

**THE NIGERIAN FEDERATION AND RESTRUCTURING DEBATE:
IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIO-POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC
ADVANCEMENT**

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Abstract

No issue in the contemporary Nigeria has commanded a greater concern and consensus than the clamour for restructuring and true-federation in recent time. In the face of the deepening crisis of ethnic agitations, political marginalisation, secession movements, socio-economic failures, and the changing pattern of the Nigeria's national security challenges, there is a step-up in the clamour for fiscal federalism. Within this premise, this study made concerted effort to examine the political and economic experiences. Its specific objectives lie in its modest effort to examine the practice of the Nigeria's federalism often dominated by the reasons, benefits and challenges of restructuring debates. To achieve its objective, historical research design was adopted, gleaned extant literature to enable us articulate the trajectory of the Nigeria political history. This implies that secondary sources of data were extensively deployed to elicit data for the study. This discourse finds it appropriate to adopt Structural functionalism as its theoretical framework base on its utility of being able to ensure that the Nigerian federalism is constitutionally restructured in such a manner that they can perform their appropriate functions that will enable the country achieve its desired political and economic development. The study amongst others revealed that the deepening crises of insecurity and secessionist movements are targeted at the installation of true-federalism. In order to resolve these revolving national issues, valid recommendations are made. The study suggests among others restructuring which in turn targets fiscal federalism which would automatically decentralised powers of the central government.

Keywords: Nigeria, Nigerian Federation, Restructuring, Restructuring Debate, Economic Experience, Political Experience.

I. Introduction

There is no doubt that the philosophy of a civil society lies in its political structure and frameworks, efficient management of its natural endowments and equitable distribution of revenues from the extraction of these resources, as well as equal employment opportunities, appointment and recruitment of the individuals in the civil service and public offices, enrolment in federal owned schools and colleges, ensuring there is security of lives and properties and other constitutional requirements of a

federal state. On the contrary, the Nigerian political structure following the seemingly unending clamour for restructuring has raised pertinent questions such as when, why and how did our the leaders got it wrong? Nkire (2017) asserts that: “because state power for a long time, has been maintained solely by the federal government instead of being sufficiently appropriated to the other levels of government, there has been the conception for true-federalism which has eluded us”. “And this has been the reason political actors and the citizens alike, have in recent times clamouring for devolution of power as well as revisiting of the constitution of the federal republic” (Nkire, 2017).

From independence on 1st October 1960 to date Nigerian leaders have experimented democratic and structural federalism which some critiques of the country’s self-styled federal system associate with those challenges leading to the persistent clamour for restructuring of the country’s federal system. The Nigerian state, undoubtedly, seems to have fallen short of the requirements of a civil society, hence, the intensified clamour for restructuring in recent time. To this end, Babalola and Onapajo (2019:43) assert that: “the Nigerian federalism since independence up to date is certainly imperfect and problematic; hence the continuum of the clamour for restructuring and which has dominated academic debate in recent time”. The emergence of President Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress (APC) who succeeded the Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan’s led People’s Democratic Party (PDP) administration in 2015 has raised a renewed clamour for restructuring and secession movement, particularly from Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), and the Eastern Security Network (ESN) both of which in recent time, intensified their quest for secession through occasional violent clashes with the armed forces of the federal republic (Babalola and Onapajo (2019:42).

Iwegbu and Uwaifo (2020:48) assert the Nigerian people are in recent time becoming more agitated because of what they conceived as lop-sidedness in political appointments and promotions and developmental efforts by the federal government. They believe that restructuring of both the economic and political structures and institutions in the country is the only solution to the problems emanating from the current status quo. Nwafor-Orizu, Okoro and Eze (2018:19) argued that “right from inception up to present time, the federal structure of the Nigerian state has shown elements of structural deficiencies, hence, the clamour for restructuring of the self-styled federal system of government”.

In addition Nwafor-Orizu et al, (2018) traced the genesis of what they refer to as chronic symptom of the administrative ill of the Nigerian federalism to Sir Arthur Richards Constitution of 1946. Olarenwaju (2016) argued that outside the fact that the Nigerian political crisis is centred on; first, the forceful amalgamation of Southern and Northern protectorates by Sir Frederick Lord Lugard in 1914; and secondly, the changing patterns of the colonial constitutions from Sir Hugh Clifford Constitution 1922, Sir Arthur Richards Constitution of 1946, Sir John Macpherson Constitution (1951), Oliver Lyttleton Constitution of 1954, the Independent Constitution of 1960, Republican Constitution of 1963, the Presidential Constitution of 1979, and 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which has undergone a number of amendments have impacted on the country’s political history.

In a similar manner, Yaqub (2016) argued that the long history of the Nigerian federalism following the agitation for inclusion of the African nationalists into the colonial administrative structure bred conflict, ethnic consciousness, and the struggle for political restructuring in Nigeria’s polity. This has not only created political divide but also antagonisms within the Nigerian system. For instance, what the government of the country conceived as continued antagonism emanating from the Niger Delta region is as a result of their conception of the term marginalisation, and exploitation of the rich oil resource in the Niger Delta region, while the region remained the most exploited and underdeveloped (Yaqub, 2016). The introduction of a federal structure in the post-independence constitutions and several sections of the 1999 Constitution have been the most challenging and identified by many as fundamental reasons for the intensified clamour for a review of the constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria in recent times.

Interrogating the fundamental reasons for the post-independence clamour for restructuring Nwafor-Urizu et al, (2018:19) faulted the operation of the federalist structure with emphasis placed on the issues arising from intergovernmental relations, resource control and allocation, issue of revenue allocation, efficiency and functionality of the constitution, inequality of states and local governments in geopolitical zones, security and marginalisation amongst others. After Nigeria gained its independence from the British colonial masters on 1 October, 1960 the Governor-General of the new state of Nigeria following the amalgamation of northern and southern protectorates relinquished state powers to the first president of the new nation-state of Nigeria, though; the function of the president remained limited and ceremonial as the Queen retained the position of the Head of State while the Nigeria domain was represented by Dr, Nnamdi Azikiwe as the Governor-General while Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa was the Prime Minister. In 1963, Nigeria became a republic under the 1963 Federal Constitution which gave the country the status of a sovereign nation and total withdrawal of the colonial apparatus. In 1979, under the 1979 Constitution the president gained executive power of becoming both the Head of State and head of government. In 1994 and under the 1993 Federal Constitution, and under the current 1999 Federal Constitution (as amended), the Head of State remained both the head of state and head of government with the inclination of the President of the Federal Republic and the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Nigeria (Olanrewaju, 2016; Daly, 2020).

Outside these national issues associated with the constitutional developments in the country, chronic corruption, tribalism, sectional representation, mediocrity and the growing of insecurity occasioned by the activities of the insurgents and criminal groups of the Boko Haram, ISWAP, armed bandits, kidnappers, armed robbers, and the self-styled Fulani herdsmen, and the secessionist movement from the South Eastern part of country and the fear of no immediate end to these security challenges, have also aggravated restructuring debates. These national issues inarguably raised pertinent question such that the rationale of the retention of the Exclusive list provision of the Constitution of the Federal Republic 1999 (as amended) which mandates only the central or federal government to legislate on the subjects in the exclusive list such as accounts of the government of the federation, and of office, courts, and authorities, therefore, audit of these accounts; arms, ammunition and explosives; aviation, citizenship neutralisation and aliens; defence, deportation of persons who are not citizens; police and other government security agencies and significant others, has been criticised severally by the academic, pressure groups and political analysts.

The recent arrest and detention of the leaders of the separatists group, IPOB Nnamdi Kanu in Nigeria and Sunday Adeyemo Igboho accused of stockpiling weapons, calling for the break-up of the country and inciting ethnic killings by the Nigerian government, and arrested in Benin Republic on his way to Germany where his wife and family for the alleged crime offence of entering the country through illegal means complement the national issues already threatening the unity of the country (Akinwotu, 2021; Nduka, 2021). Dulue (2021) alleged that federal government response to these issues has been ruthless and excessive force resulting in the death of at least 115 people between March and June 2021 with many of the victims unlikely to be members of ESN and IPOB. These plethora of issues including the jihad insurgency in the northeast and the widespread banditry in the northwest, farmer-herder clashes in the central region, kidnapping for ransom and armed robbery and attacks in the Niger Delta are now pulling the unity of the country apart.

The Nature of the Problem

There is no doubt that the dreams of the founding fathers of the Nigerian democracy as well as the leadership of Nigerian military regimes have been defeated in the face of the current structural problems of the country's federal system. The military incursions in the governance of the country have been criticised much as they were applauded. With the intension of returning the country to its

better days, the military found it necessary to intervene in order to restate the faith and trust of Nigerian citizens in governance, and most significantly, to ameliorate the continued political crises that have always threatened the country's national unity. Othman, Osman and Mohammed (2019:80) have had to argue that: "the political atmosphere from the time of the military regimes and transition to civil rule, the restructuring debate has remained intense, and has prompted various constitutional making, constitutional and national political reforms conferences, and amendment reforms in the past, such as the Justice Oputa Panel; there were also various revenue allocation and minority commissions, and national reconciliation commission (NARECON), yet, the restructuring debate remained a perturbing problem in our political arena" (Othman et al., 2019:80).

Nwokolo (2020:172) argued that the trajectory of the Nigerian self-structured federal system of government and fiscal arrangement, and conceived imbalance predate its independence and remained the underlying problem of the country's development efforts in spite of the efforts such as creation of regional government and subsequently states and additional states and local government by the military regimes.

From 1966-1999, though with interregnum from 1979-1983 the military undisputedly left some legacies which have made remarkable impacts on the current structure of the Nigerian federalism. In their efforts to decentralise the powers of the centre or federal government and bring governance closer to the marginalised ethnic groups, the military created and expanded the numbers of states and local government area councils. Within this period the country also witnessed a civil war, the Nigerian-Biafra war with its continued secession agitation arising in different forms such as the Movement for the Actualisation of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and Eastern Security Network (ESM) in recent time (Daly, 2020), yet, the Nigeria's national issues remained irresolvable up to the present time leading to the renewed clamour for restructuring.

It has become imperative to note that the Nigerian civil war often known as the Nigerian-Biafra War or simply the Biafra War which lasted between 6 July 1967 and 15 January 1970 led by Lt. Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu was fought for a purpose. First, there was a call to represent the nationalist aspiration of his kinsmen from the Igbo extraction alleged to have experienced a continuum of ethno-religious violence and anti-Igbo attacks in northern Nigeria. The military coup and a counter military coup, persecution of the Igbo people living in northern Nigeria, and control over the crude oil exploration in the Niger Delta were also contributory factors that led to the civil war (Daly, 2020). The conceived marginalisation of the Igbo people in the political affairs and leadership of the country also makes it very difficult for the Igbo people to hold on to the Nigerian aspiration for a sustained national unity. As a consequence, there has been a barrage of agitations and restiveness from the Igbo people through the operations of the IPOB led by Nazi Nnamdi Kanu and the faceless Eastern Security Network (ESN).

The problem of political marginalisation in spite of the efforts of the military remained unresolved. Although, the different regimes ended in a variety of ways and sounding legacies that are yet to be outshined by the preceding civil rules- from the first to the fourth republics, yet military regime is the most criticized in Nigeria than the democratic rules despite the fact that the preceding democratic rules rather than upholding the legacies of the military are creating more problems in the polity. Apparently, several issues and suggestions have been outlined by scholars, policy-makers, observers, pressure groups, government representatives and political analysts in order to resolve the Nigerian national issues emanating from the seemingly unitary-structured presidential system of the state of Nigeria and what some individuals refer to as *quasi federalism* but the problems relating to the current structure of the country's federal system remained unresolved, resulting in the intensified clamour for restructuring from the civil society to the academics, trade unions to professional bodies, as well as members of the national assembly to some governors of the states of Nigeria.

Ogarisiagbon and Akintoye (2019:45) raised a pertinent question while pondering on the continuum of insecurity in Nigeria when there are alternative ways of resolving the insecurity in the regions of the country. The question thereof is why the retention of the statutory role of maintenance of internal security, law and order and enforcement of same in the hands of the federal government and its security agencies of the police force and the Civil Defence corps while other options are available to complement government efforts, especially in the fight against the insurgency of the armed bandits and the self-styled Fulani marauders both of which have presented the most threats to local communities across the country? It has however become obvious that the reaction to this pertinent question raised by Ogarisiagbon and Akintoye(2019) is one of the fundamental reasons of the wide outcries for restructuring; is not only the national security architecture, but also the country's self-styled federal system of government. Based on this premise, this study interrogates the problems of the Nigeria's self-styled federalism, and the restructuring debates in order to find alternative means of resolving the deepening conflict emanating from the structure of federal system as currently being practiced in Nigeria.

1. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine the Nigerian federation and the restructuring debates. While the specific objectives are:

- I. To examine the fundamental causes/reasons of the restructuring debate,
- II. To examine the challenges of restructuring the Nigerian federal system of government, and
- III. To examine the benefits of restructuring the Nigerian federal system of government.

2. Research Questions

This study addresses the following questions:

- I. What are the fundamental causes of the restructuring debate?
- II. What are the challenges of restructuring the Nigerian federal system of government?
- III. What are the benefits of restructuring of the Nigerian federal system of government?

3. Method of Study:

The method of this study is historical research design. This design is qualitative and explorative in nature. Sources of data for historical research design are often obtained from extant literature. It implies that secondary source of data collection refers to materials that are not originally from the researcher but from existing literature such as textbooks, journal articles, government official documents, dailies and periodicals, as well as internet materials.

4. Theoretical Discourse

Because of its modest effort in determining the extent to which the structures and institutions of a government work together in order to allow for peaceful existence of the state and the citizens, Structural functionalism theory is adopted as the theoretical framework for this study. Also, with its major focus which is on how best the component units of a state structure are interconnected and how these components work together in order to maintain stability and sustainability of the whole, the structural functionalism theory is adopted in this study. Notably, Structural-functionalism theory also known as functionalism is said to have originated in the writings of an English philosopher and biologist, Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) who compared the functioning of the human body to the functioning of the society. He, thus, argued that: "just like the organs in the human body work together to keep the entire body functioning so are the various components, structures and institutions of a society (or state) must work together to maintain stability of the whole". In other words, it is required that the institutions of the state and the citizens alike are interconnected to maintain equilibrium if

there is a shift or crack in the structure of the institutions of the state. Each part, thus, must serve a function to maintain stability just the ways the organs in the human body do (Turner, 1985; Kaplan, 1994; Elwell, 2013; Kimberly, 2021).

However, the major theoretical approach to the structural functionalism theory is associated with the works of some classical sociologists such as Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) with emphasis on the systemic examination of the ways in which social institutions of the state and the people interact with each other as well as influence each other. There is also Karl Marx (1818-1888) with his emphasis on power structure in a society and how power is divorced in the society, and George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) whose emphasis lies in his believe that the individuals create meaning through their interactions with the world around them (Turner, 1991:47; Johnson, 1993:117; Knapp, 1994). All of these social scientists according to Elwell (2013) have in one way or the other engaged in describing the interrelationships between social phenomena in a society or state as they are conceived in recent times.

The major theoretical approaches to the structural functionalism model come from several scholars such as Talcott Parsons, Robert Merton, and among others (Wallace & Wolf, 1991:17). In addition, a famous example of this group is Robert King Merton, a self-styled Durkheimian (1910-2003) contribution to the development of the theory. His contribution lies in its notion that all social structures of a society or state can only be analysed in terms of both static (stability) and dynamics (changes). In essence, his conception of the functional theory is focused on the occasional changes that may occur in the structures and organisation of the state policies and programmes. It implies that in any diverse and organised society like ours there is the possibility of dysfunctions in the society occasioned by tension, strain, contradiction and disagreement between the government and the citizens. This allows the functionalist theorists to focus on changes in the society and how best to manage and adapt to these changes in order to maintain stability (Elwells, 2013:3). This form of interaction is what is expected of the Nigerian structural federal system that has over the years created dissatisfaction in a larger section of the society, and to the individual citizens and groups across the country.

Since the country's self-styled federalism has created a lot of challenges as well as attracted a lot of criticism from the larger number of the populace including ethnic and regional groups, and academics, public officers, politicians and well-meaning Nigerians, it is expected that the government of the day in order to maintain stability and equilibrium should succumb to the sustained clamour for restructuring and true-federalism; to end the challenges occasioned by the structural deficiencies of the quasi-federalism currently in place in order to return the country to its footings again.

5. Review of Related Literature

Conceptualising Federal System of Government (Federalism)

The concept federalism (a federal system of government) has different definitions and defined differently by different scholars influenced by the nature of its practice within their surroundings. For example, Elaigwu and Akindele (1996) see federalism as that: "which serves the purpose of providing the structures for the management of ethnic diversity through power sharing in multinational state like Nigeria". For Dibia (2012) a federal state: "is one in which there is constitutional division of powers among different tiers or levels of government". It is also a political system in which the powers of government are divided or shared among different levels of government- the federal, states and local governments. It enjoys unit features or characteristics such as constitutional division of power, supremacy of the constitution, rigid constitution, and separation of power, bicameral legislature and Supreme Court of justice (Dibia, 2012:23).

Nwokolo (2020:173) described the concept of federalism as: "a government structure consists of at least two constituent parts that are not wholly independent but together form the system as a whole. It

is also a method of dividing or sharing powers so that the subsidiaries governments have a sphere of coordinates and independence".Azubuike (2018) sees true federalism as; "a system that operates based on shared responsibility of the individual states of the federation and at the same time share a central core or government". It is that in which every region or state, as the case may be, run their affairs; create their wealth by harnessing and managing their resources; and maintain their commitment to the central government.Avbuere (2019:70) asserts that for a state to have true federalism, powers must be devolved from the central to the region and to the local government levels of government. It implies that power accruing to the central government ought to be at the discretion of the federating units and not the other way round as it was in the Nigeria's case where there is over concentration of power at the central governments.

Conceptualising Restructuring

Since the central focus of this study is restructuring debate of the Nigerian federal system, it has become imperative to provide conceptual explanations of what the term "restructuring" stands for in the academic space. According to Iwegbu and Uwaifo (2020:48) the concept "restructuring" though is as old as the modern day diction but it has lately taken over debates and discussions in the political, economic and the academic space in Nigeria". In addition, they conceived it as:

The concept that connotes the act of re-organising, re-arranging and re-planning of all the existing institutions and structures of the government of a country, and a panacea for a sustainable economic and political organisation and development of a state that is in bad shape due to its internal challenges (Iwegbu&Uwaifo, 2020:47).

Azubuike (2018) opines that the/ term "restructuring" stems from the concept of "true-federalism" which is a system that operates based on shared responsibilities of the federating units while maintaining a central core or government that binds them together as a sovereign entity irrespective of ethnic, cultural, religious and geographic diversity. Hornby (2010) defined restructuring as; "the act or process which involves total reorganization of something, system, place, things, or an institution for a better performance".Iwegbu and Uwaifo (2020:50) sees it as; "re-defining or re-organizing the present Nigeria's federal structure to a system and practice that involves a true federalism as practiced all over the world. In an elaborate manner they conceived a federal system as one in which the state governments should be allowed to take total control and management of all the internal affairs of the country including their resources and may agree to the maintenance of the centre or federal government.

Rooney (1999) defined it as: "that which means change basic structure of something". It also means to rearrange, recognise or reposition existing system either to correct the deficiencies in the structure or to promote more effective and efficient performance. For Bello (2017:10) cited in Avbuere (2019:66) restructuring connotes the processing of or decreasing of the number of component parts that make up a system. Akpan, Nwokah and Andem (2018:12) defined the term political restructuring as in the Nigerian context as: "that which entails both political re-configuration and devolution of power to the constituent units as it is practiced in other places". "It also involves the demand for the ownership, control and management of the country's natural resources located in a state by the state, as well as seeking for the power to establish the state's own police as against the present system where the police force is under federal control" (Akpan et al., 2018).In a nutshell, restructuring can only be effective and efficient if its processes are holistic in nature. It implies that both the political, social, cultural, economic, education and health sectors must be reverently restructured to provide the needed benefits that will justify the popular clamour for restructuring of the Nigeria federalism.

Empirical Review:

a. Nigerian Political History and the Federal System of Government

The road through the Nigeria's political history and what we perceive today as Nigerian structural imbalance was traced to the annexation of the colony of Lagos in 1861; and by extension, the amalgamation or merger of the Southern and Northern protectorates in 1914 by the British colonial authority. The merger of the protectorates of the South and North often regarded as a forceful and polygamous marriage by Sir Fredrick Lord Lugard in 1914, has been associated with the country's contemporary dilemmas. A number of historians, scholars and political analysts alike have had to argue that amalgamation forced the diverse ethnic groups with divergent social, cultural, religious and economic divergence into a forceful marriage called Nigerian state (Avbuere, 2019:66; Okereka, Oluka&Igbini, 2020:50).

Azubuike, (2018) asserts that the idea of the Nigerian federal system of government which was conceived in January 1967 just before the civil war broke out in July same year was for the purpose of creating stronger regional governments that can run their affairs and create wealth by harnessing and managing their resources while maintaining a central core or government and commit some of their resources to the central government. In essence, the reason behind Nigerian federalism was that the federating units (i.e. the 36 states including the Federal Capital Territory, FCT) must be distinct and independent while other functions including the military can be negotiated. Suffice it to state that several historical events and factors laid credence to the Nigerian federalism apart from the annexation of the colony of Lagos by the British in 1861 and the subsequent amalgamation of the southern and northern protectorates in 1914 which gave birth to the country, Nigeria. After the annexation of the colony of Lagos, in 1862 a legislative and executive council was constituted for the colony (Azubuiké, 2018).

On 19 February 1866, Lagos, Gold Coast and Gambia were placed under a Governor-General based in Sierra Leone but had separate legislative councils. In 1874, Gold Coast and Lagos were merged to form a separate colony with a Governor and a legislative council and with the headquarters in the Gold Coast (now Ghana). In 1886, Lagos became a separate political unit with its own colonial administrative structure, a Governor and a legislative and executive councils. In 1906, the protectorate of Southern Nigeria and the Colony of Lagos were amalgamated to become the colony and protectorate of Southern Nigeria. Article 4 of the Southern Nigeria Protectorate Order in Council 1906 empowered the Legislative Council to make laws for the protectorate of Southern Nigeria. Because of the large size of the country after amalgamation, Lord Lugard created a legislative council known as the Nigerian Council as an advisory body (Olanrewaju, 2016).

Obiajulu, Obi and Iwuoha (2016:29) and Olanrewaju (2016) respectively assert that the large size of the new state of Nigeria after amalgamation of the protectorates of the south and north prompted the colonial authority to create a legislative council, though; with limited function of an advisory body, but the mandatory 30 official and non-official members of the Council were some Nigerian elites. While the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Calabar Chamber were allowed to appoint one member each into the Council, the remaining officials who were Nigerians were appointed. Significantly, the regimes of the constitutional development in the country by the colonial administrators gave credence to structural issues of the contemporary Nigerian state. Although, each of the constitution experimentations in the political history of the country recorded applauded structural improvement but each have also some basic challenges (Obiarulu et al., 2016:79; Olanrenju, 2026).

In 1919, Sir Hugh Clifford assuming duty as the Governor of Nigeria was mandated by the Caseley Hayford West African Congress to provide constitutions for the British West African subject states. This mandate subsequently led to the making of the Clifford Constitution of 1922 credited for the introduction of electoral system for the first time into the Nigerian system. Although, it was

criticised for having limited franchise but it was commended for introducing for the first time electoral system with just four (4) slots with Lagos having three (3) and Calabar one (1) slot. In addition, the Constitution introduced a Legislative Council to replace the Nigerian Council with a total of 46 members out of which 23 were designated official members and 19 were unofficial members. Four others were elected from Lagos and Calabar respectively.

In 1943, Sir Arthur Richards who succeeded Sir Bernard Bourdillon as the Governor of Nigeria provided amendments to the Clifford constitution. In 1946, Richards' constitution provided for a new Legislative Council which provided for the Governor as the head of the Council, 16 official members and 28 unofficial members. Of the 28 members, two were nominated by the Governor while 4 were elected with the North having 11 members, West 8 members and East 6 members respectively. The Constitution also provided for 4 elected members from Lagos and Calabar. The Constitution also provided for Regional Houses of Assembly in which members were nominated by the Native Authority. While the West and East had unicameral legislature, the North in addition to a house of assembly had a house of Chiefs (Obiajuluet at., 2016:79; Olanrewaju, 2016).

In his attempt to finding solution to the Nigerian political problem that was created by Richards' constitution, Sir John Macpherson in 1951 amended the constitution of his predecessor. For the first time since Sir Clifford and Richards' constitutions respectively, the Macpherson colonial constitution was applauded by Nigerian elites for providing for the first time, opportunity for Nigerians to express themselves on the type of constitution that they wanted and find appropriate for the country. Notably, this constitution provided for a federal legislature called the House of Representatives which has 136 elected representatives, with 6 ex-official members and 6 nominated by the Governor. 68 members were from the north, 38 from the west and 34 from the East respectively. This Constitution also provided for regional legislature authorised to make laws for their region. While the legislatures in the West and North were bicameral and each having a House of Chiefs alongside regional legislature, the East was a unicameral legislature. One of the merits of this Constitution was its increasing regionalism bases politics and that which the regions ceased to be mere administrative units but political entities, each vested with both executive and legislative powers (Dibie, 2012:171; Obiajulu et al., 2016:86).

Furtherance to finding solution to the colonial Nigerian state, Macpherson constitution was revised through two major constitutional conferences: the 1953 London and 1954 Lagos Constitutional Conferences. These constitutional reviews gave birth to Oliver Lyttleton Constitution of 1954. The Lyttleton Constitution inarguably made radical changes not only in the structure of Nigerian federation but also in the distribution of legislative, executive and judicial powers within the federation. Significantly, this constitution provided for a federal system of government with a Governor-General at the central and the Lieutenant-Governors in the regions as the Governors of the regions. There was also the regionalisation of the civil service and the judiciary, and significant others (Dibie, 2012:174; Obiajulu et al., 2016:91). All of these constitutional development including the Independent Constitution of 1960, Republican Constitution of 1963, the Presidential Constitution of 1979, and 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which has undergone a number of amendments have impacted on the country's political history, yet the country's national problems haven't considerably intended changed, hence the restructuring debate.

Fundamental Reasons for the Restructuring Debate

The emergence of new states of Africa after independence and the realisation that the colonial powers left behind fragile political structures and power bases, prompted African leaders in general to seek for alternative systems of government in their respective states, hence, the choice of a federal system particularly in Nigeria which made it possible for the leaders to address the problem of ethnic issues arising among the diverse ethnic nationalities. Elaigwu (2002) argued that federalism in the Nigerian

context is not the end in itself but a means to an end and has been conceived as one of the fundamental reasons for the restructuring debate or clamour in recent time. Centred along economic lines, marginalisation and political uncertainties, restructuring has generated tension in the country's polity in the past decades.

In affirmation, Avbuere (2019:67) argued that the scenario of mistrust although conceived during the colonial era is a contributing factor to the continued clamour for restructuring and true federalism in the country. In addition, he associates the Nigerian problem to the jettisoning of the previous regional resource control arrangement because of the revenue from crude oil exploration rather than sustaining the commercialisation of agricultural produce such as cocoa, groundnut, palm oil and rubber that were the mainstay of the country's economy before the oil boom. Consequently, a shift from agricultural produce to crude oil as the major source of revenue for the government of the federation becomes the leading factor that led to the jettisoning of the previous regional resource control arrangement and the sustained clamour for a reverse to true federalism.

Also conceived are the concerns regarding multiple and localised violent conflicts and the rise of division rhetoric, all of which have reignited the debate on how best state powers, resources and revenue can be shared and managed among the federation of 36 states and the FCT, Abuja. The fractious politics and competitive interests have also been conceived as reasons for the restructuring debate in the country which precedes the country's independence (National Think Tank, 2017: Nwokolo, 2020:172). Farayibi (2017) argued that outside the fact that the restructuring debate is based on a genuine reason of using it as a tool to restructure Nigeria's political and economic structure in order to promote national unity in diversity and socio-economic growth of the federating states, some opposition parties, political elites and gluttonous bourgeoisie see it as tool for self-recognition by the government in power and to achieve selfish gains or interests. In short, the emerging nationalists and campaigners have adopted the debate for selfish reason hence posing very serious security challenge to national unity.

As conceived by the National Think Tank Nigeria (NTTN, 2017) despite the fact that Nigeria is endowed with abundant natural resources and one of the most populous and leading economies in Africa, the citizenry are neither happy nor content with the current political structures of the government with virtually all the powers of the state in the hands of the central and state government leaving the local government council areas unattractive and lack development principles. NTTN (2017) therefore argued the reason for the sustained clamour for restructuring is leadership problem rather than institutional and constitutional. Another factor that laid credence to the restructuring debate are the challenges associated with our political culture as Nigerians, poor leadership recruitment processes, bad governance, corruption, nepotism and poor political culture. All of these problems inarguably laid credence to the strident calls for constitution and fiscal reform using the various words and phrases such as "restructuring, true-federalism, devolution, resource control, regionalism, self-determination among others.

Challenges of Restructuring Nigerian Federal System of Government

The clamour for restructuring inarguably has taken several political dimensions over the years; yet, the succeeding Nigerian governments have not been able to find alternative and curative measures to the challenges to our national unity. As Nwafor-Orizu et al, (2018:18) put it; "the debate for restructuring is now an old song on the lips of many Nigerians and has trended for decades and seems to be one of the most challenging tasks for the government alongside the insecurity posed by the insurgent and criminal groups such as Boko Haram, ISWAP, banditry, kidnapping, armed robbery and Fulani herdsmen menace". Otite (2002:13) asserts that the Nigerian challenges stem from its several forms of pluralism such as ethnicity, religion, class and demography, all of which have aided in the generation of conflicts in the country.

From the East of the Niger to the South-South, there have been clamour for actualisation of the Independent states of Biafra by MASSOB, IPOB and ESN. In the Niger Delta, various militant groups have also emerged demanding for resource control and self-determination. In the western part of the country, the demand for restructuring of the political structure often regarded as true federalism is still top of the agenda of the people of the region. The northern part of the country on the other hand is struggling with insurrection or insurgency of the nihilist terrorist groups of the Boko Haram terrorist organisation and ISWAP, and upsurge in kidnapping for ransom, banditry and Fulani-Farmer conflict (Akpan&Nwokah, 2018:10). Apparently, restructuring debate seems to be an intergovernmental topical issue in the country in recent times and has taken several dimensions to actualise, such as secessionist movement amongst others. Given the circumstances surrounding the increasing agitation by various groups in the country Campbell and Gavin (2015) assert that a call for referendum on secession of some states of the country will definitely see a large number of Nigerians, particularly the Igbo people of South East to vote fervently for secession from the federal republic of Nigeria.

Tyungu and Koko (2018:25) situates the Nigeria's contemporary problems bedevilling its national unity to the country's colonial history of the indirect rule system and amalgamation of unprepared diverse ethnic groups which its manifestation is failure to forge unity among the diverse ethnic and cultural groups. Yaqub (2016) identified the intensified north-south dichotomy within the Nigeria's political space with the southerners as the protagonists and the northerners as the antagonists as a veritable challenge that has been associated with the clamour for restructuring. However, amongst the contemporary challenges associated with the restructuring debate is the fear that the powers enjoyed by a sectional group of the Hausa/Fulani oligarchy as well as the consequential effects on the disadvantaged states in the north in terms of mineral resources they have been enjoying from the shares of the revenue derived from these natural resources would be terminated.

Akpan and Nwokah (2018:11) assert that of all these challenges in the pursuit of restructuring and resource control, the claims and counter claims from the protagonist from the south and antagonist from the north is the most significant. While the protagonists hold that the south bear the impacts of oil and gas exploration in the southern region the proceeds are shared among the 36 states of the federal republic, the antagonists from the north argued that before the discovery and development of the oil sector of the economy, revenue from agriculture was the mainstay of the country's economy with the north producing highest percentage in agricultural produce such as cocoa, cotton, groundnuts, palm oil, hide and skill, as well used in the development of the oil sector, therefore the revenue from the oil sector belong to all. The consequence of this counter claims is the resistance from the disadvantaged states from the north.

Benefits of Restructuring Nigerian Federal System of Government

Nigeria's federal system no doubt is self-styled and not true federalism compared to those of the United States and other states of the world practicing federalism. Evidenced are the provisions of the *exclusive legislative list* which allow the concentration of enormous power at the central or federal government. As Ochonu (2021) asserts:

Instead of the sovereign state of Nigeria adopting the inclusive idiom of Complementarity, mutuality and reciprocity, restructuring should be advanced as a way of freeing the "progressive" and "productive" South from the shackles of the "conservative" and "unproductive" North..... This sentimental and counterproductive rhetoric is now a commonplace in the pro-restructuring debate.

However, with the restructuring debate which is targeted at achieving true- federalism, there is no doubt that the benefits of restructuring of the Nigerian political structure as well as economic arrangement will be enormous since it will reform the basis of sustaining our national unity, and

eliminate the sentimental and counterproductive rhetoric that is now a commonplace in our polity. In addition, the federating units will have the constitutional authority to manage their resources and push for other means to sustain their workforce and infrastructure development. Essentially, there will be shared national obligation of the federating units (states) to sustain the central core by paying royalty to the centre. It implies that core national interests will be funded by the royalty of the states to the federation account making the federal government less attractive and the struggle for the seat of power in Abuja will be very minimal.

It is also likely to shift some of financial responsibilities of the provisions of the exclusive legislative list as listed in the Constitutional of the Federal Republic 1999 (as amended) such as accounts of the government of the federation, and of office, courts, and authorities, therefore, audit of these accounts; arms, ammunition and explosives; aviation, citizenship neutralisation and aliens; defence, deportation of persons who are not citizens; police and other government security agencies and significant others to state government. Azubuike (2018) argued that the benefits of restructuring cannot be underestimated because it will go a long way to solve some of the critical challenges in the country. In a succinct manner he pointed out the following as the critical benefits of restructuring of the Nigeria federalism:

1. **Decentralisation of the Central Government:** Of all the benefits of restructuring, decentralisation to the states and local government areas is the most significant because without devolution of power every other benefit will be difficult to achieve. In other words, decentralisation of power will reduce the problem of the overbearing influence and powers of the presidency which will in turn promote easy and faster decision making process during emergency periods such as the outbreak of conflict, natural disasters and epidemics, among other issues.
2. **Power/Electricity Generation:** With restructuring power generation is likely to improve because the federating units or states will have autonomy or power to produce and distribute power rather than connecting to the national grid that has always been in comatose state and has never been enough to solve power problem in the country. When there is surplus, the privilege states can sell the excess to the neighbouring state and generate revenue in the process to fund other sectors of the state. Apart from making power available to the citizenry, it will also reduce the cost of transmission or distribution.
3. **Mineral Resources:** Also with restructuring, states with mineral resources, though, if properly managed can maximally explore and harness their resources and create wealth which in turn benefits the people through infrastructure development, improve health care facility, education and employment generation for the citizenry at all times. It implies that exploration and management of states' resources will promote self-reliance of states and independence from the central government control.
4. **Maintenance of Internal Security:** With restructuring, there will be devolution of power to the states to manage internal security arising within their domain. This means that states will be allowed to establish state policing networks or regional security outfits to complement federal security architecture, particularly the police force. With state police civil offences and other forms of offences can be easily managed by the states within their domains.
5. **Federal Character:** As it requires of the federation government, the federal character principle in Nigerian state has been disregarded in several occasions especially in the present administration while appointing public officers to the federal government institutions and agencies. Unfortunately, it is created to balance the Nigerian federation but it has become the bedrock of corruption and nepotism. But with restructuring, the centre will be less attractive

because the state governments will have more to offer their citizenry than the federal government.

Summary and Conclusion:

Unity in diversity they say is the essence of a federal system of government. Unfortunately, unity among the ethnic nationalities in Nigeria has become elusive because of the existing self-styled federal structure created by the military regimes in the country's socio-political history. The current federal structure has created more problems than benefits to the citizens. Ethnic consciousness and tribal difference among the diverse groups in the country have been in the increase following the current structure of the country's political institutions. Inarguably, what the nationalists who fought for the country's independence from the British colonial power and what they negotiated for the country during and after independence have been abandoned by the military regimes, and by extension, the civilian governments that have existed in the democratic history of the country. As a consequence, the unity of the country has been under constant threats from several ethnic and tribal groups, agitators and secessionist movements such as the Niger Delta militant groups whom major target is a return to true-federalism as IPOB and ESN domesticated in the South Eastern part of the country.

In recent times, the struggle for restructuring has gone beyond these marginalised groups of South-South and South-East geopolitical zones to other sections of the country including the people of the South West and the Middle Belt joining in the struggle for restructuring. The criteria for the creation of the 36 states including the federal capital territory, FCT, Abuja and the 774 local government area councils by the military has been subjected to questioning by Nigerians following the persistent restructuring debate in recent times. This has become more serious now that the civil populace did not understand the reasons for the refusal of the present administration to call for referendum with the question and focus on whether restructuring is the best approach to settle the emerging socio-political challenges in the country in recent times. There is therefore the need for restructuring to end the series of problems associated with the current structure of the country's federal system of government.

Recommendations:

It is obvious that the current arrangement or structure of the country's federal system does not satisfy the needs, yearnings and aspirations of the populace at every level. However, restructuring of the current structure or arrangement of the nation's federal system of government has not only becomes necessary but also requires urgent attention by the present administration of President MuhammaduBuhari/ Prof. YemiOsibanjo. It is obvious that restructuring of the country's current federal structure does not only requires devolution of powers to the states but also transforming the roles of both the federal, state and local government council areas in order to ensure they perform more efficiently. Above all, with restructuring there is no doubt that the unity of the country is assured since each of the federating units, will be allowed to manage their resources, maintain their civil service and social infrastructure. Restructuring will also form the basis for the unity of purpose and sustenance of the economic growth of each of the federating units or states of the federation. In addition, restructuring without good leadership or government at all levels wouldn't be necessary because the problems associated with the present status quo ante will remain. This study, therefore, recommends total restructuring of the country's political institutions and structures at all levels – the central, state and local government levels. Corruption, nepotism, tribalism, mediocracy and unemployment, and re-orientation of our conceptions of power should be eliminated side by side with restructuring.

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FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES JOURNAL 2022

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