

## **Restructuring the Nigerian Federation: Power Sharing and Resource Allocation Perspectives.**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

*Federal form of government is thus, advocated most for maintaining relative stability at least for its integrative capability to accommodate heterogeneity in a multi-ethnic and diverse society like Nigeria. However, the practice of federalism in Nigeria has remained a nightmare due to the asymmetric nature of relationship between ethnic, religious and regional groups as well as the components units in relations to power sharing and resource allocation. As a result, serious problem of mistrust and contestations among various social interest groups for power positions and access to resources at various levels has have efficient and viable frame-work that would help preserve national unity while allowing diversity to thrive at all levels. The study adopted descriptive and historical method while data were generated from the secondary sources that were predatory theory of government as its theoretical frame-work of analysis, the paper aimed at examining the issues towards restructuring in Nigeria, the inadequacies attached to the system and the implications for restructuring. The paper concludes that, although the current federal system is not perfect, but the contending agitations for access to political power position and control of the scare resources in the process of operating the system and its institutions by political leaders from different ethnic groups. The paper recommend that, restructuring should not be limited to institutional changes, but attitudinal changes in the operations of those institutions to ensure equity in the distribution of resources and privileges.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Federalism, Power Sharing, Predatory, Restructuring, Resource Allocation.*

### **Introduction**

Defining the appropriate system of government that can accommodate diverse nationalities and their conflicting interest for it management with relative peace, stability and development other than federalism is very rare. However, while federalism have the capability to integrate people at the center and allow them some relative autonomy for self-existence and self-actualization, finding an appropriate formula for the distribution of power position and sharing scarce resources became very difficult. The trajectories of Nigerian state and its federal practice is rooted from the socio-political and economic formation of the country which is further compounded by administrative and governance deficit by the subsequent regimes in the nation.

Right from colonial period, the amalgamation of 1914 was considered to be a doctrine of necessity that attempt to unite the people but, became a mistake which ended in juxtaposing them as a result of structural imbalance that ensues between the two protectorates. This asymmetric imbalance is what re-enforced a persistent struggle and competition among various ethnic, religious, and regional groups whose diversities have also compounded the fear of

domination leading each groups to embark on different strategies on how one could dominate and monopolized the political system and economic allocations to its advantage hence, the calls for restructuring. For this the intention of restructuring Nigeria should ideally be targeted:

The re-organization or re-arrangement of the constitutional, operational, fiscal, functional, structural, attitudinal, resource management and the other national questions concerns of the ethnic nationalities that constitute Nigeria for the purpose of Nigeria to be more efficient, more acceptable, more productive, more functional and above all, more equitable.

The problem of regional/ethnic representation in Nigeria's political setting is a contentious and long standing issue which dates back right from 1950's when the northern part felt under represented and marginalized in the federal public service and resulted into quota system and later federal character especially in the higher position of the military and other important state establishments. The federal principle suggest a relative autonomy for the federating units but, in Nigerian federal practice, the central government has placed itself as an octopus that firmly control and dictates the phase of development for other component units in their discharge of constitutional responsibilities (Jinadu, 2005). This is what re-enforce demand for restructuring as the only solution to the attainment of national unity, integration, political stability, economic prosperity as well as healthy competition for revenue generation and allocation among federating units.

However, since the Richard's constitution of 1946, to the independence through military regimes, up to the present dispensation, Nigeria's federal process has undergoes several structural and constitutional adjustments in terms of the number of federating units, intergovernmental relations, power sharing formula and other constitutional jurisdictions, all in order to better the functioning and performance of the whole political system. Despite all these, there has always been changing nature of demand and contestation particularly on power relations and resources control which polarized the people into those for and against restructuring the nation.

### **Literature Review**

Nigeria state came into being through colonial formation in which the desire for administrative conveniences led to the 1914 amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates into a single entity. Instead for the colonial government to embark on the policies and strategies that could help in promoting integration among these separate territories whose social and cultural identities were distinctively different from one another, Lugard embark on divide and rule tactics which did not only compounded the problems on identity crisis but also worsened the problems unity and integration (Aluko, 2005). This was followed by the Richard constitution that partitioned the colony into three regions; the North, the East and the West by 1946. This regional creation seem to promotes unity in diversity that lay foundational basis for federal practice in the country but, ensues an asymmetrical imbalance between these regions because northern region is twice the two other regions put together in terms of population and landmass which give it an overbearing influence on any issue of joint deliberations.

Therefore it was this arbitrariness in the formation and the centrifugal forces in the Nigeria state that later produced adverse consequences onto the national life and the political behavior of the people (Aluko, 2005 and Muhammad, 2007). This led to agitations for the feeling of domination and marginalization mostly by the southerners that led to need for constitutional amendments, reforms and structural operationalization in the federal framework. The need to restructure the political system then was rooted from the southern allegation that Northerners are in firm control of power to the exclusive advantage of their region alone, while northerners demonstrated their fear of domination by the southerners with less than 20%

in central government bureaucracy and in revenue despite their population strength, landmass and agricultural productivity in all federal establishment (Ojo. 2005).

This seem to be in tandem with the federal principle which seek to address any real or imagine marked inequality between the federating units in any form; constitutional power sharing, revenue generation and resource allocation. The concern then was that, northern region did not only out weight the other two regions put together, but it also display an over bearing power influence with the monopoly control of resources at federal level then. And because, federal level have amassed more powers, resources and responsibilities at the expense of the component units, in addition to the existing fear of domination and marginalization, ethnic groups, regions, and other interest were quickly formed with different reckless strategies such as manipulation of parochial and primordial sentiments were mobilized to achieved particularistic interest (Elaigwu, 2007 and Junaidu, 2005). From this, the calls for restructuring the nation is not only rooted from the arbitrariness of colonial formation, its structural imbalance, identity configurations but also the failure of successive political regimes to ensure good governance and corrupt practices at all levels of government which is but the consequences of its political crisis (Adedeji, 2012). The delicate balance between the north and the south since then became manifest as the north dominate politically and south dominated economically and bureaucratically which means elites from each region are not comfortable with their rival for every regions seem to be cheated in the game hence, claims and counter claims against the federal practice particularly at the center.

Other scholars (Onouha, Hembe, 2005) argues that social composition in cultural, ethnic and regional diversity which shaped the pattern of our national politics is what generate over heated debate and competition over group relations in national politics, structural arrangement and the mode of sharing national resources. This is what leads to national question which is about how to order the relations between different ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups so that each group may have equal rights and privilege access to power and equitable share of national resources (Onouha, 2005). Each social group seek to struggle and compete to have stake in national power position, resource allocation and appointment in order not be cheated or alienated. Similarly, the pressure of ethnic minority seem to have compounded the problem of federal practice in Nigeria due to their initial subjugation at regions/states level and the subsequent domination at the federal level by major ethnic groups despite different states and local government creations.

The logic of power sharing in federal principle expect autonomous existence of other components units but, because they existed at the pleasure of federal government, State and local government creation has never been a solution to the minority agitation but, it only serve as an avenues for the elites access to political power and resource sharing as Daniel Bach observed:

“While the establishment of 12 states structure in 1967 consolidated Nigeria’s unity at critical time, state creation since then, has become an avenue for easy access to national resources. It is a costly process which generates some satisfaction from the population concern, and much frustration from those communities left unsplit” (cited in Alapikin, 2005).

In this regard, restructuring is paramount so that powers can be equitably shared to guarantee harmony, integration and ultimately development but, the constitution entrust more powers to the federal government to the extends that it can declare state of emergency in any part of the federation, and enjoy monopoly control over state apparatus, fiscal relations and economic planning. Due to the nature of the Nigeria’s federal practice that allow much concentration of power, resources and responsibilities to the center, most states and local governments cannot properly functions and operates as they lack internal revenue generating capacity and

autonomous independence to operate. Thus, component units become feeble to federal government in their extractive capability leading to all centrifugal and centripetal forces to the central government hence, the introduction of federal character system to ease tension of competition and allow relative representation for all. However, Odunuga (2012) notes that;

The operations of federal character in Nigeria, has given more powers to politically superior groups thus, creating a wider power disparity between the strong and the weak. The politically weak are subjected to double jeopardy that is patently antithetical to national integration. This situation is a natural consequence of the hegemonic political ethnic scheming.

This is because federal character and quota system have the tendency of compromising educational qualification and meritocracy against nepotism and egoism particularly in the process of recruitment into some juicy federal establishments.

### **Fiscal Federalism**

Fiscal federalism revolves around the constitutional principle for revenue generation, allocation and utilization of resources so as to be able to effectively discharge those constitutional responsibilities as assigned to each level of government. It implies to the disposition of tax powers, retention of revenue and method adopted in sharing centrally collected revenue in accordance with constitutional responsibilities of all the levels of governments (Williams & Obgbole, 2014). This means it is the constitutional relationship between the tiers of government in terms of financial revenue generation and allocation in which central government shares its revenue with other levels of government.

Since the constitution sanctioned the powers of all the tiers of government, it must also define the revenues generation procedure for each to be able to discharge such responsibilities efficiently hence, fiscal federalism is aimed at addressing fiscal imbalances among these tiers of government in the process of executing their assigned constitutional functions. Thus, based on a federal principle, individuals, groups and regions surrender part of their rights to national government while retaining some for their autonomous existence, component units may retain certain fiscal prerogative while surrendering the rest to central authority. For this, earnings from taxes, custom duties, excise duties, royalties and other levies including money generated from the sales of oil and in line with the power sharing formula could be distributed based on three major ways; the fiscal location based on the expected functions to be performed by each level, the inter-jurisdictional cooperation based on the areas of shared responsibilities by both the existing level of government and multi-jurisdictional community based on the specific area and peculiarities of the people as beneficiaries (Williams & Obgbole, 2014).

There is excessive political contestations among competing interest in Nigeria over what criteria should be used in sharing national revenues, an issue that led to the formation and adoption of several committees, commissions, formulas, decrees and supreme court rulings hence, when one formula or criteria favor a particular interest, it will be severely criticized by those who feel marginalized and sought for the adoption of another one. Revenue sharing and allocation formulas such as derivation, social needs, population, even development, equality of states, absorptive capacity, national interest and minimum tax efforts among other were at one time or the other examined and recommended for.

Thus, monoculture nature of Nigeria economy make regions/states with abundance natural resources such as oil felt cheated by receiving relatively equal share with those that produce very little revenue to the federal government which immensely affect the power equation in the federal politics. This led to the establishment of various commissions in order to come out with suitable and equitable formula to be adopted for sharing state scarce resources such as Phillipson commission 1946 (derivation and even development), Chicks commission

1953(derivation), Chicks Phillipson 1957(autonomy, derivation, needs and national interest), Raisman commission 1957(balanced development, needs and minimum responsibility), Binn commission 1964 (regional financial comparability), Dinar commission 1969 (basic needs, national minimum standard and balanced development), Aboyade Technical commission 1977 (national minimum standard, equality, fiscal efficiency and independent revenue efforts), Pious Okigbo Presidential commission 1980 (population, equality of states, social development and internal efforts) and T.Y Danjuma Revenue Mobilization be allocated based on the following per centages federal government 50%, states governments 30%, local governments 15% and remaining 5% be reserved into special funds.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study adopts Alkhater's (2012) predatory theory of government. The theory was propounded by scholars such as Eric Hobsbawm, Howard Becker and Olson Mancur among others (Alkhater, 2012, Currott, 2008). For this theory, a predatory government is composed by individuals whose primary aim is all about furthering their own interest instead of the notion for collective goods of all in the state. Government exists to provide public goods to its citizens and any failure to do so will leads to economic and social crises which may result into insecurity, underdevelopment and social mistrust among different social groupings. Predatory theory of the state emphasized on the role of government policy in promoting or impeding development, mutual relations and social security in a state (Alkhater, 2012).

The major tenets of the theory is the believes in the direct relationship between endogenous government policy and the prospects of people in the society in relation to economic development, social security and maintaining law and order. Because, where the political system is controlled by a group of elite whose primary aim is to satisfy their own personal interest, there will be prevalence of developmental crisis, social mistrust hence, claims and counter claims among various social groups. As a result, every group seek to advance their interest by agitating for structural changes that will favour their sectional or groups interest hence, restructuring becomes a mechanism for checks and balance on state power and provides a system of rules and accompanying enforcement where government fails to do so (Currott, 2008).

The incidence of bad policy is puzzling because even self-serving regimes would have an incentive to promote development if they could extract enough of the resulting wealth. However, policies which promote economic development, while generating prosperity, may simultaneously alter the distribution of political power in such a way that adversely affects group initially in control of the political system. If the future gainers of power cannot make credible commitments, it may be better for those who control power to retain it rather than to promote development. By this, the government becomes a "centers of attraction" because policies that promotes economic development and good institutions are inconsistency with the maintenance of status quo, it give elites an incentive to be predatory as society is highly mobilized politically (Dixit, 2006 and Robinson, 2001). This is how under autocracy, state with abundance resources is likely to be poorer under a predatory rule and always grapple with different forms of social crisis leading to various forms of groups agitations and the calls for restructuring the polity. Thus, the theory assume that, issue of restructuring Nigeria federation is not only because of the structural deformities and institutional weaknesses but operational deficit in the federal practice by the domination and marginalization of one group against another leading to politicization of political representation and resource allocation into restructuring.

### **The Politics of Restructuring: Power Sharing and Resource Allocation**

In every federal settings, there is fear of domination or exploitation of one ethnic or regional group against another as smaller units are afraid of been dominated have the fear of been under represented. As such federal frame-work device the use of different strategy in order to minimize the bitterness of violent competition and struggle among federating units. One of the strategy is to adopt a bicameral legislature where representation into upper chamber is based on the principle of equality while lower chamber is along relative population strength of each constituency.

Nigeria federalism is characterized by unitarianism instead of decentralization and devolution of power, excessive distributive politics, controversies around federal character and indigene ship, over politicization of ethnic sentiments and widespread of conflicts and insecurity (Alapikin, 2005). Restructuring for those who argue to it favour is an attempt at addressing the structural imbalance and institutional weaknesses and as such restructuring “seek to established an effective institutions that can both accommodate diverse interest and provide effective government” (Babalola & Onapajo, 2019). However, the whole idea for the agitations for restructuring Nigeria revolves around political and economic objectives especially among those who are either out of power or feared domination but seeking the control of natural resources such as oil and other mineral deposits to the detriments of others. Thus, restructuring seem to be an elites driven agitation in the guise of how to perfect the functionality of Nigerian federal frame-work as propelled by ethnic politics and other groups vested interest in a divided society.

Since colonial epoch, leading politicians from both regions use to express their fears and resentment against one another in relation to state governance and resources sharing especially at the center which was rooted from regional imbalance and perceived fear of marginalization and domination in the process of power distribution and revenue allocation. Though, rights from colonial days, disagreement and mutual distrust has been in the Nigeria politics which demonstrate the fears of each group against one another such as the disagreement over the period for Nigeria independence, criteria for revenue allocation, census, promotion and discipline into the armed forces. All which show case the dichotomy and lack of mutual trust between the south and the north with regards to state management of power position and resource allocation. Since then, different strategies and policies were embark upon by successive regimes in an efforts to resolves any marked inequality between regions such as more states creation, adoption of different revenue allocation formula, introduction of federal character system among others all to address the fears of agitators especially the minority groups.

Nigerian federalism passes through six different phases during which the federal witnessed several structural, constitutional and policy adjustment all in order to better up the performance of the entire system through inter-governmental relations, power sharing, resources control and revenue generation and allocation formula. Despite all these, there has been a changing demand and contestations particularly with regard to politics and political power relations, and resource control which polarized the nation into protagonist and antagonist to restructuring hence, no precise and acceptable definition to what restructuring entails. For this, “political restructuring is the re-organization and re-arrangement of the nature of resource control by various governments and regions to foster unity and development” (Najakku, 2016), “restructuring represent enthronement of justice, fairness and equity” (Bode George), “striking a balancing act in the nation’s political structure to give more effect to the true meaning of a federation” (Chekwas Okorie), “restructuring mainly revolves around marginalization, domination of others in the region and resources, and opportunity distributions” (Bashir Tofa) (Cited in Yauri, 2018).

The protagonist feels that, restructuring is the only panacea to the prevailing challenges bedeviling the nation in the areas of insecurity, inequality, corruption and institutional weaknesses and any other basic issues that circumvented the federal practice in its efficiency in the management of group fragmentation and conflicts (AbdulQadir & Maigari, 2018). Agitations for restructuring is to allow a fair balance between federating units with autonomous control and display of resources and identities by various states and regions through access to more political power and resources control. This is based on allegation and fear of northern marginalization and dominance against the south into the political system assuming that, the North is parasitic, barren and unproductive existing only as a liability burden to the oil-rich south (Amadi, 2017, BELLO, 2017 and Radda, 2017). As a result, restructuring is aim at devolution of more powers to states, resources control, state police, New model for fiscal federalism, reduction in the federal government exclusive powers and real federal character into the federal bureaucracy.

While the southern protagonist point to the longer monopoly control of political power and access to federal resources by northerners which their control of power conferred to them (Egwaikhide, Isumonah & Ayodele, 2009), the antagonist feels that, to ensure equity in the distribution of economic benefits, there should be a balanced regional distribution of industries, equal representation into federal civil service, the armed forces, the police force, educational sector, banks among others. Thus, restructuring is not worse up for it will only compounds endemic corruption by putting resources in the control of greed elite for their political and material advancement thereby preventing mass of the people from any potential benefits (Ayodele, 2005 and Yauri, 2018).

This seem to be vague looking at the mismanagement of national resources and misrule by multiethnic and multi-religious coalitions of successive rulers since independence who impoverished and denied opportunities to majority Nigerians (Ochonu, 2014). Therefore, the protagonist portrayed restructuring as a desire for national development, it is tight to political opportunism based on either regional or ethnic politics and interest for the aggrieved groups and trying to vent their anger and grievances scheming to wield support of those who feel marginalized and dissatisfied with the current federal practice. Such people are out to promote sectional interest and agenda that could erode the pillars of our national unity and integration. The feelings of marginalization in revenue allocation and under representations in the important lucrative federal establishments leading to the associated politics of population census where each regions struggled to produce more human population in order to secure more seats in the federal house and lot of money from the federation account. This created serious distrust and skepticism in the heart of different regions and their people in addition to the corresponding landmass of each region, a situation that rather compounded the existing problems of north-south dichotomy due to regional asymmetric imbalance. Protagonist of restructuring want states and local governments to control a greater shares of revenue irrespective of their population strength or landmass, since their activities has direct bearing in changing the socio-economic condition of the people. While the antagonist claims that, to achieve even development, federal government should continue to retain greater share for it bears the responsibility of ensuring political, social and economic stability throughout the nation (Abdullahi & Maigari, 2018). This is further compounded by different interpretation of what 'regional balance' is as, some see it in derivation while others define it in terms of needs in relation to how resource allocation could change to better off the life of everyone in line with the principle of equity.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The paper observed that, current agitations for restructuring the nation's federation is rooted from the operational deficit of good governance across levels of governments as

manifested in the distribution of political representation and resource allocations among diverse groups in Nigeria. Although, proponents of restructuring believes that restructuring is the only way out to the various issue problems associated with the country such as insecurity, corruption, dilapidated infrastructures, poverty and underdevelopment. The clamor for and against restructuring is actually rooted from the perceived feelings of domination and alienation by the south in resources allocation and political representation as protagonist, who thought concentration of political power and its associated benefits to federal center as monopolized by the northern elements. While the northern antagonist who appears to be skeptical of any structural re-arrangement in the manner of restructuring prepares equity measures in the re-distribution of economic benefits for each geo-political zone into federal civil service, the army, the police, industries, educational sectors, banks and other federal establishment.

The paper therefore recommends that,

1. The attitudinal changes and fighting corruption in the operations of those structures to ensure good governance and rule of law.
2. There should be equity in the distribution of political representation and resource allocation of material benefits and political opportunities in appointment and recruitment attached to the federal center.
3. That states and local government be fully autonomous units thereby reducing the overarching powers of the federal center.
4. States and local government should diversify their internal sources of revenue to reduce overdependence on monthly federal allocation

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