

Revisiting Calls to Restructure Nigerian Styled Federalism

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Abstract

Over-dependence by federating units on the central government on financial matters, created some misgivings over the operational trajectory of federalism and its acclaimed dysfunctionality in Nigeria. The paper revisits the calls to restructure Nigeria's peculiar federalism, evaluates the historical antecedents, assessed government's response to such calls, at the same time, examines altercations for and against restructuring. It adopted political economy for theoretical framework, and descriptive research design, utilising secondary source of data with content analysis. The paper found that the main bone of contention is anchored around economic exclusivity by the federal government, which is breeding dissatisfaction. Nature of politics influenced lopsided restructuring that concentrated on territorial aspects, rather than the economic domain, this disabled fiscal federalism. It concluded that the policy of concentrating revenue allocation at the centre, does not give room for each federating unit to leverage on their capacity to internally generate revenue from the resources in their environment. In order to enjoy the dividend of federalism, and advance towards achieving sustainable development a revisit to calls for restructuring is needed. There is fluidity in government's commitment toward restructuring, seen in the lack of implementation of various committees reports on restructuring and fiscal federalism. Also, there is absence of the political will to change the status quo of unitarized federalism. The paper recommends that comprehensive restructuring, with the states and local government revenue generating capacity as the kick-off point. It urgently requires cutting down cost of governance to the barest minimum.

Key Words: *Federalism; Restructuring; Altercations, Revenues, Fiscal Federalism.*

Introduction

Nigeria's multi-ethnic and multi-national status, enabled the adoption of federal system of government which allows each federating group to develop at their own pace, based on their peculiarity and the resources available to them. Although the system of federalism operating in Nigeria is quite different, from the usual classical federal system. According to Wheare (1963), the federal option often arises from the desire of a people to form a union without necessarily

losing their identities. Such as; languages, music, traditions, economic livelihoods, which may include farming, fishing, cattle rearing, which may be the mainstay of their economy, These identities could create some misgivings, and could trigger off internal conflict if not understood by other federating units and protected by the government. Achieving development in diversity is the cornerstone of every federal state, and in the face of variation in the endowment of resources, as some states are endowed with so much resources than others, but yet untapped. While others are being tapped, generating huge revenue that are shared to all three levels of government. The endowed states do not have full grip or control over the revenue derived from the resources in their environment. For some states within the federation, the internally generated revenue is at zero level, warranting the federating units to economically depend on the centre for survival. Not contributing financially to the national coffers and yet receiving monthly allocation that is not commensurate with their contribution to the Contributive Pool Account has not gone down well with the major contributors.

Such inequality polarizes the forces of integration, creating a backlash on the claim to a federal status and the mushrooming of centrifugal forces. Raising questions of unfairness and demands for adoption of fiscal federalism which allows the principles of derivation formula for revenue allocation. Hence these demands has spewed over to the request for restructuring the federation. According to Awa, (1976), failure by the federal system to meet the "desire of a state to preserve their special economic resources may cause a union to disintegrate". If conflicting interest cannot be resolved through compromises, or concession, Awa'(1976) suggests that dominated group "may remain as a disgruntled member, thus reinforcing the centrifugal forces which are found in all federations, and they are prone to divisive inclination". Hence the call to restructure institutions that are working or operating in anti-federalism style, so as to arrest the divisive tendencies and unpatriotic inclination by groups. There is a particular trend that runs through the country's history with regards to the calls for restructuring Nigerian state. The unfolding of recent political events has shown cases of resistance by ethnic nationalities who felt left out in Nigeria's styled federalism, the number is increasing to an alarming rate. Niger Delta with her rich oil deposits has been a hot bed for agitation by some militants, giving room to calls for resource control, exacerbating demand for fiscal restructuring, which denotes another angle of restructuring.

Historically, issues surrounding operational trajectories of federalism in modern Nigeria has been varied and contentious. The ensuing politics, domination, challenges of insecurity and suppression of minority voices abound, such gave birth to decades of misgivings and group suspicion of government policies that turned out to form the league of burning but yet to be resolved issues. Starting from demands for restructuring by Calabar/Ogoja/Rivers political leaders, a minority group in the Eastern Regional government, whose argument was on the need to carve out a region from the then Eastern region. Their demand was based on the fact of injustices they suffered in the hands of the leadership of the governing party, the National Council of Nigerian Citizens. The request for restructuring was assiduously resisted by the political and ruling elites, who through the spurious arguments that the idea of creating new regions may affect the date for independence. This overshadowed every other argument for

creating new regions and tilted the outcome of Wilink Commission of inquiry instituted by the Colonial Government. Hence postponing the yearning and sincere desires for territorial restructuring by the minorities in the Eastern and Middle Belt axis of the Northern region

Presently Nigeria is divided into a 36 state structure, constituted within six unequal geo-political zones. Unequal in term of geographical landmass, geo-political constituent, resource endowments, population, infrastructural development, and diverse ethnic nationalities littered across the zones. Irrespective of known diversities found in plural societies, they often embrace federal system of government, in other words federalism is good for multinational states,, "multinational states comprises ethnic groups who do not only vary in size, but in the distribution of power, influence and resources"(Elaigwu, 1994). Somehow "a unit which feels deprived of reasonable economic (and political) benefits or for some reason develops fear for the safety of lives and property of its members, may want to opt out of the federation (Awa,1976). Thus forming the basis for such thought provoking and loudly expressed calls to either restructure or break up Nigerian breed pseudo-federalism. it can also exacerbate the demand for fiscal restructuring. The institutional argument that has to do with over centralisation of power, demands that the federal government shed some of her powers and transfer some of its exclusive hold on power to the states assigned just 32 items on the concurrent legislative list, while the exclusive list has 68 items. Bringing us to the fact that some demands are both territorial and institutional, and economic.

It is pertinent to note that Nigerian styled federalism is being questioned, as many persons who criticized it, ended up advocating restructuring, as a panacea against possible disintegration (Allen, 2019). For certain, there has been much about Nigerian style of federalism and its setup, though the issues may be numerous, but can not be insurmountable. What are those issues that gave birth to these multifarious calls for restructuring? For Suberu (2005), "Nigeria basically operates federal system on paper as the federal structure never existed", and such statements provoke calls for restructuring. In an interview, Rights activist, Mitee (2012) advised that the calls should proceed from the premise of asking what is wrong with the polity and how can these wrongs be remedied constitutionally? In affirming that many things are wrong with the polity, the Federal Government identified twelve priority areas begging for restructuring during the 2015 National Conference.

To state the least, the calls for restructuring is a bleeding issue, and so attracted the attention of the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER) to the extent that the Theme of the five Papers presented at the just concluded NISER Policy Dialogue on Thursday December 7, 2023 was all on National Restructuring Question in Nigeria. The major question on the lips of some concerned citizens is, how it will happen, what a restructured Nigeria will look like ? The above forms the basic thought provoking analogy that propelled the writing of this paper.

Objectives of the Study

The study dealt with the following specific objectives to;

1. Determine how the dynamics of politics influenced the calls for restructuring
2. Identify areas, or sectors that requires immediate restructuring
- 3.. Ascertain the parameters that can be used to restructure Nigerian styled federation.
4. Assess federal government's response to calls to restructure.

Research Questions

1. How does the dynamic of politics influence the calls for restructuring?
2. Which are the areas, or sectors that requires immediate restructuring ?
3. What are the parameters that can be used to restructure Nigerian styled federalism ?
4. What are federal government's response to calls to restructure the country?

Theoretical Framework

The thematic framework for existential conditions of Nigeria's style of federalism will often take off from the point of political economy perspective as propounded by Karl Marx (1818-1884). Political economy approach examines the relationship between political institutions, economic structures, skills, the distribution of resources and power in society. Political economy approach examines contemporary trends as it relates to social realities, group demands on the state, and the responses from the state which act as the instrument for the distribution of wealth and position to the dominant class. Cardinal to this is the fact that political economy also assesses society in terms of economic and its socio-political trajectories. For man to survive, he must engage in productive activities which makes him to relate with others in the productive process, creating a social relationship to the means of production. This many youths, local government and states are not engaged in any meaningful and wealth creation activities. Pushing it further for any country, region, state, union, people or individuals to survive they must engage in productive activities, where they fail to they become moribund. States that refuse to or is unable to engage in productive activities, but depend on others for survival like leeches, treading the part of dependency on other states, thereby exposing the citizens to avoidable hardships and poverty. Such a state ought to be disbanded and collapse with those with a vibrant economy, for the country to achieve sustainable development goals as envisaged in 2030. Unfortunately for more than half of the state, it is either the federal system have made them unviable economically, or the fault may be from the ruling elites who lack the vision of engaging the mass of the people in productive ventures, harnessing resources from the environment, create wealth, provide employment, and internally generate revenue for her teeming population. Such productive activities has become difficult in some states due to monthly allocation (hand-outs) from the

federal government.

Adopting political economy approach enable analysis of issues, and having a clear understanding of the nature of social forces, or the contestation of power among various interest groups (Ekekwe, 2009). Analysing the past, this gives us the leverage in understanding the present socio-economic and political realities as it relate to the existential historical underpinnings which conditions and feed such centrifugal forces as; exclusiveness in governance, profligacy,, politico-economic indolence, corruption, with other social malaise. Political economy as a framework remains very useful for explaining the politics and challenges surrounding the debate on restructuring. This framework enable us to study and understand the politico-economic underpinnings behind the elitists agenda to make the federal system unworkable. Having a true picture of the historical trends with regards to the various calls to overhaul Nigeria's style of federalism. The contemporary realities of the state of Nigeria's political and socio-economic exigencies possess her own dialectics, signaling a looming break-up, as the issues that fuel these calls remains very much unattended to. .

The framework x-rays fundamental factors that reflects the ideology of the ruling and the governing elites in the agitation for a paradigm shift from the dominant view of maintaining the status quo, to a total overhaul and transformation of the political, social, economic and territorial structures. Moreover some agitations emanates from groups whose major aim is to clinch governmental power. The issues that is embedded in this topic is analysed within this paradigm, in order to assess and have a true picture of the interplay between Nigerian politics, institutional arrangement and the nature of federalism practiced in Nigeria.

Methodology

The paper adopted the descriptive research design. It made use of secondary sources of data, from published works, books, Journals amongst others. It also made use of qualitative and content methods in analysing the data.

Conceptual Review

Federalism

Federalism as a system of government implies that the inclusive government and the component parts are coordinate and enjoy independent status especially as it relate to the preservation of group identities (Wheare, 1963). Enabling the distribution of governmental and financial powers between a central government and constituent units. Each having a level of degree of autonomy/ independent in some areas and co-ordinate, reflecting the inherent and diverse nature of such society. With peculiarities in culture language and even in the quality and quantity of natural endowments, that is, the natural resources within each unit. The harnessing and distribution of which may court problem if not properly and adequately handled. However, due to the country's peculiarities and centrifuges which are oftentimes conflictual in nature, contextual and prone to misunderstanding, the union may choose to adopt cooperative measures and where that fails, they fall back to bargaining. Concessions are made to keep the bond of

unity. In order to solve the problem of nation and state building, countries go for federalism, mainly as an avenue for compromise and consensus. Also, serious consultation follows constitutional means of handling discordant views. United States of America adopted this process in its formative years as a federation. This system of government that takes care of the twin needs of cooperation by diverse groups and having the right to separate development or taking independent action separate from that of others, including preservation of local identity. In the words of Elaigwu (1994) federalism is embedded with its own seed of discord that can lead to its dismemberment if not cautiously handled. Essentially federalism is a compromise between centripetal and centrifugal forces in the political system.

Federalism gives room for smaller nations to agree to form a larger and stronger country, hence enabling the harnessing and maximizing of potentials within each federating unit. Federalism has to do with the devolution and centralisation of power, as well as the power to manage resources, including monetary and fiscal resources. Although that which encompasses fiscal federalism is better. While federalism without fiscal autonomy is like driving a vehicle without the steering wheel.

Nigerian Styled Federalism

The 1954 Lyttleton Constitution introduced the federal system of government in Nigeria, beginning with the division of powers between the three regional governments and national government. When Nigeria stood on the tripod stand of three regional governments they recorded some giant strides, economically and socially. Though there were little strands of agitation within the three regions, but the developmental progress made by each region within the short time drowned the short comings experienced in each region. Federalism as is practiced in Nigeria is entangled with so many demands from its present 36 state structure, and 6 geo-political zones. Each geo-political zone has six states except the South East with five, and this has been the bone of contention for state creation activist, arguing for creation of a new state to make-up the number.

Some erroneously believed that the problem and challenges confronting the country can be surmounted and reversed by having in each region, equality in the number of states, and local government areas. With 19 states and 413 local government areas in the north and the south left with 17 states and 331 local government areas. Some have requested that the gap between the north and the south be filled up. Equality in the number of states in each region does not affect in any way the pace of development, neither does it make for the operation of true federalism, nor its functionality. It is very rare to find a federation where all the federating units and regions are equal in the number of states, local government, province, and districts, moreover, such does not contribute to the marginal income of citizens. Meanwhile those that think that federal system placed them in disadvantage position have not rested their oars, still pressing for equality in the number of states. Although the issue of creating an additional state is not the solution. Even within the Ibo ethnic group, the people cannot speak with one voice because of division on State basis.

Another bleeding issue is derivative principle of revenue sharing, which was in operation at various degrees, with regional units having the lion's share. The arrival of military government of General Aguiyi Ironsi and the unification Decree 31, introduced unitarized federalism, and the centralisation of economic power, which as a matter of fact jettisoned derivative principle of revenue sharing between the regions and the central government. Presently the formula is, 52.68% Federal government, 26.72% state government, and 20.60% local government. The federation has its own challenges, in terms of allocation and distribution of resources and positions of power, amongst the various nationalities. Practically there is also the argument that peace and justice can only be achieved when we have in each state equality in terms of number of ministerial appointments, thus exacerbating the overhead cost of maintenance. Though arguments like this are often politically motivated, rather than enable integration, it pulls the federating units towards the disintegrative experiences. With the adoption of inclusive government, accountability and justice, these forces could be tamed.

A comparative study of other federations, whether in America, India, Australia, Switzerland or Canada, shows that there is no true federalism, all federations are in the process of becoming. If we are claiming to follow the American model, then we must do what they did to get to where they are. Besides they are in a different environment and have their own peculiar historical experiences. Americans fought a civil war, had a constitutional conference where the rules binding the union was spelt out in the constitution and the various political leaders over the centuries have been adhering to its lay down precepts. Various states joined the union willingly, unlike the Nigerian union that came as an imposition from the colonial government. Indian own federation was an imposition, but they have found a way of blending their differences and also leverage on their peculiarities. Can Nigeria do similar things. Although Ekekwe (2020) is of the view that every federation including Nigeria is work in dynamic progress, reflecting at any one time the relative strength of the contending social and political forces.

According to Babalola, (2016), true federalism has never been practised in Nigeria in its real sense. Even at that, lets not forget the fact that attempts were made in the various regional governments to operationalize federalism between 1954 and January 15th, 1966. Those attempts were to sound very modest a success story. Each region enjoyed some levels of autonomy, fiscal federalism and unprecedented developmental strides were achieved and recorded. Post-military Nigerian federalism because of Its operational peculiarity in terms of bearing the tag federal system, (federalism) on paper, while practicing unitary system of government in many facets also exacerbate the demands for fiscal restructuring.

Restructuring

Restructuring refers to the process of altering, reorganizing, and overhauling of balancing or reshaping in a bid to finding better ways for managing the economy or the operational bases of an institution, organisation, a body or a country. Its all about re-socio-economic and political challenges in the country. Recent events in the country has created opportunity for concerned citizens to speak out concerning the state of the nation. If the demand is to completely restructure

or reorganize the perceived unequal federal system, if that is what is needed. This requires a total and complete overhaul of political and economic power base for social transformation. The issue of restructuring Nigeria and the answer to the national question are related. The country is in dire need of fundamental change in the federal structure. Ibaba (2017) explain that restructuring aim at correcting imbalances. This is all about making serious structural adjustment and realignment. Some redundant structures need to be removed and replaced by a workable structure, reappraisal of redundant structures that are resisting change, failure of which may lead to grave consequences, such as each going their separate ways. Restructuring does not really mean breaking up, nor dividing the country.

Nigeria needs to re-balance or reshape, or do an overhaul in a bid to finding better ways for managing the country, politically, economically and socially. This restructuring is not only territorial or geographic, but economic as well, because those Nationalist that argued against restructuring in the late fifties and early sixties did that on the ground of, and the fear of losing their party supporters to other parties, as well as the economic resources and derived revenue from the regions to be carved out. The calls from South-South geo-political zone for restructuring is economically motivated, based on resource control. This is in line with Sanusi (1999) definition of restructuring "as an omnibus word for all forms of adjustments, alterations, and cosmetic manipulations aimed at changing the formula on the basis of which economic resources and political power are shared or distributed among the elites masquerading as ethnic groups. He noted that each section traditionally defends the area of its comparative advantage at any given time, standing by the status quo when it serves its purposes and asking for restructuring when it does not".

There has been divergent views as it relates to the concept of restructuring. The scope, method and meaning, devolution of power from the centre to the component units which is a structural matter, regionalism as found in the six geo-political zoning system, fiscal federalism in terms of resource control or in another parlance economic self-determination and adoption of derivation principles of revenue allocation formula. Then there is the issue of cost of governance, in terms of over-bloated nature of Ministries or what is commonly referred to as duplication of Ministries and functions, membership and numbers of legislative chambers. Restructuring encompasses a redefined system of governance.

History of Restructuring Nigerian Federation

Territorial restructuring

In the process of territorial restructuring of the federation, Nigeria has gone through the epoch of colonial imposition which attracted criticisms from the then nationalists, who demanded for participation in governance at the end of the Second World War, this gave birth to structural reforms, creating a federation of three regional governments in 1954, namely; Eastern, Western and Northern regions. Although "In 1943, Dr Azikiwe called for restructuring of the Nigerian state, his main concern appeared to prevent any one region from being so large as to pose a threat to others" (Ekekwe, 1986; Azikiwe, 1974). The carving out of the Mid-Western

region from Western region changed the structure to four regions. The political and governing class participated in the discussion. The move was politically motivated, aimed at balkanizing Action Group's power and support base in the Mid Western region. It was also an opportunity to solidify the political alliance between the National Council of Nigerian Citizens(NCNC), and the Northern People's Congress(NPC). The rest of the federal structure were created through military fiat, in collaboration with political and governing elites. Starting with the twelve state structure in 1967, creation of which was to break the backbone of Biafra, and cut them off from the oil belt in the Niger Delta, and also solidify the uneasy marriage between the north and the west. Then there is the nineteen state structure in 1976, twenty-one in 1987, then thirty in 1991 and finally thirty-six state structure in 1997 (Amadi, 2019).

Why is Nigeria more divided now than ever, even while standing on thirty six legs? When she had 3 regional legs she was stronger, though with two or three roots that were agitating to branch out but was suppressed by more powerful roots. One root was added later. Standing on four legs, she was still strong. She was already in crisis when the military carved out twelve legs which they christened states. She has not stabilized when six more legs were added, then later two more was created. Although, citizens are dissatisfied with lopsided restructuring that concentrated on territorial, rather than economic domains. The request for restructuring was not part of a development inclined political agenda, rather the actions of political and the ruling elites were guided by desire to carve out political and economic vassalage for themselves. The principle of economic viability was not part of the reasons for past restructuring.

Economic Restructuring

Over ten Commissions for Revenue Allocation Formula have been constituted by Federal Government over the years in order to restructure the revenue sharing formula between the federating regions/states and central government. Right after adopting federalism in 1954, the derivation principles of revenue allocation formula was adopted, with some few changes until the 1966 military takeover that changed the fiscal trajectory of the country. For the past 5 decade, Nigeria structurally operates a federal political setup, while in financial matters she adopted unitarized and centralised fiscal federalism. To worsen her state of underdevelopment, with creation of more states without any blueprint for their financial solvency, hence deepening her economic problems. The issue of fiscal dependence on the centre by the federating states is another reason why some concerned Nigerians are advocating for restructuring. How creative and committed are these Governors and local government Chairmen in terms of harnessing local resources ?

President of Civil Liberty Organisation(CLO), Akeregha (2016), avers that "the federating units have been reduced to core dependents of the federal government, which is an unhealthy development, breeding indolence and lack of creativity". Among the component nationalities, "the existing 36 states are not financially solvent to stand strong as state and they remain a drain on national coffers, as the nation continues to fund moribund and unproductive state bureaucracies. Arguing about self-supporting ability, apart from Lagos state, how many states

among the present 36 states can boast of being able to meet its financial obligations without falling back on the federal government for bailout. Another important area that needs restructuring is the overhead cost of maintaining Legislators who are paid jumbo salaries and bloated allowances. If actually they are rendering services to the people in their constituency, then they should be given allowances not paid such jumbo salary. Others are demanding that the salary and allowances of ministers, Senators and members of the House of Representative and Houses of Assembly be restructured in line with the economic reality of the country.

If you ask me, the pre-independence governing elites were up and doing when it came to the issue of generating funds in their regions. Fiscal federalism was adopted in pre-independence and First Republic Nigeria. The military government, influenced by its unitary command system, dropped derivative formula, the various civilian governments held unto this policy of economic centralization and exclusivity. Trouble started when derivative formula of revenue allocation was jettisoned for a Distributable Pool Account, as oil became the main stay of Nigerian economy. As projected by a speaker In a debate titled: 'Nigeria: A troubled federation that needs people's dialogue', stating that "Nigerian federation is at best a 'unitarised' federation"(Nnadi, 2013). The federating units are caged and reduced to beggarly status, as resources are centrally controlled and disbursed. A former Deputy Senate President aptly described this arrangement as 'feeding bottle federalism'. Meaning that component units of the federation routinely queue at Abuja to be handed running cost as monthly allocation. The present system in which the state executive go every quarter (to Abuja) for sharing of mobilized revenue is unhealthy". This shows that there is much federal control on earned revenue, over concentration of economic power at the centre does not augur well for sustainability of democratic ethos, or encourage sustainable development. Moreover, the nature of concentrating revenue derived from the states at the centre, does not give room for each federating unit to harness resources that will enable them gain some comparative advantage over other states, enabling the country to enjoy the dividend of diversified economy. Why is fiscal federalism not practiced in contemporary Nigeria?

The specificity and clarity of the calls seemed ambiguous to those who see the word as a threat to their interest. Someone asked what the modality for such exercise will look like. Most of the calls came from the geo-political zone where majority of the federal revenue came from, and that is South South. Nine(9) out of thirty-six (36) states provides as well as generates the revenue that the rest of the states in the country uses to sustain its self. States transfer about 70% of their financial resource to the federation Joint Account. Although they allowed 13% to be shared by oil mineral producing communities, which is far less than what fiscal autonomy permits. This has formed the basis for such thought provoking calls from people of Niger Delta, who are demanding the dismantling of an unfavourable economic structure that denies them control over mineral resources that nature had deposited in their environment, just as it is practiced in America and Canada where the governments permit fiscal federalism. Citizens, are now asking for autonomy in the operations, harnessing and control of natural resources within the federating units, that is asking for socio-economic and political re-organisation. Recently while preparing for the gubernatorial election, the governor of Bayelsa state, Governor Douye Diri lent his voice to the calls for restructuring. There have been new dimension to the economic

challenges threatening oil producing communities, they not only encounter insecurity along the creeks and the waterways, but also environmental degradation. Leading to the setting up of Host Community Development Trust Fund. Although 10% was allocated for them, but the 9th National Assembly reduced it to 5%. While assenting to the Petroleum Industry Bill in 2021, President Muhammadu Buhari reduced the approved percentage to 3%, this attracted various reactions from the oil mineral producing states, increasing the calls for restructuring Nigerian styled federalism that does not give room to derivative principle of revenue sharing formula.

Political entities like states might restructure due to expanding over-head cost, poor earnings, over-bloated invoices, inability to curtail the loopholes through which money and resources are being siphoned out of the treasury. As at 2023, Nigeria's foreign debts is put at 77 trillion dollars. If there is any sector to restructure it is the draining pipes from the national coffers by both legislative and executive arms of government. 114% increase in Legislators salary and allowances, 29 million monthly salary for Senators, 160 million Naira SUV car for 360 members of National Assembly, with all sorts of allowances; Disturbance allowance, Dressing allowance, Furniture allowance, Constituency allowance. United States of America with a 50 state structure has only 15 Secretaries, the official position equivalent to the position of Ministers, while Nigeria's 36 states produces 48 Ministers, with duplication of functions, then the high cost of maintaining these Ministers and their offices, hence the argument to restructure cost of governance. This high cost has made political offices very lucrative, attractive and highly competitive, but if it is made less attractive, it will reduce some of the cost and the financial burdens at the federal level, shifting resources to where it is needed most. Target education, security, power and electricity generation, employment creation, youth empowerment, amongst others. In line with national development projects, and programmes.

Altercation for Restructuring

Recently new demands cropped up in the area of restructuring political and legal power bases, from the national to state and local government levels. Prominent amongst those demanding for a restructured Nigeria, is Emeka Ayaokwu, former Secretary General of the Common Wealth of Nations, according to him "what Nigeria needs right now in her history is to restructure the country". Reaffirming this view, Pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye, General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in 2021 also added his voice to the call for restructuring the turbulent political state. Are Ona Kakanfo of Yoruba land, Gani Adams of Odua People's Congress (OPC), a Yoruba cultural group agrees with these line of thought. While participating in Silver Birds Television programme, 'Head to Head', on 13th May 2020, he declared that "the Yorubas believe in a restructured Nigeria, based on 1951/1963 Republican Constitution, which gave each region the leverage to develop at its own pace and with its own resources". Pastor Dr. Paul Enenche of Dunamis Church, Abuja, also joined the group of well-meaning Nigerians calling for socio-economic restructuring. In the face of grouse injustices and unfairness in government appointments of key positions, he said "if the leadership refuse to the call for devolution of power, then they should be ready for the country to be dissolved". Professor Oyebode calls for a, revisit to the present federal structure where "citizens should not

feel alienated, excluded, and marginalized in their own country", he went further to state that, "the country should either be restructured or it dies". He wants a restructured, reconstituted, reconfigured, reconstructed loose federal state and a decentralized police. Arguing that it is very necessary to jettison those things that make the federal system unworkable. How feasible can these calls be in a country with conflicting class interests. Briggs (2012) considers the dialogue option that says "let's sit down and discuss our differences". This is in agreement with those suggesting convening a Sovereign National Conference (SNC), to give citizens the opportunity to re-appraise the need for continued corporate existence of the federation. In seeking an explanation for restructuring will the points raised integrate or disintegrate the Nigerian state? What are the caveats to avoid?

The Restructuring to Avoid

One of the restructuring to avoid is creating new and unviable States and Local Government Areas. A write-up in THE GUARDIAN, Thursday, August 4, 2016, titled "Gowon backs restructuring within one nation", the Former Head of State, Gen Yakubu Gowon(rtd), succinctly declares that "there is nothing wrong with restructuring the country provided it is done within the context of one Nigeria....We can restructure within one Nigeria context. I did it in 1967, we created states to stop eastern Nigeria from seceding". Based on his argument on restructuring within one nation. Which nation is the elder statesman talking about? Is it Hausa, Nupe, Efik, Idoma, Edo, Yoruba, Igbo, Ijaw, or the over 350 different nations? Nigeria is yet to be a nation. For eight years the ruling elites in which Gowon was a principal officer as the military Head of State removed fiscal federalism and derivative principle of revenue sharing, then introduced unitarised federalism that has turned the federating units into dependent and feeding bottle fed states. Sincerely I do not subscribe to that view of creation of states, this is not the type of restructuring Nigerians are demanding.

Discussions and Finding

1. How does the dynamic of politics influence the calls for restructuring ?

Middle Belt Congress placed a demand for a region to be carved out of the North, while in the East, there was also agitation to restructure the Eastern region by carving out Cross River, Ogoja/Rivers region. While explaining the politics surrounding Sir Henry Willink Commission's report in 1957, Awa (1976) stated that, the period before independence, the leaders of the major political parties which controlled the regions insisted that no new units should be carved out unless its resources in men and finance were sufficient to make it self-supporting. Some of the spokesmen went so far as to imply that if smaller units were created, they would automatically be none self-supporting. Obviously influenced by the fear of loosing the region's political and economic base. That is the resistance had its benefits in terms of regional and economic advantage. Their group interests countered the genuine demands of minority nationalities and the aspirations within the three regions.

The process of caving out the Mid-Western region from Western region, witnessed a

political alliance by the governing elites, aimed at balkanizing Action Group's power and support base in the Mid Western region. Though politically motivated, because it was an opportunity to solidify the uneasy political alliance between the National Council of Nigerian Citizens(NCNC), and the Northern People's Congress(NPC). The rest of the federal structures were created through military fiat, in collaboration with political and governing elites. Starting with the twelve state structure in 1967, creation of which was to break the backbone of Biafra, and cut them off from the Niger Delta oil belt, and also strengthen the unity between the north and the west. The request for restructuring on the one hand was not part of a development inclined political agenda, rather the actions of political and the ruling elites, guided by the desire to carve out political and economic vassalage for themselves. As well as score political goal that it was during their administration that the issue of restructuring got a governmental push.

The then regional leaders and political elites were real actors. When their interest converge, they become allies, these alliances collapse when there is divergence of economic and political interests. National issues were looked at with the eyes of sectional and economic advantage, any issue standing on the path of these interests are kicked against (Amadi, 2019). These elites down played the genuine desires of the minorities in the regions. Yet those minority fears that reared its ugly head in early 1940s and late 1950s are still with us

2. Examine reasons for resistance to demands for restructuring the Nigerian styled federalism.

Prior to 1960, the political elites resisted any attempt to restructure their regions. Awa(1976) write that, "the period before independence, the leaders of major political parties which controlled the regions, argued against creating new regions. Resistance or arguments against restructuring is not a recent development. Resistance against restructuring came from those who see nothing wrong with the state of the nation's economy. The truth about the swift resistance to the minority request for territorial restructuring was not only based on the principle of economic viability, but on primordial selfish motives. Those arguing against territorial restructuring, did that on the ground of, and the fear of losing their party supporters to other political parties and economic resources from the regions to be carved out. The assumption that a restructured Nigeria will not be conducive for the feathering of their political and economic nest, empowered the resistance then. Yet, seventy years down the line, the issue of restructuring demanded by the minorities has not abetted, but has resonated. This has given birth to more politically induced demands for restructuring the country's economic base. The NATION Newspaper of Thursday August 13, 2020, reports that former Head of State Rtd. General Olusegun Obasanjo labelled "the Yorubas who insisted on restructuring the enemies of the state". The 2005 National Political Reform Conference organised by his administration was a farce. The 2014 and 2015 National Conferences and many others were convened to find ways of moving the country on the part of sustainable peace, justice and progressive development. There is also the 2017 Committee on Restructuring headed by former Kaduna state Governor, Nasir El Rufai, and was submitted to the government of Buhari in 2018. While some political elites are afraid of debating such issue that will tamper with their hold on the present Nigerian styled federalism.

Citizens like Dr Nzenwa calls on the federal government to stop all those calling for restructuring, reasons best known to him. Tanko Yakassi, a political commentator and Northern opinion leader, while assessing all the restructuring of the past years, concluded that "Nigeria's problem is not about the issue of structure, but that the people requesting for restructuring should first and foremost define and redefine how a restructured Nigeria would look like. How do we go about restructuring this multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-religious, multi-problem country?"(Yakassi, 2016). Is Tanko Yakassi afraid of tampering with the present structure? The fear of restructuring generally is the issue of the entire northern oligarchs which he represents. This is the reason why citizens need to sit down to discuss and iron out the shape the union is going to take. Whether members want a continuity in the co-existence of the entities that make up Nigeria or not. India, Pakistan, Yugoslavia and Soviet Union that restructured, how do they look like? Each is forging ahead and developing at its own pace. America and Canada that are operating fiscal federalism, how do they look like?

To answer these questions, elder statesman and former Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon, has this to say, "Fragment the country into small components we will be forgotten by the world, that has been my focal position" (THE GUARDIAN, 2016, August 4). Such spurious argument by the ruling elites, scuttled the process of developing a durable federal structure for Nigeria. It will be better to fragment into six component units and make progress, than remain bloated and degenerate to the present pathetic state, of "the ignominious poverty capital of the world (Osai, 2021). A serving President warned the Constitution Drafting Committee "on the need to avoid engaging in the fruitless exercise of trying to alter the agreed ingredient of Nigeria's political order" (Anucha, 2010). What are these agreed ingredients? Who and who sat to agree? The crux of the matter is that the military as the coercive arm of the state believe in maintenance of status quo, and preservation of territorial integrity of the Nigerian state. For them, debating on the underlying aspect of unitarised federal structure, is a no go area. Advocates of the Sovereign National Conference (SNC), are demanding for a discussion on the functionality of a federalism that works not only in name and paper, but also in the letters, if howbeit for the sake of national integration and development.

3. What are the basis for and the parameters that can be used to restructure the Nigerian styled federation?

Several things comes to play whenever there is discussion on the parameters to be used for restructuring the federal system. Also the shape the new federal structure will take, may likely involve matters of national, group, individual differences and interest. Taking a clue from Gowon's experience, the basis for Gowon's kind of restructuring was not aimed at making the restructured state to be economically viable, subsequent creation of states towed this line of creating non-viable federating units that are spoon fed by the central government. Restructuring should start with the states and local government areas in terms of wealth creation and financial autonomy based on fiscal federalism driven by derivative principle, Those fundamental factors that reflects the ideology of the ruling and the governing elites in their quest for a paradigm shift and government's response to these requests. From the dominant view of maintaining the status

quo, to a total overhaul and transformation of the political, socio-economic and territorial structures. In the words of Ekekwe (1986) "I have attempted to look at the question of restructuring the Nigerian state from a fresh perspective. For a long time this question has been examined either from the traditional approach to federalism or from purely ethnic point of view...I have argued that the restructuring of the Nigerian state is best explained by struggles for access to, or control of, the state by the petty-bourgeoisie which became the governing class at the time of independence".

The process of restructuring was to "merge the existing states into convenient and workable units by the engrossment of the geo-political zones as federating units". Reasons been to reduce the struggle for the centre and stem the tide of agitators hustling for more states to be created. For instance, some states in Nigeria are endowed with much natural resources, yet untapped, while those of others are being harnessed and disproportionately shared out to all. Most state governments lack internally generated fund and self-supporting mechanism to meet their basic financial needs. Warranting them to economically depend on the centre for survival. Briggs (2012) reveals that 9 states oils the wheel of the country, while 27 others contribute nothing". That is, they have nothing to offer or contribute to the general purse. These states, their governors and local government chairmen depend on the federal government's monthly allocation, as their survival is jeopardized outside this unitary arrangement of dependent relationship. In restoring fiscal federalism, the requirements aims at encouraging wealth and job creation by the federating states. In other word each federating region or state will need to leverage on the areas they have competitive advantage. Those 27 states that do not bring anything to the table, but only depend on the centre, should be collapsed together with other neighbouring states in their geo-political zone, their income generating ability reviewed and restructured in the area of viability

The PUNCH Editorial of 1st January, 2024, added that "unlike the defunct regions, the states becomes self-sustaining, productive units, each with autonomous economic plans, with sector-specific, job creating targets and robust taxation and investment policies, poverty, unemployment, hunger and insecurity will linger". Taking a critical look at the competency of component units like states and local government, to create internal revenue, disappointingly this capacity has not been put to use. Apart from Lagos state that is financially solvent, most states are unable to carry out their statutory financial obligation without a visit to Abuja. In subscribing to a style of restructuring that will expose and stem the tide of systemic injustices, ameliorate socio-political and economic quagmires, touch every facets and contentious aspect of the workings of unitarised federalism, bringing Nigeria back to K C Wheare's institutional arrangement that is germane to her present reality, then restructuring could take a negotiated process.

4. What are federal government's response to calls to restructure the country?

There has been policy measures during this Fourth Republic to ameliorate Intense pressure for restructuring on various issues. Due to intense nature of the calls, at the onset, President Olusegun Obasanjo set up the National Political Reform Conference in 2005, under the

Chairmanship of Justice Niki Tobi. Terms of reference includes; revenue allocation, resource control, restructuring of the Nigerian nation, power sharing, rotational presidency, among others. Nothing tangible came out from that Conference. Under the Goodluck Jonathan's administration, in 2014, a National Conference was convened, to assess ways to move the country forward. One of the terms of reference examined by members was, restructuring of the Nigerian nation and power sharing. The Federal Government identified twelve priority areas begging for restructuring during the 2015 National Conference. They examine ;

1. Creation or merger of states and the framework and guidelines for achieving that;
2. Derivation principle, bordering on what percentage of federal collectible revenue from mining should be given back to the sub-nationals from which the commodities are extracted;
3. Devolution of powers, as it relates to state and community Police, Prisons, etcetera;
4. Federating Units; as Regions, Zones, or the 36 state structure;
5. Fiscal Federalism and Revenue Allocation;
6. Resource Control, amongst others.

The new government of All Progressive Congress (APC) led by Mohammadu Buhari following their election campaign promises, and in line with the party's Constitution as amended in April, 2014, Article 7, Subsection 2, talks about restructuring Nigeria if voted into power. They set up the a 13 man Committee, headed by Kaduna State Governor, Alh. Nasir Ahmed El-Rufai, members examined four broad areas, and came up with the El-Rufai Report in 2017. The mandate was to clarify the definition of true federalism, carefully examines various national conferences reports, especially that of 2014 report. The 23 member Committee on True Federalism set up on August, 2017, submitted their own findings on 14th January, 2018 to the Chairman of All Progressive Congress(El-Rufai, 2017). Apart from attracting controversial comments, the issue of restructuring was topical yet misunderstood by many, seen in various lights depending on who is involved and where they were standing. Nothing came out of them because of a few vested interests. Any policy that will limit the annexation of common wealth from the ruling elites are down played and at most swept under the carpet, including the 2017 Committee Report on Restructuring. They made several suggestions, but the missing link is the absence of political will to implement the numerous recommendations.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Starting with a critical analysis of the structure of Nigerian federalism and the various demands, there is a common thread that runs through the lines and stages. The study examined the fundamental factors that reflects the ideology of the ruling and the governing elites in their request for a paradigm shift and their response to these requests. From the dominant view of maintaining the status quo, to a total overhaul and transformation of the political, socio-economic and territorial structures. The paper found that numerous steps have been taken and

various efforts made at different times in her political history to achieve a restructuring peculiar to the needs of Nigeria's ruling and governing class. All argument against restructuring are politically and economically motivated. In contemporary times new voices suggesting reshaping, redefining and redesigning a purported lop-sided federal structure, is becoming clearer. Recent political and economic predicament goes beyond the restructuring based on issues of resource control, state creation or constitutional change. Until we come to the point of discussing what each region, state, local government area, leaders and citizens can contribute to national development, as well as act on them, this country will continue to deal with the same issues that led to the demands for restructuring over and over again. Especially, those emanating from the governing elites who because of perceived threat to the prevailing power structure, kept on pushing for restructuring on the basis of state creation.

In tracing past experiences in restructuring Nigeria's federation, the political processes adopted by the political class to reshape and reconfigure the structural landscape of the country, we cannot overlook the copious influence the geopolitical exigencies and the nature of politics contributed, working in tandem with the prevailing political culture within each epoch. The Paper concludes by subscribing to the idea of restructuring Nigerian styled federalism, if the demand is about; (i) Restructuring the states and local government areas in terms of wealth creation and financial autonomy based on derivative principle. (ii) Enabling wholesome commitment to development of their domains and the country in general. (iii) Political empowerment of women, youths and the marginal groups. (iv) Restructuring over-bloated cost of governance, which has become outrageous. While it rejects the idea of calls for restructuring being promoted so as to create unviable new states and local government areas that lack the capacity and capability for economic sustainability.

Based on these findings, the Wheare's classical federalism does not operate in actual sense in Nigeria, as it does in other federal states. Efforts have been made in the past through policy directive, conference and committee reports, to address the issue of restructuring Nigerian styled federalism, it all yielded unintended outcome, the time has come for the real restructuring to take place. it has become imperative that this her own styled federalism be restructured and fiscal federalism with derivative principle adopted. The PUNCH Editorial of 1st January, 2024, strongly recommends that while not neglecting others, Tinubu should attach utmost priority and give full attention to four areas namely; the economy, security, corruption and restructuring, the last being the most crucial for Nigeria's survival " .

Therefore the paper recommends that;

1. Economic viability and sustainability should be the criteria for restructuring of the federal institutions, in other words, for any alteration of economic structure, the states and local government economic base should be the kick-off point for restructuring.
2. The six geo-political zones are endowed by nature with various resources, so each should leverage on the comparative advantage of its endowed capacity, harness it for the development

of human capital in the zone.

3. The Citizens must come to the point of discussing what each region, state, local government area, leaders and citizens can contribute to Nigeria's development, as well as act on them, or else, this country will continue to deal with the same issues over and over again

4.. Emphasis should be about auto-centric development and not the principle of even development which has not encouraged states to leverage on their peculiarity and innate capacity.

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