states get different levels of power as in the case of Germany. *Symmetric* federalism is when states have equal powers typical of the case of the provinces in Australia. *Centralised* federalism is the one in which the central government take over the responsibility of policy and decision making at the centre as obtainable in Nigeria and the USA. *Competitive* federalism is the one in which the components units compete for economic benefit and development based on their size or economic and political might which is operated in Malaysia. *Cooperative* federalism is the one in which there is cooperation and coordination in policymaking between the central government and regional government as in the case of India. *Creative* federalism is the one that the federal or central government decides on when to provide resources or allocate wealth to the regional or local government which is partially practised in countries like Nigeria and USA. *Fiscal* federalism is the allocation or distribution of wealth among the federating entities in any federal state (Sodaro, 2015). This aspect applies practically to all federal states worldwide. In the case of Nigeria for example, the revenue sharing formula is 52.68% for the central government, 26.72% for the 36 states and 20.60% for the 774 local governments (Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparent Initiative, 2016). *Judicial* federalism is the separation of judicial powers or courts between the federal and states and in instances, with local governments which is applicable in all the federal states in the world in varying degrees and systems. *Permissive* federalism is how the central government delegates the states or provinces with some of its powers at the grassroots level (Sodaro, 2015).

There is a significant number of countries in the world that operate federalism. It is reported that 30 out of 195 countries of the world practice federalism today. However, despite the number being fewer, the countries that operate federalism possess a population strength making them constitute about 40% of the total world population. Usually, large countries settled for federalism because of the nature of their diversities and complexities which include the USA, Germany, India, Brazil, Nigeria, Tanzania, Malaysia, Mexico, Japan, Belgium, Australia, Switzerland, Canada, Nepal, and Ethiopia and many others. In most cases, federalism operates two levels of government, central government and any other determined constitutionally regional or provincial governments. This is the case with many federal systems like Australia, Canada, Germany and Malaysia but it is entirely a different situation in Nigeria. In Nigeria, there are three components of government. The federal, state and local governments are all constitutionally recognised. Some countries such as USA, Brazil, Germany, India, Mexico and Nigeria adopted federalism for their large territories. A diverse population is another area for the emergence of federalism in some countries including Malaysia, Nepal and Tanzania that decided to co-exist in unity while retaining their original identity. In other cases, ethnic, religious and linguistic factors compelled federal structure such as in the case of Belgium, Switzerland and Mexico (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2020).

Federalism can take various arrangements since the size and composition of nation-states differ. It is not obtainable that all federal states practice the same pattern. No federal system is exactly alike not even the US-Nigeria system which comes closer to being unique in theory, at least. The level of decentralisation and distribution of powers differ from one country to another. For instance, in Nigeria, environmental protection issue is a state matter while in Malaysia is a federal exclusion. In some federations, some powers do not belong exclusively to either of the constituent units of the federation as in the case of India where both the Indian Parliament and state lawmakers can pass a law on criminal, justice and socio-economic matters. One beauty of federalism is it provides a mechanism for representation by all groups in a decision making process. In some federal states, the nature of representation is equal irrespective of the population and size of the regions as obtainable in Australia and Argentina for senate membership (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2020). In Nigeria and USA, representation is based on the population of the states and their constituencies in the House of Representatives while in the upper chamber, the Senate, each state has equal representation of three (3) Senators irrespective of their population. In some federal states, national lawmakers are elected directly in a popular election specifically in Nigeria and USA but in countries like Malaysia and India, some members of the upper house are chosen by the members of the state legislatures. In Canada,

power-sharing is based on cooperation between the central government and the provinces as in Australia while in Nigeria and USA, powers of federal, state and local governments are specified in the constitution as exclusive, concurrent and residual (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2020). One of the ways of maintaining constitutional supremacy in a federal system despite official power allocation to various components is the clause for amendment of the constitution and law-making. In some federal states like Nigeria, India and USA, a constitutional amendment requires not only the two-third of the national assembly or central lawmakers but also two-thirds majority of the state lawmakers. Additionally, the constitution of a federal system protects the federation from dissolution. The constitution usually provides that the component units agree legally to live together and the entity is not subject to dissolution. In the case of Nigeria, the constitution is unequivocally clear that the federation is indispensable and indissoluble (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2020).

Furthermore, federal states in the world arranged their political structure based on their peculiar nature. In Argentina, there are 23 provinces with Buenos Aires as an autonomous city. Australia emerged as a federal state in 1901 and in 1986, the UK and Australia passed the Australia Acts which provides seven individual states. In Austria, there are nine states with a mixture of a semi-presidential and a parliamentary representative democracy. Brazil has 26 states with one federal entity. In Ethiopia, nine regions are established with two major cities. In Germany, there are 16 states, while there are 28 states and 8 union territories in India. Mexico has 31 states and one federal district. In Nepal, there are 14 zones. In the case of Nigeria, there is the federal government, 36 states and 774 local governments under the states. Pakistan has 5 provinces, 2 territories and 2 autonomous areas. Venezuela has 23 states and federal dependency and one capital, in Iraq, Kurdistan was a separate entity until 2003 when the US attacked and destabilised the country which made the territory join federal Iraq. In Malaysia, there are 13 states but the states of Sabah and Sarawak are more autonomous than others because of their economic mightiness since they are oil-producing states in the federation. There are 83 federal territories in Russia with some level of authority. In the United States, there are 50 states but Columbia is directly under the control of the federal government. In Belgium, three different languages are used to determine the federating units which are French, German and Dutch. In Switzerland, there are four official languages that are used to determine the composition of the federation. Bosnia and Herzegovina have 2 regions, the *Republika Srpska* and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Tanzania consists of two major entities, Tanganyika and Zanzibar (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2020).

It can be deduced from the above various explanations and dispositions that federalism in itself is not a unique and uniform system that is unilaterally

applicable to all the countries that operate it. There are different nature, patterns, levels and structures of the federation worldwide across the world countries. This made the study of federalism an interesting unit of comparative study where a study of a single state can generate interest in as much as two or more states. In this regard, this study found it expedient to study Nigerian federalism as a case study. This is because Nigerian federalism has many points of departure from most of the federating states contemporarily. For example, most federal states have two levels of government while Nigeria has three constitutional levels of government.

Perspectives on Nigerian Federalism

Nigerian federalism came into being in 1963 when the country declared itself the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 3 years after attaining political independence from Britain. However, the root or seeds of Nigerian federalism was sown since the era of colonial rule. In 1902, Nigerian territory was submerged and controlled by Britain after a successful takeover of the Northern Protectorates which exhibited some fierce resistance under the Sokoto Caliphate. The British colonisers administered the North and the South separately because the North has a better and an organised centralised political system which made it easy for the introduction of Indirect Rule while the South was semi-directly ruled by the British administrators after the Indirect Rule failed to operate successfully (Mundt & Aborishade, 2005). In 1914, the British Colonial Governor in Nigeria, Sir Lord Frederick Lugard decided to amalgamate the two territories, one large and one small to become present-day Nigeria at the behest of the advice of his wife, Flora Shaw for the naming of the territory as Nigeria with the major reason for the decision as economic and political convenience and benefits (Peel, 2011). The existing political, economic and judicial systems met on the ground in Nigerian territory were overhauled and tagged as the 'Native Authority System'. This was translated as modern local government in the country. It should be noted that the Native Authorities or local government were thus, the first political entity to emerge on the ladder of the Nigerian federalism historically even though, later in modern times, they are the most emasculated segment in the three-tier of government in the federation (Hill, 2011).

After the successful merger of the two Protectorates in 1914, the British set out in search of a better alternative that will accommodate the varying entities and competing interests of the newly merged multiethnic groups, multi-religious entities and various economic conflicting areas. The nationalists who began their activities in the 1920s pressurised the British coloniser for a satisfactory and all-inclusive government that will consider the fears of the minority and the threats that the smaller ethnic groups are facing of domination from the major groups of Hausa/Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba. The 1922 Clifford

Constitution which offered an opportunity for the elites to represent the indigenous administrators in the lawmaking body did not appease the nationalists. In this case, it should be noted that, just like the contemporary agitations, the call for political participation and restructuring in its early phase under British colonialism in Nigeria is an elitist affair and not genuinely intended for a proper representation of all the component units especially the poor (Falola & Heaton, 2008)

The dissatisfaction from the nationalists and the intensified calls for a better and most workable structure of political and economic settings for the Nigerian British territory led to the emergence of a political structure of regionalism in 1944 under the Richard Constitution. The Richard Constitution in one of its major provisions introduced regionalism where the North, East and West were created along with Lagos as an entity. This has set the foundation of federalism in Nigeria. The later Constitutions of Macpherson in 1951 and Lytton in 1954 consolidated upon the regional structure inherited from the Richard Constitution, Nigeria continued to pursue political independence as a federating unit (Le Van, 2015). However, the seed of discord is sown by the British colonisers in the establishment of the Nigerian federalism because of the regional imbalance. Politically, the North possessed around 80% of the total Nigerian territory and it has the majority population which made decision making in the parliament in those days always skewed in favour of the North. The economy too was structured in such a way that the nature of fiscal federalism in Nigeria was provided for a convenience of the British colonisers. A large chunk of the realised revenue, which majority came from North because of population and size, was retained at the centre. This arrangement was later to be enshrined in the 1999 Constitution which was also to become the major bone of contention in the agitations and the politics of the call for a restructuring (Usuanlele & Ibhawoh, 2017).

Thus, Nigeria secured political independence as a federal entity. The nationalists' scramble for drawing relevance and benefits to their respective regions led to serious conflicts that in 1963, another region emerged known as the 'Mid-Western Region' thereby making the Nigerian federation now a component of five major regions of North, East, West, Mid-West and Lagos. This was the first major political restructuring after independence (Smith, 2007). The seemingly unending agitations and dissatisfactions threw Nigeria in the wind of conflict that led to an orchestrated bloody coup by the Igbo army officers on 15, January 1966. This affected Nigerian federalism because a major political restructuring occurred which over ambitiously sought to unite Nigeria and alter the federal structure into a unitary system, a replica of the British system. The effort failed as the retaliatory counter-coup of June 1966 by the young Northern army officers abolished the unitary structure and recognised the former federating units. A Civil War that nearly break up the country between

1967 and 1970 saw the Military Regime of Gowon introducing a major political restructuring that further strengthened and consolidated federalism in Nigeria. Nine (9) states were created in 1970 later additional three (3) were created making them a total of 12. The essence of the state creation was to give a better autonomy and sense of belonging to the divergent ethnic groups by giving them self-governance at the grassroots level instead of the overcentralised system (Adesoji, 2017).

In the years that followed the Civil War, major political restructuring continued to occur. Local governments were constitutionally recognised from the 1979 Constitution. The Dasuki Reform of 1984 for the local government was further designed to recognise and extend the hands of governance more to the grassroots in the quest for true federalism in Nigeria (Dawood, 2015). The various military regimes that ruled Nigeria from the 1970s to the 1990s continued to create states whenever the force of agitation surfaced until a threshold of 36 states was reached in 1996 when the Abacha Administration created additional six states. Local governments too were not neglected. State creation goes hand in hand with local government creation. By 1996, there are 774 local governments in the country (Sule, Azizuddin & Mat, 2017). The revenue sharing formula was altered constitutionally when oil became the major pillar of sustaining the Nigerian economy. Thus, fiscal federalism and agitations for resource control became the limelight of the day in Nigeria, especially in the Southern part of the country. The glorious Northern agricultural revenue faded away and the majority North became economically impoverished (Ogundiya, 2012).

In essence, the Nigerian post-colonial state handed itself unconsciously imbalance of federalism where the fiscal arrangement and political powers are asymmetrical. The establishment of a 13% derivation formula for the oil-producing states was a major step toward actualising true federalism but the process could not satisfy the yearnings and aspirations of the agitators who insist on full state autonomy and resource control. On the other hand, the North continue to dominate power owing to its demographic mightiness in a democratic setting. In essence, most of the agitations for power control and resource control are perceived by many studies as politically motivated by the nation's elites in their scramble for access to power as shall be discussed in the following section.

Federalism and the Politics of Restructuring in Nigeria

Nigerian federalism has undergone several changes and has faced many challenges that are yet, to be resolved, indeed, the issues are even becoming intensified and precarious in the dimension that they are contemporarily taking. Some of the burning issues that are affecting the Nigerian federal structure

consist of fiscal federalism, power-sharing, resource control, agitation for state creation, calls for constitutional review and restructuring.

Fiscal Federalism

A major challenge that Nigerian federalism is facing is the issue of revenue sharing formula and control of resources or the current arrangement of the resources allocation. There are lamentations that the sharing formula is skewed lopsided in favour of the central government which weakened the governments at the grassroots thereby practically turning the Nigerian federal system into a unitary in practice. The FG is allocated over 52% of the consolidated revenue as against the 36 states and the 774 local governments altogether with a total percentage of 47% (Motunrayo & Eytayo, 2019). This is inspite of the fact that the majority over 70% of the country's population is under the control of the states and local governments. On the other hand, other works of literature (Awopeju, Adelusi & Oluwashakin, 2012 and Olaiya, Apeleko, Amanchukwu & Shiyanbade, 2014) support this formula because according to them, the FG is overburdened with control of heavy areas that require a huge financial implication including security, currency, mining and foreign affairs. In other views (Uche & Uche, 2004 and Adetoye, 2016), the formula was designed hurriedly by the military and enveloped in the 1999 Constitution without the proper and adequate consultation of all stakeholders especially people at the grassroots. They argue that there is a possibility that if there is a proper reach out, people may not accept this arrangement. Additionally, the local government which is created and facilitated to provide some basic needs such as health, education, primary roads, markets and security is emasculated under the 1999 Constitution in Section 71 where it is provided that there will be a State Joint Local Government Account (SJLGA). This provision handed over an easy avenue for the states in Nigeria to usurp and hijack the resources of local government. In most cases, the resources are channelled into less important projects such as roads in state capitals instead of genuine rural development projects. Nigeria has 774 local governments and the 1999 Constitution provides for the system of local government through the recognition of a democratically elected council of a Chairman and constituents Councillors that represent Wards in LGAs (Centre for Social Justice, 2020). Since 1999, each of the 774 local governments has 'received' not less than N30 billion from the Federation Account. This by total amounted to N23.200 trillion. The monies are only allocated to local governments in principle but in practice are hijacked by the states. In this regard, there are several calls that the sharing formula should be revisited among the three tiers of government as part of the process of restructuring the Nigerian federalism (Human Development Initiative, 2020).

Power Sharing

Power-sharing or zoning is another burning issue of Nigerian federalism since the colonial period. The problem manifests more in post-independence and the zenith of the issue reached its crux in the Fourth Republic (Olaiya, Apeleko, Amanchukwu & Shiyanbade, 2014). Constitutionally, there is no provision for power zoning or power-sharing. Although, the Federal Character principle was introduced in the Constitution for the sharing of some political appointments and elected offices. For instance, the Constitution is categorical on the Senate representation each state 3 members and Abuja 3 too making a total of 109 for the 39 states and the FCT Abuja. Additionally, the 1999 Constitution also provides that each state must have at least, one representation in the national executive or ministerial appointment, at least a permanent secretary from each state and there is also a provision that when FG is appointing civil servants, each state must be represented based on their population (1999 Constitution). However, the Nigerian Constitution has not provided any option for power-sharing in the elective offices of the President, Vice President, Governor, Deputy Governor, Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Councillors. The Constitution provides clear criteria for contesting the offices which include a minimum school certificate, sound health, nationality, party representation and other factors (1999 Constitution). The major political parties in the Fourth Republic that ruled so far (Peoples Democratic Party and All Progressives Congress), never found it necessary to include in their constitution, power zoning. Some scholars (Adeniyi, 2017 and Abdullahi, 2017) claimed that the parties only have it in principle or based on a gentlemen agreement. It was the burning issue of zoning that led to the defeat of the ruling PDP in 2015 by the opposition APC according to the scholars above. They believed that hadn't it been the PDP fielded a Northern candidate, there is a possibility that they may still win the 2015 Presidential Election. What the above scholars failed to take into consideration is the socioeconomic and political situation in the build-up to the 2015 campaign including massive corruption with impunity, escalating insecurity, poverty and other social problems that made Nigerians fed up with the then, ruling PDP. It is the same scenario that is currently reflecting on the ruling APC in the preparation toward the 2023 General Election.

The political machinations of zoning and power-sharing especially the Presidential post is generating a heated debate among the nation's elites. To some scholars (Awopeju, Adelusi & Oluwashakin, 2012 and Baba, 2017), zoning should be the only shock absorber that will sustain the federation and appease the minority or various zones from the fear of domination. But, on the other hand, zoning may lead to a situation where merit, credibility and integrity may be sacrificed on the altar of power-sharing which will deprive the country of better leadership. On the alternative, this study did not agree with all the positions above. The study believed that the rampant agitations for power-sharing and zoning are elitist. The intensive calls for zoning of the Presidency

are not representing the majority views of the Nigerians. It is an avenue that the regional elites are using to battle for power at the centre for personal benefits. Power resided mostly in the history of the country in the North but the region remains backwards in comparison with the South. It is illogical to introduce zoning constitutionally particularly if the parties that are supposed to do so cannot think of it, it is better to discard this position and open up for a competition where the best stands the chance of getting it than sharing on a platter of gold.

Resource Control

Resource control is a major issue in Nigerian federalism. During colonialism, the revenue allocation formula was based on the derivation principle where the regions are to retain and utilise their taxes under the Direct Taxation Ordinance of 1940 as reported by the Phillipson Report. All regions will also receive grants from the central government from other non-direct tax revenues of Nigeria based on the proportion of the regional contribution to other revenues. Based on the above formula, the Northern Region had 46%, Western Region had 30% and Eastern Region had 24%. The Phillipson Report is therefore historically, the foundation of derivation principles for resource allocation in Nigeria. From the inception of the resource allocation, controversies trailed the process. The Northern Region bitterly complained of the difficulty in determining the origins of goods for which region should pay for customs duties (Uche & Uche, 2004). The financial position of the colony was revisited in 1953 under the Sir Louis Click Commission of Inquiry. The Commission recommended that the Federal Government should keep 50% of the import and excise duty on tobacco, the rest going to the regions based on derivation, 100% of mining and royalty also going to the regions while the central government and regions should share the export duty on hides based on 50-50 basis.

However, in 1958, the need to review the revenue allocation formula was necessary and that has also coincided with the discovery of oil in Eastern Nigeria. The colonial government in 1958 appointed Sir Jeremy Raisman and Professor Ronald Tress to review the fiscal structure. The Committee recommended that the regions should have authority over produce sale tax and sale tax on motor vehicle fuel. They further recommended the establishment of a Distributable Polls Account (DPA) to share federally generated revenues (Uche & Uche, 2004). A similitude of what is currently obtainable as the Federation Allocation Account Committee (FAAC). Perhaps, the most significant recommendation made by the Committee was that mining rents and royalties should cease to be returned to the regions and to be centralised. Based on the new development, four major principles were introduced by the Raisman Committee for revenue allocation instead of derivation. The principles are

continuity, minimum responsibility, population and balanced development of the federation (Uche & Uche, 2004). In 1964, based on the provision of Section 164 of the Republican Constitution, the Federal Government appointed Mr K J Binns as Fiscal Commissioner to review the existing formula for revenue allocation. The final report did not make any significant change to that of the Raisman Committee. The formula was retained. With the creation of states, the revenue sharing formula was altered based on Decree 15 of 1967 where the bulk of the revenue is now shared in each region according to the number of states created in 1970 using the population criteria. It was the time that the population was given a major concern in revenue allocation. The Government White Paper adopted the Okigbo recommendations later which culminated in the promulgation of the Revenue Allocation Act Number 1 of 1981. The Act provided that the federation account shall be shared amongst the various tiers of Government as follows: Federal Government, 58.5 per cent; State Governments, 31.5 per cent; Local Governments, 10 per cent. 26.5 per cent of the state allocation shall be allocated to all states, while the remaining 5 per cent shall be allocated based on derivation.

In 1989, the military government, then headed by General Ibrahim Babangida, appointed a permanent revenue allocation committee: National Revenue Mobilization and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC). The Committee prescribed the following formula for the horizontal allocation of revenue amongst the states: equality of states, 40 per cent; population, 30 per cent; internal revenue effort, 20 per cent; and, social development factor, 10 percent (Uche & Uche, 2004). In 2002, a 13% derivation formula was enshrined in the 1999 Constitution to assuage the continued agitations for an increased in regional control of resources. The formula too was re-arranged for 52.68% for the Federal, 26.72% for the states and 20.60% for the local governments (Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparent Initiative, 2016). Nevertheless, the calls for resource control persist. From the above long sojourn with historical antecedents of revenue allocation in Nigeria, four major issues were detected in this study. There was the heavy influence of the British colonisers in designing the current formula which is continuously being modified and adopted periodically. Secondly, the commissions and committees failed to design a workable or satisfactory formula that will placate all the contending parties. Thus, building on the above point, it is possible that provided Nigeria remains as one entity, there will never be a formula for revenue allocation that will satisfy all the warring parties permanently.

Finally, most of the calls seem to be politically motivated. The oil-producing states perceived that the retention of the major share at the centre is depriving them of their resources not minding the failure of their leaders to utilise their allocation. For instance, Bayelsa State received a net statutory allocation in February 2020 of N10, 711, 351, 307.27 (nearly 11 billion) for the

state along with its 8 local governments for February. Bauchi State with 20 local governments received a net allocation of N3, 378, 855, 319.19 (approximately 4 billion). This is in consideration with the derivation because Bayelsa is an oil-producing state and Bauchi is not. Comparatively, the population of Bayelsa is 1,704,515 million while that of Bauchi is 7.3 million (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Elites' attitude toward corruption and misutilisation of resources are the main causes of outcries for resource control. Indeed, the calls themselves are seen as elitist because the leaders are yet to show what they have done accordingly with the received allocation to justify the calls for additional allocation. It is a politics for power bargain in the submission of this work.

Agitation for State Creation

States were first created in Nigeria in 1970 after the Civil War as a permanent panacea to the fears of the minority of domination by the main ethnic groups of Hausa/Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba in the country. From 1970, state creation continued by successive military regimes until 1996 when the aggregate number of the states reached 36 with 774 local governments. However, the major argument of those who are pestering for state creation is that the number of the states indicates regional imbalance because, in the North, there are 19 states with FCT Abuja making them 20 while in the South they are 17. The Southeast geopolitical zone continued to agitate for state creation because according to them, all other geopolitical zones have a minimum of six states and in the case of Northwest, they have seven and so also Northcentral which has six and FCT Abuja making it seven by implication. However, all state creations in Nigeria were executed by the military regimes. No civilian regime ever creates a single state in Nigerian history. The second issue attached to the agitations for state creation is the arguments by some scholars (Okpu, 1983 and Alapiki, 2005) that states are becoming a burden on FG or FAAC accounts because many could not afford to generate enough revenue to sustain themselves. Instead, it is seen as a scintillating movement by the elites to domesticate revenue sharing by grabbing their share through their states. Many experts (Suberu, 1991 and Adetoye, 2016) criticised the procedure of revenue sharing where some states that could not contribute any meaningful share to the federation account go to Abuja to collect their monthly, share, pay salaries, use the remaining for projects, and indulge themselves in incurring huge debts to augment their income for developmental projects or even recently, payment of monthly salaries, pensions and gratuities. It is argued that state creation will not add any value to the federation except to further straining the government's purse (Okon, Ekok, Owan & Antigha, 2013). In a different view, some scholars (Eze, Elimian & Chinwuba, 2015 and Yongo, 2015) felt that state creation resulted in grassroots development because the newly created states can use their federation allocation for executing developmental programmes in their localities. In

essence, this study takes a balance between the above positions that state may be created if there is a constitutional backing and if the area that is aspiring for the state fulfils the criteria that should be set before the award of the state. The criteria should be stringent to discourage unnecessary demands. For instance, one of the criteria should be possessing some certain geographical size, internal revenue generation and population.

Constitutional Review and Restructuring

In recent years, the calls for constitutional review and restructuring of Nigeria dominated headlines, national debates and political statements by politicians and analysts nationwide. The major argument presented by those who are inherently calling for the review of the Constitution is that it was hurriedly packaged by the military and imposed on the country in the pseudo transition to civilian democracy in 1999. The reason why the arguments above are seen as myopic are many. They have failed to take into cognisance that there was never a time in the history of Nigeria that a constitution is indigenously designed by Nigerians. The Nigerian Constitution is a product of the reminiscence of colonial heritage continuously retained and modified occasionally. The second counterpoint is that to write a fresh constitution now is practically impossible because we have to reach out to grassroots and all stakeholders to get their input. How to synthesise and harmonise these divergent inputs is what they have not told us in their agitations because definitely, there will be regional interests, religious interests, ethnic interests and other interests all of which are irreconcilable. Instead of the call for rewriting the Constitution, it is better to look at the main flaws and address them squarely rather than calling for what is not practicable. This is because all the conferences so far could not even come into the limelight talk less about implementation. The 2002 National Conference and the 2014 Conference all ended as tea party gatherings. Already, Nigeria has had enough constitutions to support a review. From 1922 Clifford, 1944 Richards, 1951 Macpherson, 1954 Lyttelton intervention, 1959 Independence Constitution, 1963 Republican Constitution, 1979 Constitution and 1999 Constitution, not even the oldest democracies such as America and England witnessed such constitutional proliferation (Abutudu, 2010). On the other hand, those calling for restructuring are right in their perspective to demand true federalism and a structure that will persuade all the components units in the federation.

There is no doubt that the current structure is existing on paper but in reality, the Nigerian federalism looks more like a unitary system and the supposed third tier of local government is practically non-existent (Dapo-Asaju & Bamgbose, 2019). However, what the agitators could not provide is the practical step by step ways of restructuring and the legal model to be adopted in actualising it. Should Nigeria return to the parliamentary model or a mixed

model of the presidential-parliamentary system? What about the current revenue sharing formula isn't in tandem with federal systems worldwide but are federal states all operating an equal structure? What about socioeconomic and political imbalance across the geopolitical zones? Should they be retained or restructured and in what mode? Failure to provide answers to these questions made the calls for restructuring to look more political and an elites' manipulation for power struggles at the centre than a serious patriotic move for a better Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study concludes that Nigerian federalism is a structure that is better for the country because other countries with similar multiethnic, multi-religious and large geographical areas also settled for the same structure. This is in consideration that countries that operate federalism are not having the same features, structures, systems and history. Countries adopted federalism based on their particular reason so also how they structure their fiscal federalism and power sharing. The study also concludes that there are several problems with Nigerian federalism from its inception in 1944 including fiscal federalism, power-sharing, revenue allocation and unending agitations from various interest groups but it seems to be difficult or impossible to come up with a formula or a model that may satisfy the seemingly irreconcilable interests that continue to agitate for one issue or the other. Nevertheless, the study is in support that some fundamental issues that are causing dissatisfaction in the system should be revisited and a workable model should be designed. The study also concludes that most of the calls for power-sharing, resource control, constitutional review and restructuring are politically motivated by the elites to bargain for access to power at the centre due to the overconcentration of resources and power at the centre which turned the Nigerian state in practice into a unitary structure unconsciously. Also, the study concludes that most of the agitations for restructuring and resource control are not accompanied by a practical approach that will convince the majority and is not also taking into consideration the legal perspective of the matter. Based on the above conclusion, the study recommends the following for better Nigerian federalism in future:

1. Areas that are causing permanent dissatisfaction should be sincerely looked into and experts drawn from all parts of the country should be appointed to present an alternative model that will satisfy the agitations;
2. There is a need to look into the current system whether it is feasible or sustainable or it is not. This study suggested a modified presidential system that will incorporate a parliamentary where there will be a president and a prime minister;

3. The constitutional review should only consider some burning areas and attend to them instead of the call for complete writing of a new constitution which is impossible;
4. Nigerians should only take serious those agitations that directly affect them such as the call for wealth redistribution between the rich and the poor and reducing the gap of inequality instead of falling into the trap of elites' power gameplay which has no provision for them and
5. The revenue allocation formula should be revisited where the centre or FG should be allocated 30%, states 30% and local governments 40% because of the proximity of the LGs with the people for a grassroots development projects. But this should be granted only if Section 71 of the Constitution is abolished which provides for the joint account and the full autonomy of LGs is guaranteed. LGs should have their allocation directly coming to their account while their leaders should be elected in a general election to be conducted by Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) making the State Independent Electoral Commissions (SIECs) to be abrogated.

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FEDERALISM, HEGEMONY AND THE CLAMOUR FOR RESTRUCTURING IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Federalism in Nigeria has been the subject of constant demands for tinkering or fundamental restructuring since colonial times. The debate and demand for restructuring of the federation and federal practice to create effective political and economic institutions that can both accommodate diverse interests and provide effective government, have refused to die down. This study investigated the hegemony or forces militating against the effective practice of federalism and thus creating a room for the persistent clamour for restructuring in Nigeria. Relying on secondary materials, this study investigated the contending issues in Nigerian federalism, such as structural imbalance, asymmetric power relations, fiscal federalism and local government as a third tier of government in Nigerian federalism. More so, the neo-Marxist theory of the post-colonial state was adopted and applied as the theoretical framework of analysis. The study realised that the thorny issues of centralisation of powers and resources at the centre, asymmetric power-sharing, fiscal federalism, and the role of the local government as the third tier of government have formed the basis for the restructuring narratives in Nigeria. While the discourses for restructuring have been persistent and regenerative, the call has been antagonised by hegemonic forces in the country. On a general note, the study affirmed that the ruling political class, irrespective of their political, ethnic, and regional extraction, has always resisted restructuring for some selfish reasons. It was also realised that the northern hegemony has particularly antagonised restructuring. To ensure a stable democratic state and effective federal practice in Nigeria, the study recommended, among others, a comprehensive constitutional review, leading to decentralisation and devolution of powers. There is also the need for distributive justice in Nigeria.

Keywords: Federalism, Restructuring, Hegemony, Decentralisation, and Power-sharing

Introduction

The modern state in Nigeria arose through the forces of British imperialism and ever since the disparate groups were forcefully brought together in 1914, there have been rumbles in the state, leading to incessant political mending, panel beating, and even attempted secession. The federal system of government was adopted in 1954 to officially recognise and share constitutional power and resources between the federating units in the new federation. Yet, in about sixty-four (64) years of the federal practice in Nigeria, the political class, enmeshed in the centripetal and centrifugal forces of power-sharing in the Nigerian federalism, has never agreed on the true form of constitutional power-sharing (Majekodunmi, 2015). To Aiya and Alabi (2016), Nigeria can be said to be operating the federal system of government in theory, whereas in actual practice, the country is tending towards a unitary system. Similarly, Okotoni and Adegbam (2021) submit that the states of the Nigerian federation are mere political concessionaries.

Since the federal structure and the practice of federalism in Nigeria has been faulty from the beginning, the clamours for restructuring and redrawing the guidelines, principles, and practice of federalism in Nigeria have been generative and refused to recede. Consequently, this clamour has become loudest, since 1999, after the end of military authoritarianism and the expansion of the civic space in Nigeria. What then are the contending issues in Nigerian federalism yawning for restructuring? Again, what are the hegemonic forces in Nigeria, antagonising the socio-economic and political remodeling to ensure the smooth practice of federalism in Nigeria? This work, therefore, investigated the nature and character of the Nigerian federalism, the underlying reasons for the incessant clamour for restructuring, and laid bare, the hegemony in the centripetal and centrifugal forces in Nigerian federalism.

This study relied on secondary sources for data generation to investigate the problem under interrogation. It employed thematic research approach to investigate federalism, hegemony and the clamour for restructuring in Nigeria. The study reviewed related literature, government reports and extant publications. The secondary data, were acquired from journals, books, official publications, newspapers, seminar and conference papers, policy papers, lectures, unpublished materials and magazines. Furthermore, qualitative data collected were logically analysed based on facts in order to make sound conclusions. The sources consulted were duly acknowledged and cited.

Conceptual Issues**i. Hegemony**

Hegemony, as a concept, etymologically derives from the Greek word “hegemonia”, connoting domination or a preponderance influence exerted by a dominant group over others. Scholars of Marxist orientation and International

Relations have variously applied it to their analyses. As submitted by Seteolu and Okuneye (2017), it traditionally meant the dominant state that can wield unchallenged influence and power on other states within the system of states. In addition, (Olajide and Ojakorotu, 2020; among others) have agreed that the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci laid the foundations of what is known as hegemony which is an important extension of Marxian analysis of the capitalist state. For Gramsci, hegemony means the predominance of bourgeois values and norms over the subordinate classes (Offu & Okechukwu, 2015). The latter is the view of this work.

Thus, Gramsci (1971) alludes to the fact that the ideas of the ruling class are the dominant idea in society. As Mailafia (2018) further submits, the notion of hegemony explains the structure and anatomy of domination in a political society. He identifies varying forms of domination: economy, culture, and politics. He also maintains that the dominant political class in Nigeria manipulates capital, political power, religion, ideas, information, and knowledge to consolidate their stranglehold on society. It is noteworthy that hegemony can be so effective to the extent that the people dominated begin to accept their fate as a part of the natural order and the best of all possible worlds. The hegemonic powers in this study, therefore, refers to the political class, which has persistently enjoyed the centralisation of power and consistently frustrated and resisted the clamour for the restructuring of the Nigerian federalism.

ii. Federalism

There is a consensus among scholars of federalism that the modern idea and conceptualisation of what constitutes federalism have been determined by K.C. Wheare. This foremost scholar and doyen of federalism defined it as the “methods of dividing governmental powers so that general and regional governments are each within a sphere, co-ordinate and independent” (Wheare, 1964, p. 10). He also emphasised that “... to the extent to which any system does not conform to this criterion, it has no claim to calling itself federal” (Ezeani, 2018, p. 5). Suffice it to add that Wheare’s definition was criticised as being rigid, legalistic, unrealistic, and neglecting certain socio-economic, cultural, and political realities that shape federal societies (Livingstone, 1952 Friedrich, 1964, among others). For instance, Livingstone (1952) emphasised sociological factors or federal qualities that make power division as encapsulated in the constitutional provisions as well as unity inevitable. According to him, “the federal government is a device by which the federal qualities of the society are articulated and protected” (Livingstone, 1952, p.12). Similarly, Friedrich (1964) sees federalism as a process rather than a design. This implies that “federalism is a general principle of social organisation and a process that operates in the direction of integration and differentiation” (Friedrich, 1964, p. 286). He also avers that the pattern of the direction of these

depends essentially on sociological criteria which include prevailing attitudes, values, preferences, propensities, and interests of the various actors at that material time.

Another classical scholar, Etzioni (1962) emphasises the centrality of power in the integration process of systems. Put differently, federalism is a means of ensuring equitable power-sharing among diverse groups of society. Again, Nwabueze (1983) defines it as an arrangement whereby the powers within a country are shared between a national, country-wide government, and a number of regionalized (that is territorially localised) governments in such a way that each exists as a government separately and independently from the others, operating directly on the persons and property within its territorial area, with a will of its own and its apparatus for the conduct of its affairs, and with an authority in some matters exclusive of all the others (Obidimma & Obidimma, 2015).

Drawing from the above postulations, this work defines federalism as a system of government adopted by people with diverse backgrounds who form a political union but at the same time, desire to preserve a limited autonomy. Therefore, it implies that federalism is a system of constitutional governance that ensures the distribution of political and economic decision-making powers among constituent units and levels of government. It is a form of government that is deliberately designed to cope with the twin problem of maintaining unity while also preserving diversity. Federalism thus connotes an organisational principle of a political system, emphasising both vertical power-sharing across different levels of governance and at the same time, the integration of different territorial and socio-economic units, and cultural and ethnic groups in one single polity. Essentially, federalism is about the distribution of political and economic decision-making power among constituent units or levels of government.

iii. Restructuring

There is no agreement among the advocates of the restructuring of the Nigerian federation on what constitutes restructuring. However, while the term has gained popularity in Nigeria in recent times and become a buzzword, Najakku (2016) posits that the term is used by a segment of the ruling class who have been shut out of government at the centre. Similarly, Adeosun et al, (2017) concur that restructuring is a bargaining chip for the nation's political class, to negotiate their way into lucrative positions of power. To Akpan et al (2018), restructuring entails both political re-configuration of the country and devolution of powers to the constituent units. According to them, it involves the demand for the ownership, control, and management of mineral resources located in a state or region by that state or region and the power to establish its police as against the present system where the police are under federal control.

Again, the concept of restructuring presupposes the re-organisation or re-arrangement of the existing political and economic structure which many perceive as unfair, unjust, discriminatory, and anti-development. The calls for restructuring in Nigeria centre on the balanced nature of the country's federal arrangement and inherent grievances – political representation, revenue allocation, political appointment and centralisation of resources and powers, among other anomalies embedded in this arrangement. Nweke (2019) confirms that as a concept and process, restructuring is operational, dynamic, and perceptive. He also submits that restructuring in Nigeria entails the remodeling of Nigeria's federalism to achieve governmental responsibility. In short, restructuring concerns the need to address the lopsided and unbalanced federal structure and the practice of what Nigerians call true federalism.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that captures and explains this work is the neo-Marxist theory of the postcolonial state. This is an offshoot of the classical Marxist political economy approach, to analyzing and understand the contending issues in Nigerian federalism and the clamour for restructuring. The major tenets of the theory of the postcolonial state are generated from the works of Ekeh (1972); Alavi, (1973); Ake, (1981) and Ekekwe, (1986); who among others, have contributed to the explanation and understanding of the character of States in the periphery. The central focus of the theory rests on understanding the nature, structure, history, composition, and character of the State in the periphery, to ascertain the dynamics of political developments and processes within the State.

It is noteworthy that the State occupies the centre stage of politics in the periphery, including Nigeria, and therefore is the major determinant of most societal processes, including the adoption and operation of federalism in Nigeria. The theory suggests that the postcolonial state is a creation of imperialism. As such, it has followed the developmental strategies of the colonialists, dictated by the interest of the imperialists and their local allies, not by those of the majority of the indigenous population. The post-colonial state has created for itself a deep crisis from which it can hardly extricate itself without fundamentally changing its present nature. As Engels (1919), cited in Omoyibo (2014, p. 23) argues, "the State is nothing but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie". Similarly, Ake (1981, p. 5) notes that:

The State is a specific modality of class domination, one in which domination is mediated by commodity exchange so that the system of institutional mechanisms of domination is differentiated and disassociated from the ruling class and

even the society appears as an objective force standing alongside society.

More so, Alavi (1973, p. 146) has opined that the “post-colonial States and their apparatus are instruments of primitive accumulation by the dominant class and their collaborators”. In line with this, Ekekwe (1986) posits that the post-colonial states rest on the foundation of the colonial state. This, in turn, had incorporated some important elements of the pre-colonial rudimentary state structures. The main goal of the colonial state was to create conditions under which the accumulation of capital by the foreign bourgeoisie in alliance with the ruling elite would take place through the exploitation of local human and other natural resources. It was on this basis that the post-colonial state emerged.

Given this context, the stakes and struggles for State power are usually but unfortunately, very high and often assume a winner takes all approach. The limited autonomy of the post-colonial state in Africa leads to an exclusive politics articulated in power struggle based on efficiency norms rather than legitimacy norms; the triumph of the vicious over the virtuous circle; centralisation of power; imposition of hegemony or domination and political control; alienation of leaders from their masses; and the deployment of extremism in the exercise of power, are all hallmarks of the post-colonial state. The intensities or the frequencies of the above forces in African states affect the operationalisation of government policies and the consolidation of democracy in such states (Ogbonna, 2014).

Under these circumstances, state-building, nation-building, and the practice of federalism and democracy are subverted and become the political equivalent of primitive accumulation, employing brutal force and violence. It entails conquest and subjugation since it is projected as arbitrary power. State-building and the practice of federalism in Nigeria thus assume a rather violent character as groups or social classes jostle for power and resources (Ake, 1996). Thus, an understanding of the history, nature, and character of the State is very important for capturing the dynamics of socio-economic formations, their configuration, and transformation. So, the basic characteristic of the State in Africa is that it has very limited autonomy. This means that the State is institutionally constituted in such a way that it enjoys limited independence from the social classes, particularly the hegemonic social class, and so, is immersed in the class struggle that goes on in the society, which does have an overbearing influence on the implementation of policies that would have given all citizens equal opportunities and a sense of belonging in the political system.

Despite its analytical power, the neo-Marxian theory of the post-colonial state has been attacked as being ambiguous and vague. As indicated by Young (1996, 2001), the neo-Marxian theory of the post-colonial state not only lacks clarity and consensus but also keeps changing through new forms of social

collectivity as they emerge in time and space in the postcolonial world. However, its fluidity and ambivalence are what are genuinely enabling about the theory. The theory is also accused of suffering from colonial reductionism and such cannot stand empirical scrutiny because it lacks adequate and valid explanation as to why countries like the United States of America, Australia, Singapore, among others, all former colonies are exempted from the postcolonial quagmire (Okolie, 2010).

However, it can be convincingly demonstrated that the neo-Marxian theory of the post-colonial state raises succinctly, some major questions as regards the question of democracy and development in Africa (Ake, 1996). These issues according to Gutkind & Wallerstein (1976, p. 21), “must be approached historically, for it is the past, rather than some evolutionary dynamics that have shaped the present and it is these past events and experiences which so many contemporary analysts have elected to ignore”.

From the above submissions, it can be stated that the neo-Marxian theory of post-colonial state is relevant in interrogating the practice of federalism and the clamour for restructuring in Nigeria. Consequently, Arowosegbe (2001) and Ogbonna (2014), among others, have used this framework to investigate various political phenomena, in the civil society and democratic consolidation. Therefore, this theory is not only in vogue but also relevant in the examination of germane issues of the democratic practice and the operation of federalism in Nigeria.

Consequently, the character of the Nigerian State, especially its authoritarian and unitarian tendencies discourages the practice of principles of federalism. It suffices to add that the Nigerian State suffers from a hegemonic, predatory, parasitic, and non-productive ruling class, which sees politics as a zero-sum game and as such strongly possess a winner takes all mentality. More so, the malfunctioning of federalism in Nigeria can squarely be attributed to the high premium placed on capturing and retaining State power in Nigeria by the hegemonic ruling class.

Contending Issues with Nigerian Federalism

Nigerian federalism, *ab initio*, is a product of the extraordinary diversities and complexities in the land. This complexity is a reflection of the avalanche of ethnolinguistic, cultural, and religious groups cohabiting the territory and the intricacies of interaction among them (Majekodunmi, 2015). As Eliagwu (2005, p.5) submits, “federalism emanates from the desire of people to form a federal union without necessarily losing their identity”. Consequently, in a plural society like Nigeria, federalism is theoretically, about equality, justice, and fair play among both the constituent units and communal groups found in the polity. It is also concerned with the spatial mobilisation and utilisation of societal resources in a manner that facilitates balanced growth and development.

Yet, federalism has traversed a crooked path in Nigeria, necessitating the rumble and tumble in the polity, often driving the state to a near precipice and explaining the undying clamour for restructuring. The major contending issues in the Nigerian federalism are analysed below:

1. Structural Imbalance

One of the key issues on the front burner, raised by the critics of Nigerian federalism is the structural imbalance in the federation. Akindele (2001, p. 2) captures it thus:

Federal structures and processes, wherever adopted to accommodate territorially based diversities, must show concern for the notion of equilibrium or ‘reasonable balance’ not only in the initial federal bargain, reflecting the competing pressures for unity and diversity... but also in the operation and working of the federation.

Other scholars have collaborated on this submission. For instance, Ayoade (1998) maintains that a federation is morbid if one part of the federation is bigger than the sum of the other parts. Again, as a condition for stability in a federal system, scholars, operators, and managers of inter-governmental relations in the federal experiment, have drawn attention to the importance of, and the necessity for structural balance within the system (Ezeani, 2018).

Yet, the Nigerian system does not have a semblance of a balanced federation. An important dimension of the notion of structural imbalance is the comparative size and wealth of Nigeria's territorially structured component units. This structural imbalance in Nigerian federalism is not unconnected with the awkward and lopsided origin of the Nigerian federal structure. As Akindele (2001, p.13) collaborates, “a conspicuous territorial imbalance characterises the comparative size of the constituent units in Nigeria, since inception”. Suffice it to add that the Richard Constitution of 1946 created three regions in Nigeria – the North, East, and West. The mid-western region was carved out of the Western region in 1963. It is noteworthy that the very construction of the Northern Region in the form in which it entered the era of independence represents the greatest injustices and acts of gerrymandering in history (Ezeani, 2018). Suffice it to add that the Northern Region then had 77 percent of Nigerian landmass, the Eastern Region had 8.3 percent, the Western Region had 8.5 percent and the Mid-Western Region had 4.2 percent. Again, the 1963 population census indicated that the Northern Region accounted for 53.3 percent of the total population of Nigeria, the Eastern Region had 22.3 percent, the Western Region had 18.4 percent and the Mid-Western Region had 4.6 percent (Orluwene, 2018). Thus, landmass and population figures, even today, have made it virtually impossible for the South to control political power at the

centre, given the ethno-regional character of politics in Nigeria. While there is no federal system in the world in which the constituent units are even or nearly equal in size and population, political power, administrative skills, economic development or relative geographical locations, Orluwene (2018, p. 81) posits that “whenever the disparity is as great as to make one constituent unit or region permanently dominant in collective decisions, it results in unitary centralism rather than a federalism”.

2. Asymmetric Power Relations in Nigeria

Another of the challenge of the Nigerian federalism that has attracted extensive public discourse is what Ezeani (2018, p. 15) describes as “the problem of the asymmetric power relationship between and among the disparate component units in the federation. This has generated mutual accusations and counter-accusations of domination and domination by the Southern part of the country, particularly, the South-East and South-South. See table one below:

Table One: Leadership Distribution among the Six Geo-Political Zones in Nigeria, 1960-2021

S/N0	Dates	Name of Presidents	Regime	State of Origin	Geo-Political Zone
1.	1/10/1960 – 15/01/1966	Tafawa Balewa	Civilian	Bauchi	North-East
2.	15/01/1966– 29/07/1966	Aguiyi Ironsi	Military	Abia	South-East
3.	29/07/1966– 28/07/1975	Yakubu Gowon	Military	Plateau	North-Central
4.	28/07/1975- 13/02/1976	Murtala Mohammed	Military	Kano	North-West
5.	13/02/1976- 01/10/1979	Olusegun Obasanjo	Military	Ogun	South-West
6.	01/10/1979- 31/12/1983	Shehu Shagari	Civilian	Sokoto	North-West
7.	31/12/1983- 27/08/1985	Muhammadu Buhari	Military	Katsina	North-West
8.	27/08/1985- 28/08/1993	Ibrahim Babangida	Military	Niger	North-Central
9.	28/08/1993- 17/11/1993	Ernest Shonekan	Civilian	Ogun	South-West
10.	17/11/1993- 08/06/1998	Sani Abacha	Military	Kano	North-West

11.	08/06/1998- 29/05/1999	Abdulsalam Abubakar	Military	Niger	North- Central
12.	29/05/1999- 29/05/2007	Olusegun Obasanjo	Civilian	Ogun	South-West
13.	29/05/2007- 05/05/2010	Umaru Yar'Adua	Civilian	Katsina	North-West
14.	05/05/2010- 29/05/2015	Goodluck Jonathan	Civilian	Bayelsa	South-South
15.	29/05/2015 till date	Muhammadu Buhari	Civilian	Katsina	North-West

Source: Compiled by the author, 2021.

According to the geo-political zones, the North-West has produced 6 presidents, the North-East 1 and the North-Central 3. In the South, the South-Eastern States have produced 1, the South-South has 1 and the South-West has 3. Therefore, the presidential slot is largely a Northern affair since political independence. The study reveals that the North has produced 10 out of the 15 presidential slots since Nigeria's independence. In other words, 80 percent of Nigerian presidents or heads of government have been from the North, while the South has occupied the coveted position for a paltry 20 percent, since Nigeria's political independence. See table two below:

Table Two: Presidential slots according to Geopolitical Zone

S/NO	Geo-Political Zone	N0 of slots at the Presidency	Percentage
1.	North-West	6	40.0
2.	North-East	1	6.7
3.	North-Central	3	20.0
4.	South-West	3	20.0
5.	South-East	1	6.7
6.	South-South	1	6.7
	Total	15	100

Source: Compiled by the author, 2021.

Consequently, Oruebor (2015) refers to the Nigerian political structure as the feeding bottle federalism. In a similar criticism of Nigeria's federal practice, Abah & Nwoku (2017) observe that the age long rape on the federalist principles coupled with apparent abuse of the federal character principle enshrined in the Nigerian constitution, especially by the President Buhari led administration in areas of appointment into key positions and alleged marginalization and neglect of some sections of the country may have awakened

the consciousness of Nigerians on the need for urgent political restructuring of the Nigerian federation.

It is noteworthy that the Northern hegemony has been consolidated and extended by the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari. There have been hues and cries that the President's appointments are skewed in favour of the North. In particular, almost all the heads of security agencies under Buhari are from the North. In his 2020 Christmas Message, Bishop Kukah of Sokoto Catholic Diocese posited that Buhari's administration is 'institutionalizing northern hegemony by reducing others in public life to second-class status' (Kukah, 2020). He also maintained that President Buhari deliberately sacrificed the dreams of those who voted for him to what seemed like a programme to stratify and institutionalise northern hegemony. He has pursued this self-defeating and alienating policy at the expense of greater national cohesion.

3. Fiscal Federalism and Revenue Allocation

The politics of fiscal federalism and revenue allocation has remained a thorny and delicate issue in the discourses on Nigerian federalism. The demand for resource control by the oil producing states is an evidence of the dissatisfaction with the present inter-governmental fiscal relations in Nigeria. The issue of fiscal federalism has engaged various commissions and committees since the colonial days (Sagagi, 2015). Yet, even today, this issue continues to be in the front burner of national discourse. The calls or demands for resource control and the review of the sharing formula clearly demonstrate that this is still an unsettled matter. As Kalu (2011) posits, between 1948 and 2012, there have been nine Commissions, six Military Decrees, one Act of the Legislature and two Supreme Court judgments that have attempted to defining and modifying fiscal interrelationships among the component parts of the federation. In the present democratic dispensation, there has been a hike in the clamour to redefine or interpret the framework for revenue sharing both between the States and the Federal Centre (vertical sharing) and among the States themselves (horizontal sharing).

The politics of determining the sharing of the federal revenue among the federating units in Nigeria has always been contentious. Studies (Vande, 2021, Omodero, 2019) have revealed that, revenue allocation formula is an instrument for determining what segment of the polity gets what percentage of the so-called national cake. It is also clear that revenue allocation is more of a tool used for ensuring fiscal efficiency, social justice and political stability, which guarantees growth and sustainable development within the context of well-defined national objectives. However, the federal government, in Nigeria has, over the years, centralized resources and appropriated most powers at the detriment of the federating units. Consequently, there has been unrelenting agitations for devolution of powers and resources to the federating units. These

activities, including the agitation for resource control, review of the sharing formula and the politics of derivation have often times been confrontational, violent and have polarized the country along the age long ethno-regional lines.

4. Debate on Local Government as a Third Tier of Government

The federal structure of Nigeria is one that has three constitutionally created levels of government – federal, state and local government; yet, practically two levels of government – federal and state – are dominant, as the local government is submerged into the state government (Ideobodo, Okolo & Eze (2018). Hence, visibly sprouted is the issue of constitutional imbalance within the constitutional framework of the federal political structure of Nigeria. Whereas the constitution created the local government as the independent third tier of government in section 7(1) of the 1999 constitution of Nigeria, it handed over the creation, management and control of the local government to the state government in section 7(2). This has been reason for the functional incompetence of local government which has resulted to the motion to abrogate the local government as a tier of government at the national political conference (CONFAB) organized by Goodluck Ebele Jonathan's led regime in 2014. This proves that the local government is dependent and lacks autonomy. This contradiction and position of local government needs to be clearly defined in a restructured Nigeria.

5. Centralisation in Nigerian Federalism

One of the major problems of Nigerian federalism has been the centralisation character of the Nigerian system, leading to why many scholars have described it as pseudo-federalism. This resonates in Obianyo (2005, p. 175), when he succinctly submits that 'one major reoccurring decimal in the Nigerian federal system is the effort of the central government to clip the wings of the state from flying at all, in the bid to have them completely consumed by the flaming power of the centre'.

In line with the foregoing, Asobie (2001) argues that the centralising trend in Nigerian federalism has manifested in three ways, viz:

First, the federal government has, beginning from 1963, but especially since 1967, demonstrated increased capacity to alter unilaterally and in its favour, the existing distribution of power between it and the regional governments.... Second, there has been an increasing accretion to the federal government of functions previously allocated to the regional (or state) governments. Third, the resources – coercive, bureaucratic, ideological and financial – directly available to the component units (regions or states) for carrying out their constitutional functions have steadily diminished in range

and quantum while those at the disposal of the federal government have increased (Asobie, 2001, p. 128).

It is apt to submit that the federal arrangement in Nigeria with its emphasis on regional autonomy remained during the pre-independence era (1954-1960) and even in the First Republic (1960-1966). Yet, as agreed by scholars, after the military struck in 1966 and took over the government of Nigeria, a unitarist tendency gained influence (Ezeani, 2018; Orluwene, 2018; Elaigwu, 2005 and Nwoli, 2005). In other words, the centralising trend in Nigerian federalism has its roots in the military incursion into Nigerian government and politics. Thus, under the military rule, power flowed from the federal centre to the regional or state governments, which were then headed by military officers who were answerable to their superior officers at the centre (Ezeani, 2018). This was the beginning of the centralising trends in Nigerian federalism and was handed over to the democratic dispensation in 1999.

Furthermore, the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) is reported to contribute to the centralisation in the Nigerian federalism (Ezeani, 2018 and Elaigwu, 2005, among others). In an attempt to raise the resources for prosecuting the Civil War, the taxation powers of the former regions changed in favour of the federal government, further strengthening the centre, at the expense of the states. Thus, military rule in Nigeria witnessed a massive federal take-over of educational institutions, social services, and economic activities of national life (Ezeani, 2018). For all intents and purposes, this practice did not augur well for federalism as the states lost their sense of initiative and independence of action. Therefore, as states became many and less financially independent, a powerful centre emerged in a federal government that appropriates so much power and responsibilities, took the biggest chunk of national revenues (53 %). The centrist philosophy found its way into the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as amended, specifically in section 183(2).

Thus, by the time the military disengaged from politics and handed over power to a democratically elected government in 1999, the unitarist take-over of the federal structure in Nigeria was completed. As Ezeani (2018) maintains, the democratically elected governments in Nigeria since 1999 have found fiscal centralisation too attractive to resist. Thus, under the present revenue sharing formula, the federal government is allocated 52.68 percent of the Federation Account Revenues (including 4.8 percent of the account originally earmarked for Special Projects, like national ecological emergencies), while the states and local governments receive 26.72 percent and 20.60 percent, respectively. It is curious to note that the financial dependence and insolvency of many states in Nigeria manifests in their inability to pay salaries of workers as and when due.

The Narratives and Clamour for Restructuring in Nigeria

It is apt to reiterate that federalism as a system of governance is pragmatic, dynamic, utilitarian and evolving. Yet, since the adoption and practice of federalism, Nigeria has continued to experience rumples and ripples from inception as well as continual tinkering, panel beating and even attempted dissolution. At the centre of all these agitations are the issues of socio-economic and political restructuring and resource control which have and still remain contentious issues in Nigeria's body politic (Akpan, Nwokah & Andem, 2018). Largely and as Yaqub (2016) submits, the protagonists of restructuring are people of Southern Nigeria and the antagonists are of Northern Nigeria. While there are different perspectives and understanding of restructuring, the common perspective is that which advocates for a decentralisation of power at the centre to the sub-national units. More so, Akpan et al (2018) aver that the clamour for restructuring is akin to the thorny issue of fiscal federalism.

Furthermore, Abada, Okafor and Omeh (2020) submit that the rationale and the clamour for socio-economic and political restructuring in Nigeria takes its roots from the nature of federal structure in the country. These scholars observed that Nigeria operates a "morbid federalism" and that the central government in Nigeria is too powerful and has arrogated so much responsibility to itself to the detriments of the component units, which is the states and local governments (Abada, Okafor and Omeh, 2020). Such responsibilities also go with a lot of finances to the federal government while the component units have paltry amount allocated to them. This has also given rise to the demand for the devolution of power by the federating units in the country. The South-South people argued that they were denied participation in the oil and gas sector and the proceeds derived from the oil wealth of the region was not ploughed back to the region but used in the development of other regions. It is however stating the obvious that all the cases of agitation are based on some reasons such that for the South-South, it has been the economic and political marginalisation of the oil-bearing communities which has accounted for the demand for resource control and political restructuring.

Similarly, the South East has also advanced several reasons for their agitation and demand for self-determination including political marginalisation which according to the region is rooted in the scars of the Civil War and the seeming continuous mistrust of the region by the federal government. In a similar vein, the South-West agitates for political restructuring in order to curb the excesses and influence of the federal centre and create some semblance of equity in resource distribution (Adeosun, et al, 2017).

Again, Nigeria's fiscal architecture focuses on the principles or formula for revenue sharing. Nigerian being a rental economy, focuses more on sharing what is gotten and not on how to generate more revenue. In the present formula, about 52.68 per cent is allocated to the Federal Government from the Federation

Account, 26.70 per cent to the 36 states and 20.60 per cent to the 774 local government areas. This formula has been characterised by bias, distrust and contention by the state and local governments and has led to series of agitations. This is one of the reasons there is a growing cry for restructuring in Nigeria, especially from the South-South geopolitical zone, the area where much of Nigeria's foreign earnings, derived from petroleum resources are got. Suffice it to add that the clamour for fiscal restructuring seeks to ensure more equitable distribution of the Nigeria's revenue resources. It could be in the form of adjustment of the sharing formula or total change of the structure, where all resources no longer come to the Federal before it is shared to the states, rather states own their own resources, manage it and pay tax and development fund to the centre. This later part is what Nigeria refers to resource control, where states own, keep and control what resources they have on their soil, while paying tax to the Federal government and also contributing to the development of the less endowed states, which may have less resources to fall back on. More so, fiscal restructuring has been on in Nigeria since 1946 in the form of Revenue Allocation formula and its constant "adjustment" or restructuring (Vande, 2021 and Elekwa, 2011). The various re-arrangements or restructuring of the fiscal structure of the federation has been documented (Vande, 2021).

Another perspective for restructuring looks at state and local government creation as a form of restructuring in Nigeria. In this sense, Nigeria has undergone a long process of restructuring in terms of the number of geo-political administrative units constituting the polity. This process is popularly referred to as "state creation" and/or "reorganisation," the process whereby new geo-political units/constituents known as "states" in most federations are created out of existing or old ones. The outcome of this process is usually an increase in the number of states constituting the Nigerian federation (Adetoye, 2016). It is apt to submit that some advocates for restructuring, especially from the South-East geopolitical zone, argue for an additional state in the South-East, to balance up with other geopolitical zones in Nigeria. Suffice it to add that the South-East has the least number of states and local governments in the Nigerian federation. See table three below:

Table Three: Federal Structure in Nigeria according to Geopolitical Zones

S/NO	Geopolitical Zone	Number of States	Number of LGAs
1.	North West	7	186
2.	North East	6	113
3.	North Central	7*	118
4.	South West	6	137
5.	South East	5	95
6.	South South	6	125
	Total	37	774

Source: Compiled by the author, 2021.

*The Federal Capital Territory is located in the North Central, though it does not have the status of a state.

Furthermore, the centralisation of the security architecture in Nigeria has also drawn attention of the protagonists for the restructuring of Nigeria. There is no gainsaying the obvious that Nigeria is overwhelmed by security challenges all over the landscape and the centralised security architecture is overstretched. This has challenged the notion of the Governors of the Nigeria states being referred to as the Chief Security Officers of their states. There is thus the clamour and agitation for the decentralisation of the security architecture in Nigeria. Beside the call for the creation of state police, some geopolitical zones like the South-West, South-East and South-South have created and enforced regional security apparatuses: Amotekun and Ebube-Egwu in the South-South and South-East geopolitical zones, respectively. While there is every need for the decentralisation of the policing architecture and to allow for state police, the concern has been that the governors would turn them into an army for political vendetta against real and imagined political rivals and enemies.

Suffice it add that, Nigeria has undergone a long process of restructuring in terms of the number of geo-political administrative units constituting the polity. This process is popularly referred to as “state creation” and/or “reorganization” the process whereby new geo-political units/constituents known as “states” in most federations are created out of existing or old ones. The outcome of this process is usually an increase in the number of states constituting the Nigerian federation. Historically speaking, the issue of state creation in Nigeria started as far back as 1963, when the Midwest was carved out of the former Western Region by the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa administration. In 1967 the country was further divided into 12 states by the administration of General Yakubu Gowon. This progressive increase in the number of territorial units continued in 1976 when the Murtala Administration

created an additional 7 states, making the total of states 19. Between 1987 and 1991, General Babangida in two separate exercises, created 11 additional states, bringing the total up to 30. In 1996, the Abacha administration created 6 more states to make the territorial units of the country 36 (Adetoye, 2016). In spite of this, the clamour for political restructuring remains potent. While some agitate for more states to be created, others posit that the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria should become the constituent units of Nigeria's new and restructured federal structure.

Hegemony and Antagonism to Restructuring in Nigeria

There is an unequivocal clamour and a crystallisation of discourses for socio-economic and political restructuring of the federal structure. While there have been previous attempts made towards the restructuring of the federal structure in Nigeria (Ideobodo et al, 2018), the puzzle remains that the impact of the previous attempts at restructuring have not been satisfactory nor felt. As Mailafia (2018) indicates, the hegemonic powers, manifest in the interest of the dominant ruling class have always antagonised and frustrated every attempt at restructuring, for selfish reasons. The dominant forces antagonising the undying clamour for restructuring in Nigeria are discussed below.

The first factor to be considered is the interest of the ruling class, masquerading as elite interest. As Ideobodo et al (2018) submit, this appears to be a major problem facing restructuring of Nigeria. In their words, "the politico-economic elites of the country who are being favoured in one way or the other by the existing political structure of Nigeria influence negatively the struggle for political restructuring" Ideobodo et al (2018, p. 30). These constitute a hegemonic group in Nigeria and include a set of wealthy businessmen, the political class and even the top echelon of the civil service. In their argument, Ujah and Agbakwuru (2017), maintain that one of the reasons the northerners shun and frustrate the call for political restructuring is because of the landmass and population in the North, which grants the northern political elites the opportunity of being appointed in large numbers into government positions and using land to hustle for funds in Abuja. It is out rightly obvious that the clamour for restructuring has fallen to the dictates of the politico-economic elites of the Nigerian society. Thus, they constitute a strong antagonising force against the bid to restructure the pseudo-federalist political structure of Nigeria.

Another hurdle antagonizing the restructuring movement in Nigeria is what Ideobodo et al (2018) describes as the fear of domination. This fear has existed in the land since Nigeria came into being is predicated on the nature of allowing one ethnic group to dominate and marginalise the other constituent elements. To Nuhu (2016), the North is opposed to restructuring because there is nothing to restructure. In his view, those who clamour for restructuring or true federalism to enable each region and/or constituent unit to develop at its own

pace are unwittingly advocating that Nigerians should live as if they are in different countries, where some citizens would live in comfort zones while others would live on the fringes. Similarly, Nwaorgu and Erondy (2010) maintain that, an attempt to restructure Nigeria in 1966 and 1967 was battered by the northerners because of fear of domination of the southern region and the consequent was the genocidal war. From the above, the fear of having nothing and having the southern region dominate the northern has in a tremendous way inhibited political restructuring of the country as the northerners who are acclaimed the most populous would not consent for fear of a domineering uprising of the southern region.

Meanwhile, Othman, Osman and Mohammed (2019) submit that successive governments in Nigeria have resisted the persistent calls for restructuring and only play gimmick when the pressure rises. They posit that irrespective of where the national leadership comes from, either North or South, such leadership usually resist or manipulate the clamour for restructuring much pressurised, largely due to the questions of constitutionality and fear of the known, including the possible disintegration of the Nigeria. More so, the ruling class, especially those who lose power, use it as a means to secure political relevance and accommodation in the political space, circle and access to the state power and resources (Adetunberu & Bello, 2018). To Ekweremadu (2017), the resistance to restructuring by some parts of the country is due to the fear of survival without oil, the nation's financial mainstay. Obviously, the reference was to the Northern part of the country, which depend largely on the revenue derived from the oil deposits, found in some parts of the South.

There is no doubt that the persistent clamour for restructuring and the seeming unending battle between the protagonists and antagonists of restructuring can be situated within the nature and character of the State in Nigeria. By the character of politics in Nigeria, it is therefore clear that, the struggle to control, and the use of State power, becomes warfare. As Vande (2019) posits, power in Nigeria is over-valued and security lies only on getting more and more power. As a result, there is no restraint on the means of acquiring power, on holding it and on using it. It is within this framework that political instability in Nigeria can be understood, because political competition becomes normless and is carried to the extreme thereby turning political competition into warfare. In this sense, the struggle for access to power becomes a competition with intense anxiety in which the struggle by the factions is done with fraud, repression, coercion, intimidation, brute force and even physical combat. All these are possible because the factions to the struggle had their struggle reinforced precisely because there was no sufficient restraint on the abuse of power as the State has no autonomy and had not really emerged to mediate between the factions (Ake, 1985). Lacking in autonomy, the State in

Nigeria equally lacks the capacity to ensure and foster national security, hence, the struggle by the factions of the ruling class to have access to power.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The foregoing has established that Nigerian federalism has been federal in name and not in practice and this is because too many powers are vested in the central government, in contravention of the tenets of federal practice. Though the foundation of federalism was laid on negatives, ab initio, the several years of military rule and its command structure have serious consequences on the practice of federalism in Nigeria. A good example of this centralisation of powers is the appropriation of powers hitherto belonging to the component units by the central government. Thus, the Nigerian federal practice has rendered the component units powerless and commandeered the control, management, and distribution of natural resources of the semi-autonomous units in Nigeria. More so, the demand for restructuring and political reorganisation is attributed to the entrenched lop-sidedness and distributive injustice of Nigerian federalism. Consequently, a concerted effort by all stakeholders towards restructuring the Nigerian federalism will make Nigeria a better country where needless tensions and conflicts are minimal and where the sub-national government are not reduced to mere appendages.

Based on the foregoing analysis and conclusion, the following recommendations have been made for the efficient operation of the Nigerian federal structure and government:

- i. The National Assembly, in collaboration with the State Assemblies should be patriotic and demonstrate the required political will by amending the unitarist Nigerian Constitution. This amendment should ensure decentralisation and devolution of powers to the constituent units.
- ii. The political structure of Nigeria should be made cooperative federalism instead of pseudo-federalism so that the ethno-regional entities interests would be mutually integrated in the formation of a serene sociopolitical structured Nigeria.
- iii. The executive arm of government, both at the state and federal levels should be committed to distributive justice in terms of appointments and distribution of social amenities as well as infrastructural development. This will give a sense of belonging to the different groups in the state and reduce the agitations for restructuring and secession to the barest minimum.

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