



## RESTRUCTURING: A CATHOLICON FOR THE STABILITY OF NIGERIAN FEDERALISM

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### Cite this article:

Deinibiteim M.H., Mercy T. (2022), Restructuring: A Catholicon for the Stability of Nigerian Federalism. African Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research 5(3), 92-104. DOI: 10.52589/AJSSHR-VFDYAO6S.

### Manuscript History

Received: 15 June 2022

Accepted: 26 July 2022

Published: 9 Aug 2022

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**ABSTRACT:** *Nigeria has, over the last three decades, observed threats to its corporate existence as a federation due to the dissatisfaction of the various ethnic nationalities. This dissatisfaction has necessitated the growth of ethnic and micro-nationalistic groups requesting that the country be restructured. Hence the clamour for “restructuring” is high more than ever in the country, with the different ethnic groups advocating for one form of restructuring of the other; while others are threatening to secede from the union. Successive governments have made efforts to pacify the different ethnic nationalities to keep fate with the Nigerian federation with little success, as the agitations for restructuring and threats to disintegrate remain all times high. Consequently, there is strong political rivalry, among the different ethnic groups, which has substantially created political instability in the nation. Thus, the main objective of this paper is to demonstrate that genuine and sincere restructuring of the Nigerian State will to a large extent douse the threats to Nigerian federalism. The study adopted the Cooperative Federalism strand of the Modern Approach of Federalism, which is anchored on cooperation and interdependence among component units of governments, to explain the necessity for restructuring the Nigerian State. The study used mainly secondary data related to federalism, restructuring and political stability. The study revealed that there has not been a sincere effort at restructuring the Nigerian State since the collapse of the First Republic through a coup d’état, which to a large extent made the country operate as a unitary state and this has fueled ethnic rivalry as well as underdevelopment in the country. The paper concluded that for Nigerian federalism to be substantially free from stress and strains there must be a concerted effort at sincerely restructuring the polity. The study recommended among other things, that government should expedite action to restructure the Nigerian State, engage the dissatisfied and agitating groups clamouring for self-determination, grant greater autonomy to the sub-units, and allow the states to explore and exploit mineral resources in their domain for maximum productivity and development.*

**KEYWORDS:** Restructuring, Federalism, Political Stability, Ethnic Nationalism, Dissatisfaction.



## INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is made up of over three hundred and fifty (350) different ethnic nationalities with diverse cultures, linguistic, religious and traditional and other orientations. In recognition of these diversities, the founding fathers of the nation-state adopted the federal system of government so as to achieve “unity in diversity”. Nigerian federalism effectively came into operation with the advent of the Oliver Lyttleton Constitution of 1954. Consequently, upon independence in 1960, Nigeria had a federal system with a federal and three (3) highly autonomous regional governments. This highly autonomous federal system was abrogated by the military coup of 15<sup>th</sup> January 1966, and a unitary system masquerading as a federal system has held sway in the country from 29<sup>th</sup> July 1966 to date. For instance, in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) there are sixty-eight (68) items on the Exclusive Legislative List for the Federal Government, and barely about twelve (12) items on the Concurrent Legislative List (Anya, 2021). Essentially, this structure of the Nigerian federation stripped the component units of their autonomy to operate as sub-units of the federation. Indeed, a major mark of federalism is the autonomy component units enjoy, especially in the areas of revenue generation and resource utilisation as well as the functionality of public institutions (Harry, 2020). Such autonomy is lacking in the Nigerian federal system.

The above situation has exposed the Nigerian federation to threats to its corporate existence. In the past three decades, there has been constant clamour and agitation by various ethnic nationalities demanding for restructuring of the federation. This is because of the dissatisfaction of the different ethnic groups leading to the formation of various ethnic movements and micro-nationalistic groups requesting that the country be restructured. According to Okaba (2021), restructuring the Nigerian state is non-compromisable, thus, those who make restructuring impossible make balkanization of the country inevitable. Indeed, many ethnoreligious groups have threatened to secede from the Nigerian federation if the present structure, which is more of a unitary system is not restructured to allow the component units the autonomy they deserved in a federal system. Thus, the main objective of this paper is to demonstrate that genuine and sincere restructuring of the Nigerian state will to a large extent dowse the tension in the country and threats to the Nigerian federation. The paper contends that restructuring is the panacea to the survival and stability of Nigerian federalism. Consequently, political leaders from the different ethnoreligious groups should sheath their swords, and summon the needed courage to deliberately make efforts toward restructuring the country so as to save the federation.

### Concept of Federalism

Federalism is more of a political system than an ideological concept. The idea originated with the concept of intergovernmental relations and dates back to the legal relationship between the league and city-states (Kalagbor, 2017). According to Olu-Adeyemi (2018), federalism refers to the mixed or compound mode of government, combining a general government (the central or 'federal' government) with sub-regional governments in a single political system. Amuwo, Agbaje, Suberu and Herault, (2004) defined federalism as a form of government where the components units of a political organisation participate in sharing powers and functions in a cooperative manner. It is important to note that the essential nature of federalism is to be sought not in the shading of legal and constitutional terminology but in forces economic, social, political and cultural that make the outward forms of federalism necessary. “The essence of federalism lies not in the constitutional or institutional structure but in the society itself... Federal government is a device by which the federal qualities of the society are articulated and



protected” (Olu-Adeyemi, 2018). It is a system in which governmental powers and functions are shared among various component units in such a way that each unit's jurisdictional operations are spelt out in the constitution.

No wonder Professor K.C Wheare (1963) defined federalism or federal government as “the method of dividing power so that general and regional governments are each within a sphere coordinate and independent” (Kalagbor, 2017). Simply put, in a federal system, powers are shared in the constitution between the central and regional governments to the extent that none is subordinate to the other since they all derive their powers from the same source, the constitution. Indeed, the goal of federalism is to unite the diverse ethnic groups that exist within a geographical entity under a single administrative umbrella.

### **Concept of Restructuring**

It is imperative to note that a federal system is ideally made up of component units with diverse values that are brought together for the purpose of promoting unity and improvement among the components units. Abideen and Joseph, (2021) pointed out that the recognition of this diversity is what makes the system federal in the first place. They further asserted that the degree to which this diversity can be integrated for the mutual benefit of all has been a source of contention in all federal systems, including the old federal systems such as the United States of America (USA) and Canada. To effectively integrate these component units, they must go through a number of processes, the most important of which is restructuring. Abideen and Joseph, (2021) defined restructuring as rearrangement, reconstitution and reestablishment or overhauling of a system in order to reconstruct, reorient, reshuffle or revamp a system or organisation. According to Rooney (1999), restructuring denotes changing the basic structure of something. To restructure means to rearrange, reorganise or reposition a system, to correct the structural defects with the hope of better and more effective performance. Restructuring, simply put “is the process of increasing or decreasing the number of component parts that makes up a system and re-defining the inter-relationship between them in such a way that the entire system performs more efficiently. The restructuring of an organisation is a vital feature of all systems economic, social or political. What is important is the nature and dimension to which such reorganisation (restructuring) should or ought to take and what are the aims and objectives of such restructuring. According to Empire (2020) restructuring entails the alteration and re-organisation of an existing system in a manner, unlike the way it used to be. Former Military President Ibrahim Babangida defines “Restructuring” as the act of devolution of powers to the extent that more responsibilities are given to states, while the federal government is vested with the responsibility to oversee foreign policy, defence, and economy (Empire, 2020). Restructuring to some other Nigerians is a political arrangement that allows federating units to control resources within their localities and the devolution of powers to the component units (Harry, 2020). This would involve the reduction of the powers and roles of the federal government so that it will concentrate only on those matters best handled by the central government such as defence, foreign policy, monetary and fiscal policies, immigration, customs and excise, aviation, as well as setting and enforcing national standards on such matters as education, health and safety (Farayibi, 2017). Amuwo, Agbaje, Suberu and Herault, (2004) noted that one of the goals of restructuring is to lay an institutional foundation for a more just and more equitable sharing of the political space by multinational groups cohabiting in a federal polity. They asserted that restructuring in a federal polity is meant to serve as a steering mechanism to properly give focus and locus to attempts at collective identity and distributive politics.



It follows from the above that restructuring will ensure the economic and financial viability of the states and local governments by the zonal system of power and wealth generation and utilisation. This will also address the concern of minorities about domination by the three major ethnic groups (Harry, 2020). As Farayibi (2017) asserted, moving substantial power, revenue and resources away from the centre to the federating units essentially elevates the states from mere consumers of oil rent to auto-viable, productive and co-equal components of the federation.

### **Nature and Character of Nigerian Federalism**

To understand the nature and character of Nigerian federalism, it is important to note first that Nigeria is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world with well over 250 ethnolinguistic groups, some of which, according to Ojo (2009), are bigger than most independent states in Africa. Indeed, it is an indisputable fact that what is known today as Nigeria is British Made construction, following the different constitutional development processes from the Clifford 1922, Richard 1946, Macpherson 1951, Lyttleton 1954. The making of Nigerian federalism can be traced to these constitutional development efforts, after the amalgamation of 1914. Aderonke (2015) disclosed that the choice of federalism as the preferred system of government for Nigeria was not accidental. The eventual transformation of Nigeria into a federal state started in 1954 as a result of the 1953 Lyttleton constitution conference. In Nigeria's type of federalism from 1954, territories rather than nationalities (ethnic groups) were the focal point of the arrangement in place. These arrangements had a long and chequered history and were complex as to the concept of building federal structure from the top or bottom of a given social political ladder (Amuwo, Agbaje, Suberu and Herault, 2004). Ajagun, (2006) observed that Nigeria is tending progressively toward a unitary state. This is especially so in the area of sharing of functions and resources available in the country between the central government and the component units on the one hand and between the government and citizens on the other.

Like all federal systems, Nigeria's federalism since its adoption in 1954 has been operating in both fiscal and political contexts. The fiscal context consists of the mode of expropriation and distribution of resources while the political context relates to putting in place appropriate structures that would facilitate the self-realisation of component units (Aderonke, 2015). Both contexts are expected to be designed in such a way that there is no significant inequality among the various component units in power and resource sharing. In the fiscal context, there is no doubt that profound conflict exists among the component units (Federal, State and Local governments) of the Nigerian federation. In the political context, a series of agitations have taken centre stage for the establishment of state police for the federating unit (the state) to supplement the Nigerian Police Force's security efforts. In fact, the present structure of Nigeria's federalism favours the Wright (1957) hierarchical model, where the relationship between the Federal, State and Local Governments is more like the Principal/Agent relationship otherwise known popularly as the "father and son" relation, which most scholars and social commentators in Nigeria referred to as "feeding bottle federalism". Aderonke, (2015) describes the nature of Nigerian federalism as a system of power deconcentration and not devolution thereby reducing the component units (State and Local) of the federation into platforms for administering federally determined policies and not as levels of government. It is not therefore surprising to observe in Nigeria that the federal government conduct elections for state elective offices approves the appointment of Judges through the National Judicial Commission (NJC) controls the prisons, police in the state, etc and shares revenue with the



states on a monthly basis. The local government in this scenario derives some of its powers from the state government and not the constitution. The federal government is thus, depicted to enjoy predominant powers over the component units. It is also observed that the power arrangement in Nigerian federalism, as contained in the exclusive, concurrent and residual legislative lists, favours the Federal Government (FG), with as many as sixty-eight (68) items on the exclusive list thereby making the other levels of government in the Nigerian federation less important, by stripping them of the powers to maximally generate revenue and the enabling environment to make economic policies that will benefit the country in their localities. Consequently, the mainstay of most states and local governments in Nigeria is derived from the federal allocation to states and local governments. Harry (2020) noted that the present situation in which the federal government on a monthly basis releases oil money to the federating units to run their affair discourages creativity and therefore serves as a major factor hindering economic growth in the country.

### **Threats/Stresses to Nigerian Federalism**

The nature and character of Nigerian federalism have been plagued by a slew of threats/stresses that have hampered not only federalism practice but also governance and development in the country. These threats to Nigerian federalism stem from a variety of issues that have the potential to bring the Nigerian state to its knees. One of these issues is the push for resource control, which most scholars see as one of the advantages of true federalism. Azaiki (2010) observed that agitations by ethnic minority groups, particularly in the Niger Delta, over the allocation and control of oil revenue, compensation for environmental degradation arising from oil exploration, and political marginalisation, appear to be the greatest threat to Nigerian Federalism. The militant youth of the region, scholars and relevant stakeholders have continuously demanded greater control and say in the business of the downstream oil sector in Nigeria. Another threat to Nigerian federalism is the fear of one group dominating the scheme of things particularly as it concerns the federal institutions and organisations. There is palpable fear among various ethnic groups that one ethnic group will dominate the proportional sharing of all bureaucratic, economic, media, and political posts at the central government, including the armed forces, security agencies, government-owned companies, and parastatals (Abideen and Joseph, 2021)

Ethno-religious conflict is also one of the major threats to Nigerian federalism, especially with regard to the fact that Nigeria is vast with ethnic religious and cultural diversity. The federal system has been more disposed to conflicts and rampant clashes among the varying groups. These clashes, according to Abideen and Joseph, (2021), often lead to killings and destruction of lives and property thereby deterring growth and development. Many public infrastructures and facilities have been destroyed, and many turn into orphans and homeless with many in abject poverty, high level of unemployment and falling standard of living. Again, in recent times, Nigerian federalism has been threatened by Insurgency and terrorism. According to Abideen and Joseph, (2021), the cruel activities of the Boko-Haram insurgency and terrorist group operations in the Northern part of the country have been so devastating; they kill people in mass and indiscriminately too. For instance, the Boko Haram insurgency in the North East, the banditry in the North West and North Central, the killer herdsmen rampage and secessionist Biafra agitation have become the strongest threats to the corporate existence of the Nigerian federation since 2014 to date. Indeed, the Boko Haram terrorists have been bombing public places and ransacking harmless communities, kidnapping people too, especially women, youths and children. A notorious example of this was the brazen kidnapping of the Chibok



Girls on 14th April 2014 and the Dapchi Girls in 2018. These two incidents which attracted both national and international outrage demonstrate not only the brutal nature of the insurgency but also the complexity of the crises and the threat of coexistence among the various ethnic groups in the country.

Furthermore, the issue of state creation cannot be left out as one of the major impediments to Nigerian federalism, particularly in the oil-rich region where the quest for rapid development is often anchored on the issue of closeness to government through state creation. This is often the reason for state creation to correct the structural and administrative imbalances of the country and to prevent further political friction. This has, however, not solved the problem, as more ethnic groups cry for state creation; the creation of states has its own flaws (Awofeso and Obah-Akpowoghaha, 2017). No doubt, a deliberate effort at restructuring the country to allay the fears of minority groups and allow component units substantial levels of autonomy to generate revenue and run their affairs on their terms will dowse the tension and threats to the nation's corporate existence.

### **Restructuring and the Stability of Nigerian Federalism**

The need for restructuring the Nigerian state, irrespective of the over-politicization of the thinking, is quite overwhelming in the present situation of Nigeria (Harry, 2020). Indeed, restructuring, if actualised, has the capacity of turning things around and bringing about national prosperity, development and a stable operation of federalism in the country. Harry (2020) noted that restructuring in form of devolution of power and resource control will free the central government most of the functions in the 68 items exclusive list by releasing such functions to the states and local governments and allow sub-unit governments to explore and exploit mineral resources in their localities thereby increase the revenue base of the federating units. He asserted, for instance, that such freedom would result in productive economic activities in the country across states and regions. According to him, this means Enugu State could invest in coal mining, Plateau State in tin mining, while Kano, Zamfara, Sokoto and other northern states in agriculture and limestone mining for cement factories. No doubt, these economic activities would create massive jobs, and wealth and drastically reduce poverty in the country (Harry, 2020). With restructuring, especially with reference to resources/revenue control, federating units (State and Local governments) in Nigeria can embark on massive infrastructural development in the area of roads, railways, electricity, telecommunication, education, health care, etc. This would result in regional competitiveness and development across the regions that will further enhance stability in Nigeria and also end all forms of agitations such as agitation for the sovereign state of Biafra and agitations by other secessionist groups in the country. More so, inter-ethnic and inter-regional conflicts, which constitute major impediments to the stability of Nigerian federalism will stop or reduce to the barest minimum, since there would be no more "national cake" to fight for, rather every state will focus on ways and means of generating revenue to run its operations (Harry, 2009). Also, this would create the much-needed synergy among states to cooperate and complement each other in their drive toward development, as a result, it will create a more comradeship and like-mindedness relationship among the states and ethnic groups in the country. As Oseloka (2018) posited, as the debate on restructuring gathers steam, there is a corollary, the fear that equates restructuring with the breaking up of Nigeria. This is obviously misleading and missing the point. According to Oseloka (2018), Nigeria has been restructured several times without negative consequences. Essentially, the present democracy is to make the centre and its component units more efficient and more acceptable, more productive, more functional and



above all more equitable. Therefore, restructuring the Nigerian state will to a large extent make the federation more functional and effective in all ramifications.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study is anchored on the Modern theories of federalism, focusing on the Theory of Cooperative Federalism, also known as Marble-Cake Federalism (Tariq, Khan and Rizwan, 2018). The theory of Cooperative Federalism is a departure from the Classical and Traditional Theory of Federalism as postulated by A. V. Dicey and K. C. Wheare and their associates. The Classical and Traditional Theory of Federalism mainly explained the relationship between the two tiers of government, that is, the central government and the component units' governments as captured in the constitution of the land, in which they are coterminous and operate in a coordinated way, "signifying that the constituent/component units are not to be treated in a subordinate way nor are they dependent upon the federal government" (Palekar, 1978 and Tariq, Khan and Rizwan, 2018). To Tariq, Khan and Rizwan (2018), the major weakness in the Classical or Traditional Theory is that it "tells more about the legal and juristic aspect of federalism but fails to explain the proper relationship between the centre and constituent units in a coordinated way". It is this gap the theory of Cooperative Federalism has come to fill. Proponents of this theory, like Zimmerman (2001), and Morris (2006), argued that its assertion is that governmental power is not concentrated at any governmental level or in any agency; rather it should be shared reasonably between the national and state governments. It explains fully the functioning of the federal system at the beginning of the twenty-first Century. The central assumption of the theory of Cooperative Federalism is that the national and state governments are to cooperate and interdepend upon one another in a very positive way. Simply put, the federal and state governments are to have a flexible relationship in which both work together on a variety of issues and programmes.

The relevance of the theory lies in its emphasis on joint action between the federal and state governments in almost all spheres of life. No doubt, if Nigeria is restructured and the federal government frees the bulk of the sixty-eight (68) items on the Exclusive Legislative List in the country thereby allowing states to participate on such items in a cooperative manner, the tension witnessed in polity would be drastically reduced and this will bring stability to Nigerian federalism.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted mainly a documentary research approach in the collection of data and content analysis method of data analysis. This means that it was essentially qualitative in nature. To this end, secondary data were drawn from textbooks, journals, articles, newspapers, materials, archival materials, etc. These works were selected on the strength of their suitability and relevance to the topic under investigation. The content analysis method in research work, as Hsieh and Shannon (2005) have argued, is the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes and patterns. It is mainly inductive in the application. In this study, content analysis was used to show the relationship between restructuring and the stabilisation of the federal system of government in Nigeria amidst clamours and agitations for self-determination, and more autonomy to component units' crises that have plagued the country.



## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

As earlier noted, the Nigerian state has been witnessing threats to its corporate existence because of the dissatisfaction some ethnic nationalities feel as a result of the politico-socio-economic structure of the country. Thus, the critical questions for consideration in this paper are:

- a. What are the effects of the present structure on Nigerian federalism?
- b. Why is restructuring the Nigerian socio-political environment needed?
- c. How will restructuring serve as a tool for stabilizing Nigerian federalism?

### Effect of the Present Structure on Nigerian Federalism

In the First Republic (1960-1966) three regions and later four regions, co-existed as independent sub-units, with substantial control over their own resources while the central government played the supervisory role and protected the territorial integrity of the country (Farayibi, 2017). During this period, there was healthy competition among the regions to grow at their own pace in every sphere of human endeavour. For instance, in the West, through Cocoa and other agricultural products, free education was adopted, industries built and other social services delivered substantially. The same could be said of the other regions, each growing at its pace without hindrance(s) of any kind (Harry, 2020). It is true to say that what ushered in the present structure of Nigerian federalism is the same thing that led to the collapse of the Nigerian first republic. Indeed, in the First Republic, Nigeria was known for being a true federalist state. As Harry (2020) pointed out, in spite of the political tension occasioned by the majority ethnic groups dominating the body politics of the nation, tremendous developmental strides were achieved independently by sub-units during the period of the first republic. However, the collapse of the first republic led to the fall of the true federal system in Nigeria. The military incursion into politics and governance obliterated the political structure (a truly federal system) put in place by the founding fathers, knowing the ethnic and cultural configuration and diversity of the vast majority of the people. In the new dispensation, the country operated a unitary system but still calls it the Federal Republic of Nigeria. There is now excessive centralisation of operations that removes the independence and autonomy of the sub-units and this makes them appendages of the central government (Harry, 2020). From the period of the military coup to the present democratic dispensation what has been in practice in Nigeria is the unitary system in the guise of a federal system. The present structure has ushered in fear among the major ethnic groups (Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa). Amuwo, Agbaje, Suberu and Herault, (2004) put it that each of the three main ethnic groups in Nigeria feared the domination of one another. The Yoruba feared the Igbo, the Igbo feared the Yoruba, and the Yoruba and Igbo who constituted the Southerners were feared by the Northerners and vice versa.

Again, the current structure of Nigerian federalism has hampered even development across the various states of the federation, as most states rely on federation allocation; a reasonable number of states in the country find it difficult to pay civil servant salaries, let alone embark on standard infrastructural development projects/programmes across their local government areas. It has instilled laziness in the states and local governments, all of which rely on oil revenue and thus leave their potential resources untapped. In fact, because of the centralization of the country's operations which some have described variously as unitary-federalism, feeding-bottle federalism, etc, achieving equality, contentment, and access to natural/national





resources has been dealt a serious blow. The present structure has created a country where the system breeds massive corruption among the political class and/or ruling elites. The corollary, as Harry (2020) puts it, is the disappearance of the gains and prosperity made in the early years of independence, which had now been replaced with nepotism, and unprecedented massive poverty - making Nigeria “the poverty capital of the world, unemployment, underemployment, high crime rates and mass despondency, in a country in which the leaders once said “money is not the problem but how to spend it.

Farayibi (2017) observed that the present structure has generated a lot of marginalisation and discord that is awakening secessionist movements, which represents their solution to their discontentment, arising from the sharing of the “national cake”. Thus, we have to correct the national cake mentality whereby each region/state is waiting and struggling to get their share of the monthly allocation, appointments and political largesse which are the main sources of discontentment and conflict in the country.

### **Need for Restructuring in Nigeria**

It is generally believed by proponents of restructuring that it will enhance the balance of powers in the country among the federating units, make resources/revenue available to the states and local governments and bring much-needed development to the citizenry where ever they might reside. Indeed, the need for restructuring in Nigeria has discoursed for a very long time. According to Okpeh (2003), the call for restructuring of Nigeria has several advocates with differing viewpoints. Though, many like the late Obafemi Awolowo in his “Path to Nigeria Freedom” (1947) feel that Nigeria as presently constituted is not a nation in the sense of the English, Scots or Welsh. For this group, the multiplicity of ethnic cum cultural groups in the federation has created a structural imbalance in the polity, which “can only be resolved through a convention of all the various nationalities that make up the country to discuss what they want the structure of the country to look like. For this group of advocates, the more the delay in restructuring the country, the more there will be mutual suspicion among the ethnic groups in the country; the more minority elements will feel cheated by the system; and the more crises the federation will experience (Okpeh, 2003). Therefore, the need for restructuring is very urgent as a matter of fact to address the present security challenges and threats to the corporate existence of the country and solve the problems of secessionist groups, especially in the Eastern Region.

As Professor Benjamin Okaba, the President of the Ijaw National Congress has argued, in the First Republic, Nigeria was truly a federal system in which the regions were highly autonomous, and had their constitutions and ambassadors in foreign countries of their choice. The restructuring will help dowse ethnic rivalry, mutual suspicion, and tension in the country. Restructuring the Nigerian state is non-compromisable, thus, those who make restructuring impossible make balkanization of the country inevitable (Arise News, 2021). No doubt, restructuring will reduce the political kinetics towards underdevelopment and the instability being witnessed in the polity today. It is not therefore surprising that the need for restructuring dominated the 2014 National Constitutional Conference, in which far-reaching decisions on restructuring the country were reached, which the government have refused to implement. Hence, the unending clamour for restructuring in the country persists.



## **Restructuring: A Tool for Stabilizing Nigerian Federalism**

As noted earlier, restructuring is a sinequanon, especially with reference to resources control and a free hand for revenue generation, so as to enable the federating units (State and Local governments) in Nigeria to generate substantial revenue to embark on massive infrastructural development in the area of roads, railways, electricity, telecommunication, education, health care, etc in their localities. This would result in regional competitiveness and development across the regions that will further enhance stability in Nigeria and to a large extent reduce all forms of regional agitations. Currently, there are numerous agitations across the country; the Niger Delta Region is agitating for resource control, the Eastern Region is agitating for separation due to massive poverty and marginalisation caused by the current structure, and up North, there are calls to strengthen security following the Boko-Haram insurgency, agitating for the establishment of an Islamic state. These agitations and quests arose from the structural imbalances witnessed among the federating units in the country. For some intellectual pundits and policy analysts, the unending quagmire threatening the peaceful coexistence of the country emanated from a political system that is highly tailored towards some sections of the country at the expense of other ethnic nationalities (Davis and Christmas, 2020). This situation has generated a lot of confusion, distrust and disagreements among all that have agreed to live together under a federal arrangement. It is common knowledge that one of the reasons for adopting federalism is to put the fear of the minority to rest; that is, the fear of conquest by external aggression, but today in Nigeria, the reverse is the case as the minority ethnic nationalities are gradually being swallowed by the actions and activities of the major ethnic groups, arising from the conspicuous struggle to gain ascendancy over other smaller groups (Davis and Christmas, 2020). The imbalance in the structural arrangements of the country is virtually manifest in some key sectors of the national economy and this has been keenly and clearly identified by some intellectual pundits, policymakers, opinion leaders and other relevant stakeholders as the causal factor of the tension witnessed in the nation. The persistent and consistent agitations of Nigerians over the structural imbalance of the federation called for restructuring to serve as a veritable tool for the promotion of a true federal system of government in the country. Supporting the above aphorism, Udah (2018) opined that Nigeria should be restructured to meet the dictates of true federalism where political and economic structures are in tandem with the overall interests and overall well-being of all the segments or ethnic nationalities that constitute the Federal Republic of Nigeria. With restructuring, there will exist a better arrangement of a federal system of government that will promote stability and reduce regional agitations. The restructuring of Nigeria will foster peaceful living, cooperation and collaboration in the use of resources independently toward the national integration of the country (Oguntuyi, 2013). Corroborating this statement Sekoni (2017), acknowledged that restructuring has the value of promoting and safeguarding a sense of belonging among various components of socially and culturally plural society through the creation of practices that set out to advance the social and economic interests of members of the community or society. Thus, restructuring, in the words of Ossamor (2018), is a clarion call for the furtherance of socio-economic advancement for any nation irrespective of other factors, which may be a deterrent to such advancement. It is a matter of fact that, the only remedy to removing existing practices that may be perceived as negative to the interest of federating units and adding new practices that can enrich such interests is restructuring. No doubt, a deliberate, sincere and honest restructuring of the Nigerian state will serve as a tool for stabilising Nigerian federalism by substantially reducing, if not eliminating, the threats to the corporate existence of the country.



## CONCLUSION

It is true that the issues discussed in the preceding headings constitute the impediment to Nigerian federalism which are highly combustible and bear centrifugal tendencies. It is also the belief of this paper that in order to preserve Nigerian federalism and achieve unity in diversity and peaceful co-existence among the pluralistic ethnic groups in the country, there is an urgent need to restructure the present federal arrangement, which this paper believed is responsible for the soaring cases of instability across regions in the country. The call for restructuring, thus, will necessitate a thorough and in-depth understanding and analysis of what and how the restructuring should be done, as well as the extent to which the restructuring should be done in order to maintain the purpose and objective of the federal system without necessarily undermining the benefits and purpose as envisioned by its founding fathers and proponents. Essentially, the paper asserts that restructuring will help to address issues such as resource control, state formation/minority questions, federal character dilemma, the poor state of the economy of the country, poor and lopsided representation, and ethnoreligious conflict, political instability, and so on. Therefore, the conclusion of this paper is that for Nigerian federalism to be substantially free from stresses and strains there must be a concerted effort at sincerely and honestly restructuring the polity to meet the aspirations of the different federating units and ethnic groups in the federation. Restructuring will provide Nigerian federalism with the technique for managing conflicts among the country's heterogeneous groups through a system of the constitutional division of powers that provides for shared rules while also allowing for some levels of sub-national independence.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings above the following recommendations are made:

- i. Leadership should not be seen as the birthright of any ethnic group of the federation; this way the rate at which various ethnic groups fight tooth and nail to win the presidency will reduce. It also follows that whosoever wins the presidency should be just and upright to all ethnic groups in the country.
- ii. All forms or formulae pertaining to revenue allocation from the federal government to the states and local governments should be abandoned and a proper arrangement in which states are granted greater autonomy to control their resources and pay a certain percentage as royalty to the central government should be hammered out for the proper functioning of a stable and true federal system. Also, the state should engage the dissatisfied and agitating groups clamouring for self-determination to resolve critical issues in the nation.
- iii. It is important for the government to revisit the recommendations of the 2014 National Conference, as it is a step in the right direction towards solving the challenges of the present structure. It is believed that the implementation of the 2014 National Conference Report will help the nation's questions of restructuring that will benefit all ethnic groups in the country.



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